

## IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL, COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF CHILDHOOD

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### **Abstract**

The key dimensions in the development of human being are physical, mental, social, emotional, moral and language developments. The constant interaction with the environment results in the growth and development of innate capacities, abilities and potentialities in a child and transform him into future citizen. The physical and motor developments in every individual occur due to biological processes such as digestion, respiration, circulation, secretion etc. Rich and balanced diet is essential for proper physical development. So, parents should focus on providing healthy food and atmosphere for the children. The cognitive development (mental development) indicates the ability of an individual to pattern his responses according to the needs of situations in which he has to function. Mental development is gradual and cumulative. It is the result of number of factors like heredity, environment, physical growth, socio-economic status, type of education provided etc. *Socialization* is assimilating the life styles, rules and regulations, customs and traditions of the society and living accordingly. Mother is the first teacher for anyone during socialization.

**Key Words:** Innate Capacities, Motor Developments, Cognitive Development, Socialization

### **1) Introduction:**

According to Elizabeth Hurlock “the dividing line between early and later childhoods is significant because the child leaves the home environment and enters school, new pressures and new expectations result in marked changes in patterns of behavior, attitudes and values”. This statement reinforces the gradual developmental changes in life of an individual during his childhood.

As the child development is divided into early and later childhoods, the two periods are presented side by side in tabular form for all six dimensions (physical, mental, social, emotional, moral and language) of development for clear grasping of the knowledge.

**2a) Physical and Motor Development:**

The lifelong changes that occur in morphology (external features) and anatomy (internal organs) of an individual are termed as *physical development*. These internal and external changes are proportionate and systematic and result in proper personality of the individual. Factors affecting physical development are inheritance, mother’s health during pregnancy, nutrition, delivery conditions, baby care, living conditions etc.

Physical development follows certain principles like *law of individual differences* (each individual has his own pattern of development), *law of direction* (development proceeds from cephalo-caudal and proximo-central), *law of rhythmic growth* (development is fast in infancy, slow in childhood, fast in early adolescence and slow in late adolescence), *law of continuity* (development is orderly and continuous throughout), *law of spontaneity* (development is not influenced by any external factor) and *law of developmental rate* (all body parts do not show uniform growth and speed).

The characteristics of physical and motor development during early and later childhoods are presented in the following table.

<b>Characteristics of Physical and Motor Development in Early Childhood (3-6years)</b>	<b>Characteristics of Physical and Motor Development in Later Childhood (6-12 years)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Development of brain is rapid in early years. By the time the child completes the age of four, his brain gains almost 90% of its final weight.</li> <li>❖ The head constitutes about one-fourth the height of the body at birth, but as the child grows older, the proportion of the head size decreases and the other body parts show changes proportionately. The square shaped trunk now becomes rectangular and rounded.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There is low increase in height and weight during later childhood period. Girls are ahead of boys. Growth rate is slow, steady and uniform.</li> <li>❖ The body grows proportionately, but at a slower rate. Jaw becomes larger. the forehead broadens and flattens. The neck becomes larger, the abdomen flattens, the arms and legs lengthen.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Child develops milk teeth by the time of two years of age. First pair of milk teeth arises between 6-9 months of age. At the end of first year, 4-6 teeth develop followed by 8 teeth each in upper and lower jaw (8+8) by the end of second year. Near the end of the fifth year, the permanent teeth begin to appear. Girls usually show more advanced teeth growth than boys.</li> <li>❖ The motor skills developed include manipulation with hands for eating, catching, writing, drawing, self bathing, clothing and holding the items etc.</li> <li>❖ With the help of muscular coordination, various motor abilities like walking, running, jumping, throwing, catching, climbing are seen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Shedding of milk teeth and growth of permanent teeth changes the appearance of mouth.</li> <li>❖ Muscular growth is more hence, child attains physical fitness. Development is seen in manipulations and speed is observed in activities.</li> <li>❖ Painting to toys, gardening, preparation of playing items are some of the motor abilities develop during this period.</li> <li>❖ They are interested in outdoor games like cricket, swimming, skating, football and athletics etc.</li> </ul>
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**2b) Educational Implications of Physical and Motor Development:**

- The knowledge of physical development helps the teacher to behave properly with the physical deviates. It helps the teacher to know the estimated growth and to avoid the under or over estimation.
- Provisions for games and sports help children for alround development and self-expression. The co-curricular and extra-curricular activities provide physical labour to the children that develop cooperative skills while developing their own physique. Outdoor games like swimming, skating, hockey, volley ball, basket ball etc. are best practices for physical development.
- Demonstrations for motor skills are very valuable for beginners. At the earlier stages, activities like clay work, coloring, tearing, cutting, painting, threading and sewing etc. should be planned.
- The pattern of physical and motor development helps in knowing the finer movements, dexterity etc. children should be encourage to manipulate, handle and use different objects and equipment so as to provide sensory activity and eye-hand coordination.
- The school should organize varied types of activities in the form of handicrafts, wood craft, gardening and various types of outdoor programmes and experiences for better motor development.

**3a) Cognitive Development: (Mental Development)**

The mental processes like thinking, intelligence, memory, language, perception, abstraction, imagery etc are called *cognitive abilities*. These internal abilities grow and mature with age. Mental development or intellectual development is the development of the mental abilities and capacities which help an individual to adjust his behavior to the ever changing environmental conditions or to enable him to accomplish a task that needs complex cognitive abilities.

Gessell is of the opinion that “the child during his first five years is able to learn the double of what he is able to acquire in his later twelve years”.

The characteristics of cognitive development during early and later childhoods are presented in the following table.

Characteristics of Cognitive Development in Early Childhood (3-6years)	Characteristics of Cognitive Development in Later Childhood (6-12 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The child has poor perception of time, space, distance and depth.</li> <li>❖ The child is able to perceive the concrete things. He is able to perceive family members, objects like toys etc. which are visible to him.</li> <li>❖ Reasoning is confined to concrete personal things from child’s immediate environment.</li> <li>❖ The child is able to generalize or discriminate the things that are in his environment. It tries to develop various concepts from direct experiences.</li> <li>❖ During this stage, situations become significant factors in child’s memory. It is rote memory and he learns by repetition.</li> <li>❖ Concentration is not developed in this stage. No logic is found.</li> <li>❖ It is the period like a clean slate (<i>tabula rasa</i> according to Aristotle), where maximum learning takes place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ They develop perception about distance, time and depth.</li> <li>❖ Able to distinguish between familiar and strange objects with verbal sounds.</li> <li>❖ Their perceptions become organised and definite towards concrete things.</li> <li>❖ Children are able to form concepts not only from direct and concrete experiences, but also from indirect experiences (abstract).</li> <li>❖ They are able to form concepts offered by reading, movies and lectures etc.</li> <li>❖ The child is able to understand and memorize with logic.</li> <li>❖ Children are able to solve not only physical and personal problems, but also able to solve academic problems.</li> <li>❖ As the abstract thinking ability develops they are able to solve different problems.</li> </ul>

**3b) Educational Implications of Cognitive Development:**

- The knowledge of mental development helps the teacher in the selection of curricular and co-curricular activities and in arranging learning situations, methods, techniques etc.
- The school should have library equipped with appropriate books for developing their mental capacities and creative abilities.
- The cultural and social experiences, learning opportunities and discipline which he gets for the development process, contribute significantly towards mental development.
- The schools may provide activities like story making, telling writing and listening, picture compositions, quiz competitions, elocutions, puzzle filling etc. for better mental development.
- The child should be exposed to opportunities of narrating, observing, imagining, thinking, reasoning, questioning, individual work etc. to enhance his critical thinking.

**4a) Social Development:**

According to Elizabeth Hurlock, social development is the “attaining of maturity in social relationships”. Sorensen stated that “by social growth and development we mean the increasing ability to get along well with oneself and others”. Education is the means by which every society prepares, within their children-the essential conditions of its very existence.

The terms social development and socialisation are often used as synonyms. *Social development* is the development of relations with others by overcoming selfishness and improving the social skills like understanding and cooperation so as to acclimatise within the environment to lead successful social life.

No person can live in complete isolation. It is the parents and society who teach human qualities to transform a person into citizen. From merely a living organism, the infant develops into complete individual in the context of social environment. The characteristics of social development during early and later childhoods are presented in the following table.

<b>Characteristics of Social Development in Early Childhood (3-6years)</b>	<b>Characteristics of Social Development in Later Childhood (6-12 years)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Gregariousness starts as the child enters school.</li> <li>❖ Transformation occurs from unsocial to socialized individual. (From selfishness to share and cooperate with others). But his social contact is limited.</li> <li>❖ Cooperation is seen in group activities like building sand castles, performing the marriage of dolls, preparing play items etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Child prefers social approval for his actions. He understands social culture and behaves accordingly to get approval of others.</li> <li>❖ They learn to cooperate with others and make friends on shared interests and similar personality traits.</li> <li>❖ Children form gender groups. There are clear differences between boy and girl groups in their habits, attitudes and interests.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Adjustment with others is prominent social behavior during this stage. The child develops awareness about the environment in which he lives.</li> <li>❖ Child enjoys the company of peers and interest in playmates increases. He spends less time with parents.</li> <li>❖ Boys and girls play together and form groups irrespective of the sex.</li> <li>❖ <i>Solitary play</i> (18-24months), <i>Parallel play</i> (24-36 months) and <i>social play</i> (36-48 months) are gradual developments in socialisation process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There is possibility to develop into a maladjusted and anti-social personality for being neglected by parents or teachers or peers.</li> <li>❖ This period is <i>gang age</i>. Through the gang life, child develops good and bad social qualities.</li> <li>❖ Feeling of autonomy develops in children. They begin to explore their environment independently.</li> <li>❖ Jealousy and differences arise in the minds of children in school due to dissimilarities in social and economical status of parents.</li> </ul>
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**4b) Educational Implications of Social Development:**

- Students should be trained to cooperate with fellow students and school personnel.
- Community activities like camps, common meals, social services etc. should be frequently organized.
- Stories of freedom fighters, social activists, charity organizations etc. should be taught.
- For the proper social development, you should give them group activities and engage them in collective work.
- Children should not be isolated. If any child prefers isolation, try to know the cause for that.
- The present day school has to perform some of the functions of the family like developing good social habits, acting positively in an unprejudicial manner etc.
- The teachers are expected to be vigilant to ensure that the students do not think in terms of untouchability, caste, distinctions and other prejudices.

**Conclusion:**

The activities that facilitate physical development are regular medical check-ups, provisions for nutritive diet, guided play activities, yoga, exercises etc. Cognitive development (mental development) includes observation, insight, imagination, concepts, intelligence and problem solving behavior. It is influenced by the environmental factors of home, school, teacher, peers, co-curricular activities, learning experiences, maturity etc. Factors affecting the social development of the child include, culture, family, health, religion, peer groups, school, community, neighbourhood, mass media, intelligence and emotional development.

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