

Research Paper

Stages in Child Development: A Psychosocial Overview

Govind Kumar^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Children are valuable human resources for any nation. The universal fact is that childhood constitutes the most crucial period in the life because, during the period, foundations are laid for motor, sensory, cognitive, language, social and personality development. Development means changes in a forward direction. Child Development is not just child becoming bigger; it involves development in many areas – physical, mental, emotional, psychosocial and so on. We may define child development as a progressive series of changes of an orderly and coherent type toward the goal of maturity. It can be observed, appraised and measured. As commonly believed, development doesn't start with birth. Birth is only a point, a stage, when the fetus emerges out to be independent of the mother. By then the newly born (neo-natal) will have developed considerably – physically and in sensory motor areas – even a fetus shows complex Behaviour. Development begins with conception. Prenatal development covers development from conception to birth, while post-natal covers development after birth.

Keywords: *Child Development, Psychosocial, Physical, Mental, Emotional*

Development is a continuous process, although rate of development varies within a child for different bodily parts and for different types of Behaviour, and from child to child. Although continuous, development proceeds stage by stage. All type of Behaviour do not appear in a child at the same time, each becomes manifest at a certain stage. On the whole, typical behaviour there appears to be a stage, although there are individual differences on the rate of development. For instance, jealousy in most children is noticed between 18 to 24 months. A group of four to five year olds may place some leaves and flowers in a row and act as though it were a feast. All these are instances of play. Almost all self-initiated activities of children are instances of play in their natural context.

Play	Play
Participatory Attractive Natural to children Enjoyable	Rewarding Related to activities which promote intellectual skills

Play is a natural path for children and they actively participate in constructing their environment. A learning environment, which allows the maximum opportunities for play, is

¹Research Scholar, P.G. Department of Psychology, Veer Kunwar Singh University, Arrah, Bhojpur, Bihar.

*Corresponding Author

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therefore best suited for children's growth and development. During play, it will be seen that children are involved in what they are doing;

- Almost always initiate the activity on their own;
- Experience natural joy and
- Express curiosity and show the urge to explore.

Preschool teachers hence must know:

- The needs, abilities and interests of children in relation to age
- The patterns of interaction and activities that will foster development in all domains and
- The diverse social and cultural practices, concerns and values that influence children's development.

Domains of Development with Motivation

The child's development can be thought of in different domains or aspects. These are all intimately interrelated and interdependent and interact with each other, so it may be often difficult to separate them. Yet it is important to do so, lest any domain is neglected and curriculum can be planned to attend to all domains and achieve holistic development. The two diagrams below divide development in different ways. Alternative - A eight domains such as fine motor, sensory, cognitive, language, emotional, social, personal gross motor and alternative - B six i.e. affective, psycho motor, cognitive, social personal, aesthetic, motor.

For convenience, child psychologists have measured development in terms of chronological age. For example, fetus development is described in terms of weeks or in months. Infancy, babyhood, early childhood and late childhood are stages measured in years. Schooling periods offer another convenient mode of fixing stages – like pre-school, primary and so on or grade-wise, classification. Yet, it should be remembered that age or grade are only convenient points for reference and are not absolute thresholds within which development occur.

Play Based Activities for Development through the Lifespan

Development in each domain can be fostered by giving each child a chance to participate in a wide variety of play-based activities. These activities allow the child to engage actively in the process, to learn, practice and master skills at each level, to test and evaluate, and to develop self-confidence and motivation to achieve. While several activities have been suggested for each domain, it must be emphasized that every activity addresses several domains. For convenience, each activity has been shown only once, but would have an impact in other domains too. For instance, in a drawing activity, the children are not only perfecting a small motor skill they are also learning to:

- Share (social and emotional skills)
- Follow directions (listening or language skills)
- Copy a visual pattern (visual or sensory skills)
- Visualize the object (cognitive and imaginative skills)

Pre-school teachers must remember that:

- Young children learn best in small groups because it eliminates long waiting periods and offers more person to person opportunities.
- Young children's attention span for any concentrated effort lasts for about one minute more than their age.

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Some suggestions to preschool teachers:

- Introduce only one or two concepts at a time.
- Keep games simple and make sure that instructions are clear. Try to demonstrate as much as possible, especially when introducing a new game.
- Ensure that each child has opportunity to participate and to succeed.
- Watch for restlessness and stop when the interest wanes.
- Don't insist that every child participates in every game. Gently encourage them to take part. Make sure recognize and positive reinforce child's individuality.
- Play games without winners or losers.
- Give each child a special task such as being a leader or initiator in order to foster positive qualities.
- Praise and reward children for cooperative actions and helpfulness.
- Create situations where cooperative behaviour is needed.
- Continue to let children experience the joy of doing and achieving mastery in their own time and also involve in aesthetic work.

'Organization of Play Activities' discusses to optimally utilize the space available, the toys, equipment and play materials needed and to arrange them. The organization of time-how to plan a schedule and how to use themes in an integrated-approach is also dealt.

Activities for Pre-School Education (PSE)

	Water Play	Paper Cutting, Folding, Pasting	Painting and Drawing
Sorting	Classification	Threading Beads	Building Blocks
Action Songs	Free Conversion	Nature Walk	Story Telling
Doll Play	Musical Tones	Straw Boards (Painting and Drawing) on Floor	Clay Modeling
Finger Printing	Balancing	Imitation	Sensory Experiences
Sounds	Two Hand Coordination	Eye hand Coordination	

Play is a mode of psycho-physical recreation of a child. Psycho-physical recreation involves relaxation of brain, nerve, neuro, fine and large muscles of body. Effective eye-hand and two-hand coordination is an important part of child's developmental milestone. Eye-hand and two-hand coordination involves activities related to sorting (seeds/different, small/big), classification (size, shape, colour), grouping and balancing. Activities like walking, climbing stairs, playing musical instruments, stirring food in a bowl, sorting seeds, marbles, grains, stones using tools require efficiency in eye-hand coordination skills. It involves child handling objects together, attempting to grab the things consist of a series of trials, with the child looking at the objects. Overall, eye-hand and two-hand coordination brings development in the muscular and cognitive functioning in the children.

Various activities which can enhance the better eye-hand coordination may involve: Letting children form a circle then decide the name of a class e.g. fruits, colour objects, foods items, animals and so on. Telling the children what you have chosen. For instance, colour objects asking each child in turn to call out the name of a colour object. After some practices, children should not repeat the name of a colour objects called out. Another activity: Asking

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the children to sit in a circle. Singing a song in mother tongue (language) and asking then children to sing with your actions.

Let us not briefly examine with prominent psychologist representing different schools of thought have to say regarding developmental stages. Sigmund Freud is one of the most famous thinkers in psychology history. Father of modern psychology Sigmund Freud theorized that development consists of series of fixed stages through which a child has to pass in sequential order. If basic drives characteristic of a given stage are not gratified. Fixation results and ability of the child to adapt and adjust is impaired. A child unable to adjust at a given stage may go back to the previous or earlier stages where it was successful, a phenomenon he called "Regression". He describes four stages – (i) Oral, (ii) Anal (iii) Genital and (iv) Phallic stages.

Gessel believes that all development occurs in definite, patterned and internally controlled sequences. Maturation plays a dominant role in development but environment and culture can modify it. The credit for developing carefully studied and prepared development schedules goes to Gessel. We are able to predict what Behaviour to expect of a child at a given stage with the help of such norms.

Piaget views development as a succession of definite stages for a given Behaviour, emerging in an unchanging and constant order, each incorporating the structure of the preceding stage and each characterized by an initial period of preparation and a final period of achievement. He lists Assimilation and Accommodation (assimilation and new and accommodating the old) as two important processes of development. He describes development in three stages:

- i. Stages – Sensory Motor Stage (first 2 years)
- ii. Preoperational Stage (2-7 years)
 - a. Preconceptual Stage (2-4 years)
 - b. Perceptual, Intuitive Stage (4-7 years)
- iii. Concrete Operational Stage (7-12 years)
- iv. Formal Operational Stage (12 years onwards)

Burrhus Frederic Skinner was an American psychologist, Behaviourist, author, inventor, and social philosopher. Skinner represents the Behaviouristic School that emphasizes the role of environment in child development. Behaviour is described in terms of a series of stimuli and responses. The behaviourists don't accept any particular study of stages is based on events occurring in the environment, malnutrition changes and Behaviour manifestations.

Sullivan emphasized interpersonal relationships (IPR). How the child adapts, the methods used for adaptation, his ways of perceiving the world, how he relates his self with others in the environment are important factors that determine his development. His Behaviour is primarily oriented towards meeting his biological and security needs. His psychological problems stem from insecurity. His developmental stages from infancy to childhood are characterized by new interpersonal needs and IPR.

No one view can be accepted as sole explanation of developmental stages. Each may be right and every view has its own limitations. The current trend is towards formulation of an integrated approach to development. Whatever be the description of the stages, it is generally agreed, that development follows certain trends. Based on a number of studies of

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children from different age groups, certain principles of development have been evolved. They are listed below:

1. Development is a continuous process.
2. Pattern of growth, to some extent, is predictable.
3. Rate of development differs within a child and from child to child.
4. Development is characterized by certain trends – like diffusion hypothesis that development proceeds from a diffused state to a specific state – as in development of muscle control, emotions and so on.
5. Similarities in growth trends are noticed universally. From such observations of similarities, we can infer average trends, normal distributions and so on.
6. Development is orderly and follows definite sequences. This can help in preparation of developmental schedules for prediction.
7. Although developmental trends are universal, each child has its own individuality. Each child has an inner world of his own, his own family, culture, goals and perceptions and thus he possesses an individual identity.
8. While the controversy over the importance of heredity had maturity is yet to be resolved the via media policy would be to accept the importance of the interaction of both. The critical period hypothesis suggests how both readiness of the child and availability of opportunity to learn at the time of readiness are important for learning to take place.
9. Development in each area proceeds at its own pace, yet they are all interrelated and interdependent.

The study of child development at various stages is important for a number of reasons. Human development is complex phenomena. Nearly one third of human life is involved in development during childhood. Humans have the longest period of infancy compared to other species. Childhood is a very important phase of life – it lays the foundation for adulthood. Childhood covers up to 12 years; of this life span the development is very rapid in first six (0-6) years than in the next six years.

Behaviour during childhood is less complex as compared to other stages; it is possible to control the environment of a child so as to modify his Behaviour. A child has unparalleled potentiality for development and proper care and guidance can harness these potentialities. So, a study of stages of child development can help to predict whether development can help to predict whether development is normal or not, to take corrective measures – for example speech and to plan child care, child training and child guidance programmes.

CONCLUSION

Finally, Children are a gift of nature. They provide joy and happiness, hopes and a new beginning. Caring and nurturing of children entails commitment, concentration and efforts in order that they grow into healthy citizens. As a final point, the period of early childhood is the most significant in the life span of an individual. The period between the age of three and six (early childhood) is marked with rapid physical, psychosocial and mental development when the child gains confidence about the bodily postures, strive for independence by doing things on its own and experiments with objects in the environment. Children display curiosity, enjoy the company of their peers and seek to imitate adult behaviour. Therefore, early childhood years should be full of experiences and interactions with peers, parents, family members and other adult care givers for the holistic development of the children.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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