
PSYCHO-SOCIAL SKILLS CATEGORIES

The basic premise within the ECCD field is that investment in the early years promotes optimal development. *Optimal development refers to the child’s ability to acquire culturally relevant skills and behaviors which allow the child to function effectively in his/her current context as well as to adapt successfully when the context changes, and/ or to bring about change.*

If we want ECCD projects to support children’s optimal development as defined above, the major question is, “What are we going to use as indicators of children’s optimum development?” Indicators for the psycho-social domain are particularly difficult to identify. Pollitt (1998) suggests two reasons for this:

- **PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IS NOT TANGIBLE**, its measurement cannot follow the basic measurement principles that often apply to physical and biological variables (e.g., height, weight).
- **PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IS A CONSTRUCT OF PSYCHOLOGY** that cannot be adequately appraised with a scale that fits different ages or periods of early childhood.

As Pollitt goes on to note, one of the reasons it is so difficult to measure psycho-social development is that there is no general agreement on a definition of the term “psycho-social”. For some, it includes only the social and emotional domains. For others, including Pollitt, psycho-social has a much broader definition and includes social, emotional, mental, and motor domains. Regardless of how inclusive your definition of psycho-social, what is true is that all of these domains change radically during the early years, and they are interrelated.

What follows is a summary of the psycho-social skills categories most often agreed-upon by psychologists and development specialists.

PRE-ACADEMIC SKILLS

Child learns basic concepts, improves small muscle coordination, and begins to master skills necessary for reading, writing, and arithmetic.

MOTOR/PHYSICAL SKILLS

Child improves his/her coordination, balance, and agility through large muscle activities.

SELF-EXPRESSION SKILLS

Child learns to express him/herself creatively through arts and crafts, music, dance, and or imaginative play.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Child learns to express his/her thoughts and feelings verbally in a clear and appropriate manner.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Child learns to share and cooperate with other children, to respect them and to understand their feelings. Child learns to listen to, cooperate with, and respect adults.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY SKILLS

Child learns to be independent and to care for him/herself and his/her belongings in a responsible manner.

SELF-ASSESSMENT SKILLS

Child learns to assess his/her own abilities and behaviors, begins to take pride in his/her accomplishments, and develops a sense of self-confidence.

REFERENCE:

Pollitt, E. 1998. "Forecasting the Developmental Impact of Early Childhood Programs." Washington: World Bank.

The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, 1998.