# UNIT 9 : DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

## UNIT STRUCTURE


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## 9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- acquire the concept of pre-school child
- understand how cognitive development take place in the pre-school child
- comprehend the social development in the pre-school child.

## 9.2 INTRODUCTION

After getting acquainted with the developmental characteristics of pre-natal, neonatal, infancy or babyhood period, it is very essential for you to be well versed with the developmental characteristics of one of the most important period of life-i.e., early childhood period. In the earlier discussion, we have pointed out that some developmental psychologists classified childhood period into two sub-stages-early childhood and late childhood. This subdivision of childhood is widely recognized at today's context. You may find variation in the age range of these stages as different psychologists classified these stages on their own study and research. Yet, the average

period range of childhood is somewhat between the end of babyhood and the onset of puberty. Hence, early childhood extends from two to six years and the late childhood extends from six to the time child becomes sexually mature. The ***early childhood stage can be treated as Pre-school period.*** This unit will familiarize you with the concept of early childhood or pre-school period and its various developmental aspects.

## 9.3 THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

Childhood begins when the relative dependency of babyhood is over at approximately the age of two years. Children falling in the age range of early childhood period are termed as pre-school children. Early Childhood stage or pre-school stage is the foundation period of life of an individual. It is a period of rapid - physical, mental, emotional, and social and language development of a child. Apart from these major development in the area of understanding, moral values too take place in the children. It is characterized by slow growth and rapid development. Early childhood is a distinctive period in the life span of a human being. The pre-school age is named differently by different people. It is labelled as 'The Problem age '; 'The Troubles some, or 'The Toy' age, by the parents as for many parents and teachers, it become a bit difficult for them to handle children. Psychologists named it as 'The Pre-gang age, 'The Exploratory', or 'The Questioning' age, "Imaginative age" and "Creative age" because of its unique characteristics.

**Early Childhood as Pre-School**

It has been mentioned that the early childhood stage is labeled by different terms. Educators named it as pre-school age. Because they wanted to distinguish it from the time when children are considered old enough both physically and mentally. The intention was to help the children to cope with the work they will be expected to do when they begin their formal schooling. Even when children go to nursery school or kindergarten, they are labeled as preschoolers rather than school children. In the home, day care center, nursery school or kindergarten, the pressures and expectation for young children are subjected to vary from those who will experience

when they begin their formal education in the first grade. As such the early childhood stage is a time of preparation for formal schooling.

**Characteristics of Pre-school Child:**

The following features are exhibited in the pre-school children-

- Pre-school children acquires a good physical development. Body proportions change markedly and the "baby look" disappears in them.
- Pre-school children are looking to explore life in a variety of ways as they spend most of their times in the environment around them and want to know how it works, the causes for several natural ongoing processes and how they can be a part of it.
- Pre-school children are influenced by imitations of speech and actions of others. This stage is an imitative age where they develops creative talents.
- Pre-school children are very talkative. The reason for this is that after they develop the basic skills of communication, they speak with ease and this influences them to communicate with other children.
- Pre-school children develop various skills by repeated trials and different attempts of completing goals.
- Improvement in speech and comprehension is developed among the pre-school children.
- Moral development is on a slow level among the pre-school children because intellectual development has yet not reached the point a child can learn or apply the abstract principles of right and wrong in their daily lives.
- Pre- school Children ask a lot of questions since they have a high level of curiosity as such this period is considered as Questioning age.
- Pre-school children loves to play as such they spend most of their time in playing.
- Emotions are especially intense in the pre-school children.

## 9.4 PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

The physical growth and development refers to a process which brings bodily and physiological changes, internal as well as external in an organism. Pre-school Stage is characterized by marked physical development. But, growth during pre-school stage proceeds at a slow rate as compared with the rapid rate of growth in babyhood. It is very important to know how children develop physically because physical development influences children's behavior directly and indirectly. It also determines what they can do and indirectly influences their attitude towards self and others. Moreover, personal and social adjustment of the children depends on the physical development. The physical development in pre-school children are discussed under the following headings-

**A. Height:** The average annual increase in height is three inches. By the age of six, the average child measures about 46.6 inches.

**B. Weight:** The average annual increase in weight is 3 to 5 pounds. At age six, children normally weigh approximately seven times as much as they did at birth. The average pre-school girl weighs 48.5 pounds and the average boy weighs 49 pounds.

**C. Body Proportion:** There is marked change in body proportion in the pre-school children. During this stage, the "baby look" disappears that used to be in them during the babyhood period. Facial features remain small but the chin becomes more pronounced and the neck elongates. There is gradual decrease in the stockiness of the trunk and the body tends to become cone-shaped. Some of the other characteristics in terms of body proportion in the pre-school children are- flattened abdomen, broader and flatter chest and boarder and square sized shoulder.

**D. Body Build:** During this stage, differences in body build become apparent for the first time. Some children have a fat body (endomorphic), some have muscular body (mesomorphic) and some have thin body (ectomorphic).

**E. Bones and Muscles:** Ossification which means hardening of the bones is an important features of physical development in pre-school children. The bones ossify at different rates in different parts of the body. The muscles become larger, stronger and heavier. As a result, children look thinner as early childhood progresses even though they weigh more.

**F. Fat:** Regarding fats in children, it has been observed from the research study that children with fat body have more fatty tissue (adipose tissue) than muscular tissue. Again children with muscular body have more muscular tissue than fatty tissue. The children with thin body have both small muscles and little fatty tissue.

**G. Teeth:** During the first four to six month of early childhood stage or pre-school stage the last four baby teeth erupt. Again, during the last half year of early childhood stage, the baby teeth begin to be replaced by permanent teeth. With the end of early childhood stage, the child generally has one or two permanent teeth in front and some gaps where permanent teeth will eventually erupt.

**H. Nervous System:** The growth of the nervous system is very rapid before birth and during the first half of pre-school period. Before birth the development consist primarily of increased in the number and size of the nerve cells, because no new cells are formed after birth. As such, development in the first four years i.e. in the first half of early childhood stage consist of the development of immature cells present at birth. After the age of 3 or 4, growth of the nervous system proceeds at a relatively slow rate.

In spite of the predictable physical development in average pre-school children discussed above, there are individual differences in all aspects pf physical development in children. Children of superior intelligence tend to be taller in early childhood than those of average or below average intelligence and shed their temporary teeth sooner. Moreover, sex difference also impacts on physical development in children. Ossification of the bones and shedding of temporary teeth are more advanced age for age in girls than in boys. The nutrition, treatment and care provided by the family too

matter a lot in the physical development of the child. Children from higher socio-economic groups tend to be better nourished and receive better pre-natal and post-natal care. These children tends to vary in height, weight and other physical development than the average.



**LET US KNOW**

- Ossification of the bones and shedding of temporary teeth are more advanced age for age in girls than in boys
- Early childhood stage or pre-school stage is regarded as the teachable moment for acquiring different skills.
- **Hand Skills**: Self-feeding, dressing, brushing, throwing, catching, drawing, coloring.
- **Leg Skills**: hopping, skipping, galloping, jumping, climbing, tri-cycling, swimming, balancing, dancing.

## 9.5 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

Cognitive development or mental development is a continuous process which continues without interruption in every stage of growth. The process of mental growth and development of an individual's cognitive, mental or intellectual abilities like sensation, perception, conception, generalization, interpretation. These abilities are inter related and never developed in isolation. Childhood is a rapid mental growth and development. The child's mental functions and mental capacities which relate to his perception, memory, reasoning, concept formation, problem solving and creative thinking are important for tackling the many different problems of life and intimately related to his performance as a learner. Mental development comes from the maturation of the intellectual capacities of the child and from knowledge acquired by learning over a period of time. The second stage of cognitive development as analyzed by **Jean Piaget** is termed as pre-operational stage which extends from 2 to 6 years of life. Language development takes place during this period of early childhood

stage which help the child to make use of symbols to represent objects.

***The following are the developmental characteristics in terms of cognition in pre-school child*** –

- **Perception:** During the pre-school stage, the mental abilities of the child develop very rapidly. His perceptual powers increases and his curiosity are aroused to a great extent.
- **Curiosity:** With increased intellectual abilities and increased ability to speak and communication the pre-school children acquire the ability to ask questions in words.
- **Discrimination between people and object:** With increased intellectual abilities, especially the abilities to reason and to see relationships, pre-school children's understanding of people, objects and situations increases rapidly. They can discriminate between people and object easily.
- **Understanding Relationship:** During this period, children come to know about the simple relationships, like - parents, sibling, relatives etc. This increase in understanding comes from new meanings being associated with meanings learned during baby-hood.
- **Self-understanding:** By the time they are three years old, most young children know their sex, their full names, and names of different parts of their bodies.
- **Meaningful concept:** Pre-school children begin to notice details that formerly escaped their attention. As a result, their concept become more specific and meaningful to them.
- **Concept Development:** Pre-school children develop many of the same concepts which they earn through their common learning experiences. There are differences in the concept children develop in their preschool years, but many of these differences overcomes when they go to school and subjected to similar learning experiences. Some of the common concept that pre-school children develop are-
  - **a) Life:** Pre-school children tend to ascribe living qualities to inanimate objects-like doll and stuffed animals.
  - **b) Death:** Pre-school children tend to associate death with anything

that goes away but they are unable to comprehend the finality of death.

c) **Body Function:** Pre-school children develop the concepts of bodily functions. With the entrance in school, these concepts are elaborated.

d) **Space:** Pre-school children can judge short distance and judge left and right accurately.

e) **Weight:** Pre-school children estimate weight almost exclusively in terms of size.

f) **Numbers:** Pre-school children usually understand numbers up to an average number. The preschool experiences help the child in this context.

g) **Time:** Most of the pre-school children know the day of the week and by they reach the end part of early childhood stage, they are able to categorize the month, season and year.

h) **Self:** By the time children are three years old, they know their sex, their full names and names of the different parts of their bodies. Play helps in the development of self-concept.

i) **Beauty:** Most pre-school children prefer music with a definite tune or rhythm and they like simple design and bright colors.

Thus the capacity to learn, remember and symbolize information and to solve problems exists at a simple level in young children, who can perform cognitive tasks such as discriminating animate and inanimate beings or recognizing small numbers of objects. Developmental advances in cognition are also related to experiences and learning.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 1:** What are the other terms used to refer early childhood period?

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**Q 2:** Why educators named early childhood as pre-school age?

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**Q 3:** What is the annual average increase of height in pre-school children?

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**Q 4:** What is the age range of pre-operational stage as suggested by Jean Piaget?

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## 9.6 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

One of the most important development that take place in pre-school children is social development. Social development means acquisition of the ability to behave in accordance with social expectation. During the childhood period, there is a strong drive to be with others and to be accepted by them. When this need is not meet, the child become unhappy. That's why parents, teacher and the member concerned should be very careful in fulfilling the social needs of children. As social aspect of personality plays a very important role in children's life.

It has already been mentioned that pre-school period is also termed as ***pre-gang age*** it is because children acquire the preliminary training and experience needed to become a member of a "Gang" in late childhood. The foundations for socialization are laid by the family, neighborhood and by his pre-school. The child develops his social qualities in his family. A good family provides a good social atmosphere for the child to develop healthy social habits. Sometimes he goes to the neighborhood. He finds that the atmosphere there is different from that at home and he tries to adjust with that atmosphere. He develops friendship with other children of his age in the neighborhood. He plays with his friends and sometimes he also quarrels. Through this interaction, he acquires many social qualities.

They come to know of teasing, imitating, quarrelling, sympathy, sharing, cooperation etc.

***The following characteristics mark the social development in pre-school child*** –

- **Formation of social behavior**: The most important forms of social behavior necessary for successful social adjustment starts appearing and begin to develop at pre-school stage. Though these forms are not fully developed however it is crucial in terms of establishing basic social attitudes and pattern of social behavior.
- **Establishment of social Contact**: During the pre-school period or early childhood period, children learn how to make social contacts and how to get along with the people outside the home, especially children of their own age. They learn to adapt themselves to others and how to co-operate in play activities.
- **Social awareness:** This period is marked by greater degree of social awareness. The pre-school children learn to share, co-operate and to do things with others. There is a great expansion of child's social world.
- **Peer interest:** During this period, the children tries to seek independence from his parents and other members of the family. Interest in playmates of his own age get increased. In the selection of companion, children prefer other children of their own age and levels of development who can do what they are able to do.
- **Gang influence:** Early childhood is termed as pre-gang age, because children acquire the preliminary training and experience needed to become a member of a "Gang" in late childhood. During this time, the numbers of contacts children have with other children increases and this determines how their social development will progress.
- **Development of regards for others:** The children by nature is largely self-centered. He wants everything for himself and he is jealous of his possessions. During the pre-school period, the child rises above this ego-centeredness and develops regard for others. Instead of keeping his own interest above everything else, he normally starts taking into consideration the interests of others.

**Some of the common social behavior pattern in pre-school children:**

It has already been mentioned that the most important form of social behavior begins to develop during the pre-school period. It is important to note that we cannot expect that children will always develop social pattern. Many of the social pattern appear to be unsocial or even antisocial. Here, we are going to mention about the social behavior pattern in pre-school children-

**A. Imitation:** Children imitate the attitude and behavior of a person whom they especially admire and want to be like.

**B. Rivalry:** The desire to excel others is apparent as early as the fourth year. It begins at home and later develops with children outside the home.

**C. Cooperation:** By the end of third year, cooperative play and group activities begin to develop and increase in both frequency and duration as the child's opportunities for play with other children increase.

**D. Sympathy:** Sympathy appears occasionally before the third year as it requires an understanding of the feelings and emotions of others. The more play contacts the child has, the sooner sympathy will develop.

**E. Empathy:** Like sympathy, empathy requires an understanding of the feelings and emotions of others but in addition, it requires the ability to imagine oneself in the place of the other person. A few children are able to do this until the early childhood ends.

**F. Social approval:** As early childhood draws to a close, peer approval becomes more important than adult approval. Young children find that naughty and disturbing behavior is a way of winning peer approval.

**G. Sharing:** Pre-school children discover from experience with others that one way to win social approval is to share what they have specially the toys with others. This sharing pattern in them replaces their selfishness.

**H. Attachment Behavior:** During this stage, the children try to attach their affection to people outside the home such as nursery school teachers or some inanimate objects.

Knowing what the pattern of social development is makes it possible

to predict what the child's behavior in a social situation is likely to be at a given age. Generally the social behavior and attitude of a child reflect the treatment he/she receives in the home or pre-school. Hence, it is very much essential for the parents and the teachers to create conducive social environment at home and school so that sound social behavior can be expected from these children.



**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 5:** What is Concept Development in Pre-school children?

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**Q 6:** Why is pre-school period considered as pre-gang age?

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**Q 7:** Mention two common social behavior pattern in pre-school children.

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## 9.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, it can be summarized as-

- Children falling in the age range of early childhood period are termed as pre-school children. Early Childhood stage or pre-school stage is the foundation period of life of an individual.
- The pre-school age is named differently by different people. It is labelled as 'The Problem age '; 'The Troubles some, or 'The Toy' age, by the parents. Psychologists named it as 'The Pre-gang age, 'The Exploratory', or 'The Questioning' age, "Imaginative age" and "Creative age" because of its unique characteristics.

- Educators named it as pre-school age. Because they wanted to distinguish it from the time when children are considered old enough both physically and mentally.
- Pre-school Stage is characterized by marked physical development. But, growth during pre-school stage proceeds at a slow rate as compared with the rapid rate of growth in babyhood.
- Social development during the childhood period means acquisition of the ability to behave in accordance with social expectation, there is a strong drive to be with others and to be accepted by them.
- Some of the common social behavior pattern in pre-school children are- Imitation, Rivalry, Cooperation etc.



## 9.8 FURTHER READING

1) Ahlawat Neetu(2010): Developmental Psychology, RBSA Publisher, Jaipur.
2) Chetry Krishna Kumari (2016): Developmental Psychology, Ashok Book Stall, Panbazar, Ghy.
3) Goswamee Gayatree (2008): Child Development and Child Care, Arun Prakashan, Guwahati, Assam.
3) Hurlock Elizabeth B (1980): Developmental Psychology: A life-span Approach, Mc Graw Hill Companies, Inc., New York.



## 9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** The other terms used to refer early childhood period are- *The Problem age '; 'The Troubles some, or 'The Toy' age, 'The Pre-gang age, 'The Exploratory', or 'The Questioning' age, "Imaginative*

*age" and "Creative age".*

**Ans to Q No 2:** Educators named it as pre-school age. Because they wanted to distinguish it from the time when children are considered old enough both physically and mentally. The intention was to help the children to cope with the work they will be expected to do when they begin their formal schooling

**Ans to Q No 3:** The average annual increase in height is three inches. By the age of six, the average child measures about 46.6 inches.

**Ans to Q No 4:** The age range of pre-operational stage as suggested by Jean Piaget extends from 2 to 6 years of life.

**Ans to Q No 5:** Concept Development in pre-school children means they develop many of the same concepts which they earn through their common learning experiences such as –life, death, space, number, time.

**Ans to Q No 6:** Pre-school period is considered as pre-gang age because children acquire the preliminary training and experience needed to become a member of a "Gang" in late childhood.

**Ans to Q No 7:** Two common social behavior pattern in pre-school children are-

**A. Sympathy:** Sympathy appears occasionally before the third year as it requires an understanding of the feelings and emotions of others. The more play contacts the child has, the sooner sympathy will develop.

**B. Empathy:** Like sympathy, empathy requires an understanding of the feelings and emotions of others but in addition, it requires the ability to imagine oneself in the place of the other person. A few children are able to do this until the early childhood ends.



## 9.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**A. Short Questions** (Answer each questions in about 150 words)

**Q 1:** Who is a pre-school Child?

**Q 2:** Why do educationists consider early childhood as pre-school age?

**Q 3:** State some of the common concept formed in pre-school children.

**Q 4:** Discuss briefly some of the common social behavior pattern in pre-school children.

**B. Long Questions** (Answer each questions in about 300-500 words)

**Q 1:** Discuss the characteristics of Pre-school period.

**Q 2:** Discuss the physical development in pre-school children.

**Q 3:** Discuss the Cognitive development in pre-school children.

**Q 4:** Why pre-school period is considered significant from social developmental perspective?

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