**3. Human Development**

The concern to study children is not a new one as it goes back to ancient Greece where very prominent thinkers wrote about it. The aim behind their studies was the same as nowadays researchers; they indeed wanted to guide people become better care givers to ameliorate children’s well-being and to understand human nature. They managed to raise issues which continue to be of interest up to now.

**3.1 Early Philosophers’ Views to Child Development**

Among the most ancient prominent recorded studies and ideas about children’s development were those belonging to Plato and Aristotle. These two Greek philosophers devoted most of their intellectual efforts to studying how nature and nurture impacted children’s development. Plato and Aristotle believed that the future welfare of societies is between the hands of well-educated children. It, thus, was very essential for both of them to give utmost importance to children’s upbringing as these latter’s basic nature would otherwise drive them to rebellion. Yet, Plato considered the upbringing of boys as a real challenge for parents and teachers:

**“Now of all wild things, a boy is the most difficult to handle. Just because he**

**more than any other has a fount of intelligence in him which has not yet**

**“run clear,” he is the craftiest, most mischievous, and unruliest of brutes.”**

**(Laws, bk. 7, p. 808,Cited in Saito)**

Aristotle went along with Plato’s idea that discipline was necessary, but he was more interested in joining child-rearing to the needs of the individual child.

What differs the two philosophers is that Plato believes in the innateness of knowledge in children, i.e. they are born with it. However, Aristotle thought that all knowledge is generated by experience and he compared the mind of an infant to a blackboard on which nothing is written.

Yet, centuries later, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)put more stress on parents and society as a whole and how their role to best foster children’s development.

Not the least, The English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704), like Aristotle, considered the child as a tabula rasa, or blank slate, whose development is totally impacted by the type of nurture the parents and the society imprint on him. He theorised that the premium objective in a child’s raising-up is the character growth. To fulfil this objective parents have to mediate good models of honesty, stability, and gentelness.They also have to avoid spoiling the child mainly at early age.However, while reason and discipline are installed, authority should be alleviated as far as their age, discretion, and good behaviour could allow it . . . The sooner you treat him as a man, the sooner he will begin to be one.(Cited in Borstelmann, 1983, p. 20)

Conversely to Locke’s beliefs about early discipline, Rousseau claimed that parents and society should grant children more freedom at early ages. He hypothesised that children learn from their unpremeditated interactions with their environment, rather than through parents’ or teachers’ instructions. He even went further in his claims by suggesting that children should not have formal education until by the age of 12, when they reach “the age of reason” where they can evaluate by themselves the value of what they read and are told.

Although elaborated very long ago, these philosophical trends of thoughts continue to fuel the debates of many contemporary scholars, like whether children should receive explicit instruction or an implicit one where they discover knowledge by themselves.

Other concerns which have triggered scholars thoughts are why should we care about children’ s development in general and that of learners in particular and what the difference between development and learning is.

**3.2 Human Development Defined**

Human development is a concept generally used to refer to the changes that occur from conception to death. The term, however, should not be paired up with all the changes but only with those that come up in a certain order and last for a long time. As a good example to this definition let’s consider a little boy named Karl who has been given piano lessons with a steady pace from his childhood. Altogether he attended piano lessons for 13 years since he was 4 until 18 years old with only very rare interruptions as when he was ill or when he went on holiday trips with his parents.

Throughout his piano practice lessons Karl could notice small changes in his skills. He played a simple piece slightly better than what he did the previous week. Connections between his skills at a given moment and the moment before or just after were very obvious. If anyone would ask Karl what accounted most for these changes, he would certainly answer and without hesitation that these changes took place because he was ‘learning’ specific piano pieces. Yet, for the long term, Karl noticed more significant changes. He learnt to play much more complex pieces of music than the ones he could perform years ago. Karl’s musical talent became more and more attractive over the long term, in other words his talent now is far more refined than when he was a beginner piano learner.

If someone asks Karl about these long term changes, he would have found it more difficult to answer that question than if he is asked about those short-term changes. He might have answered that he had been getting better at piano. If he is asked the same question now, however, he would say that his music skills had developed, and that their development took a long a time to be reached, and that the changes were not only the result of practice, but from becoming more broadly skilled about music as a whole.

Thus, when we talk about development, we usually refer to those personal changes that take place along the long term and that have different sources and consequences. It is equivalent to Karl’s skills in playing the piano at the age of sixteen compared to those at the age of six, instead of the difference between his music one week and that of the following one.We should note that there are some human developments that are too broad to develop in a short period of time but take a long time to be shaped fully. For example, reading other people’s moods may take a whole life time to be fully developed. Other developments may quickly take place, like a kid’s increasing skills to stand right on the saddle of a bicycle. Thus, as far as the change is simple and fast, we tend to refer to it by ‘learning’ rather than development. Thus, the difference between the two concepts, i.e. learning and development is a matter of degree. Learning the names of the planet in the solar system, for instance, does not usually require a long time nor great effort on the side of the child. Therefore, in this case it is more reasonable to think of learning rather than of development (Salkind, 2004).

**3.3 Emergence of the Discipline**

Child development came into interplay as a formal field of inquiry at the end of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th century. Universities at different parts of the USA and Europe started establishing child development Departments and scientific Journals devoted to the study of child development were launched. Alfred Binet (1857/1911), the French psychologist, and his colleagues launched the first systematic test of children’s intelligence and were the first to come out with studied results about children’s differences.

The American researchers G. Stanley Hall (2002) and in another study Arnold Gesell (2021) used surveys to collect data from a number of parents, teachers, and children so as to shed light on certain children’s aspects of development from the feeding schedules of babies, and the toilet training of toddlers, to the pre-schoolers’ play activities , the social relationships of elementary school learners, and the physical and psychological changes that adolescents experience throughout this critical period.

**3.4 Types and Characteristics of Development**

Throughout this chapter we are going to consider the different types of development. Among them is physical development which covers the changes of the body and motor skills. Cognitive development which explains how our minds and mental processes evolve through time. And finally social and moral development where the social growth since infancy until advanced age altogether with the development of moral values within a social context will be dealt with. Yet before tackling each kind of development aside, it is worth mentioning that most scholars in the domain recognise some characteristics of development to be common among children and which are as follow:

1. Development is orderly, that is to say phases of development come in order .
2. Development is a long term process which never happens abruptly over night for children.
3. Development may happen at different rates for individual.
4. Some changes occur naturally as they are controlled by our human genetic programming system and are named maturation changes. These changes take place over time and are not affected by the environment. This category mainly embodies physical development. Conversely, to this type of development, social and moral development do not take place until the individual gets in touch with his surrounding environment and others such as parents, siblings, and classmates at school.(Aisha Sato, academia.edu )