UNIT 3: PERSPECTIVES IN DEVELOPMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives
3.2 Introduction
3.3 Concept of growth, development and maturation
3.4 Major Theoretical Perspectives
   3.4.1 The Psychodynamic Perspective
   3.4.2 The Humanistic Perspective
   3.4.3 The Contextual Perspective
3.5 Influence of Nature and Nurture on Development
3.6 Development: Continuous Change versus Discontinuous Change
3.7 Gathering Data about Children
   3.7.1 Naturalistic Observation
   3.7.2 Case Study
   3.7.3 Survey Method
   3.7.4 Clinical Methods
3.8 Let us Sum up
3.9 Further Reading
3.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
3.11 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- discuss the concept of growth, development and maturation
- discuss important theoretical perspectives of development
- describe the influence of nature and nurture on development and
- explain the techniques of gathering data about children.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this unit is to provide you a broad foundation for
understanding child development.

In your personal and professional life you must observe and work with children in day-to-day life. You have observed children after their birth, during preschool years, in schools and so on. You have observed their physical and motor development, their emotion in various situations, their likings in play, art and other activities. We assume that you have some knowledge and experiences about the nature of development of children. However, you may not have deep understanding of the development of children. A deep understanding of development requires familiarity not only with phenomena but also with theories that provide coherent interpretation of the facts, allowing you to anticipate the consequences of various courses of actions.

The optimal development of children is very important to society, so it is important to understand the physical, social, emotional and educational development of children.

In this unit, you will learn the concept of growth, development, and maturation, make yourself familiar with the views and studies of different psychologists and researchers who have contributed a lot in the field of child development. Here, we shall highlight three perspectives of development: the psychodynamic, the humanistic and the contextual perspective. We shall touch upon the important issues related to the influence of nature and nurture on development, and continuous and discontinuous change in development. We shall also discuss in detail some important techniques of gathering date about children. We hope, this unit will help to add some more information into the basket of your knowledge with regard to child development and you will be able to observe the children more systematically and contribute to their development in a better way.

3.3 CONCEPT OF GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND MATURATION

Growth

Growth is the physical process of development, particularly the process of becoming physically larger. It is quantifiable or it can be
measured, and it is mostly influenced by genetics.

Physical growth refers to an increase in body size. It may be in length or height and weight and in the size of organs. From birth to about age 2 years, children grow rapidly. After this period, growth slows. During the preschool and school years, growth in height and weight is steady. Children tend to grow in almost similar amount each year until the next major growth spurt occurs in early adolescence.

Different organs do not grow at same rate. For example, the brain grows almost exclusively during the early years of life but the reproductive organ has a brief growth spurt just after birth, then changes very little before puberty.

Children’s physical, intellectual, and emotional development is rapid up to the age 13. However, the rate of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development varies considerably from child to child. Development depends partly on heredity, nutrition, environment, physical problems etc.

Children’s development is usually continuous. However, temporary pauses may occur in the development of a particular function, such as speech.

**Development**

Physical growth is an increase in size, whereas, *development* is growth in function and capability. You may take any child for observation. You may have observed that the child grew into a kid, she learned how to walk, run, and jump. Later, she started talking and learned how to express her thoughts.

At later stage, she learned more complex things, like how to calculate, how to solve problems and so on. In other words, you may have observed the child has become more capable of doing things in different ways.

These are few examples of development in the child. The development takes place at all stages of an individual’s life. There are many aspects of development e.g. physical, emotional, social, and intellectual.

Physical growth and development depend on a combination of
factors, including genetics, nutrition, and the environment.

**Maturation**

Sometimes we use the words growth and maturation interchangeably. However, growth and maturation have different meaning. In the previous paragraphs, you have learned the meaning of growth. Maturation is the physical, intellectual, or emotional process of development. Maturation is often not quantifiable. You may have observed some one to say that this child is mature, or the child is more mature in comparison to her age.

You have learned that growth is physical. Maturation is physical, intellectual, or emotional. When an individual's brain physically develops, she is able to understand intellectually what others are going through and how they might feel. When a person becomes mature she does not behave like a child.

### 3.4 MAJOR THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Human development refers to the biological and psychological changes that occur in human beings between birth and death.

People who study development of human beings approach the field form different perspectives. Each perspective encompasses one or more theories. In the following sub-sections, we shall discuss few major theoretical perspectives.

Psychologists who study development in human beings are concerned about two fundamental questions. The first one is whether the development best understood as a continuous process of change or as a series of transformations in the organization of an individual's behaviour. The second question is related to heredity and environment, whether the development is primarily guided by the genetic programme locked into the body's cells or fundamentally directed by forces in the external environment. Psychologists differ on many aspects of these two fundamental issues.

The concern about continuity beings more specific questions like how similar or how different are we from our near neighbors in the animal kingdom? Are there distinct stages of development? Are there critical
Concerns about sources of development have given rise to various theories about contributions of biology and the environment to the process of development. According to biological–maturation perspective the sources of development are primarily endogenous, arising from the organisms’ biological heritage.

According to environment–learning perspective the developmental change is primarily caused by exogenous factors (Clarke and Clarke, 1986).

According to interactional, perspective development arises from the active adaptation of the organism to the environment. Biological and environment factors play an equal role in development (Piaget, 1973).

According to cultural – context perspective the interactions out of which development emerges are crucially shaped by the prior history of the group as embodied in its culture (Vygotsky, 1978).

### 3.4.1 The Psychodynamic Perspective

The psychodynamic perspective is closely associated with Sigmund Freud, a Viennese physician.

**Freud’s Theory**

Freud’s theory of psychosexual development is one of the best known, and controversial as well. Freud believed that personality develops through a series of childhood stages during which the pleasure-seeking energies of the id become focused on certain erogenous areas. This energy, or libido, was described as the driving force behind behaviour.

If these stages are completed successfully, the result is a healthy personality. If certain issues are not resolved at the appropriate stage, fixation can occur. A fixation is a persistent focus on an earlier stage. Freud opined that until this conflict is resolved, the individual will remain ‘stuck’ in that stage.

**Age Range: Birth to 1 year**

**(Oral stage)**

During the first year of life, the infant’s primary source of
interaction occurs through the mouth, so the rooting and sucking reflex is especially important. The mouth is vital for eating, and the infant derives pleasure from oral stimulation through gratifying activities such as testing and sucking.

The primary conflict at this stage is weaning process. The child must become less dependent upon mother or caretakers. If fixation occurs at this stage, the individual would have issue with dependency or aggression. Oral fixation can result in problems with drinking, eating, smoking or nail biting, which are observed in many people at later stages, Freud claimed.

**Age Range: 1 to 3 years**

(Anal stage)

According to Freud during this stage the primary focus of the libido was on controlling bladder and bowel movements. The major conflict at this stage is toilet training. The child has to learn to control his or her bodily needs. Developing this control leads to a sense of accomplishment and independence.

Freud believed, success during this period is dependent upon the way in which parents approach toilet training. Parents who utilize praise and rewards for using the toilet at the appropriate time encourage positive outcomes and help children feel capable and productive. Freud believed that positive experiences during this stage served as the basis for people to become competent, productive and creative adults.

If parents take an approach that is too lenient, Freud believed that children develop a messy, wasteful or destructive personality. If parents are too strict or begin toilet training too early, Freud believed they develop stringent, orderly, rigid and obsessive personality.

**Age Range: 3 to 6 Years**

(Phallic stage)

During this period, the primary focus of the libido is on the genitals. At this age, children also begin to discover the differences
between males and females.

Freud also believed that boys being to view their fathers as a rival for the mother’s affections. A complex describes these feelings of wanting to possess the mother and the desire to replace the father. However, the child also fears that he will be punished by the father for these feelings, a fear Freud termed castration anxiety.

A different type of complex has been used to describe a similar set of feelings experienced by young girls.

**Age Range: 6 to Puberty**

*(Latent stage)*

During the latent period, the libido interests are suppressed. The development of the ego and superego contribute to this period of calm. The stage begins around the time that children enter into school and become more concerned with peer relationships, hobbies and other interests.

The latent period is a time of exploration in which the energy is directed into other areas such as intellectual pursuits and social interaction. This stage is important in the development of social and communication skills and self-confidence.

**Age Range: Puberty to Death**

*(Final stage)*

During the final stage of development, the individual develops a strong sexual interest in the opposite sex. This stage begins during puberty but last throughout the rest of a person’s life.

It is believed that in earlier stages the focus was solely on individual needs, interest in the welfare of others grow during this stage. If an individual completes the other stages successfully, the individual should now be well-balanced, warm and caring. The goal of this stage is to establish a balance between the various life areas.

The latent period is a time of exploration in which the energy is directed into other areas such as intellectual pursuits and social interaction. This stage is important in the development of social
and communication skills and self-confidence.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Answer the following question in about 40 words each.

(i) What may be the results of oral fixation of an infant?
................................................................................................
................................................................................................
................................................................................................

(iii) Why toilet training is important?
................................................................................................
................................................................................................
................................................................................................

(iii) In what way the latent stage is important?
................................................................................................
................................................................................................
................................................................................................

3.4.2 The Humanistic Perspective

The main focus of humanistic perspective is the unique qualities of human being. People who advocate humanistic perspective suggest that people have a natural capacity to make decision about their lives and to control their behaviour. According to them each individual has the ability and motivation to reach more advanced levels, of maturity.

The humanistic approach suggests that people need positive regard which results from an underlying wish to be loved and respected. As positive regard comes from other person, we become dependent on them. Our view of ourselves and our self worth is a reflection of how we think others views on us (Rogers, 1971).

However, humanistic perspective could not have a major
impact on the field of human development, primarily, due to its inability to identify any sort of broad developmental change that is the result of increasing age or experience (Feldman, 2010). Some concept drawn from the humanistic perspective like self – actualization, have helped describe important aspects of human behaviour. Self – actualization is a state of self – fulfillment in which people achieve their potential in their own unique way (Maslow, 1970).

3.4.3 The Contextual Perspective

The contextual perspective suggests a broad approach to development. The contextual perspective considers the relationship between individuals and their physical, cognitive, personality and social world. Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bio- ecological approach and Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory are the two important theories under this perspective.

A. The bio-ecological approach

The bio ecological approach suggests that five level of the environment simultaneously influence individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 2000).

a. **Microsystem**: It is the everyday and immediate environment of child’s daily life. Parents, teachers, caregivers, all influence child’s behaviour. However, child is not a passive recipient, s/he actively help construct the microsystem, shaping his/her immediate world.

b. **Mesosystem**: It connects various aspects of microsystem. The mesosystem binds children to parents, students to teachers, friends to friends, and so on.

c. **Exosystem**: It represents broader influences of social institution such as school, community, local media etc. Each of these institutions can have an immediate and major impact on personal development.

d. **Macrosystem**: It represents the larger cultural influences on
an individual including society, religious and political value system, and so on.

e. Chronosystem: It underlies each of the previous system. It involves the way the passage of time including historical events affects child’s development. For example, a massive earthquake, a terrorist attack in a city may affect child’s development.

The bio-ecological approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of the influences on developments. As the various levels are related to one another, a change in one level of the system affects other levels. Bio-ecological approach stresses the importance of cultural factors that affect development.

B. Vygotsky’s Socio-cultural Theory

The socio-cultural theory stresses how cognitive development proceeds as a result of social interactions between members of a culture (Vygotsky, 1979). Vygotsky argued that children's understanding of the world is acquired through their problem solving interaction with adults and other children. While children play with others, they learn what is important in their society and as the same time develops cognitively. Socio-cultural theory emphasizes that development is a reciprocal transaction between the people and the child.

3.5 INFLUENCE OF NATURE AND NURTURE ON DEVELOPMENT

Nature refers to traits, abilities, and capacities that are inherited from one’s parents. It encompasses any factor that is produced by the predetermined unfolding of genetic information – a process known as maturation. These genetic, inherited influences are at work as we move from the one – cell organism created at conception to the billions of cells that make up a fully formed human (Feldman, 2010). Due to the influence
of nature your eyes are brown or blue, have thick hair or thin hair, and so on.

Nurture, on the other hand, refers to environmental influences that shape our behaviour.

The ways parents discipline their children, the ways peer pressure effects on children, and the socioeconomic circumstances of a family etc. are some of the environmental influences that shape the behaviour of the individuals.

However, neither nature nor nurture stands alone in most developmental matters.

Although our genetic background orients us toward particular behaviour, this behaviour will not necessarily occur without an appropriate environment. People with similar genetic background e.g. identical twins may behave in different ways. People with different backgrounds may behave quite similarly. Psychologists differ with their opinion with regard to influence of heredity and environment or intellectual development. Heredity plays an important role, but environmental factors like exposure to good reading materials, schools, intelligent people etc. play important role.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Answer the following question in about 40 words each.

(i) What are the five levels of environment that influence individuals?

................................................................................................
................................................................................................
................................................................................................
................................................................................................
................................................................................................

(ii) According to socio-cultural theory, how children acquire understanding of the word?

................................................................................................
................................................................................................
................................................................................................
................................................................................................
3.6 DEVELOPMENT: CONTINUOUS CHANGE VERSUS DISCONTINUOUS CHANGE

Most developmentalists are of the opinion that while many types of developmental change are continuous, others are relatively discontinuous (Heimann, 2003).

In continuous change, development is gradual. Achievements at one level build on those of previous levels. Continuous change is quantitative and the underlying developmental process remains same throughout the life span. According to this view changes are a matter of degree, e.g. changes in an individual’s height (Feldman, 2010).

In discontinuous change development occurs in distinct stages. Each stage brings about behaviour that is assumed to be qualitatively different from behaviour at earlier stages.

3.7 GATHERING DATA ABOUT CHILDREN

In this section we shall discuss how the psychologist and developmentalists gather data about the development of children.

Psychologists have developed a variety of techniques for gathering information about child’s development. These include naturalistic observations, experiments, clinical interviews, and so on.

Let us discuss the technique of naturalistic observation.

3.7.1 Naturalistic Observation

In the nineteenth century, many scientists started to write baby biographies i.e. diaries to record observations of their children (Kessen, 1965).

The goal of naturalistic observation is to obtain detailed evidence on children as they behave in the real world settings they inhabit, including home, the school and the community.

Observational studies are crucial source of date about children’s development. However, there are some limitations.
Observers enter the scene with expectations about what they are going to see and there is a natural tendency to observe selectively in line with those expectations. It is not possible for an observer to write down everything he observes, so information is incomplete. Video recording is very useful, but may be expensive in some cases.

If a child knows that his/her behaviour is being observed, the child may try to manipulate his/her behaviour. So, the observers should be very careful at the time of observation.

Naturalistic observation is a research method commonly used by psychologists and other social scientists. This type of research is often utilized in situations where conducting lab research is unrealistic, cost prohibitive or would unduly affect the subject’s behavior.

**Advantages and Disadvantages of Naturalistic Observation**

**Advantages**

i. It allows you to directly observe the subject in a natural setting.

ii. It allows you to study things that cannot be manipulated in a lab due to ethical concerns.

iii. It can help support the external validity of research.

**Disadvantages**

i. It can be difficult to determine the exact cause of a behavior and the experimenter cannot go for outside variables.

ii. People may behave differently when know they are being watched.

iii. People may try to behave in a certain way in order to conform with, what they think the research expects to see.

iv. Different observers may draw different conclusions from the same witnessed behavior.

**Data Collection Methods Used in Naturalistic Observation**

You may utilize a number of techniques to collect data from naturalistic observation. This might involve writing down the number of times certain behaviour occurred in a specific period of time, or making an actual video-recording of the subjects of interest.
● **Tally counts**: You may write down when and how many times certain behaviours occurred.

● **Observer narratives**: You may take notes during the session and then go back later to try to collect data and discern behaviour patterns from these notes.

● **Audio or Video recordings**: Depending upon the type of behaviour being observed, you might also decide to make actual audio or video-taped recordings of each observation session.

**How Often Data can be Collected?**

Because it is rarely practical or even possible to observe every moment of a subject's life, you may use sampling to gather information through naturalistic observation. The goal is to make sure that this sample of data is representative of the subject's overall behaviour.

Obtaining a representative sample can occur in a few different ways:

● **Time sampling**: Involves taking samples as different intervals of time, which may be random or systematic.

● **Situation sampling**: Involves observing behaviour in a variety of different situations and settings.

**ACTIVITY 3.1**

After studying the naturalistic observation as a technique of data collection, let us take an example how to study a particular behaviour of the child. Imagine that you want to study differences in risk-taking behaviour between 9-10 years boys and girls. You might choose to observe behaviour in a few different settings, such as on a rock-climbing wall, a bumper cycle ride. First, you define what is meant by “risk-taking behaviour”. Then observe teens in these settings and record every incidence of what you define as a risky behaviour.
Q 3: Answer the following question in about 40 words each.

(i) Mention two advantages of naturalistic observation.
..............................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................

(ii) Name three data collection methods used in naturalistic observation.
..............................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................

3.7.2 Case Study

When a researcher follows the progress of a subject over an extended period of time, you may say that he is conducting a case study. In this method, the researcher records the behaviour of an individual and examines all background information available at that time.

The researcher may conduct interview to collect information and also may check the medical records or past history of the individual. Sometimes, if needed, the researcher can administer psychological testing also.

Case study method has both advantages and limitations. It yields a large amount of data about a child if you study child development using this method. However, you can not be sure that the child being studied is similar to other children who are in the same age or who have a common behavioural pattern.

3.7.3 Survey Method
If you want to find out how parents in your state are satisfied with the performances of their children, or how they respond to specific demands of the children, you may use survey method. For doing a survey, you may prepare a questionnaire and distribute the same to selected sample to collect information. You may conduct interview also with the help of an interview schedule. After collecting information, you may tabulate the data, analyze and prepare your report.

Though the survey method is an important tool, it has some limitations. It is often difficult to ascertain that the parents you have selected for the study are representative of the parents across the state. It is difficult to ascertain that the parents have told the truth. It is well known fact that all the questionnaires sent for data collection in a survey are not returned. The views of those who have refused to respond may be different from the views of others. Sometimes, it is difficult to prepare an effective questionnaire. You must be very careful about wording of the questionnaire.

### 3.7.4 Clinical Methods

The clinical methods are used to investigate the problems of an individual who is unwell. The most famous application of clinical methods in developmental psychology may be the work of Sigmund Freud. Freud considered that the early family history of the child to be essential to later personality development. He used to identify crucial events from the patient’s account using clinical methods that produced the difficulty from which the person was suffering.

Jean Piaget often used clinical methods to explore the reasons behind the answers given by the children when he asked them to solve intellectual problems. A classic example of clinical interview has been reported in the literature (Piaget, 1965 a, P.164). He put 20 wooden beads into a small box while a 6–year old child watched. Two of the beads were white, the rests brown. Piaget kept
the lid of the box open so that the boy can see old the beads.

Piaget asked the boy: *Are there more wooden beads or more brown beads?*

The child answered: *More brown beads because there are two white ones.*

Piaget asked: *Are the white ones made of wood?*

The child answered: *Yes,*

Piaget asked: *Are there more brown ones or more wooden ones?*

The child answered: *More brown ones.*

Then Piaget asked: *What colour would a necklace made of the wooden beads be?*

The child answered: *Brown and white.*

The boy knew all the beads are made of wood. He also understood the concept of more or less. However he failed to answer the first question related to the class of beads. The boy could not simultaneously concentrate on the whole and its parts, he maxed the logic.

Piaget’s careful probing using clinical method revealed how the two systems of logic became confused in the boy’s attempt to answer the initial question.

### 3.8 LET US SUM UP

- In this unit we have discussed the concept of growth, development, and maturation.
- Physical growth refers to an increase in body size and in the size of the organs. Development is growth in function and capability. Maturation is the physical, intellectual or emotional process of development.
- We have discussed major theoretical perspectives in development. Each perspective encompasses one or more theories.
The psychodynamic perspective is closely associated with Sigmund Freud who believed that personality develops through a series of childhood stages during which the pleasure-seeking energies of the id become focused on certain erogenous areas. During the first year of life, the infant’s primary source of interaction occurs through the mouth.

- The infant derives pleasure from oral stimulation through gratifying activities such as testing and sucking. If fixation occurs at this stage, the individual would have issue with dependency or aggression.
- During one to three years of age the child has to learn to control his or her bodily needs. Developing this control leads to a sense of accomplishment and independence.
- During three to six years period, the primary focus of the libido is on the genitals. The children begin to discover the differences between males and females.
- The latent period is a time of exploration in which the energy is directed into other areas such as intellectual pursuits and social interaction.
- The goal of the last stage i.e. puberty to death is to establish a balance between the various life areas.
- People who advocate humanistic perspective suggest that people have a natural capacity to make decision about their lives and to control their behaviour. According to them each individual has the ability and motivation to reach more advanced levels, of maturity.
- The contextual perspective considers the relationship between individuals and their physical, cognitive, personality and social world.
- The bio ecological approach suggests that five level of the environment simultaneously influence individuals. These are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem.
- Most researchers are of the opinion that while many types of developmental change are continuous, others are relatively discontinuous.
- Psychologists have developed a variety of techniques for gathering
information about child’s development. These include naturalistic observations, experiments, clinical interviews, and so on.

- The goal of naturalistic observation is to obtain detailed evidence on children as they behave in the real world settings they inhabit, including home, the school and the community.
- The clinical methods are used to investigate the problems of an individual who is unwell.

3.9 FURTHER READING


3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** (i) Fixation occurs at oral stage, the child would have issue with dependency or aggression. Oral fixation can result in problems with drinking, eating, smoking or nail biting, which are observed in many people at later stages.

(ii) Positive experiences of toilet training in children serve as the basis for people to become competent, productive and creative adults.
If parents take an approach that is too lenient, children develop a messy, and destructive personality. If parents are too strict or begin toilet training too early, they develop stringent, orderly, rigid and obsessive personality.

(iii) The latent stage is a time of exploration in which the energy is directed into other areas such as intellectual pursuits and social interaction. This stage is important in the development of social and communication skills and self-confidence.

Ans to Q No 2: (i) Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem.

(ii) According to sociocultural theory children’s understanding of the world is acquired through their problem solving interaction with adults and other children. While children play with others, they learn what is important in their society and as the same time develops cognitively.

Ans to Q No 3: i. (a) It allows you to directly observe the subject in a natural setting.

It allows you to study things that cannot be manipulated in a lab due to ethical concerns.

ii. (a) Tally counts

(b) Observer narratives

(c) Audio or Video recordings

3.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q 1: Name the person whose name is closely associated with the Psychodynamic perspective of development.

Q 2: Which perspective of development gives main focus to the unique qualities of human being?
Q 3: What is the difference between nature and nurture? Write your answer in one or two sentence.

Q 4: What is meant by situation sampling?

B) Short Questions (Answer in about 150 words)
Q 1: Differentiate between growth, development and maturation.
Q 2: Write short notes on any one of the following:
   i. The Psychodynamics Perspective
   ii. The Contextual Perspective
Q 3: Write the advantages and disadvantages of Naturalistic Observation.
Q 4: What are Clinical Methods? Write briefly.

C) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)
Q 1: What is Development? Explain its theoretical Perspectives.
Q 2: Discuss the influence of Nature and Nurture on development.

*** ***** ***