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# **UNIT 1 CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, LIFE SPAN PERSPECTIVE, METHODS OF STUDYING DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPMENT**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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From the moment the human child is first conceived, to the day the individual dies, they keep changing constantly and developing. While some of the changes humans undergo are as a result of chance incidents and personal choices, the vast majority of life changes and stages the human passes through are due to certain common biological and psychological factors partly inherited and partly environmental and are shared by all people.

Development refers to the biological and psychological changes that occur in human beings between birth and the end of adolescent, as the individual progresses from

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strongly influenced by the genetic and environmental factors during prenatal life and these are the part of the study of child development. Developmental change may occur as a result of genetically-controlled processes known as maturation, or as a result of environmental factors and learning, but most commonly involves an interaction between the two. Developmental psychology refers to development throughout the lifespan, and pediatrics, the branch of medicine relating to the care of children.

In this unit we are also going to introduce the concept of life span development. It deals with important developmental stages that human beings go through birth, infancy, adolescence, adulthood, old age and death. As the humans grow up from one stage to another stage they learn to make use of their body parts, learn how to express themselves and communicate with persons, learn how to maintain relationship with others and how to love and care for others. In this unit we will be focusing on the concept of development, issues and stages. In development of humans, and then put forward the concept of life span development, and its characteristics and theories of child development.

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## **1.1 OBJECTIVES**

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After go through this unit, you will be able to:

- define the concept of human development;
  - describe about the growth and development;
  - explain life span perspectives;
  - explain the significant issues involved in the process of human development;
  - identify the stages and important domains of development;
  - analyse the characteristic features of life span development; and
  - explain the research methods and its obstacles in studying the life span.
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## **1.2 CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT**

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Development describes the growth of humans throughout the lifespan, from conception to death. It refers to development as patterns of change over time. It does not just involve the biological and physical aspects of growth, but also the cognitive and social aspects related to the development. The scientific study of human development seeks to understand and explain how and why people change throughout life. This field examines change across a broad range of topics including motor skills and other psycho physiological processes. Cognitive development refers to the areas of problem solving, moral understanding, conceptual understanding, language acquisition, social, personality, and emotional development, and self-concept and identity formation. Growth is defined as an increase in size. In other words development is defined as a progression towards maturity. Even though development is a continuous process with competencies developing, then disappearing, only to appear at a later age, it is not continuous in the sense that it increases constantly but rather in a series of waves with whole segments of development reoccurring repetitively. For example, new borns walk, if held, and then this ability disappears only to reappear at eight or ten months of age.

### **1.2.1 Goals of Development Changes**

The goal of development is to enable people to adapt to the environment in which

they live. Self actualisation is essential to achieve these changes. It plays an important

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role in mental health; people who make good personal and social adjustment must

have opportunities to express their interest and desires in ways that give them satisfaction but, at the same time, conform to accepted standards. Lack of these opportunities will result in frustrations and generally negative attitudes towards people and life in general.

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## **1.3 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

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Growth refers to the development of children from birth to adolescence. From newborns to teenagers, parents often have questions if their children are developing normally. WHO is also coordinating an international effort to develop child growth standards for infants and young children (age 0-5 years). There is a process of child development, which makes a growth curve. Growth curve is defined as a statistical curve derived from plotting weight and height against chronological age for comparing an individual child's growth pattern with the average age of growth. In short we can say that personality is influenced by many factors and these factors are involved in the development of the personality of a child.

The strongest factor in the process of development of personality is society and the child's experiences in the society and in the environment. Most of the children's learning comes from the society, their surroundings and their experiences. Although these experiences are supervised by the parents and teachers, more often they occur in spontaneous family or neighborhood settings. As such one finds that every child is different from the other. Another factor that influences personality is the cultural factors. Through everything from music, television, and incidental remarks overheard but hardly understood by the child to deliberate modeling and training, the child is encouraged to embody the typical or ideal personality of her culture.

Place is the third factor which is involved in the development of a child, in addition to the biological factor. As children grow up from one stage to another, they learn to make use of their body parts, learn how to express themselves and communicate with others. They also learn to form relationship with others, how to care for others, how to love and how to work.

Over the years, people who study children have created theories to explain how children develop. While these theorists realise that every child is special and grow in his or her unique way, they also have recognised that there are general patterns that children tend to follow as they grow up, and these patterns have been documented

by the theorists. Also there are four areas in which children's growth and development take place and these are discussed below.

- i) **Physical:** Physical growth is perhaps the most obvious. Children grow in height and weight over the years and their appearance changes to a great extent during puberty. Children also develop certain physical abilities during their progression towards adulthood, including crawling, walking, running and (possibly) writing. Their motor coordination becomes well refined and they can shoot across a target relatively more accurately.
- ii) **Psychological and cognitive:** Children also develop psychologically and cognitively as their brains absorb more information and they learn how to use that information. Literally, children have to learn how to think on purpose and to process or organise all the information that comes to them from the environment. They must learn how to solve problems, to talk, and to complete

mental tasks such as remembering telephone numbers or using computers.