Chapter 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.0.0   Introduction

Both family and school are social contrivances which serve as societies within societies providing a buffer between a young human being, and the larger society and culture. In ancient societies, family took the major share in initiating new entrants into the world of adults. This was because in ancient societies the social mores were uncomplicated and the corpus of knowledge and skills they had as their cultural and technological endowment were non-esoteric and almost evenly distributed. This being so, each family was equipped with the pre-requisites for acting as a complete socialising agent for its children. The modern society on the other hand is highly stratified, has complicated social mores and esoteric knowledge and skills in its cultural, technological endowment which are most unevenly distributed. Therefore, family today is not equipped, nor is it expected, to serve as a complete socialising agent for its children. The modern society has invented school to build on and sometimes to contravene the influence of family towards this end. A child today enters the world of adults via family and school, family being the major influence during the years of infancy, and school during the later years.

1.1.0   Entry into Formal School: A Crucial Transition

Weaning is probably the most decisive step towards the infant's existence as an independent biological being. This transition represents perhaps the final severance of the in-

visible   umblical   cord   that   linked   the biological diad - the
mother and   the   child.   Schooling is in a way a   process   of
weaning,   albeit restricted to the social dimension. Any civilised
society contrives an elaborate curriculum through which an in-
dividual   may   get,   intiated as its fullfledged member who shares
its   heritages and   legacies and contributes in her[1]   turn   to   its
destiny.   It takes   a rather prolonged span of time for the cur-
riculum to, be transacted.   The ten years of formal schooling   as
also   the   years   of higher education are spent in this transaction
process. This period is in fact a gradual transition,   in   a way   a
protracted   severance of the social umblical   cord   between the in-
dividual and the family.   This is enormously significant   in   the
individual's life, for the family has been perhaps   the   only chan-
nel   of   inward diffusion of social stimuli   at   the   initial phase
of her life cycle.   Schooling is a process   through which the   in-
dividual   opens up her windows one by one to   let   in   ,the   light
from   larger   environment and culture,   eclipsing thereby   not just
little,   the one solitary peephole she used to peep   through in the
initial part of her life - her family.

Thus,   schooling   provides   for the transition from an in-
dividual   whose relevance is defined only in the narrow context   of
her   family   and   the   immediate   social environment,   to a fully
evolved social   being - one who has found a perch in   a   meaningful
and   dynamic role   the relevance of which is defined in the wider
social   context.   This is a gradual transition.   However,   its ini-
tial   phase   is   dramatic in its suddenness and the totality of
shift   in   the physical and   social   environment.   The   sudden
change   in   the   child's   rythm   of life during her entry   into
formal   schooling reflects   the   family's   and   the   society's

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Wherever   there is a need for a generic pronoun in the third person
denoting an individual (when the gender is   not   specified),   `she´
and `her´ are used throughout this dissertation.

determination, and probably her own unexpressed desire, to trigger off the process of social weaning from whatever has been lulling and consoling in its familiarity, to be catapulted into a frontier which is unchartered and unfamiliar, and yet holds the promise of unfolding every potential of her self.

The child in transition from home to school is a very curious social organism and is probably one of the most fascinating subject of study for a student of social sciences. In her is explicit the complex interaction between the organismic forces on a developmental mode struggling to give expression to the growing individual, and the social environmental conditions which tend to structure and regulate the individual's pace and direction of growth, and give it the stamp of its space time context. For students of educational systems and processes, the study of the new entrant into school is all the more vital, for it is to her ultimately that the structural arrangements and the curricular processes pretend to cater.

The beginning of schooling for a young child can be a highly traumatic experience; for her it is an introduction to a way of life entirely different from what she is used to. Graduating from the confines of the family which is small, intimate, informal and emotionally congenial, to the school which is large, organised, impersonal, alienating and demanding strict conformity to the institutional norms, this transition can be highly intimidating for the child. After an almost entirely family – centred existence, she must now suddenly accommodate herself in the school environment with its set of unfamiliar rules and all too demanding expectations. There is a wide gap between the behaviour that was accepted and approved at home and the new demands made on the child at school.

She has to adapt to the dominiant features of the new en-

vironment - the unfamiliar physical setting, the curriculum, the group and the interaction pattern within the group as well as between it and the teachers, and the evaluation procedures. Pre-School has made this transition to formal school less traumatic. However, pre-school programme is essentially characterized by its informal approach in its rules and regulations, curiculum, teaching style and evaluation procedures. It is a more child-centred programme and hence less severe to the child. It is the formal schooling with which commences a more rigid programme.

The school does not exist in a vacuum. It is an organic part of the social-cultural milieu, as much a part of it as the family is. However, these two institutions have quite different geneses and historical purposes. The family is an institution rooted in tradition and in the Indian context it stands for perpetuation of values and social relations and norms which are semi-feudal in character. Modern Indian school, on the other hand, has its roots firmly planted on the colonial soil. Its emergence as a social institution is closely linked with the emergence of the modern Indian state. It therefore stands to promote the modernisation ideology and everything else which is considered to represent the aspirations of the new nation state. There is, hence, a dichotomy and a divergence of purpose between the family and the school in India.[2] It is this factor, more basic than anything else, that makes the transition from home to school an extremely traumatic one for an Indian child. Another point that may be highlighted here is that an Indian pre-school child, unlike her western counterpart, is treated with a great

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One must not, however, ignore the contradictions within these institutions. The family has partially adapted to the changing times while not completely discarding its basic characters, and thus manifests a great deal of ambivalence in its messages to the growing young child. The school, similarly, despite its ostensible modernisation ideology, has retained many a vestige of its medieval and to a greater extent colonial counterpart.

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deal of indulgence by her family. As Kakkar (1981) observes, the Indian family follows the dictum "treat a son like a raja for the first five years, like a slave for the next ten and like a friend thereafter"(p.127). Thus, the Indian family allows the young child a lot of liberty, also taking time in initiating the child towards being independent. Most of the time, she is in the company of the females of the house - the mother, grand-mother, aunts or elder sisters who submit to most of her whims. Even their occasional scorn does not bother her much because of its familiarity. Entry into formal school is perhaps her first formal exposure to the world of other adults (outside of the friendly female adult company at home) and its relatively for-mal and impersonal transactions. It is impersonal in the sense, the individual child is no more the centre of the stage; she is just a part of a group of children. This seemingly 'Copernican revolution' is understandably very traumatic to the youngster. Piaget in fact talks about this trauma while dis-cussing about the ego-centric stage (Flavell, 1963).

As was stated earlier, the school is inseparably linked with the state. The ruling ideology of a society is the ideology of its ruling class. The school and the curriculum therefore have their own preferences. They do not mean the same to children coming from different social-cultural backgrounds. School and curriculum do favour the dominant sections of the society. Therefore, variations in the family backgrounds should be expected to be a factor determining the child's smooth transition from home to school and to some extent her performance in the school.

1.2.0   Discourse of Study of the Child in Transition

The entire discourse of study of the child in transition

has two major foci: one, the individual and the various dimensions of development; and two, the entire social-environmental matrix that provides the context of her development.

The two major dimensions of development of the child, if one excludes physical development are cognitive and psycho-social dimensions. The major parameters in terms of which the child as she enters formal school is studied are her cognitive capabilities and psycho-social competencies. Literature in developmental psychology on these two aspects of child develop ment is rich. One needs to examine the relevant theoretical systems in these fields in order to formulate the conceptual framework for a systematic study of a new school entrant. An elaboration of this point will be made in one of the subsequent sections.

Meanwhile, it may be stated that one can draw meaning-ful inferences out of one's observations of the child's cognitive and psycho-social competencies only if one takes into account the relational dimensions that exist between these attributes and the social-environmental matrix in which she lives and grows. This matrix, therefore, needs to be analysed and explored as a part of the study of the child. What needs to be analysed are the home and the neighbourhood background and interactions as well as the school environment.

Thus in this chapter, apart from the above general intro-duction, two more things are attempted: one, discussions on ap-propriate theoretical systems explaining the child's cognitive and psycho-social development; and two, an overview of the social-environmetal matrix which constitutes the context of the present study.

1.3.0   The Developing Child: Evolving a Theoretical Perspective

In search of appropriate theoretical systems:

There are several alternative theoretical systems to
choose from while formulating the theoretical premises of the
present study, premises concerning the child's cognitive develop-
ment and her psycho-social growth. The psychological concepts and
categories most popular in educational research are personality
traits or specific cognitive faculties. Theories encompassing
such categories as anxiety, aggression, extroversion-
introversion, intelligence, creativity, etc., do not seek to ex-
plain a whole person in a specific stage of development in con-
stant interaction with a complex physical, social and cultural
environment. Such theories by and large view an individual as
an assemblage of faculties and traits with not adequate explana-
tion of structural linkages among them. These linkages are most
crucial in explaining the innate tendency of growth and develop-
ment in the individual, they provide the constant communion be-
tween individual and the environment and the resultant dynamic
equilibrium that individual traverses through as she grows and
develops. Even such developmental theories as that of Havighurst,
while trying to view the individual as a developing entity, fails
to transcend a particular reference frame (Schiamberg and Smith,
1982). What the preoccupations of a comprehensive study of the
child in transition, on the other hand, demand to incorporate in
its conceptual foundation are precisely these very characteris-
tics which the theoretical systems mentioned above fall short
of. To be more precise, such a study needs to have a theoreti-
cal framework incorporating the premises derived from the theoreti-
cal systems which have the following characteristics:

1.   that they have as the object of their discourse a whole
dynamic individual who is percieved to be in a development mode

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and whose developmental characteristics can be explained as effected by well-founded epigenetic principles and the dynamics of constant interaction between an active organism and the complex environmental factors;

2. that they have a comprehensive typology of developmental stages with an invariant sequence of occurrence, each stage characterised by definite and discernible behavioural manifestations; and

3. that their concepts and principles, by and large, cut across cultures and races and have an almost universal jurisdiction on the human specie, and at the same time accommodate the very many cultural nuances within the niches that their structures provide.

Keeping the above criteria in mind, the present study is envisaged with the following theoretical systems providing the basic premises: The cognitive development of the child is viewed in the perspective provided by Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, and the psycho-social development of the child is seen in the light of Erik H. Erikson's theory of psycho-social development[3]. How these two theoretical systems fare in terms of the criteria mentioned above is being discussed hereunder.

1.3.1 Piaget and Erikson: Evolving a Common Framework.

Only when one has an idea as to which developmental stage the children are in and what their capabilities and limitations are can one understand the challenges and frustrations they face. The five year olds have to be viewed as they are - with

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3. Also known as the affective theory of Erikson.

their cognitive, social and emotional make-up as they deal with the demands of the different environmental contexts in which they transact, viz., home, school, peer group. The maximum demands the school makes are on the cognitive and psycho-social capabilities. It therefore becomes imperative to understand the child's cognitive and psycho-social characteristics.

By knowing about the childs's cognitive make-up, one can appreciate her cognitive possibilities and limitations, what she can grasp and what she cannot, how she understands events and in what way she does not. Such knowledge enables one to understand what the child says and does and perhaps predict her behaviour in various situations. Also, it aids in structuring and evaluating the environment as one can assert that at this particular stage the child cannot be influenced by certain classes of stimuli now, since she lacks the structural wherewithal with which to assimilate them, but she can and will be influenced by them later when the structural development permits meaningful assimilation (Flavell, 1963). It becomes essential, therefore, to know the school entrants' (5-7 year olds) cognitive capabilities and for this we have to fall back on the existing theories of cognitive development. Piaget's theory of cognitive development presents itself as the best alternative. It is a highly unified and integerated theory giving the specific logical sequences in the intellectual development of human beings. Piaget elucidates the picture of a growing child's, especially the pre-schooler's, cognitive experiences, dispositions and limitations remarkably well. Piaget explains very well the pre-schooler's egocentrism, his susceptibility to centration effects, his inability to deal with transfarmations as opposed to states etc. Another advantage of viewing the childs's development from the Piagetian point of view is that it sees the cognitive development in a developmental perspective ranging from infancy to adolescence where one achieves the mental structure

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akin to adults.   The theory elaborates   the behavioural changes
from the less to the more cognitive functioning with detailed
comparisons among the successive stages.   It gives vivid details
of the dominant characteristics of a given stage with reference
to and in contrast with the preceding and successive stages.
Thus   the   Piagetian   system enables one to assess the school
entrant's cognitive development and place her exactly in the
developmental stage sequence.

Social   development represents the broadest area of
child development encompassing such categories as self-image,
sex-role differentiation, socialization, motivation, depen-
dency, love, altruism, autonomy, competence, aggression, attachment
and so   on.   Rather than studying these categories seperately,
what yields a more comprehensive picture of the person of   a
growing child   is an integerated approach to the study of the
child's social-emotional development.   The premise should be
that the growing child is a composite entity in active, interac-
tion with the social-cultural environment, progressively inter-
nalising   the various   social competencies in an integerated
fashion.   The growing individual, as was mentioned earlier, is
not   just   an assemblage of skills, but a complex matrix in a
development mode within a still more complex matrix of social -
cultural forces.   Thus, it is more relevant to view the growing
child as a dyanmic integral of skills and competencies that enable
her to acquire a sense of mastery and control over her own so-
cial life.   The skills involved here are those which help her to
deal effectively with people and situations in the environmental
matrix.

There are attempts at theorizing the occurrence   of
these individual competencies. However, such theories do not allow
for a comprehensive perspective subsuming all these competencies
and their inter-relationships.   Also, many of these categories

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taken individually may not be stable in a growing child; she may, at that stage, be experimenting with them, and as such classifying the child grossly on a single dimension may not be the right thing to do. Thirdly, some categories such as aggression or dependency don't have a universal connotation; they hold different appeals within different cultures. And finally, some of these characteristics and whatever theorization that have gone into explaining their presence don't give enough attention to the processes underlying them.

Once it is clarified that the child is to be viewed as an active organism instead of a bundle of skills and competencies, the choice of theories to fall back on becomes narrower. One would then look for a theory system which considers the interactions the child makes with her environment a function of the forces within her – the organismic (biological, cognitive and emotional) forces and the forces operant in the environment (those pertaining to the locale, culture, social stratum, etc.). As the child, thus, grows from the role of a helpless infant into a toddler, preschooler, school-goer and an adolescent, her horizon widens and concomittantly her expectations from the outer world undergoes a change. The growing child has to grapple with her inner growth forces and the external demands. In doing so, she develops her own preoccupations, interests, problems and conflicts which form an integral part of her *self* as she traverses through a particular developmental stage. These interests, conflicts, etc., manifest in the way she conducts herself, her activities,the way she tackles a problem or even the way she withdraws from a situation. It is the interactions between the growing individual self and the environment and the issues that emerge from these interactions that form the substantive part of Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. His theory has a broad range – from birth to old age. The stages of development that he conceptualises

vividly bring out the preoccupations of the human being at various stages in her life. The discourse of Erikson's theory brings out the qualitative distinction between the characteristics of individuals in successive stages of development.

The cognitive development theory of Piaget and the psycho-social development theory of Erikson are congruent in their basic premises and complementary to each other in their description of the whole person of the child. Crain (1980) elaborates the commonality of the two theory systems in the following manner:

1.   The epigenetic principle: Both Piaget and Erikson believe that like in the case of the development of a foetus where specific organs emerge and develop at given times, like a pre-set programme, in the course of human development also specific issues and capabilities emerge and develop at specific stages in life.

2.   The stage concept: Both Piaget and Erikson do not view development as a continuous progression with gradual quantitative changes; for them each change is qualitatively different from the other.   Hence the concept of `stage´ is the most essential feature of their theories.

3.   The stages unfold in a invariant sequence: For both, development unfolds in a invariant sequence, although, probably the rate of development might differ.   Also, both emphasize the importance of biological maturation in this sequence of development.

4.   Uniformity in different cultures: Both Piaget and Erikson claim that their stages unfold in the same sequence in all cultures.   Piaget is not concerned with the exact cultural beliefs, etc.; but he is concerned with the underlying cognitive abilities. Erikson too is aware of the vast differences among cultures.   In fact, his goal is to show how cultures handle the stages dif-

ferently in accordance to their different value systems .

5.   Both Piaget and Erikson believe that each successive stage is based on the ones preceding it.   In terms of the cognitive development the child's concrete operational stage has its roots in the structures one has developed at the pre-operational stage.   In Erikson's psycho-social development the biological maturation and social expectations act as forces pushing along the developmental stages, whether one has been successful at earlier stages or not. However, Erikson does believe that success at one stage helps in the success at other stages as well.

6.   Organism-Environment Interaction: Both the theorists emphasise the role of environment.   According to them, it is the organism's active interaction with the environment that propels her development.

7.   Emphasis on conflict: Both theorists emphasize the role of conflict in the course of human development, albeit differently. Piaget emphasizes the role of mental conflict called equilibration in acquiring new knowledge. Erikson, on the other hand, emphasizes the organism's conflict in terms of how her emotions oscillate between the two polarities at each stage and how the ego attempts to resolve this conflict so that one of the polarity is integrated into the individual's personality.

1.3.1.1 Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development:

Jean Piaget believed cognition to be a mode of adaptation to the world beginning with man's biological nature and innate reflexes, and proceeding by invariant stages to abstract logical reasoning (Sigel and Cocking, 1977, p.15).   Piaget's theory includes the following major facets:

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1.   developmental point of view which focuses on orderly stages of intellectual growth, with learning capabilities defined at each stage;

2.   description of how children acquire information about the physical world (number, quantity, time and space), the social world (morality, social conventions), and logical-mathematical understandings (classification, seriation, hypothetico-deductive reasoning); and

3.   methodology that deals with how children think rather than what they know.

For Piaget, mental activity aided by physical activity is important in gaining knowledge. Knowledge is constructed in step-wise progression by the interaction of the child with the world. The Piagetian child actively selects and interprets environmental information in the construction of her own knowledge rather than passively copying the information just as it is presented to her senses. In addition, she reconstructs and reinterprets that environment to make it fit with her own existing mental framework (Flavell, 1977, p.6). This process is carried out by two invariant functions: organisation and adaptation.

Organisation essentially refers to the process whereby the human mind constantly tries to organise thought processes or ideas into coherent systems. Adaptation refers to the progressive interaction of the human cognitive apparatus to the external world of objects, events and ideas. It comprises the twin processes of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation basically is taking in objects or information in the existing cognitive structures. In other words, it is the process by which one uses the existing structures to understand newer objects and ideas. Accommodation,

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on the other hand, is the process by which one makes changes in the existing structures in response to newer ideas, objects or events.

Thus, assimilation refers to the quantitative changes in the existing schemata[4] which in turn are used to make sense of the newer stimuli in the environment. On the other hand, accommodation refers to the qualitative changes in the schema (Schiamberg and Smith, 1982, p.26). Assimilation and accommodation are the constituent twin processes of cognitive development. The balance that exists between these processes is what Piaget calls equilibrium. And, it is the imbalance between them or the departure from the state of equlibrium caused by the reception of new environmental stimuli or by the structural compulsions within, that provides the impetus for cognitive development, in pursuance of higher and more stable equilibrium states. The continuous interaction between the internal cognitive system and the external environment forms the basis of the construction and use of knowledge.

The assimilation-accommodation-equlibration model of Piaget explains this interaction, and it accounts in part for the movement to higher stages of cognitive development. Each transaction with the external environment stretches the cognitive structure slightly and thereby enables the child to make sense of newer environmental stimuli. A given structure, however, reaches a saturation point of growth when further accommodation results in a kind of quantum jump to a higher equlibrium level and a new and more over-encompassing cognitive structre. This represents a stage transition after which the child begins developing a well integrated understanding of the familiar objects, events and ideas, and acquiring capability of cognizing those objects, events and

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4. Schemata are organised patterns of behaviour which form parts of the structural system present at all the stages of development. As Maier (1969, p.106) puts it, they are "an established pattern of meaningful repeatable psychological unit of intellectual structure or its pre-requisites during infancy".

ideas which have till then eluded her comprehension. In other
words, she starts looking at the world in a new way and becomes
capable of interacting with it at a higher plane. The stage of
cognitive development at which a child is, therefore, characterises
her capabilities and limitations. It is in this context that the
stage description of Piaget becomes valuable to the concern of the
present study, that is understanding the new school entrant.

If it is submitted that there exist cognitive structures
which belong to the subject, and that they are built, and that this
building is a gradual process, it should be logically concluded
that there exist stages of development. While postulating these
stages, two conditions should be satisfied. One, that they must be
defined to ensure a constant order of succession, and two, that the
definition allows for progressive construction without entailing
total preformation. Piaget postulates four major stages of
development. First is the sensorimotor stage (0 - 18 months) which
occurs before the advent of language. This period is characterised
by what is called 'sensori-motor-intelligence' which results in a
certain number of performances, such as the organisation of spatial
relationships, the organisation of objects and a notion of their
permanence, temporal succession of events, the organisation of
causal relationship, etc. The next one is the pre-operational
stage (2-7 years) which starts with the symbolic function and lan-
guage development. During this stage, the child begins to show
evidence of her capability of mentally representing objects that
are no longer present. This symbolic function signals the begin-
ning of representational thought. The thought is still very
egocentric and 'other' points of view are not within the child's
frame of reference. The child during this stage is unable to
reverse the order of events in thought and arrive once again at the
beginning point. This feature of thinking from two to seven years
of age is emphasised by Piaget as the major obstacle to performing
real mental operations which are internalised actions and these are

reversible.   The third stage is called concrete operational stage
(7 to 11 or 12 years).   This stage is characterised by the incep-
tion of operations which are concrete, that is mental operations
carried out with the aid of concrete objects which are actually
manipulated or whose manipulations is imagined. At this stage, the
child can classify objects or order them or establish correspon-
dence between them, or use numerical operations on them, or measure
them from spatial point of view.   The fourth stage starts at 11 or
12 years.   This is the formal operational stage.   This stage is
characterised by formal or propositional thought. Here, the opera-
tions transcend concrete or real objects to cover abstract ideas,
hypotheses and proportions.   Hypothetico-deductions and com-
binatorial reasoning are possible at this stage.

The school entrant, the subject of the present study, is
around 5-7 years of age.   This age bracket represents the final
phase of pre-operational stage or the beginning of concrete opera-
tional thought.   The characteristics of this age bracket is
described in detail hereunder:

The pre-operational stage may again be divided into two
sub stages: the pre-conceptual stage (2 to 4 years) and the intui-
tive stage (4 to 7 years). At the pre-conceptual stage, the child
begins to *know* things without directly acting upon or manipulating
the object concerned.   However, knowing at this stage is still
limited to the perceptual and motor characteristics of the objects.
Perceptual characteristics refer to the externally significant
characteristics like size, colour, texture, etc, The motor charac-
teristics are whether the object is manipulable, turnable, throw-
able and so on.   The child between 2 and 4 years is generally tied
down to the world of concrete objects and actions.   He does not
know how things operate internally or how things relate to one
another, which is what conceptual thought is all about. The major
facility at this stage is the child's increasing ability to repre-

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sent reality in terms of symbols and engage, therefore, in a symbolic interaction with the environment and her world of imagination. However, one major limitation of the child at this stage is her inability to appreciate the fact that others' perceptions can differ from her own. Ego-centrism affects the child's thinking, interfering with her cognitive development as she persists in her belief that her view of the world is the only one. Yet, egocentrism is in no way due to lack of experience or training; it is simply the way the child at this stage thinks. Secondly, the pre-operational child is unable to handle multiple characteristics; because of her preoccupations with the perceptual aspects of an object, she is unable to identify the combinatory features of several objects and classify them under one head. Thirdly, thinking at this stage is rigid. She cannot think from `particular´ to `general´, nor from `general´ to `particular´. Instead, she proceeds from one `particular´ to another (Modgil and Modgil, 1976, p.39-40).

The child between 4 and 7 years of age, in fact begins her journey towards conceptual thought and initiates the process of de-egocentrising. However, what characterises her more than anything at this stage is her intuitive thought. Piaget was impressed by the fact that the child may often make statements without using facts to support them and without seeking proof of their validity. The child aged between 4 and 7 years is seen to have difficulty on defining the concept she uses. Instead of being logical, she uses intuition which is an internalization by means of images and mental experiences (Piaget, 1967). She is strongly influenced by perceptual appearances. She is able to internalize actions, but they remain at the level of sensori-motor patterns converted to acts of thought. They do not reach a level whereby they become reversible actions. Reversibility helps to lift them from the realm of intuitive thought to that of concrete operations.

The preoperational period is seen as a time of organization and preparation, the preparation for concrete operations (Sheppard, 1978, p.27). It is however esential to understand the limitations of the pre-operational child's cognitive processes. A brief summary of her most important characteristics will give a picture as to how the child thinks. Schiamberg and Smith enumerate the characteristics as follows:

1.   Preoperational thinking is `concrete'. That is, the child works best with the world of her immediate surrounding and her own perceptions of the reality. The child is usually involved with the present and with objects or experiences that can be easily represented by images and simple words.

2.   Preoperational thinking is `irreversible'. That is, the child can understand how events happen in the present, but has difficulty imagining the return of the present events to their original state. For example, if a large ball of clay is made into several smaller balls of clay in full view of the child, she continues to think of the clay as several small balls and has difficulty thinking of clay in its original form as a large ball.

3.   Preoperational thinking tends to be `ego-centric'. The child focuses on the environment from the perspective of her own limited experience.

4.   Preoperational thinking tends, to focus on only one aspect or dimension of a problem at a time. For example while looking at the height of an object, the child is almost oblivious to its width. She perceives one set of relationships while being ·unable to think of other relationships simultaneously.

5.   Preoperational thinking tends to involve `transductive reasoning'. The preoperational child reasons from one specific and

immediate even to another equally specific and immediate event, as opposed to the inductive and deductive reasoning naturally employed by older children.

Several features of the preoperational stage are manifested or illustrated in what Piaget and others have called as problems of conservation and classification. This stage is characterised by the child's natural inability to perform these two cognitive processes.

Conservation is awareness of the invariance of material despite certain transformations (Sheppard, 1978, p.27-29). Conservation can be exhibited with regard to a number of different concepts, number, quanitity, substance, weight and volume. Piaget has devised standard cognitive tasks to be performed which if used in a clinical interview situation can reveal the child's acquisition of the concept of reversibility and her ability to view things beyond the perceptual cues.

Classification is the fundamental cognitive process that forms the basis of conceptual thinking. A child at the preoperational stage is naturally incapable of this. A child who has achieved the classificatory skills should be able to see the salient features of given objects and form classes of objects, each class comprising objects who resemble one another on the basis of a given criterion. Further, she should be able to categorise the same set of objects according to different criteria, each time taking one single criterion into consideration. She should also be able to assign small classes of objects to larger class of objects, thereby performing the ability of class inclusion. At still higher levels, she should be able to classify objects into different categories and classify each of those categories into sub-categories. A preoperational child, on the other hand, has difficulty is understanding the concept of set and class inclusion;

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she is unable to compare the total, higher order class with the one that is within it. The child may not have any difficulty in seeing that the union of A and B makes C, but she cannot see that this logically implies the universe that is A=C-B. If she could, she would realise that the whole is conserved and retains its identity, and so the whole can be compared with the part as A⊂C, and the additive composition of the class is achieved. Preoperational child fails to do this, according to Piaget, because of the lack of reversibility in her thinking, and the inability to conceive the whole and the part simultaneously (Sheppard,p.30-31).

1.3.1.2 Erikson´s theory of Psycho-Social Development:

Erik H. Erikson in his psycho-social theory traces the psycho-social development of human beings throughout the life span. According to Erikson, development occurs in a given environment that includes the societal background and culture. An individual´s life course is decisively influenced by the era, area and the arrangement into which she is born. It is the environment that provides children contacts to the outer world and determines the range of their experiences and influences (For example, the societal norms, the child rearing practices, the education system prevailing, etc.). It could be therefore said that the individual´s personality is shaped simultaneously by his biological and psychological processes, and by the physical, social and ideational influences. In Eriksonian terminology then, the nature of psycho-social development is essentially the struggle to maintain a homeostasis by the ego between the processes inherent in the organism and the social or societal demands made on the organism.

Erikson firmly believes in the `epigenetic principle´, and has successfully integerated this principle as he systematically unfolds his theory. The epigenetic principle states that in an

organism, there is a ground plan for anything that has to grow and develop, and this plan is given from the beginning, yet there is a time for each organ and organ system to develop (Erikson, 1950). Thus for Erikson, the human personality develops according to predetermined steps, from infancy to old age. Erikson visualizes this life span as having eight stages. He views that in the course of an individual's development and her interaction with the society, an individual will face some 'crisis' in congruence with the human being's physical development and libidinal urges. A person's affect development revolves round her ongoing struggle to overcome this crisis in a given societal context. It is in this light that Erikson perceives development to be following a zig-zag course from phase to phase, a constant state of imbalance of each stage where there is conflict of opposing forces. The individual either chooses between opposites or incorporates such opposites in order to create a new life situation. Thus, transition through Eriksonian stages is dialectical, in that solution of the conflict of each phase generates the struggle for the next developmental conquest. With satisfactory resolution of the crisis, there is a 'virtue' realized at every stage. Erikson presents these eight stages in the form of a chart showing how the individual evolves in the course of her development and reaches the last stage of life. The chart is presented in figure 1.1. Also shown in the chart are the Piaget's stages. However, before enumerating the stages, it is essential to understand the Erikson's theory as it differs from Freud's. Erikson's theory undoubtedly has its roots in the Freudian psycho-analytic theory. Like Freud, Erikson believes that there is some kind of an inner force or unconscious motivation inherent in the human beings. Yet, Erikson's major preoccupations are with the processes of socialization, and the relations of the ego to the society. He firmly believes that it is the ego which is also the force of human development and not the sexual or libidinal urges alone, as Freud stresses it. Erikson's emphasis is on the continuity of the interpersonal experience. Importance is given to

TABLE 1.1: The Eriksonian Stages

	Sens.Mot	Pre-operational		Conc.Op	Formal Operational			
Old Age								Integr. vs Despair
Middle Age							Genera. vs Stag-nation	
Youth						Intim. vs Isola-tion		
13 to Youth					Ident. vs Ident. Diff.			
6-12				Indus. vs Inferi-ority				
4-5			Initia-tive vs Guilt					
2-3		Auto-nomy vs Shame						
0-2	Trust vs Mistrust							

*PS-> Sens.Mot | Pre-operational | Conc.Op | Formal Operational

Age   0-2   3-6   7-12   13 onwards

Note: * Piagetian Stages.

the affective aspects of life, to the innate inner self which re-
lates to the society. To Erikson, the child's world is something
more than the Freudian `child-father-mother' triad with its power
struggle and evolving complexes. The child has to function in a
broader social matrix consisting of her caretakers within the con-
text of their particular family and its historical and cultural
heritage in direct relationship to the social and political set up
at a given time. This viewpoint clearly emerges when individuals
are viewed not as some kind of patients but as ordinary people
developing in an open environment. This reflects on the deviation
of Eriksonian methodology of theorisation from that of Freud, in
that, Freud's lab was the psycho-analyst's couch, whereas Erikson's
lab was the space, time and cultural scene of each person's daily
life sphere.

The Eight Stages

1.   Trust Vs Mistrust (age 0-2 years). The virtue realized is
`hope'.

2.   Autonomy Vs Shame and Doubt (age 2-3 years). The virtue
realized is `will'.

3.   Initiative Vs Guilt (age 3-6 years). The virtue realized
is `purpose'.

4.   Industry Vs Inferiority (age 7-13 years). The virtue real-
ized is `competence'.

5.   Identity Vs Identify Diffusion (age 13-18 years). The
virtue realized is `fidelity'.

6.   Intimacy Vs Isolation (Youth). The virtue realized is 'love'.

7.   Generativity Vs Stagnation (middle age). The virtue realized is 'care'.

8.   Integrity Vs despair (old age). The virtue realized is 'wisdom'.

        Since the focus of the present study is the class one child, it becomes essential to understand her psycho-social characteristics with a brief reference to the stages preceding her present stage and a detail sketch of her present stage characteristics. The class one child, the 5 to 7 year old, is somewhere between the third and fourth stage of Erikson; these are the Initiative Vs Guilt and the Industry Vs Inferiority stages. And the stages preceding are Trust Vs Mistrust and Autonomy Vs Shame and Doubt.

The initial stages: The human infant at birth is an helpless bundle of needs and wants, unfamiliar with the world and her own bodily needs and abilities. She is completely dependent on her caretakers for survival. With consistent care and warmth the infant gradualy learns to trust her environment which caters to her needs. Also with continuous repetitions and trial and error of body movements and functions the infant develops a trust in herself too. However, if the environ fails to cater to her needs and to reassure her, the infant is most likely to develop a feeling of mistrust towards her environment. By the end of the two years the child is developed physically and is capable of a host of motor activities. The increased mobility and mastery of movements makes the child more active and venturesome. The child now wants her own way, she

now has a distinct sense of autonomy. Again, the society now exerts pressure on the child in matters of toilet training; she can no longer have her own way in these matters. Thus, the society now exerts dual pressures on the two year olds - to curb her explorations and to eliminate body wastes at the correct time and place. The child's inability to comply to the adult demands creates a sense of shame and doubt in her. This then is the struggle of the second stage - Autonomy Vs Shame and Doubt.

Stage III - Initiative Vs Guilt: The child at this stage is now in command of increased motor skills and knowledge of the world. She is now full of energy and exuberance. The added knowledge, physical and language development as well as vivid imagination not only add to the ego growth and self identity, but, also make the child more daring and investigating. The child is now all set with a sense of initiative to master newer and challenging skills and tasks and assume responsibility (eg., learning skipping, running, looking after pets and toys, etc.). The child also develops the ability to plan, initiate and execute play and projects. The child finds immense pleasure in manipulating and wielding toys and tools. These very qualities that keep her on the move, land her in trouble also. She finds that she is usually curbed by adults in her pursuits. This then becomes a constant state of struggle for the child - whether to move beyond the set limit or to curb one's desire and remain within the expected limits (Maier, 1978). She has to struggle constantly with a sense of guilt over goals contemplated and acts, that are initiated spontaneously. Thus, polarity of initiative versus either passivity or guilt of having gone too far provide the major theme of this period. In the Freudian theory this developmental phase is noted for its Oedipal complications. Erikson does not doubt the attachment to the opposite sex parent, but he notes that this must important person of the opposite see has thus far been the true and only representative of that sex. The child's affectionate outreach can

not be only incestuous, but is also the outcome of the fact that love and trust are extended to those who have proven themselves and are readily available. This is very true in the Indian context, where families many a time are joint, and child has a number of caretakers.

Stage IV - Industry Vs Inferiority: The child at this stage is less preoccupied with fantasy and libidinal desires. Now she wants to settle down to tasks which she can complete and which give her satisfaction. The major theme of this phase reflects her determination to master the tasks before her; she learns by doing and experimenting with skills and tools in her wider culture. In fact, according to Erikson this is the most decisive stage for ego growth, "achievement and involvement in mastering various skills and tasks add to their ego grwoth" (Erikson, 1950). In the process the children master important cognitive and social skills during this period. In preliterate societies where hunting, farming, etc., were the major occupations, children had direct access to the actual working situations and learnt many of these skills informally, usually working as an apprentice with an adult or older child. However, in modern technological societies, where jobs are more specialized, the child has to prepare herself by mastering reading, writing and arithmetic and other cerebral skills. In either case, children at this stage are involved in meaningful work and in general preparing for the future adult role. Peer group too, assumes importance at this stage as children learn, work and play with their peers, thereby learning the basis of cooperative behaviours.

In general, children at this stage try to prove their competence lest they percieve themselves as inferior; this is the crisis the child faces at this stage. The child may be plagued by a deep sense of inadequacy and inferiority. Hurts and failures in classroom or playgrounds therefore assume a colossal dimension

(Crain, 1980). Children who have been unable to resolve the con-
flicts at earlier stages and have not developed a sense of trust,
autonomy or initiative may be unable to take up and master newer
tasks. At other times, the community school and home may hinder
the child's sense of industry by their attitudes and disregards for
individual talents (Crain, 1980). On the other hand, proper
guidance, inspiration and provision to attempt a variety of tasks
by the school and home helps the child in resolving the present
conflict of Industry Vs. Inferiority more effectively.

1.3.2. Social-Environmental Matrix:

The earlier section articulated two specific theoretical
perspectives in which the growing child has been viewed. While ar-
ticulating these theories, the importance of the social-cultural
milieu and the physical environment in not only providing a con-
text, but also acting as a stimulating influence in the child's
development was brought out. Both the cognitive theorists as well
as the psycho-analysts emphasise the importance of the environment
in the development of the child. Piaget stresses the interaction
between the biological capabilities of the individual and the ex-
perience she encounters in her environment; development proceeds as
a result of these interactions. Erickson too emphasises the impor-
tance of the social milieu and parential attitudes in the way an
individual handles her inner conflicts and proceeds along her
psycho-social development.

The importance of the environment surrounding the growing
child is greatly emphasised by Bloom (1964). He bases his obser-
vations on prolonged research attempts studying the human charac-
terstics and the role of the environment. Bloom observes that the
development of some of the most significant human characterstics
occurs in the first five years of life. Bloom also found that the

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"environment in which the individual develops will have its
greatest effect on a specific characteristic in the most rapid
period of change and will have least effect on the characteristic
in its least rapid period of change" (Bloom, 1981, pp.72-73). In
the light of this, the importance of home and family is sig-
nificant.   Bloom's findings maintain that the child who enters
first grade is no *tabula rasa*, but that a generous amount of her
development and major foundation of her academic achievement has
taken place prior this. In fact, according to Bloom the school
programme largely builds on the foundation laid at home, and that
much of the variation in children at the beginning of the first
grade can be attributed to variations in the home environment.

However, environment or milieu is an abstraction. If one
wants to build one's understanding of the growing child in a con-
text, one needs to spell out the specific parameters and attempt
concretising this abstraction.   The present study attempts to un-
derstand the child as she graduates to formal school, and her
achievement during the initial months.   Here, it is necessary to
take up a few relational dimensions which link the environment and
the milieu with the various faculties of a growing child.

One may look at the child and her environment the way
Bronfenbrenner looks at.   He observes that the environment has
several layers when looked at from the point of view of an in-
dividual.   There are a few broad (in time and space) aspects of the
environment which touches the individual obliquely, but which per-
meates into every sector of her life in the most subtle fashion.
This, Brofenbrenner calls the larger environment or the macro sys-
tem.   And then, there is the immediate environment which affects
the individual grossly and directly.   This layer of environment is
concretely visible in its influence in everything that the in-
dividual does.   Bronfenbrenner calls this the micro system.
(Bronfenbrenner,1979; and Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983, p.357).

The home, the micro system in this case, is not a single entity, but comprises a number of variables interacting simultaneously. However, before going to the specific variables operating in the environment, it would be worthwhile to examine how the home environment interacts with the growing child. The young child's development - physical, cognitive, psycho-social, etc., depend, greatly on the things she perceives and internalises (a point greatly emphasised by both Piaget and Erikson). The perceptual development is stimulated by the environments which are rich in the range of experiences available; experiences which provide the right stimulus, which make use of toys, games, pictures, objects for manipulation; experiences which have ample scope for interactions both with adults and peers. Also, important is the language used at home. Bernstein's work in this area found that language and forms of communication used at home are related to the types of social interactions, and that these determine not only the verbal behaviour of the child but also the nature of her thinking and learning, and her social behaviour with adults as well as peers (cited in Bloom, 1984).

Another important aspect of home are the emotional experiences. The emotional climate at home, the encouragement, guidance, love, warmth, democracy, or conversely dislike, discouragement, hostility, autocracy, all affect the growing child greatly. As mentioned earlier, the immediate home environ too comprises a number of variables - the number of family members, type of family, the disciplining techniques used, the child rearing practices used, emotional crisis, education of parents and so on. The home environment comprises the interplay of these numerous variables. Bloom (1964) proposed a way in which this complex environment could be better understood. According to him, the development of any particular human characterstic is related to a sub-set, or sub-environment of the total environmental forces for eg., a set of variables or socio-psychological processes may form a

sub-environment that affects a particular characterstic in the child. The task of researchers in this area is therefore isolating and then measuring the pertinent sub-environment from the total set of environmental variables.

For the present endeavour, two major sub-environments have been broadly identified. The first important aspect of home life of the child influencial in her development and school performance is the educational environment at home. The educational environment includes aspects like the availability of books and play material, her exposure to the media, her encounters with the outer world in terms educational trips, etc. Such experiences would go a long way in stimulating the child's general cognition and school performance. Next, what matters is the guidance and encourangements that the child receives at home from parents, elders and siblings. The attitudinal disposition of the significant elders towards education in general and *her* education in particular, the value and aspiration the family has for her education, all these constitute the educational environment of the child. Also important are the communication patterns and the language spoken at home, the emphasis given to the child and her needs over other family and routine matters. These variables operating at home create an educational climate, a climate which in more ways than one affect the child's own disposition towards her studies.

The second important dimension in the child's home environment is the home interaction pattern. This includes the autonomy granted to the child, the reinforcements used, that disciplining techniques followed and the sibling relationship. The autonomy allowed to the child in day-to-day life, goes a long way in building the child's confidence in herself and in determining the extent of her initiative in school activities and among her peers. The type of reinforcement and disciplining techniques used, sets the tone of interaction pattern followed at home. Positive

interaction makes a great deal of difference in making the child feel secure and reassured, thereby making the child confident of herself and the environment. These aspects have relation to the child's strengths and inhibitions. Another aspect that goes to determine the home interaction pattern is the nature of the sibling relationship that exists.

Apart from home, the neighbourhood also determines the kind of exposures the child is given to the various aspects of life and in turn determines her maturity and confidence. It even determines her ability to adjust, tolerate and appreciate others dissimlar to herself and create in her the value of cooperation.

What have been listed above are a few of the important parameters in the child's environment which should be considered by researchers studying home environment.

1.4.0   Sharpening the Focus : An Overview of the Present Study

The two major dimensions of development of the child in the context of social-environmental matrix allow for very many variations. Cognitive and psycho-social development are themselves highly culture-specific; this is what the cross cultural studies in developmental psychology have shown (Dasen, 1977). To add to this there is the influence of home and neighbourhood background and interactions and the variations in school environments. Thus, there is no way one can draw the profile of a typical child or a typical Indian child. The reality concerning the child is not a single, unified one; there are many realities. Thus, any serious attempt at studying the child of class one has to start by delimiting its own scope and focusing on specific social-environmental contexts.

To state that the concern of the present study is to un

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derstand not just the Indian child, but the lower middle class urban Indian child as she enters her neighbourhood school - a school that caters to the educational needs of children of her kind of background is in itself the first major step towards delimiting its scope. The focus, no doubt, is sharper; but, a lot of things are still presumed. For instance, it is presumed that there is a well-differentiated, discernible and internally homogenous category called the lower middle class urban child; and that she is a pan-Indian phenomenon. To presume these will be naive and to strive to empirically construct such a pan-Indian reality will be hazardous.

The present study, therefore, does not go into all these. Its approach is by and large ideographic. What it attempts to do is only to study a certain group of children newly enrolled in class one in a vernacular school where mostly the lower middle class children go, in one of the industrial metropolices of India. Methodologically, it does not claim to achieve the impossible - to study a representative sample of the so called lower middle class urban Indian children. More of this will be mentioned in the later chapters.

The present chapter, thus, articulated the theoretical perspectives in which to look at the child in transition. This, in a way, is a fore-runner to chapter three wherein the study and its design are explicated further. For this to unfold it is necessary to scan through the research literature in this field and examine the empirical evidences and methodological possibilities brought out there. This is what is attempted in chapter two.

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