

Tiny Echoes: The Silent Symphony of Childhood Imitation

~ HeyZeus Oak

Imitation is a silent, illuminating beacon that gently guides the unfolding journey of every child, shaping their world with unseen brilliance. Consider the small moments: a toddler watching their parent cook, a child mimicking their teacher's kind tone, or a young one copying a sibling's playful gestures. These everyday interactions significantly impact a child's life forces, as children learn by observing, absorbing, and acting out what they experience. For adults, it's not simply what we say to the child that matters, but what we do in their presence.

The role of adults in this process is immense. As children imitate not only what they see but also the inner attitudes and feelings of those around them, adults must be conscious of their actions. Our manner and attitude toward the world, and our inner attitudes, are perceived by the child and have a significant effect. Educators and caregivers must embody the qualities they wish to instill in children. Through their observations, children integrate these social expressions into their own being, highlighting the profound influence that adults have on the incarnation of the young child.

Understanding and assessing imitation in children can be complex. Often, educators look for direct and immediate imitation, but children's imitation can be delayed and not as easily observable. Children might replicate an action or behavior days after observing it or imitate something for days. The influence of adults is both far-reaching and profound, often manifesting in ways that are not immediately apparent.

In today's noisy world, children's ability to imitate is frequently interrupted. The constant presence of background noise from dishwashers, leaf blowers, automobiles, and other machinery can interfere with more meaningful imitative activities that penetrate the child's soul life. If we allow a child's spiritual life to be neglected, the spirit will still enter them, but it may be through problematic pathways, such as digestion. A child may not imitate songs when their environment is filled with mechanical sounds. How does that child's soul learn to express itself? What are the consequences of spiritual "indigestion" and impeded self-expression? Such questions could be relevant to many of the common challenges educators face today. If a child doesn't engage in sufficient meaningful imitation, it

contributes to many challenges later in life, including restlessness and poor concentration.

Through imitation, children not only learn to walk and speak, but also begin to develop a sense of morality and ethics. The environment in which a child grows must be rich in worthy examples, as this forms the basis of their moral development. Children mirror the intentions and attitudes of the adults they observe, making it vital for caregivers to act consciously and responsibly.

The concept of imitation extends beyond individual development and plays a significant role in the broader context of creating an inclusive pedagogy for all. By curating environments where positive behaviors and attitudes are modeled, we contribute to a more respectful and empathetic society. When children observe and imitate actions that promote kindness, understanding, and respect, they internalize these values and carry them into their interactions with others, which works toward creating inclusive communities.

Children naturally possess the motivation for inclusivity, and play is their motivator. If their play is facilitated well, they often desire to include children who are culturally and physically different from them. Play is where imitation comes to life. Picture children playing house, taking on roles as parents, teachers, or even heroes. Through play, they internalize and creatively explore the behaviors and scenarios they observe in their environment. This form of play is essential for developing their formative forces. Play provides children with opportunities to practice and internalize their social environment that they observe, fostering creativity and emotional intelligence. Additionally, play that involves cooperative activities and role-playing scenarios related to fairness and kindness can further instill values of empathy and understanding in children.

Imitation is not just about copying actions; it's about absorbing the essence of behaviors and attitudes, which is deeply connected to a child's spiritual development. When a child watches an adult meditate

or express gratitude, these moments are soaked in a deeper understanding of life's values.

A child's innate impulse to imitate is a resource for teachers and can be influenced to support a child in processing experiences. However, if a teacher unknowingly presents something that hinders a child's ability to imitate by bringing premature awareness to the child's own sense of self, it can cause harm. For example, when a classroom lacks representation of various skin tones, it impacts children differently. A child of color might feel estranged, while a white child might experience a deep sense of belonging. Since we live in a multicultural, globalized society and have so much to learn from diverse communities, including representations of diversity will support not only a more just world but also richer and more beautiful classrooms.

The role of imitation in early childhood is profound, influencing not only the physical development of children but also their moral and spiritual growth. Adults need to act consciously and responsibly, as their behavior and attitudes serve as the primary models for young children. By creating environments rich in positive examples and opportunities for meaningful engagement, educators and caregivers can support the development of the whole child, nurturing physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Moreover, the influence of imitation extends to developing positive cultural values, where cultures and communities are represented and honored through conscious and responsible actions. ♦

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