


Lillian Katz's Theory of Teacher's Developmental Stages

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Early Childhood Investigations
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Lillian G. Katz

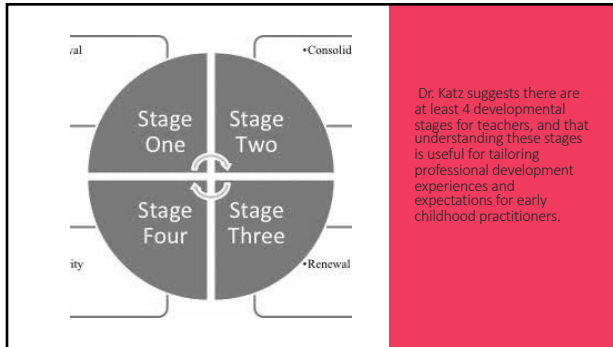
Professor emerita of early childhood education at the University of Urbana-Champaign
Founder of Early Childhood Research Quarterly and Early Childhood Research and Practice
Scholarly work focuses on teacher development and the Project Approach

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Developmental Stages of Preschool Teachers (1972)

“Preschool teachers can generally be counted on to talk about developmental needs and stages when they discuss children. It may be equally meaningful to think of teachers themselves as having developmental sequences in their professional growth patterns...It seems reasonable to suggest that there may be at least four developmental stages for teachers. Individual teachers may vary greatly in the length of time spent in each of the four stages...”

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Stage 1: Survival


- "Can I get through the day in one piece?"
- "...without losing a child?"
- "Can I make it till the end of the week?"
- "Can I really do this kind of work day after day?"
- "What comes next?"
- "Will I be accepted by my colleagues?"

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Training Needs for Survival Stage

- Support, understanding, comfort and guidance
- Instruction in specific skills
- Insight into complex causes of behavior
- Provided on site!
- Senior staff members, advisors, consultants, coaches
- Training must be constantly available and easily accessible
- Not met by scheduled check ins or site visits only

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Stage 2: Consolidation

"By the end of the first year"

Consolidate overall gains
Differentiate specific tasks and skills to be mastered next

Usually begin to focus on individual "problem children" and situations

"How can I help a clinging child?
How can I help a particular child who does not seem to be learning?"

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Training Needs for Consolidation Stage

On site help continues to be valuable

Mutual exploration of problems with trainer

Observe and discuss suggestions and tentative solutions


Extended give and take conversations may be best for trainer to help teacher interpret their experience

"What have you done so far? Give an example of the experience with this child this week. When you did such and such, how did the child respond?"

Learning to use a wider range of resources

Opportunities to share feelings with other teachers

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Stage 3: Renewal

"Often during 3rd or 4th year"

Begins to tire of doing the same old things

Asks questions about new developments in the field

May find old methods/themes boring

Need for renewal and refreshment should be taken seriously

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Training Needs for Renewal Stage

Meet colleagues from different programs, both formally and informally

Regional and national conferences

Membership in professional organizations

"Teachers are now widening the scope of their reading"

Reflect on their classroom using video

"Teacher Centers"—places to gather together to help each other learn or relearn skills, exchange ideas, organize workshops

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Stage 4:
Maturity

Teacher has come to terms with herself as a teacher

Has enough perspective to begin to ask deeper and more abstract questions like "What are my philosophical roots? Can schools change societies? Is teaching a profession?"

More meaningful search for perspective and realism

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Training Needs for Maturity Stage

Participate in conferences

Work toward a degree

Read more widely

Interact with other educators on many problem areas

Conference sessions that Stage 2 teachers enjoy may be very tiresome to the Stage 4 teacher

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Podcast Episodes:

- That Early Childhood Nerd:
- Episode 323: ECE MAYtrarchy Episode 4
- Episode 333: Katz Ladies: Lillian Katz's Stages of Teacher Development
- Episode 334: Katz Ladies: Narcissism vs Self Esteem in Childhood
- Episode 335: Katz Ladies: Distinctions Between Academic and Intellectual Goals
- Episode 336: Katz Ladies: Mixed Age Grouping in Early Childhood Settings

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