Unit 1: Child Development

Level: **3**

Unit type: **Core**

Guided learning hours: **120**

Assessment type: **External**

Unit introduction

While children are all different and special, groups of children of the same age usually share quite a few characteristics. Babies are known to cry and crawl, while 2 year olds have a reputation for tantrums. Most 3 year olds seem to love dressing-up, while 5 year olds are keen to tell on anyone breaking the ‘rules’. Child development helps to explain why children share certain characteristics but equally why two children of the same age can be so different.

In this unit, you will learn about the ways in which growth and development are interlinked. This interlinking is why we often talk about children’s ages, as well as their stages of development. You will learn about children’s development in five broad areas: physical, cognitive, language, emotional and social, and will see how these areas of development are interlinked.

You will learn that there are many theories of why, and how, children develop and a range of factors that seem to influence the development of individual children. The knowledge you gain from this unit will help you with the rest of this qualification. It will also be the key to your professional work with children: recognising a child’s stage of development will allow you to plan for this and support them effectively.

Learning aims

In this unit you will:

A. understand how the principles of growth and development apply to children’s developmental progress from birth up to 8 years

A. understand theories and models of development and how they relate to aspects of children’s development

B. be able to apply theories and models of child development to support children’s development

C. understand how a range of factors influences children’s development

D. understand the importance of recognising atypical development.

Learning aims and unit content

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| Learning aim A: Understand how the principles of growth and development apply to children’s developmental progress from birth up to 8 years |
| The learner will be expected to understand the principles of growth and development; to use relevant information from provided sources to recognise the developmental stage that children should have reached at that age; to anticipate the next stage(s) of development; to recognise delays, difficulties or advanced progress in relation to growth and developmental norms; to analyse how development in one area may affect their development in other areas; to explain a child’s development in the context of their cultural environment; to recall, apply and synthesise knowledge of child development and apply it to unfamiliar scenarios.   Principles of growth: the rate of growth is variable; different parts of the body grow at different rates; children’s growth is monitored by measuring height, weight and the head circumference of babies.   Definition of development as the skills and knowledge that children gain.   Principles of development:   physical development occurs in an orderly sequence   physical development begins with the control of head movement and continues down the body   physical development begins with uncontrolled large movements before becoming precise and refined   areas of development are interrelated   the development rate varies between children   development is affected by a range of different factors.   That the development of children’s brains (neural growth, development of pathways, myelination) underpins many aspects of children’s overall development.   The effects of cortisol on the developing brain.   That principles of development help practitioners to:   recognise a child’s overall stage of development   support a child’s development   anticipate the next stage(s) of development   recognise delays in development   recognise difficulties in development   understand different factors that may affect development.   Five areas of development:   physical development is to do with movement – gross, or large, movement of limbs and fine manipulative movement of fingers; includes balance and coordination   cognitive development is the construction of thought processes, remembering and problem solving   language development is the development of speech and communication, reading and writing  continued |

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|  emotional development is the development of feelings about oneself and towards others; includes the development of self-esteem and self-concept   social development is the growth of relationships with others.   The relationship between growth and development and how they work together in supporting children’s overall development.   Norms: how children’s development is measured against milestones that have been determined by looking at the development of large groups of children and determining what is typical or the ‘norm’.   The normative age/stages and sequence in physical, cognitive, communication and language, social and emotional development from:   birth up to 2 years   2 up to 4 years   4 up to 8 years.  ● Normative age/stages as follows:   gross motor development – the usual sequence of development and progress from reflexes to coordinated movement   fine motor development – the usual sequence of development from reflexes to coordinated movement   cognitive development – how concepts, memory and understanding develop   communication, language and literacy development – the development of receptive and expressive language from the pre-linguistic phase to fluency   social development – the development of relationships and awareness of social rules   emotional development – how attachments are formed and the development of self-esteem and the ability to manage feelings and impulses.  **Cultural environment:** how children’s development needs to be considered in context as physical and genetic factors interrelate with the child’s cultural environment. |

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| Learning aim B: Understand theories and models of development and how they relate to aspects of children’s development |
| The learner will be expected to show an understanding of aspects of theory; to analyse how theories and models of development relate to observations of children’s development; to identify the strengths and weaknesses of theories; to apply different theoretical approaches to unfamiliar scenarios; to compare theoretical approaches to specific areas of child development; to identify which theories or models of development link to what has been observed and explain why associations have been made; to be able to use the theories or models of development to make a judgement about what is being observed.  In applying these theories to unfamiliar scenarios, aspects of these theories and models of development will apply to a broader age range than birth up  to 8 years, if the child’s performance exceeds that of a 7 year old.  Theories that consider how children learn behaviours:   Bandura’s social learning theory – the concept of modelling and how this theory might be used to explain how children learn behaviours and actions, self-efficacy  and empowerment.   Pavlov’s theory of classical conditioning – how it might be used to explain the way that children may learn through association.   Skinner’s theory of operant conditioning – different types of reinforcements, schedules of reinforcement and how this theory might be used to explain why and how children learn behaviours and repeat actions.  Theories that consider the development of cognition and language:   Piaget’s model of how children’s logic and reasoning develops – stages of cognitive development, the development of schemas, his tests of conservation, egocentrism and how his model may explain children’s thoughts and actions.   Vygotsky’s approach to the development of children’s reasoning – the concept of a zone of proximal development and the importance of interactions in supporting children.   Athey’s identification of schemas, which she proposed children explore at different levels to support their cognitive development.   Bruner’s theoretical framework – that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on their current/past knowledge. The learner selects and transforms information, constructs hypotheses and makes decisions, relying on a cognitive structure to do so.   The information processing theory of cognitive development – the role of memory and attention, and how this may be used to explain why young children may not focus on, and remember, the same things as older children or adults.   Chomsky’s model in relation to how children acquire language – Language Acquisition Device (LAD), the concept of a critical period in which children may learn language, which may explain how children seem to instinctively gain language.  continued |

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| Theories that consider personality and the development of self-esteem:   Erikson’s psychosocial stages of personality – the role of adults in the first three stages and how this can be used to explain how children’s personality might be influenced by their parents and adults who are significant in their lives.   Harter’s theory of self-esteem – the ideal self, self-concept and Cooley’s theory of the ‘looking-glass self’, which can be used to explain levels of confidence in children.  Theories that consider children’s moral development:   Kohlberg’s stage model of moral development and Piaget’s stages of moral development, which can be used to explain children’s behaviour.  Theories that consider children’s development in relation to their environment:   Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development, which is often represented as a series of concentric circles that show how children's development does not happen in isolation, but is closely interrelated to their family, nursery or school, local community as well as the wider society.  Theories that consider attachment:   Bowlby’s theory of maternal attachment; secure, resistant and avoidant attachment; the stages of separation anxiety and Mary Ainsworth’s research into the security of attachment (secure, resistant and avoidant). How these theories might explain children’s reactions to being separated from their primary carers. |

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| Learning aim C: Be able to apply theories and models of child development to support children’s development |
| The learner will be expected to use a range of theories in relation to different aspects of development and understand that theories of learning and development are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Learners will be aware that in practice a combination of theoretical approaches will need to be used.  Theories that consider how children learn behaviours:   How to use the social learning theory – encouraging children to try activities or learn skills; adult role modelling positive behaviours that they wish the children to develop.   How to use the theory behind Skinner’s theory of operant conditioning – promoting positive behaviour by giving praise, positive acknowledgement and rewards; promoting children’s learning by planning activities that are pleasurable for children.  Theories that consider the development of cognition and language:   How to use the theory behind Piaget’s stages of cognitive development to provide a wide range of practical activities so that children can develop schemas by being active learners.   How to use Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development model to observe what a child can do and then work alongside the child to further the child’s development through the use of interaction and sensitive questions.   How to use Athey’s schema theory to observe children’s use of schemas while playing and then provide further resources and activities that will allow the child to explore further.   How to use Bruner’s theory by ensuring that the curriculum is based on learning through play and activities; that adults spend time engaging and interacting with children in order that children can make connections between what they are doing and their past experiences.   How to use the principles behind the information processing theory by using visual aids, props and timetables to assist processing; giving children enough time to respond when asking questions; the need to remind children to do things as they may not be able to remember instructions; using practical activities and play as a way of teaching; recognising that children of different ages will respond at different rates and so ensuring that younger children have more time to process instructions or new experiences.   How to use the theory behind the Chomsky’s language acquisition device to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for interaction with children in order that they can assimilate language.  Theories that consider children’s personality and the development of  self-esteem:   How to use Erikson’s psychosocial theory of personality development by:   encouraging children to try out new things for themselves   reacting appropriately when children make mistakes   giving positive and unconditional support to the child   helping parents to understand the importance of their doing similarly at home.  continued |

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|  How to use the theory behind Harter’s model of self-esteem and the ‘looking glass effect’ by:   providing positive and unconditional responses   smiling and using positive body language   showing an interest in what they are doing   making positive comments.  Theories that consider children’s moral development:   How to use the theory behind Kohlberg’s and Piaget’s stages of moral development – adults should react proportionately when children show unwanted behaviour and provide explanations of why it is good to behave in certain ways.  Theories that consider children’s development in relation to their environment:   How to use the principles behind Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of human development: the importance of working in partnership with parents; supporting the children’s learning in the home; talking to children and planning activities based on what they do with their family and in the community; going on visits in the local community and inviting people to come in to the setting.  Theories that consider attachment:   How to use the principles behind Bowlby’s attachment theory and Ainsworth’s research in order to ensure that a child has an attachment to a key person before separation takes place; to develop flexible settling in procedures; to observe that a child’s attachment to their key person is secure; to recognise and act to reunite the child with their parent if there are signs of separation anxiety; to make sure that when a child is moving from the care of one adult to another that sufficient time is allowed for the child to become settled. |

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| Learning aim D: Understand how a range of factors influences children’s development |
| The learner will be expected to analyse a range of factors that support or hinder a child’s development; to make a judgement about the extent to which the factors may affect the child’s development in the short- or long-term; to analyse the likely strength of each factor’s effect compared with other factors.   How a combined range of factors contributes to each child’s uniqueness as no child, even if genetically identical, experiences life in the same way.   How delayed development in one or more areas can impact on a child’s overall development.   Pre-natal factors: maternal health, diet and lifestyle choices, and how they may affect the growth and later development of children.   That babies born before 37 weeks, who are often described as preterm or premature, may take time to reach developmental norms.   That biological factors such as disability, long-term medical conditions and short-term illnesses may negatively impact on a child’s development because they restrict a child’s opportunities to play and learn.   The potential effects of poverty on children’s lives:   increased likelihood of poor health outcomes (infant mortality, morbidity and life expectancy as a result of housing and diet)   lower educational attainment as a result of fewer opportunities for stimulation   the influence of others beyond the immediate family – the wider family, friends, carers, teachers and the wider society as potential reinforcements or counterbalances to effects of poverty.   How the family experience of education can affect a child’s development.   Social/political factors: social class; local policies; national services; local services; national strategies; local strategies.   Cultural factors that may support or restrict opportunities for development: how education is valued by parents and the local community; attitudes towards gender within the family.   How education affects children’s physical, emotional, intellectual and social development: the ability of children to learn to mix and socialise with other children; the presence of opportunities to promote cognitive development through introducing concepts like number and shape.   Emotional factors that might support or hinder a child’s feeling of security: attachments between the child and parent; divorce or separation of parents; parental depression.   The different stresses on children: bullying; transitions; separations and abuse; which can affect their overall development and behaviours in the long- and short-term. |

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| Learning aim E: Understand the importance of recognising atypical development |
| The learner will be expected to analyse the ways in which atypical development in one or more areas of development may affect another area of development; the extent to which atypical development in one or more areas may have an effect bearing in mind the child’s overall development in relation to norms and any other factors that may be affecting their development; the advantages of early recognition of atypical development in context.   The definition of atypical development as a way of describing a significant difference in one or more areas of a child’s development compared to the expected normative development.   The definition of the term ‘delayed global development’ to describe delay in all areas of development and the term ‘gifted’, which is often used in the context of a child having advanced acquisition of skills relating to cognition and language.   How delayed social development impacts on other areas of development: the impact on physical development through not joining in with physical play with others; reduced interaction with peers and adults, which may limit language development; the impact on behaviour as a result of reduced play and interaction or impact of being bullied.   The extent to which delayed cognitive development impacts on other areas of development: the impact on development of speech and learning to read and write; on social development if a child is unable to play cooperatively with peers; on feelings of self-esteem if compared with peers; and on behaviour if excluded from play or being bullied.   How delayed language development impacts on other areas of development: on behaviour if a child is unable to express feelings; on cognitive development if a child is unable to express thoughts; and on social development if communication limits interaction with peers.   Ways in which delayed emotional development impacts on other areas of development: on social development if behaviour limits opportunities to play with peers and build relationships with others.   The extent to which delayed physical development impacts on other areas of development: on cognitive development if there is reduced opportunity to explore the environment; on social development if there is reduced opportunity to join in play with peers; on self-concept and behaviour if excluded from play or being bullied.   How other areas of development of children who have advanced acquisition of skills relating to cognition and language may be affected: on social development if play is at a different level from peers; on behaviour if child is frustrated due to under stimulation.   The impact on children’s outcomes: on relationships, self-confidence, literacy and ability to access learning opportunities if atypical development is not recognised promptly.   Reasons for early recognition of atypical development: benefits of early referral; early recognition of a medical condition; additional support and resources for the child; reduction of unwanted behaviours caused by frustration; increased likelihood of a positive outcome.  continued |

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|  The importance of listening to and involving parents: the rights of parents to be involved in referral; parents’ own observations about their child and family history.   The importance of building a picture of a child’s development through collaboration with health professionals and other specialists to ensure that atypical development is correctly assessed and the right support and services are provided. |

Teacher guidance

Early Years Educator Qualifications Criteria

When delivering this unit, teachers/tutors must be aware of the terminology used within the *Early Years Educator Qualifications* *Criteria* published by the National College for Teaching & Leadership, in particular for Section 1: *Support and promote children’s early education and development* (criteria 1.1–1.10) and 2: *Plan to provide effective care, teaching and learning that enables children to progress and prepares them for school*. Teachers/tutors must ensure that learners are familiar with the range of terminology used within the criteria.

In learning aim A, it is expected that an understanding of the principles of children’s growth and development will also include an understanding of the development of children’s learning.

Learners must understand that children’s development in one area may affect their development in other areas and that areas of development are interrelated. This may also be referred to as ‘holistic development’.

The development of children’s brains and neural growth may also be referred to as ‘neurological development’.

Under language development, the development of reading and writing can also be referred to as the development of literacy skills.

Assessment guidance

The words in bold, at the beginning of each learning aim in the unit content, indicate the ways that the unit content will be assessed. For example, under learning aim E, *‘****the learner will be expected to analyse the ways in which atypical development in one or more areas of development may affect another area of development’***,and questions will be set in the external assessment for the qualification to address this.

Knowledge of learning aim A – ***‘how the principles of growth and development apply to children’s developmental progress’*** – informs and underpins the other learning aims in the unit.

This unit is externally assessed under examination conditions.

The external assessment will be in the format of a paper-based test, consisting of short and extended writing questions.

The paper has two sections with a total of 80 marks. The first section is based on a scenario. This requires learners to spend 15 minutes reading a scenario, before answering questions. Learners will need to apply their knowledge of child development to answer these questions. The second section will be made up of short- and extended- answer questions.

The external paper will test learners’ understanding of, and ability to synthesise and apply, the knowledge base of the unit outlined in the *Unit content* section of the unit. Learners will be required to carry out analyses of issues presented in the scenarios. In addition, they will be expected to evaluate evidence, make judgements and draw conclusions from material presented in the scenarios, justifying their responses.

The quality of learners’ written communication is not assessed in the external assessment. However, it is strongly recommended that learners, especially when engaged in extended writing during delivery of the unit, have opportunities to continue to develop their literacy skills.

Resources

There are no special resources needed for this unit.