Introduction

Any individual’s growth and development is affected by a myriad of factors from prior to conception until late-life stages. As professionals who will likely have a significant impact on individuals, we must understand factors that influence humans’ biological, cognitive, psychological, social, and moral development. We must understand how individuals respond to the environmental, psychological, and social contexts in which they must live: some thriving while others languish or have a negative influence on themselves, and thus society. We need to understand the development of individuals as holistic beings who will take on various roles throughout the life cycle and our own role in working with them in order to be effective.

The human organism cannot and has not changed with the same rapidity as the accelerating pace of technology and information, for instance. Humans must adapt and hopefully thrive with the same biological, psychological, and cognitive resources as our ancestors while adapting to and using technology and other tools. Cognition has grown exponentially because of technology and the ability to do more and do it more quickly. We need to adapt and thrive given the resources we have in our time and with our abilities. In order to maximize the individual’s potential, we must understand the individual’s limits and resources, both available and potential, and how we might be instruments of positive change through understanding and encouraging the individual’s development, needs, and possible contributions.

Overall Objectives for This KAM

The purpose of this Knowledge Area Module (KAM) is to explore one or several interrelated aspects of human development: physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional, moral,
spiritual, and behavioral growth and change. Through such understanding should come appreciation for individual differences, leading to a positive influence in understanding ourselves and others and helping individuals reach their potential.

When you have completed this KAM, you will be able to:

1. Analyze and explain a chosen aspect or aspects of human development of particular professional relevance to you (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual, moral, and biological). Your analysis should use concepts and information drawn from the existing body of theory.

2. Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate how recent scholarly research might influence your understanding of individual growth and development and how this understanding might affect your work within your area of professional interest.

3. Evaluate and/or propose a practical, real-world idea or plan for effecting positive change through the betterment of opportunities or services for developing individuals.

Plan to accomplish objective #1 in the Breadth component of the KAM, objective #2 in the Depth component, and objective #3 in the Application component.

Challenges and Opportunities in This KAM

Your first challenge in this KAM will be to identify an aspect or combination of aspects that shape human beings across the life span or at particular periods in their life history that are relevant to your professional work. Such factors include biological, environmental, sociocultural, cognitive, moral, spiritual, and psychological. You will want to either look at a particular developmental aspect across the life span or a cluster of interrelated development aspects of a particular age group. You should then examine theory and research toward identifying practical implications and applications.
Because all dissertation studies undertaken at Walden are intended to be significant in some way for social change, in this KAM you may begin to build a foundation for satisfying that eventual outcome through acquiring an understanding of individual growth and development and ways for enhancing such development and meeting developmental needs of individuals at particular points in their life history.

The next challenge is to identify theories that will help you understand more about the development stages or changes humans experience as they grow and develop through the life span. There are many factors that are involved in this development. The task in the Breadth section of this KAM is to demonstrate that you understand several theories of human development and have brought critical thinking to bear on them. Demonstrating understanding is more than simply reporting what the theorists say. You need to demonstrate your understanding by using higher levels of thinking such as comparing and contrasting, analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating them. In the other sections of the KAM, you will be able to relate your knowledge of theories to questions you have about how humans develop and apply some aspects of what you have learned.

In the Depth component, you have the opportunity to focus your understanding on the examination of a particular aspect affecting the development of individuals. Build upon the knowledge of a particular theory or theories of human development you examined in the Breadth section and critically examine how they influence your professional context and are addressed in different ways by researchers in your field. You will write about these in a way that shows that you know and understand what current researchers have discovered and can apply them to what you want to learn. You will also write to demonstrate that you are able to identify how their research is, or is not, helpful, perceptive, and well grounded, and what gaps remain in our
understanding of individual growth and development. Finally, you will address what still needs to be considered within your profession.

In the Application section, you have the opportunity to respond to human development issues you have already addressed. You may design a project of your own, assess a project you have already completed, or assess the strengths and weaknesses of someone else’s project in terms of what you have gathered from the study of the underlying theories and research examined in the Breadth and Depth sections of this KAM.

Breadth Component

SBSF 8210 Theories of Human Development (5 cr.)

Human growth and development can be examined in terms life stages or of particular phenomena that impact development such as poverty; genetics; psychosocial influences; ethnic, racial, or cultural diversity; gender; educational opportunities; and one’s potential to meet the demands of rapid change. These forces are interconnected, sometimes mutually dependent, and collectively influence the individual. You will need to identify a specific focus. Here are some suggestions for the kinds of issues you might want to pursue in the Breadth component of this KAM. They are intended to be suggestive only, but will give you an idea of the kinds of topics your paper might address.

1. How do the stages of moral development correspond to the Chronological Age vs. Mental Age discussion pertaining to individuals with Cognitive disabilities?.

2. How might an awareness of stages of human development throughout the life cycle affect Special Educators’ ability to elicit the best from their students?

3. How have biological factors influenced development? How do recent discoveries of the neurosciences, human biology, genetics, nutrition, health and wellness,
and epidemiology influence our understanding of individual growth and individual differences?

4. What are the cultural influences that affect a person’s development? How does a person's socioeconomic status, race, nationality, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, or disability affect development?

5. How do major schools of thought, such as psychodynamic, behavioral, social development, or humanistic theories, inform our thinking as professionals servicing individuals with disabilities?

6. How have typical and atypical development been treated in literature or in history?

7. How do “age-related life stage” developmental theories differ from “critical moment” theories, and what are some of the strengths and weaknesses of both in explaining and shaping our understanding of individual growth and development?

8. How do lifespan related transitional (or passage)-events such as puberty, school change, graduation, job change, parenthood, divorce, retirement, caregiver status, death of a spouse, and physical effects of aging effect a person's development?

9. What are the demands and implications of rapid societal change on the mental, physical, social, or vocational adjustment and growth of individuals with disabilities?

10. What do we know and, more importantly, what are the major gaps in our theoretical understanding and knowledge of the relationships between environmental, biological, and psychological influences on individual growth and development?
11. What are the interrelationships between physical, psychosocial, and cognitive development at a particular stage of life?

12. What guiding principles derived from developmental theory can educators, health care workers, managers, public policy makers, or other professionals adopt in their professional role to contribute to individuals thriving?

13. What developmental issues should inform the professional working with individuals with disabilities at a particular stage in their growth and maturity?

Your demonstration of theoretical competency in this KAM should be informed and directed by theoretical literature on human growth and development chosen by you because of its relevance to the issue on which you will focus.

Demonstration of Competence

Using the knowledge resources covered, write a scholarly paper that demonstrates an understanding of the theories of human growth and development in general or as they relate to a particular phenomenon or group of phenomena. The emphasis of the paper is not on summarizing the content of various theories but on a critical assessment of them including comparisons, contrasts, evaluations, and a synthesis of different theories, assumptions, concepts, ideas, and elements encountered during the theoretical literature search and review. The expected length of the paper for the Breadth component is approximately 30 double-spaced pages, plus references. The paper is considered equivalent to 5-quarter credit hours of graduate work.

Learning Resources

A bibliography of possible references for this KAM can be found at the Walden Library site accessed through the faculty or student personal start page/campuscruser. Once in the Walden Library site, click on Get KAM Research Help and look for the appropriate program or
KAM. The Resources links will take you to general references that will provide an overview of the field or key thinkers. The Bibliography link will take you to a list of possible writings. The books and authors listed here are meant only to provide examples of the kind of literature you should be accessing. You can compile your own bibliographic references using this list as a starting point. If you have difficulty compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.

Depth Component

EDUC 8221 Current Research in Human Exceptionality

The purpose of the Depth component is to help you understand, analyze, and explain individual development as it affects and is affected by your profession as indicated in recent research. Your task in this component is to select a particular influence that has current salience, is of interest to you, and that intersects in intriguing and important ways with your professional context. In the Depth section you might consider the impact of the issues you examined in the Breadth section on some aspects of your profession.

Depending on the focus of the Breadth component, topics that you might consider could include:

1. The impact of deinstitutionalization on health and development in midlife and later years.
2. The impact of loss of a parent, divorce, retirement, or widowhood on development of an individual with a disability.
3. The impact of life-changing events or circumstances, such as poverty, AIDS, drugs, teen pregnancy, war, or other trauma, on development of individuals with disabilities.
4. The relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional leadership or moral development and spiritual development for individuals with disabilities.
5. The impact of prenatal care and early intervention on cognitive development of developmentally delayed children.
7. The autism, ADHD, ODD, or Alzheimer’s “epidemics”: causes and implications.
8. The No Child Left Behind Act and its implications on cognitive or psychosocial development of individuals with disabilities.
11. Impact of home schooling on cognitive/social development.
12. Implications of moral and/or cognitive development theory for dealing with school violence or bullying.
13. Impact of distance/online learning for the educational development of the individual and the effects on the continuing development of the special education as a profession.
14. Delayed childbirth and the developmental effect on both the children and older parents.
15. Increase in vulnerable populations: the effect on the populations themselves and society at large.

17. Environmental conditions that help or hinder child development.

Demonstration of Competence

1. Compile an annotated bibliography that includes a minimum of 15 recent peer-reviewed or refereed research journal articles or chapters from edited books (published within the past 5 years) related to the particular focus of human development that you identified for this assignment, including literature that places this issue within the historical development or contemporary context of your profession. For each source included on your list, prepare a critical analysis. This annotated bibliography must be arranged in alphabetical order. Each annotation should be about 1 to 1½ pages long.

2. Write a 25-30 page double-spaced typed scholarly paper (in addition to the annotated bibliography) describing, analyzing, and explaining the selected developmental issue in light of recent research and relating it to your profession. In this paper, be sure to include evidence of higher order thinking (comparison and contrast, analysis, evaluation).

The total Depth component assignment is equivalent to 5-quarter credit hours of graduate work.

Learning Resources

Because the Depth section is individualized, it is difficult to be specific about reading recommendations. Both edited books and journal articles should be used, although current research is more likely to be found in journal articles. You are encouraged to review a wide range of sources for this assignment but focus particularly on recent dissertations and journal articles.
Application Component

EDUC 8237 Professional Practice and Human Exceptionality (4 cr.)

In the Application component of the KAM, your focus should turn to your own professional context. Here you may examine and critique a particular role of the profession in engaging in or responding to the specific phenomenon you have been examining throughout this KAM or propose and justify a response to that phenomenon. In order for the Application component to be the most productive learning experience possible, it is useful to draw on learning from the Breadth and Depth components of the KAM. You are encouraged to review the resources presented in previous components of this KAM as well as the annotated bibliography compiled as part of the Depth component. In addition to these, you are urged to reflect on your own professional practice and firsthand experiences with developmental issues affecting individuals. Remember to secure Institutional Review Board approval before engaging in any research involving human subjects. (Note- Due to the inherent time constraints in the KAM process, it is recommended that students do not undertake projects requiring IRB approval).

Some suggestions of Application projects you might consider:

1. Prepare a report that reflects your understanding of how your professional setting, or another of interest to you, has engaged in providing services to individuals with disabilities. In so doing, you could engage in a number of personal interviews with key leaders as a means of developing a complete understanding of the selected topic. Documents such as case histories, patient records, and IEPs are other useful resources that could be used.

2. Develop a transition handbook to assist parents and students.
3. Develop a resource booklet for adult caregivers in your community.

4. Describe a program and its impact on helping individuals negotiate developmental issues at a particular point in their maturing process, for example, HIV/AIDS prevention, saying “no” to drugs, choosing a career, or transitioning from home to school, school to college, school to work, or work to retirement.

5. Using one of the web accessibility tools (WebXact, Bobby, etc), perform an accessibility assessment on your school or organization’s website. Prepare a report for the administration.

6. Describe and assess the impact of a program on lowering drop-out rates of students receiving special education services.

7. Study the research on the efficacy of full inclusion and mainstreaming of students with special needs.

8. Examine the impact of a multi-age inclusive classroom.

9. Explore the impact of respite care for individuals with disabilities.

10. Describe and evaluate a program that is intentionally dedicated to addressing issues of fostering individual development that is operated by your selected institution or organization. Your evaluation could address the following: (a) a description of details such as the program, its goals, target audience, stakeholders, or delivery and implementation strategies; (b) a detailed description of the evaluation goals, target population/sample, design (qualitative, quantitative, mixed), data collection methods, and data analysis procedures; or (c) a summary of the major results of the evaluation, including conclusions, implications, and recommendations, especially as you assess them in the light of the theories and research studied in the earlier components of this KAM.
11. Develop a project of your own that addresses a specific aspect of individual development. Consider including the following: (a) a needs assessment that explains the developmental issue you are addressing and why this is important to your stakeholders; (b) a description of details such as the program, its goals, delivery, and implementation strategies; (c) a description of how you will evaluate the degree of success in implementing the program, including the evaluation goals, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures; or (d) if the project is implemented, a summary of major results of the evaluation, including conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

12. A major work you have previously completed (e.g., a master’s thesis, curriculum design, or professional project) may demonstrate your ability to apply the theories, concepts, methods, and research findings that are the focus of this KAM. Such a demonstration of your competence may be submitted along with an essay that explains how the project illustrated a particular facet of human development and its theoretical explanations and your mastery of this domain. In addition, provide a brief rationale for the project and comment on how the situation might have changed since the project was first undertaken and what you might do differently if you were to plan and implement something like this again.

13. Design a hypothetical program to address one of the major issues listed above. Include the proposal, the budget, and the selected population for pilot testing. It could be written as a grant or business proposal.

14. A description of how a public policy was implemented, with an analysis of the role that different stages of human development played in forming the perspectives represented in the debate.
Demonstration of Competence

This component of the KAM gives you the opportunity to put the theories and research pertaining to human growth and development into practice. Think in terms of developing some kind of project that addresses developmental issues in your setting. Your final demonstration should include both the project and up to 10 pages of reflective commentary on it, showing how the project was informed by the theories and research examined earlier in the KAM. The Application is considered equivalent to 4-quarter credit hours of graduate work in a traditional program.

Learning Resources

The resources you will use in this component will be very specific to your particular project. If a theory or research paper is the foundation of the project, be sure to reference it.