

HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Meaning of Growth

The physical development of human body is referred to as growth. It is manifested in the form of enlargement of some parts of the body or the body as a whole. For example, increase in weight or in height indicates growth. As a result of growth, human body becomes larger and heavier. A change in the organism which can be observed and measured quantitatively is termed as growth.

2.2 Meaning of Development

The term development refers to “a progressive series of changes that take place as a result of maturation and experience”. (Hurlock, 1980) Development implies qualitative changes. But all changes in behaviour are not developments (Dash & Neena, 2003) some of the changes in behaviour may be temporary and transient such changes cannot be called developments. Those changes in behaviour or traits that seem to emerge in an orderly manner and sustain for a reasonable long period of time are considered as development. (Conger and Kagan, 1979). These changes in behaviour are more stable well organized, more complex and healthier. Such changes lead to greater maturity and more advancement. Development starts from childhood, does not cease at adolescence, rather continues throughout life. According to Peary London, “Development means the whole sequence of life from conception to death.

2.3 Distinction between Growth and Development

A Clearcut line of demarcation can be drawn between “Growth” and “Development” is more comprehensive than the term growth.

- (i) Growth refers to changes in the particular aspect or aspects of the body whereas development implies the organization as a whole.
- (ii) Growth stop at a certain stage of life where as development continues throughout life. Development means a progressive, an orderly and coherent pattern of changes till death.
- (iii) Growth usually constitutes to the development, but not always. A human body may become fat and heavier with accompanied by any development.
- (iv) Development may be possible without any significant growth. For example, some children do not grow in size but they do develop ability.

(v) Growth is structural whereas development is functional. But a structure is of no use without its functions and function is a meaningless without structure.

2.4 Aspects of Development

Human development is complex, for growth and change occur in different facts of the self. We will discuss separately about physical, cognitive, personality and moral development in coming chapters. There is a great deal of overlap among these since each type of development affects development in the other spheres.

(a) Physical Development

Changes in height, weight more abilities, brain development and health related issues all part of physical development, exert a major influence on both personality and intellect.

(b) Cognitive Development

Mental abilities such as learning, memory, reasoning, and thinking (our intellectual capabilities) change one time and are closely related to both the physical and the emotional aspects of our being.

(c) Personality Development

Our unique way of dealing with the world, the way we get along with other people and our feeling, and emotional development affect both the physical and the cognitive aspects of functioning. A person's anxiety while taking a test, for example, can result in a poor performance and an underestimation of intellectual competence.

2.5 Theoretical Perspectives about Development

The way we explain development, depends on the way we view the basic nature of the human being. Different thinkers have seen as through different prisms and their ideas about our fundamental nature have given rise to different explanations, or theories. Theories are attempts to organize data or information, to explain why certain events occur.

Theories can range in scope from simple "Bunches" about why something happens to more complex multiplications to elaborate explanation. They try to integrate a great deal of information about a number of related events.

There is no one theory that is universally accepted by all the developmentalists. Nor is there any one theory that explains all facts of development. Different theories have different perspectives for looking at the way people develop. These perspectives dictate the question they ask, the research methods they use, and the way they interpret their data.

(a) The Mechanistic Perspective

Its view of humanity equates people with machines, it sees people as reacting, rather than initiating. We are what our environment makes of us. Mechanistic theories see change as quantitative (change in the amount rather than kind) and development as continuous. This view is held by Social Learning Theorists and Behaviourists.

Behaviourists focus on behaviour that can be seen, measured and recorded. They believe that human beings learn about the world in the same way as animals by reacting to the rewards, reinforcements or punishments of their environments. According to these theorists conditioning is the basic mechanism determines human behavior. Two kinds of conditioning are

(i) Classical (Respondent) Conditioning

This was first demonstrated by Ivan Pavlov (1839-1946). A previously neutral stimulus comes to elicit a response, not ordinarily associated with it. According to this theory our personality and we developed through such associations, or conditioned situations.

(ii) Operant Conditioning

This was shown by B.F. Skinner (1904). A system of rewards and punishments shapes a response. New responses are acquired in their way. For attaining different rewards and avoiding different punishment, we perform different some specific acts, which ultimately become the parts of our personality.

(b) The Organismic Perspective

In direct contrast to mechanistic model, the organismic model sees people as active organisms who, by their own actions, set their own development in motion. The mechanist believe organisms are more interested in process than in product in how an individual comes to believe certain things and acts in certain ways, rather than in the specifics of a person's thought or behavior. They are more interested in qualitative change rather than quantitative, in the leaps from one stage of development to another.

Jean Piaget (1896—1980) was the most prominent advocate of the organismic world view. Much of what we know about the way children learn is due to the creative inquiry of this semis

psychologist Piaget explained many aspects of children's thought and behaviour by considering them as going through definite stages. Each stage represents a qualitative change from one type of thought or behaviour to another. Such stage theories have certain characteristics points to make. All individuals go through the same stages in the same order. Even though the actual timing will vary from one person to another making any age demarcation only approximate. Each stage builds on the one that went before and constructs the foundation for the one that comes next. And each stage has many facets to it.

According to Piaget at each stage of development, an individual's personal representation, of the world-or, to use the Piagetian term, his or her Scheme will become more complex, more abstract and more realistic. This cognitive growth results from a two-step process of taking in new information about the world and changing one's ideas to include this new knowledge.

Piaget's four major stages of cognitive development are.

(i) Sensori Motor (0 to 2 Years)

Infants acquire knowledge about the world through their senses and their motor activity. During sensori motor stage the infant changes from a being who respond primarily through reflexes to one who can organize his/her activities in relating to the environment. The major cognitive acquisition is the realization that the world is a permanent place and that the people, places and things in it continue to exist even when they are out of view.

(ii) Pre-Operational (2 to 7 Years)

In this stage the child develops a representational system and uses symbols such as words to represent people, place and events. The thinking of the preoperational child is still immature. Because of his egocentrism, the child has difficulty considering the point of view of others.

(iii) Concrete Operations (7 to 11 Years)

The child begins to understand and use concepts that help him deal with the immediate environment during this stage. The child can solve problems logically if they are focused on actual things and events. The most important cognitive skills acquired are conversation and the realization that two things that started off the same remain the same even if they are made to look different as long as nothing has been added or taken away from them.

(iv) Formal Operations (12 to 15 Years)

The individual can think in abstract terms and deal with hypothetical situation in this stage. He or she is able to consider many possibilities and solve complex problems in a systematic way.