

Perspectives on Children's Development

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



Objectives

- To be able to articulate why an understanding of all facets of growth & development is important for people working with children.
- To be able to differentiate between growth, development, & maturation & describe the interrelationship between them.
- To be able to describe how human development is affected by both genetic and environmental factors.

WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?

- **‘Systematic changes and continuities in the individual that occur between conception and death’ - Sigelman (1999)**



STAGES OF THE LIFE-SPAN

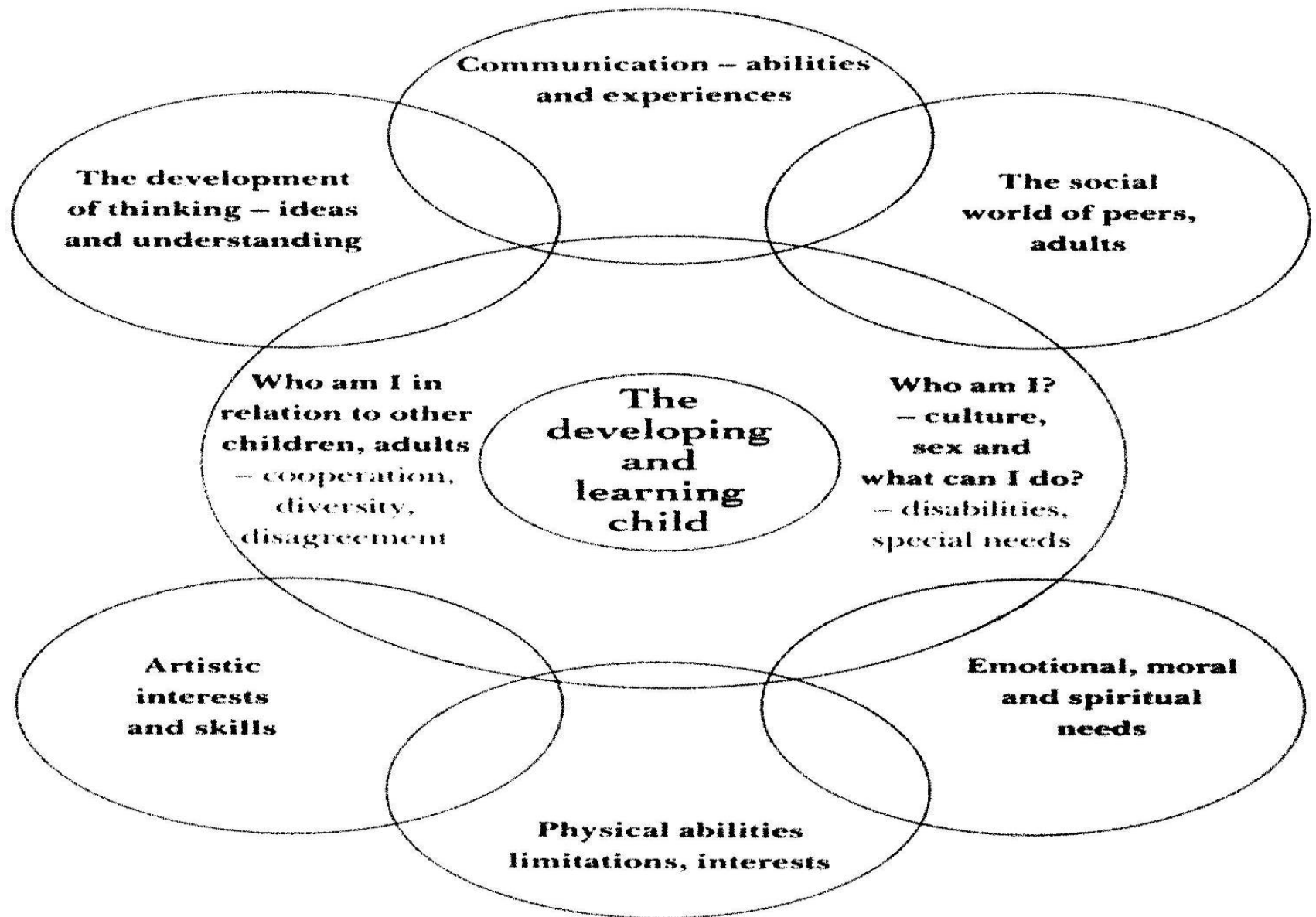
- Prenatal period: conception to birth
- Infancy and toddlerhood: birth to 2 years
- Early childhood: 2 - 6 years
- Middle childhood: 6 - 11 years
- Adolescence: 11 - 18 years
- Emerging adulthood: 18 – 25 years
- Early adulthood: 25 - 40 years
- Middle adulthood: 40 - 60 years
- Late adulthood: 60 years and older

(Seifert et al, 2000; Berk, 2009)

Consider the whole child

‘The physical development of children is part of their whole development and therefore must be seen in the context of the social, emotional and intellectual changes that occur through childhood’ (MacGregor, 2000).

Viewing children as whole individuals



Growth, Development & Maturation

What is growth?

The process of growing; the gradual increase of an animal or a vegetable body; the development from a seed, germ, or root, to full size or maturity; increase in size, number, frequency, strength.

(On-line medical dictionary, 1998)

Growth, Development & Maturation

What is development?

The series of changes which animal and vegetable organisms undergo in their passage from the embryonic state to maturity, from a lower to a higher state of organization.

(On-line medical Dictionary, 1998)

Pedagogy

- “the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept.”

(Oxford English Dictionary, 2017)

- “the study of the methods and activities of teaching.”

(Cambridge English Dictionary, 2017)

Principles Governing Human Development (Baltes, 1987)

- Development is lifelong.
- Involves processes that emerge through the lifespan.
- Multidimensional & multidirectional – development is achieved in a variety of ways, and may be comprised of multiple abilities.
- Cephalocaudal direction.
- Proximodistal direction.

Embryonic Period

The large
neural tube
and the
formation of
the brain.



Growth and Development (G&D)

- Involves losses and gains.
- Involves plasticity –the way the “brain” can be moulded, the variability that may occur.
- Alterations in structure and function of internal tissues, organs and biological systems that also reflect the acquisition of physiological competence.
- G & D involve influences of neuromuscular and endocrine systems, nutritional status and environmental forces.

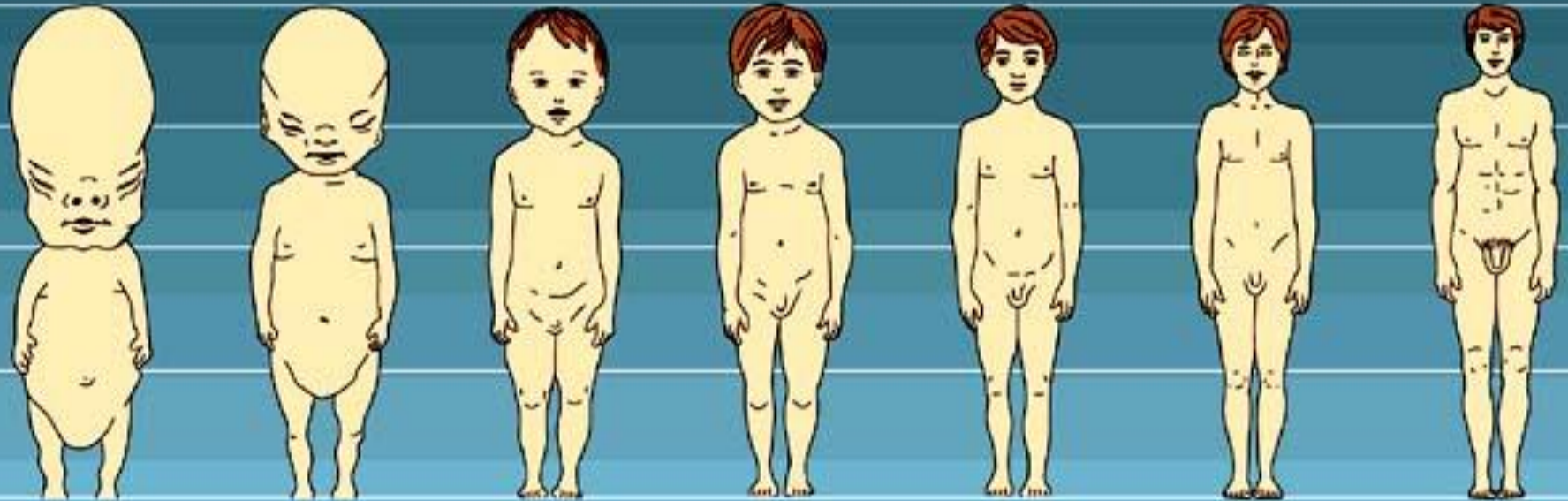
How is growth accomplished?

1. Hyperplasia (increase in cell number/proliferation).
2. Hypertrophy (increase in cell size/enlargement).
3. Cells differentiate - 'early cells are systematically modified & specialised to form all the tissues necessary to ensure an organised coordinated individual' (Wong, 2003:416).

Changes in Shape

- Head, trunk, limbs, periphery.
- Lengthening of trunk.
- Accumulation of subcutaneous fat.
- Child learning to walk-large head, protuberant abdomen, out turned feet and bowed legs.
- At birth, the circumference of the skull = circumference of the chest, and the circumference of the abdomen is greater than the skull & thorax until two years of age-due to large liver and small pelvis.
- Growth of pelvis facilitates the urinary tract, bladder & intestines, sinking down into the abdomen resulting in a gradual flattening of the abdomen.

Changes in Body Form and Proportion



2 months
(fetal)

5 months
(fetal)

Newborn

2 years

6 years

12 years

25 years

Maturation

1. Universal - all children, all cultures and societal boundaries.
2. Sequential.
3. Relatively impervious to environmental influences.

These processes have been shaped by evolution, however inheritance and the environment shape who we are and our potential throughout life.

3 BROAD DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT

- **Physical Development**
- **Cognitive Development**
- **Psychosocial Development**

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- The growth of the body and its organs from conception and after birth - height, weight, development of teeth, hair.
- Changes in the body and functions of physiological systems e.g. - during puberty.
- The appearance of the physical signs of aging during adulthood – changes in muscle and bone density, eye sight, hair loss/gain.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- ❑ Often age specific – certain aspects of physical development correspond to age e.g. – starting to sit or walk, development or loss of teeth.
- ❑ Childhood physical development is monitored very closely – children are expected to be a certain weight or height at a certain age and records are kept of their development.
- ❑ Nutritional status is an important consideration.

Psychological/Intellectual/ Cognitive Development

- How the child thinks.
- How the child learns.
- Theoretical perspectives.
- The relationship between language and thought.
- Socialisation.



COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- ❑ The development of understanding and thought.
- ❑ Development and changes in perception and understanding.
- ❑ Visual perception.
- ❑ Learning and problem-solving skills.
- ❑ Language.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Cognitive development can also be considered to be age specific – however, also dependant on other factors such as the degree of stimulation and interaction, education and past experiences.

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal and interpersonal aspect of development:

- ☐ Development of interpersonal skills.
- ☐ Development of social relationships and the changing roles played in the family and society.
- ☐ Development of personality.
- ☐ The concept of self and the development of self-esteem.
- ☐ Development of moral reasoning.
- ☐ Development of gender.

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