

Chapter 3

THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1.0 A Brief Recapitulation

The preceding chapters were meant to prepare the background for the present study. Chapter 1 provided the theoretical backdrop. Chapter 2 presented the research evidences related to the conceptual framework elaborated in chapter 1. To recapitulate briefly, the main focus of chapter 1 was the child in transition, the new entrant to formal schooling. The attempt there was to portray the child in a social-environmental matrix that included both school and home. The chapter attempted an elaboration of the developmental characteristics of these five to seven year olds. The chapter highlighted the crisis that this group faced in adjusting to the new environment of formal school which was different both from the relaxed atmosphere of home and the informality of pre-school.

Although one agreed that all the characteristics of the child were of import for the present study, two significant developmental characteristics were identified for elaboration. One was her cognitive development which enabled her to comprehend and interact with the environment. The second was her psycho-social development which reflected her affective capabilities to resolve conflicts in interacting with a demanding social environment. Piagetian and Eriksonian perspectives were applied in understanding the developmental characteristics.

Providing a supportive environment to the tug-o-war between the child with her organismic characteristics on one side and the demands of the formal school system on the other, is the social-

environmental matrix comprising home and other background variables. The conceptual framework highlighted the contribution of home in the child's development. The emphasis was on the simultaneous interplay of multiple variables operating, thus giving home environment a kaleidoscopic character. It was recognised that, in a way, the kaleidoscopic nature of home environment gave each home its uniqueness in the manner it affects the growing child.

The review of related literature presented in chapter 2 revealed the dimensions of home environment that had been researched into and the relationship these dimensions had with the child's personality attributes and school performance. The review also brought out certain gaps in Indian researches in terms of areas, variables and methodologies. Most Indian studies on home environment did not attempt to explore beyond socio-economic status (SES) and demographic variables; there had been a total neglect towards process variables operating in home environment, thereby rendering whatever understanding of home environment one derives out of the Indian studies rather superficial. Even at the superficial level of the abstraction called 'socio-economic status', most Indian studies confine to examining merely the correlation between SES and certain personality attributes and that between SES and school performance. The studies do not throw much light on the causal relationships between home environment and child's developmental characteristics on one hand, and developmental characteristics and school performance on the other. Neither has there been any attempt to derive a detailed and comprehensive picture of home environment in terms of processes actually occurring at home. Another major gap identified through the review of Indian studies was a near total absence of research attempts focusing younger children (pre-schoolers and early primary schoolers).

3.2.0 The Present Concern

The background provided in chapter 1 and the review of related research presented in chapter 2 constitute the rationale and the logical antecedents for the present study. This chapter is, therefore, essentially to further articulate the conceptual framework presented in chapter 1 and to respond to the research imperatives and gaps identified in chapter 2. The concern of the present study is three-fold: One, the study attempts to establish certain causal relationships between the child's home environmental variables and their background determinants, her developmental characteristics and her performance at school. Two, it attempts to analyse the home environment in terms of relevant interactions and processes, and evolve a comprehensive picture of the social-environmental context in which the child grows and in which she attempts to respond to the demands made by her entry into formal school, and to describe how the various human and physical elements in that context influence this endeavour of hers. Three, it attempts to focus on a population of children who have been largely left out by Indian research studies, viz., younger children at the early primary school stage, that is standard one.

As was mentioned in chapter 1, it is impossible to describe a typical Indian child, for there is no such unified monolithic category. For a meaningful analysis, one has to delimit the scope of one's study. For this, one has to confine the discourse to a single socio-cultural environment. The first step towards that is to localise one's focus to a specific geo-demographic context. For instance, the perspective gets much better focused if one clarifies that one's concern is not just the Indian child, but the urban Indian child. For this purpose, the concern of the present study is further explicated, that it focuses on the urban child. One further step that could be taken is to specify the socio-economic stratum that the present discourse pertains to. The socio-economic cir

cumstances provide a wide spectrum of home environmental influence on the child's performance at school. For the present concern to acquire a sharper focus, it could be at this point clarified that the study pertains to lower socio-economic stratum. Thus, this study concerns the urban lower middle class Indian child of standard one in a given school context.

The above discussion on the concerns of the present study holds a pointer towards the research questions that the study seeks to find answers for, the design of the study and the population that the study researches on. The sections to follow elaborate the research questions, design and sample to be drawn from the population.

3.3.0 Research Questions

The research questions that are sought to be answered through the present study are the following:

1. What are the specific causal relationships that exist between home environment, personality characteristics and school performance of urban, lower middle class Indian children of the first standard?
2. What are the relevant processes and interactions in the social-environmental context of the first standard urban child of the lower middle class which influence her response to the demands made by her entry into formal school?
3. How do the various human and physical elements in the urban lower middle class home environment influence the first standard child's performance at school?

The title of the present study is worded in such a way that

it reflects the intentions behind the above research questions. It is as follows:

"A study of the relationship among certain environmental factors, personality characteristics and school performance of first standard students."

3.4.0 Design

To answer the research questions stated above, there seem to require two sets of empirical information. The first research question seems to seek quantitative information to establish specific causal relationships, whereas the second and third research questions seem to call for qualitative and descriptive information. To elaborate, the first research question seeks to establish specific and definite causal linkages among clearly discernible variables, and this will involve operationalising those variables, measuring them on a sample of subjects drawn from the population in focus using standard instruments, and verifying the propositions by juxtaposing the empirical reality thus emerging on a rational model using statistical techniques. The second and third questions, on the other hand, raise issues which cannot be addressed in this definitive fashion, but which call for a comprehensive description of the scenario. Such a description, no doubt, should yield understanding of the basic causal relationships that characterise the reality; however, it will not involve a neat format as the quantitative approach would. The emphasis here is to comprehensively tap the various sources of information in the child's social-environmental context and build a composite picture by collating and interpreting various bits of information.

The quantitative and qualitative approaches should complement each other in constructing the composite reality of the child

in transition. The design of the present study therefore encompasses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to seek empirical answers to the questions raised above.

3.4.1 Establishing causal relations:

The first research question seeks to establish specific causal relationships between home environment, personality characteristics and school performance of first standard students. What it demands to establish are not inter-causal relationships, but unidirectional cause-effect linkages. This calls for a nomothetic approach focusing on a group of first standard students taken as sample and proceed to empirically verify through quantitative data a hypothetical recursive model of causal relationships among specific variables. Thus, it emerges that the first exercise will have to be analysing the research question in terms of specific variables and constructing a hypothetical model of causal relationships among them.

The first research question readily yields a broad causal model as given in figure 3.1.

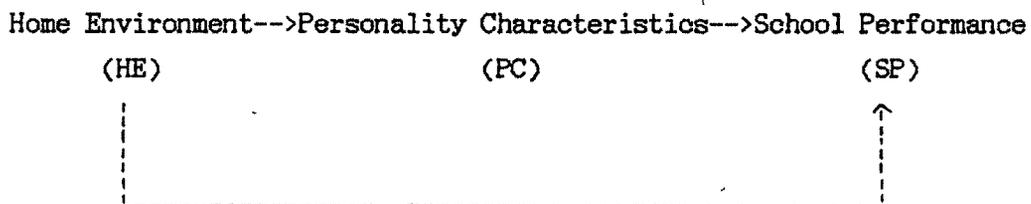


FIGURE 3.1: The Broad Causal Model

'School Performance' means response of the child to the demands of the school. It is therefore to be taken as the extent to which she conforms to the norms and expectations of the school. There can be two dimensions to school performance: they are academic achievement and adjustment to school. Here, academic achievement should not be taken as an objective indicator of the child's scholastic abilities. It should be taken as the child's performance with reference to the academic expectations of the school. Similarly, adjustment to school should be taken more as the school's view of the child's conformity to the social norms of the school. Logically as well as in the light of the previous researches, a causal link could be expected between adjustment to school and academic achievement as presented in figure 3.2.

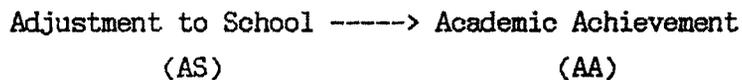


FIGURE 3.2: Variables within School Performance (SP)

Personality characteristics of a first standard child mainly concern developmental characteristics especially in the two major dimensions of the child's development, viz., Social Competence (SC) and Cognitive Development (CD). The empirical evidences derived from previous research do not suggest a causal link between these two specific variables. They may at best be highly correlated with each other, and may be represented in figure 3.3.

Home environment insofar as its influence on the child's personality characteristics and school performance, may be considered to comprise two specific variables, viz., Home Interaction Pattern (HIP) and Educational Environment at Home (EEH).

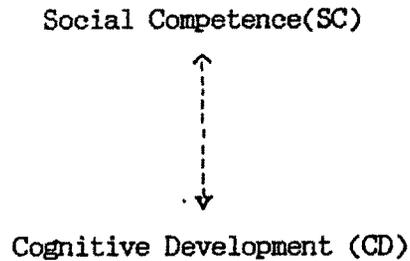


FIGURE 3.3: Variables within Personality Characteristics (PC)

These two specific variables, in fact, may be components of a larger home environment variable and may be considered highly correlated with each other. But, there is no reason to assume a cause-effect relation between them. Again, there may be a few background variables that determine the nature of Home Interaction Pattern and Educational Environment at Home. Mother's Education (ME) seems to be one such crucial background variable. This is logically tenable considering the crucial role of mother in a child's world, and specifically because of the extent of time the child spends with the mother. That the mother has had formal education should be believed to support the creation of a favourable Home Interaction Pattern and a positive Educational Environment at Home. Similarly, considering that the Indian lower middle class aspirations concerning female and male children may differ drastically in favour of boys, one may tend to anticipate differential support from the family to the child's response to the school depending on the gender of the child. Thus, the child's Gender (G) emerges as an important predictor variable to the Home Interaction Pattern and Educational Environment at Home. This configuration of relationships within home environment discussed above is represented in figure 3.4.

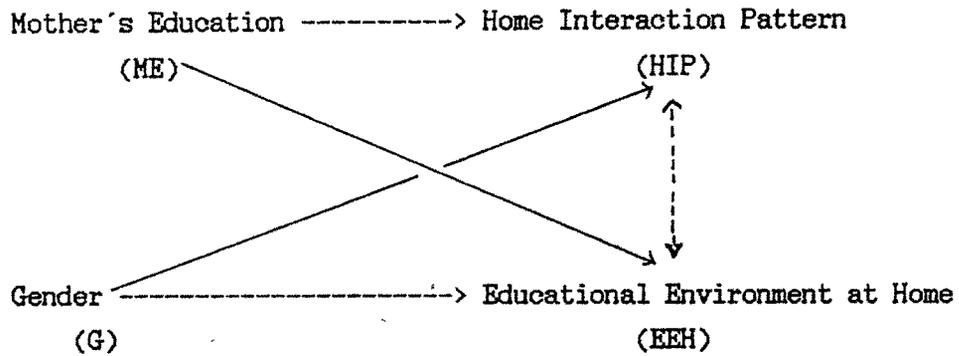


FIGURE 3.4: Variables within Home Environment (HE)

As one can see, the models given in figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 are elaborations of the components SP, PC and HE respectively of figure 3.1. If the broad causal model given in figure 3.1 is elaborated by substituting the models given in figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 for the components SP, PC and HE respectively, a causal model represented in figure 3.5 is arrived at.

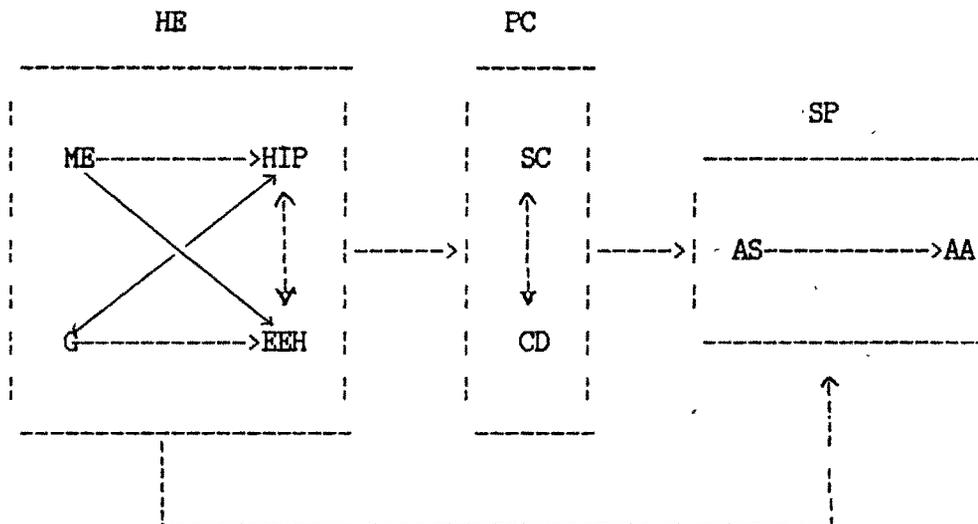


FIGURE 3.5: The Broad Causal Model Elaborated

One could now highlight only the causal links ignoring the correlations and also not consider HE, PC and SP as composite variables. Further, one could take HIP and EEH as the front variables within Home Environment (HE) since Mother's Education (ME) and Gender of the child (G) are background variables. If all the above considerations are taken, one will have to revise the broad causal model elaborated in figure 3.5 and present it as it is given in figure 3.6.

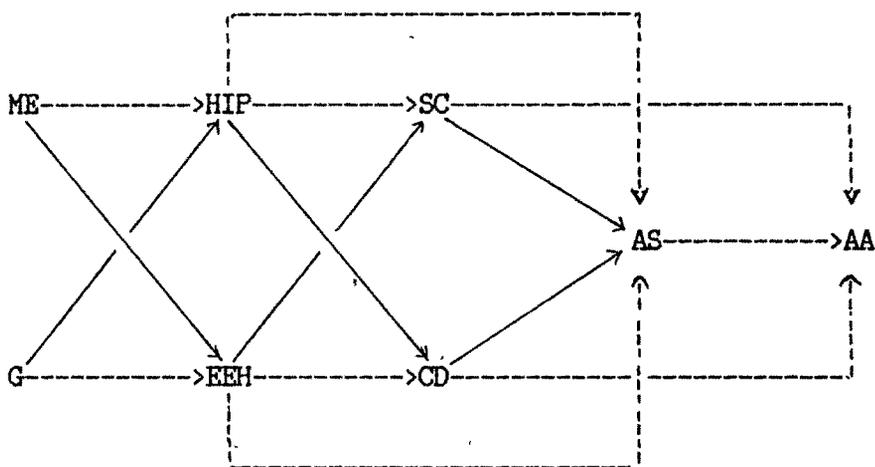


FIGURE 3.6: The Broad Causal Model Elaborated and Revised

What needs to be examined now is whether either of the two background variables, Mother's Education (ME) and Gender of the child (G) has any direct causal links with any of the dependent variables, independent of Home Interaction Pattern (HIP), and Educational Environment at Home (EEH). Mother's Education (ME) can be logically eliminated from such possibilities for its manifestation could be only through the home environmental variables. Gender of the child (G), on the other hand, has certain socio-cultural implications even outside of the family. The socio-cultural milieu, independent of home environmental variables should be believed to

influence the Social Competence (SC) and Adjustment to School (AS) differentially on the basis of the Gender of the child (G). There is however no data nor reason to support a belief that Gender of the child (G) will influence Cognitive Development (CD) and Academic Achievement (AA). Thus, there seems to be causal links between G and SC, and G and AS. The causal model thus may further be expanded, and that becomes the hypothesised model of causal relationships among variables, for the first research question in the present study. Figure 3.7 presents this model.

Now that a fully articulated hypothetical model of causal relationships among the variables selected has been evolved, the question now would be what analytical technique could be employed to empirically verify this model. It would be worthwhile to examine what other researchers have done under similar circumstances. Kahl (1961) used a combination of survey technique and intensive investigations on small groups to establish causal relationships among selected variables. Watson's (1981) concerns were very similar to those of the present study, in that they focused on causal links between home environmental and school performance variables of first grade children. The technique used for empirical verification of the hypothetical model here was Path Analysis. Williams (1976), Laosa (1982), Marjoribanks (1984) and McGowan and Johnson (1984) have again very similar preoccupations as those of the present study, and they also have employed Path Analysis. Kahl's approach seems to be a little cumbersome, while Path Analysis promises to yield a neat statement of causal relationships verifying a complex causal model using a composite analytical procedure. For this reason, it is proposed to subject the hypothesised model of causal relationships formulated in the present study to Path Analysis. The purpose of this exercise will be to empirically establish causal relationships among variables to seek answer to the first research question. The first step in this direction will be to select or construct a suitable measuring instrument for each of the selected variables.

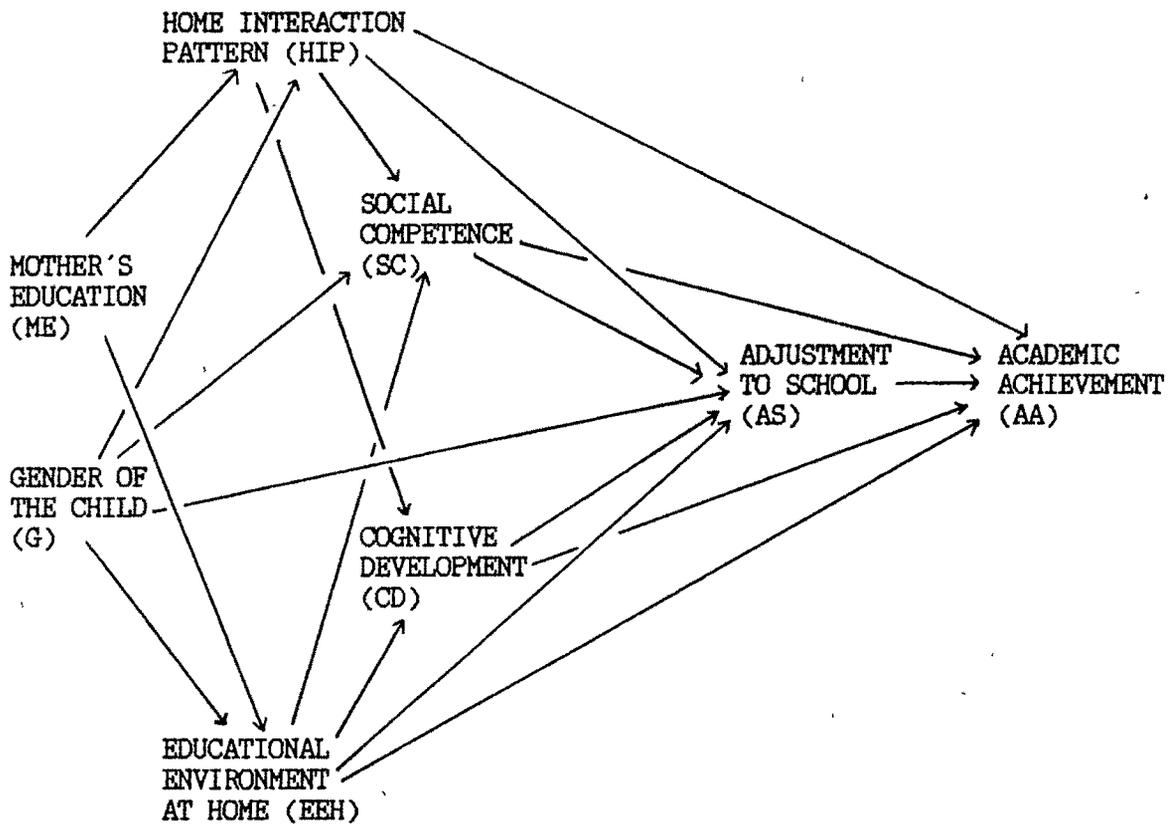


FIGURE 3.7: Hypothesised Model of Causal Relationships among Variables

The second step will be to administer these instruments on a sample drawn from the population of children which the present study focuses on. Through this, one will derive sample distributions of the quantitative indices for selected variables. The next step will be to process these distributions for Path Analysis.

3.4.2 Collecting qualitative and descriptive information:

The second and third research questions are in fact related ones; they are exploratory in nature probing into the "what" and "how" aspects of the various home and socio-environmental elements, processes and interactions influencing a lower middle class urban child's response to the demands made by the transition from pre-school to formal schooling and her performance at the formal school. These questions cannot be answered conclusively by compartmentalising the phenomenon in terms of variables expressed in quantitative measures and analysing their relationships through statistical techniques. What is called for on the other hand is a more comprehensive and descriptive information which are qualitative in nature. The approach here has to be idiographic as opposed to the nomothetic approach selected for establishing causal relationships among variables through Path Analysis. For establishing causal relationships in response to the first research question, the approach will be to select a group of cases and elicit information regarding the distribution of the group on selected variables expressed in quantitative measures and analyse the relationships among them using Path Analysis. On the other hand, for seeking answers to the second and third research questions, a case study approach will have to be resorted to. For this, one may have to go for a limited number of cases (i.e. children) and attempt descriptive surveys covering school, home and to some extent neighbourhood of each child. Observation and lengthy interviews involving the child, her teachers, her parents and the significant others in her family and neighbourhood will be the main inputs for building each case study. The attempt

here will be more of ethnological and phenomenological nature and there will be a minimum of imposition of an *apriori* rational framework in the conduct of the case studies. All that is *apriori* in the pursuit of qualitative information, will be the notion that will underlie the selection of cases. In order that broad insights get yielded as regards the elements, processes and interactions that characterise the home environment and their causal links with the child's school performance, the cases may have to be selected from among children belonging to two categories of school performance. Similarly, in order to examine the extent to which the child's gender influences the support she receives from her home in responding to the demands made by her graduation into formal school, the cases may have to include both boys and girls. The case studies will mainly involve description of the home background of the children selected for study. However, interpretations may have to ^{be} made in a comparative frame of reference in order to highlight the tendencies of different configurations of home elements, processes and interactions influencing differentially the child's response to the challenges of her transition into formal school.

3.4.3 Methodological approaches adopted:

For seeking answers to the three research questions, two totally divergent approaches have been proposed, viz., a nomothetic, quantitative approach and an idiographic, qualitative one. Each approach yields a unique perspective to a limited aspect of the composite reality. The nomothetic approach seeks to generate stable relationships in precise terms of limited number of variables. The idiographic attempts to describe a comprehensive picture of a limited exemplar elements of reality, with no claim of generating a stable, generalisable sets of relationships. While the first approach goes for precision and stability at the cost of comprehensiveness, the second approach goes for comprehensiveness at the cost of precision and stability.

Thus, the present study attempts to describe the reality from two diametrically opposite vantage points, through diverse approaches. The whole scenario in which the study is conducted will however have to be a limited one if one has to do justice to the objectives of the study. Thus, the ultimate outcome of the present study will not be a set of generalisable and stable statements concerning the population it claims to focus on, viz., the lower middle class urban Indian child of first standard. At best, what will emerge is a tentative web of relations substantiated by a limited glimpse of the empirical reality, which in turn may provide hypothetical propositions calling for more extensive surveys for their verification.

3.5.0 Sample

As we found in one of the earlier sections in this chapter, for any meaningful analysis in a study such as the present one, one has to localise one's focus to a specific socio-cultural environment. In pursuit of localising the perspective the scope of the study has been delimited from a pan-Indian perspective to that of an urban lower middle class Indian child. In order to isolate a more or less homogenous socio-cultural environment, the study may have to be further restricted in its focus to one neighbourhood or one school. In most Indian towns, a neighbourhood does not necessarily characterize one single socio-economic stratum. On the other hand, the characteristics of a school, for instance that it is vernacular medium school or an English medium one, or that it is a municipal school or a private one, broadly determine the socio-economic stratum it caters to. Hence, the study restricts its focus to the first standard students of a vernacular school catering to lower middle class students in an Indian town. Furthermore, it was also thought that a single section of class one of the selected school would go to form the sample of the study. In restricting the sample to a single school and a single section, uniform school climate and

uniformity in the instructional and evaluation process would be ensured. This would enable the research to be focused, giving a composite picture of the various child and home variables. For the present study, the Sayaji High School in Vadodara was selected. The school was selected keeping in mind the above points.

Vadodara, formerly known as Baroda used to be one of the more progressive princely states of India. Like any old Northern or Central India city it had a walled inner city which was the centre of residential and trade activities. The aristocracy of the city lived a little away from this walled area. The spread of the city was limited. The demographic composition of the city was mainly restricted to Gujarati and Marathi speaking families. The population too was quite limited. Baroda saw a lot of changes in the post independence days; now a part of India, Baroda became a major city of the Gujarat State. Baroda now is a busy metropolis, teeming with a number of large government and private industries, as also a number of smaller business enterprises. The city population has burgeoned, with a number of rural migrants and people from other parts of the country settling in Baroda. The city now suffers from the usual urban problems of over population, deterioration of the civic amenities, pollution, traffic congestion, housing problems etc.

The Sayaji High School is an old school in the city, it is about 85 years old. Its medium of instruction is Gujarati. The school children generally come from nearby areas. Most of them have Gujarati as their mother tongue.

The Class One : The school had two sections for class one, the children were not categorized on the basis of abilities or performance in achievement tests but were randomly assigned to the two sections. Therefore one of the two sections, section 'A' for the term 1984-85 was taken up for the present study. The selected class had fifty-six students in the age group of 5-6 years. There were 15

girls and 41 boys. Details of the fifty-six children in terms of their name, sex, birth date, type of family, number of family members, income, father's education, mother's education, father's occupation and mother's occupation are presented in appendix 1. An attempt has been made in this section to briefly give the details of the sample; tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 have been presented to describe the sample in brief.

Table 3.1 presents information about the father's occupation and the corresponding range of the family income. It is seen from the table that 24 families have the income between the range of Rs.500 to Rs.1200 per month (categories 1 and 2). Fathers' occupations range from unskilled labourers, shop attendants, chowkidars to semi-skilled artisans, medium tradesman and cerks in small business houses. Twenty-five families have the income between the range of Rs.1000 to Rs.2200 per month; the fathers' occupations here ranged from skilled factory supervisors, clerks, teachers to small business men and medium tradesmen. Seven families had a monthly income of more than Rs.2200; here the occupations ranged from bank officers, lawyers and medium business to professions like doctors or large businesses (category 4 and 5). The three families with an income range of Rs.5000 to Rs.10000 are actually large joint families with almost 20 to 22 members (table 3.3); the income shown is the joint family income, or income from the family business. In fact, 39 children out of the 56 lived in joint families while 17 lived in nuclear families.

As regards the parental education, it can be seen from table 3.2, that of 55 fathers, 40 had pursued their education till intermediate or less. Only 15 fathers were graduates or post graduates. As for mothers' education level, only 7 of the 56 mothers were graduates. The rest 49 had their educational level upto or less than the intermediate level, 29 having pursued their education till class 10 or less.

TABLE 3.2: Parental education

Category No.	Category Description	Father* (frequency)	Mother
1.	Below class VII	2	5
2.	Class VII to class X	9	24
3.	SSC, ITI certificate, PTC, Intermediate	29	20
4.	Graduate, Engineering Diploma, B.Ed.	13	7
5.	Post-graduate,, professional graduate	2	0

*Note: Since one child's father had deserted the family since last five years, his educational level has not been considered. As such, the number of fathers is 55.

TABLE 3.3: Size of the family

Category No.	Range	Frequency
1.	2 - 4 members	9
2.	5 - 7 members	30
3.	8 - 10 members	10
4.	11 - 13 members	4
5.	14 and above	3

This sample description of the 56 children was circulated amongst a panel comprising demographers and social scientists of the M.S. University of Baroda to determine whether the socio-economic parameters of the group corresponded to those defined for the lower middle class as per the Indian standards. The experts opined that but for one or two cases, the income and occupation range of the rest did correspond to the characterisations of the Indian lower middle class. It was opined that the sample group of 56 children may be treated as representative of the Indian lower middle class.

Sample for the Case Studies - The six cases:

These six cases were selected on the basis of their school performance. Of the six cases, three had their Academic Achievement scores on the higher side, i.e. above 65 per cent; the other three cases, on the other hand, had low Academic Achievement scores, i.e. about 40 per cent. The classroom behaviour of the three high achievers was distinctly different from the other three. While the three high achievers were well adjusted with the classroom procedures, the other three had distinct problems in coming to terms with them. It was also made sure that the six cases included both boys and girls; there were thus three boys and three girls.

3.6.0 The chapters to follow

The design of the present study discussed in this chapter clearly indicates that the methodology of collecting empirical evidences to answer the first research question is quantitative and that for the second and third research questions is qualitative. The subsequent chapters ~~therefore~~ therefore are organised according to this scheme. The first step in the quantitative approach is to select or construct measuring instruments or devices for the selected variables. The procedure followed during the step as well as the procedural details of collecting the data, both quantitative

and qualitative, are presented in chapter 4, which is called 'Tools, techniques and procedural details'. The processing of quantitative data, the analytical procedures adopted, and an interpretative discussion are presented in chapter 5 entitled 'Establishing causal relationships'. Chapter 6, 'Presentation of qualitative information', presents the qualitative data collected through case studies, and a discussion based on that exercise. Chapter 7 ties up the loose ends of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches and discusses the emerging composite reality. This chapter is called 'Summary and conclusion'.

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