

Introduction to child development

CHAPTER 2

2

Introduction to child development

2.1 Theories of child development 53

2.1 THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

(a brief introductory orientation)

There are several well-supported theories concerning the development of the child from birth to adulthood, each of them with its own perspective and each described in detail in accordance with this perspective. We shall mention some of these theories without going into detail about any of them. Baldwin (1967) offers a clear account of the relevant theories with a criticism of each. *Kurt Lewin* applies his topological field approach to his description of child development. He advocates a totally systems approach. The behaviour of the child within his life-space at any given time is the result of all the psychological forces affecting him. The strength of the valency diminishes in proportion to increased distance from the valency area.

Sigmund Freud emphasized the sub-conscious and unconscious regions of the mind together with the biological drives. He developed the developmental phases into which he divided the period of childhood accord with the emphasis *Carl Gustav Jung* (1905, p. 31) gave to Freudian concepts (Freud's division, and characterizes the five developmental phases as follows:

- (a) awareness of basic needs;
- (b) awareness of autonomy;
- (c) awareness of initiative;
- (d) awareness of control and proficiency;
- (e) awareness of a conscious personal identity.

In his study of child development he identifies these phases as ways in which the growing child expresses his emotional or biological drives. In his view, development is a balance between a maturational process and an educational process.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction to child development

2.1 THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT (a brief introductory orientation)

There are several well-supported theories concerning the development of the child from birth to adulthood, each of them with its own perspective and each described in detail in accordance with this perspective. We shall mention some of these theories without going into detail about any of them. Baldwin (1967) offers a clear account of the relevant theories with a criticism of each. *Kurt Lewin* applies his topological field approach to his description of child development. He advocates a totality approach. The behaviour of the child within his life-space at any given time is the result of all the psychological forces affecting him. The strength of the valency diminishes in proportion to increased distance from the valency area.

Sigmund Freud emphasised the sub-conscious and unconscious regions of the mind together with the libidinous drives. The developmental phases into which he divided the period of childhood accord with this emphasis. *Erik Erikson*, (Maier, 1965, p. 31) a neo-Freudian, accepts (Freud's division, and characterises the five developmental phases as follows:

- (a) awareness of basic trust;
- (b) awareness of autonomy;
- (c) awareness of initiative;
- (d) awareness of control and proficiency;
- (e) awareness of a conscious personal identity.

In his study of child development he identifies these phases as ways in which the growing child expresses his emotional or libidinous drives. In his view, development is a balance between a maturation process and an educational process.

Jean Piaget, (Maier, 1965, p. 91) biologist, philosopher and psychologist, devised a cognitive, conflict-free theory of child development. On the basis of his empirical research, he came to the conclusion that fixed and regular patterns of cognitive development occur in every child. With these patterns in mind, he described certain fixed developmental phases through which every child must pass and in accordance with which the extent and nature of his understanding can be predicted throughout the developmental period. He mentions three main phases: the sensory-motor phase (0-2 years), the pre-conceptual phase (2-4 years), the intuitive phase (4-7 years), the concrete operational phase (7-11/12 years) and the phase of conceptual thought (11/12 years+).

The *learning-theory* (Maier, 1965, p. 155) model of child development is based on the consolidation of stimuli and reactions. Watson, Hull, Dollard, Sears and Skinner have all made contributions to this approach, and in very recent times Walters and Bandura have applied it with special emphasis on the development of the child in the social context. The theory was inspired by psycho-analysis and is also based on S-R conditioning.

Heinz Werner, a German who emigrated to America during the Hitler regime, also adopts a totality approach to child development (comparable to that of the Gestaltists). All child development is at first relatively global and then becomes a gradual process of differentiation, discrimination, and hierarchical integration and analysis.

At this stage we shall not attempt to study these theories in detail. Almost all of them have made significant contributions to a better understanding of the growing child. Some of the thought-structures involved cannot be understood outside the context of the whole theory. Others are more general, and are thus especially significant with regard to our pedagogic approach to child development. But we must guard against the danger of using irreconcilable concepts to support or complement one another.

We cannot subscribe to a rigid phaseology. We shall arrive at some understanding of the growing child if we adopt the practical division into pre-school, primary-school and secondary-school stages, and use these periods as working categories. During these periods children live for a considerable part of the school day in corresponding milieus. This makes comparison possible, despite numerous collective and individual differences.

The small child learns to know the world that fosters him. At first his knowledge is mainly intuitive, but it becomes more conceptual as his powers of differentiation improve. And through significance attribution he creates meaningful relationships within his life-space. The small baby needs his mother. She is therefore the first person with whom he forms a

meaningful relationship. In the course of time more and more of the people among whom he lives become meaningful to the child. He also becomes aware of objects – such as his bottle, clothes, cot, etc. – which are important to him. The expanding physical-cultural world of values, attitudes and ideas is a broad category within which the growing child forms significant relationships. The small child also learns about his own body. The distinction between *me* and *not-me*, I and *not-I* culminates in an image of the body and a concept of the self which represent the relationship that the child has formed with himself. Most of these relationships with the self, with other people, and with objects and ideas are formed under the guidance and with the support of educating adults. If we are to understand the child in any one of the developmental periods mentioned above, it will be necessary to know something about the nature of these relationships and how they are organised.

The complexity of child behaviour can be better understood if certain aspects of development are studied separately. Language fulfils a special function with regard to the child's development. It would therefore be profitable to study linguistic development in this connection. The same applies to the development of the cognitive functions, thought, and the child's emotional life. Such studies concentrate specific attention upon intelligence.

In the following study of child development we shall adopt a view which concurs to some extent with the approach of I.J. Gordon. The child's self (or ego or I) is the theme (factor) that integrates all the factors influencing his development or genesis or learning. Some of these factors lie within the self and others are external to it, but they are all integrated by the self.

When we study child development from the pedagogic point of view, we do so in the light of or against the background of the pedagogic categories discussed in *Fundamental Pedagogics*. If we are to lead the child towards what he ought to be, *we must study him as he is*. The distinctions we are about to draw will enable us to come to grips with the child progressing towards adulthood.

Objectives of becoming

3

CHAPTER 3

Objectives of becoming

- 3.1 Introduction 59
- 3.2 World of meaning 60
- 3.3 Adequate self 60
- 3.4 Belonging 61

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Our focus is the CHILD who is growing, or struggling through, and educational help. The question we are trying to answer is the question it means to the child when he grows physically – is guided by the new team – fully mathematics – is accepted or rejected by his own group, etc.? If self-actualization or self-actualization is a continuous growth accompanied by greater or lesser success, what are the specific objectives along the way? These objectives are chosen objectives. They are specific (flying those lines, writing, drawing or sketching – that address a specific cognitive problem); it is not a question of making multiple abilities. These aspects are components of larger concerns that are rearticulated only in terms of a much broader dynamic which, we may term the Gestalt self-actualization.

Since the child is always relating to people, objects, ideas and himself – since he in fact initiates these relations – we can distinguish the following objectives in this regard.

- *A world of meaning in the totality of meanings formulated by the child during his experience.*
- *An adequate self.* As the child requires increasing control of his world, becomes more and more capable of knowing and acting, he experiences the function it is he himself who is adequate.
- *Belonging* – the child's positive relationship with other people. Acceptance in friendship and love, so that a real self-relationship is experienced, gives him a secure basis for further exploration.

These part-objectives can be distinguished but not separated. Promoting the one promotes the others: it is the same child who forms relations so that he can understand and orient himself better, so that he can be more adequate and experience his adequate self and so that he can

CHAPTER 3

Objectives of becoming

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Our focus is the CHILD who is maturing, or actualising himself, with educational help. The question we are trying to answer is this: what does it mean to the child when he grows physically – is picked for the first team – fails mathematics – is accepted or rejected by his peer group, etc.? If self-actualisation or self-enhancement is a continuous process accompanied by greater or lesser success, what are the specific objectives along the way? These objectives are always dynamic. They are specific (tying shoe-laces, writing, throwing or catching a ball, solving a specific cognitive problem); it is not a question of realising static possibilities. These aspects are components of larger structures that are meaningful only in terms of a much broader dynamic whole. We may term this Gestalt 'self-actualisation'.

Since the child is always relating to people, objects, ideas and himself – since he in fact initiates these relations – we can distinguish the following objectives in this regard:

- *A world of meaning* as the totality of meanings formulated by the child during his orientation.
- *An adequate self*. As the child acquires increasing control of his world, becomes more and more capable of knowing and acting, he experiences the fact that it is he himself who is adequate.
- *Belonging* – the child's positive relationship with other people. Acceptance in friendship and love, so that a real we-relationship is experienced, gives him a secure basis for further exploration.

These part-objectives can be distinguished but not separated. Promoting the one promotes the others: it is the same child who forms relations *so that he* can understand and orient himself better, *so that he* can be more adequate and experience his adequate self and *so that he* can

become a respected member of a group – whether it comprises two members, twenty or the whole sub-culture which he values.

3.2 WORLD OF MEANING

The world of meaning is not a static objective. For each child it is an expanding significance which he himself must explore. His life-world contains things to which he is not perfectly oriented; new ideas, persons and objects are always appearing, and meaning has to be assigned to them. Growing experience and a more effective cognitive structure make it possible, within the expanding ambience of meaning, to deal with these challenges more speedily. Not only do the horizons expand: the quality of meaning is increasingly enhanced by a deeper involvement with partly-known things. The child – and the adult, for that matter – is always being confronted with obstacles and problems. Finding himself in an unfamiliar situation, he is confused because he is not yet oriented to the situation or its components. Each new situation is a new challenge to attribute meaning. His relations with people, objects, ideas and himself acquire a new and enhanced quality as his involvement with them deepens.

For the assignment of meaning, educational help is essential. An educator or teacher must explain the necessary meanings at the child's level of comprehension. As Bruner (1966, p. 2) says: '... any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development. Shulman (Clarizio et al. 1973, p. 221) explains that Bruner not only wants the material explained at the child's level: he also wants the child involved with it. The assignment of meaning brings about a richer life-world of meaningful relationships. This aim, however dynamic, may be distinguished as an essential objective for development. The Gestalt of meanings discovered and assigned by the child is of primary importance. Hamachek (1975, p. 24) says: '... man is influenced and guided by the personal meanings he attaches to his experiences'. This is a serious matter, a challenge to an educator to guide and support the child in this endeavour.

3.3 ADEQUATE SELF

The child starts off weak, ignorant and completely inadequate. All he has is the potential, and the will, to overcome obstacles and meet challenges. He has almost everything to learn – how to observe and recognise, how to grip and handle objects, how to coordinate eye with hand,

hand with hand and hand with mouth. To communicate, he has to learn a language from scratch. Later on he has to learn to read and write, to solve mathematical problems and to make deductions. One is struck by the child's phenomenal capacity for learning – how soon he recognises his mother's voice, feeds and dresses himself, walks and talks. This almost insatiable need to be adequate must be fed with experiences of success. All the child's actions are intentional '... and, to the degree that they're successful, they can leave a child with a happy sense of efficiency, of being good at something' (Hamachek 1975, p. 57). The experience of success is the beginning of self-esteem.

As the child experiences success, a sense of confidence and efficiency is born. The sense of adequacy motivates the child to explore and to take risks. The experience of adequacy heightens self-esteem and self-acceptance and helps to establish a positive self-concept.

The self-concept is enhanced by every intentional assignment of meaning and every achievement of a skill. The research of Morse (1963, p. 50) in the U.S.A. clearly shows that this experience of adequacy is not natural or inevitable. He found that the statement 'I feel pretty sure of myself' drew the following response from scholars: 12% of the third graders and 34% of the eleventh graders say "unlike me".

Adequacy is experienced when the child realises this is me – this self-identity – acting competently, running fast, getting high marks and being praised and applauded by others. A healthy self-esteem does not demand outstanding success in every field. The proportion of successes to failures will vary, but we may be sure that the child will show greater confidence in fields where he usually succeeds than in those where he succeeds less often. The attitude of an educator (parent or teacher) may also lead him to interpret failures, not as 'I have made a mistake' but as 'I am a failure'. This destroys the self-esteem and self-acceptance essential to an adequate self. The danger is that the child may know his own identity, i.e. that he is somebody, but may experience himself as inadequate or a person of no account.

It is obvious that an educator must help a child establish an adequate self. It is the respected educator whose praise the child values. Consistent acceptance from people like these support him in maintaining his identity and developing into an adequate self.

3.4 BELONGING

Education demonstrates that each child depends on specific people for his survival, growth and maturity.

Amongst these people are his parents and teachers and also other

family members, relatives and members of peer groups – the people Sullivan calls 'significant others'. The child needs to experience belonging to these people. Belonging is characterised by love (mother for child) and friendship (in a peer group). Researchers like René Spitz (1945, 1946) have shown that children deprived of love lose even the will to live.

For the child there is no neutral position in his relationship with 'significant others' (especially parents). If they do not love and accept him, he experiences rejection. Since he fears this more than anything else, a great deal of anxiety results when he does not experience enough security – including emotional security – and acceptance. This sense of belonging is essential if he is to maintain his identity: it provides the secure base from which he can explore and achieve self-realisation. The secondary school child, who is embarking on new levels of self-realisation, needs a new base also. He will risk domestic peace and quiet for the sake of acceptance from his peer group. Self-maintenance in an accepting peer group frees him to tackle new obstacles to self-actualisation. The child who is not accepted by the people and groups he values becomes so engrossed in self-defence that he has little attention and energy to spare for current problems. He therefore finds it difficult to develop an adequate self.

It is up to the educator to give the child a sense of belonging and of increasing emotional security. This attitude determines the quality of the relationship, not only during education but in everyday life.

The pre-school child

4

The pre-school child

- 4.1 Introduction 65**
- 4.2 Bases of relationships which the child forms 66**
 - 4.2.1 The physical basis 66
 - 4.2.2 The psychological basis 67
 - 4.2.2.1 *Cognitive powers* 67
 - 4.2.2.2 *Affective powers* 69
 - 4.2.3 The social basis 71
 - Language as a medium of communication* 72
 - 4.2.4 The cultural basis 72
- 4.3 Forming relationships 73**
 - 4.3.1 Relationships with parents 73
 - 4.3.2 Relationships with peers 74
 - 4.3.3 Relationships with objects 74
 - 4.3.3.1 *Spatial relationships* 74
 - 4.3.3.2 *Temporal relationships* 75
 - 4.3.3.3 *Quantitative relationships* 75
 - 4.3.4 Relations with himself 76
- 4.4 The child's life-world 77**
 - 4.4.1 Meaningful relationships 77
 - 4.4.2 Conditions for self-actualisation 77
 - 4.4.2.1 *The need for achievement (competence)* 77
 - 4.4.2.2 *The need for love and esteem* 77
 - 4.4.2.3 *The need for understanding* 78
 - 4.4.2.4 *The need to belong* 78
 - 4.4.3 The child in his life-world 79
- 4.5 School-readiness as a developmental task 80**
 - 4.5.1 Physical development 81
 - 4.5.2 Psychological development 81
 - 4.5.2.1 *Cognitive powers* 81
 - 4.5.2.2 *Affective powers* 81
 - 4.5.2.3 *Conative powers* 82
 - 4.5.2.4 *Moral powers* 82
 - 4.5.3 Social development 82

CHAPTER 4

The pre-school child

4.1 INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to classify a child's development into generally accepted periods or phases; the criteria used by various authorities differ too much. Besides, children, too, differ so much that no complete positive correlation can be made between chronological age and physical or psychological maturity. Socio-economic conditions, and the educational differences these imply, are a further reason why no universal classification or phaseology is possible.

As we have seen, a broad classification into primary school and secondary school phases has been found practicable. The preceding and subsequent phases – pre-school and post-school – are indicated where necessary.

The pre-school period can also be described as the period between the ages of two and six. The child's development on all fronts is phenomenal. He very soon succeeds in holding his bottle, following moving objects with his eyes, recognising his mother's face and voice, etc. – all indications of psychological and motor development. Deliberate communication, characterised by *smiling and 'making sounds'*, starts at about two months and becomes more effective as he learns words and eventually speaks fluently.

At the age of two a normal, healthy child can walk and talk effectively. His involvement with his world is very clear at this period. He is confronted by a multitude of problems and challenges, so that his exploration by manipulation becomes a threat to the adult. The home must be made *child-proof*. The pre-schooler walks, runs, rolls. He gazes at his world, surrenders himself to it. (On our television screens during April-December 1978 Heidi gave us an incomparable demonstration of wonder and involvement.) This wonder at and involvement in all that he

experiences through his five senses are the child's route to understanding, establishing relations and structuring a known life-world. He grows physically, establishes better communication with people, and his psychological abilities during this period (2-6 years) make possible an ever greater intentionality. Each child grows up in a given cultural ambience, and he assigns meaning within this ambience. All these relations are achieved with educational help. Our next step will therefore be to study the physical, psychological, social and cultural bases of a child's development to adulthood. This chapter will also deal with the relations a child forms and their significance for self-actualisation – more particularly the significance of play and of school-readiness as optimal developmental task.

4.2 BASES OF RELATIONSHIPS WHICH THE CHILD FORMS

A child is always totally involved in forming relations. These are formed between the child as one pole and the referent as the other. To understand the development of relations we must take a look at the foundations on which they are built.

4.2.1 The physical basis

Growth takes place in the child's skeleton, muscles and nervous system. Cartilage becomes bone; the bone hardens. The muscular system changes. Up to the age of four, muscular growth more or less keeps pace with the growth of the body as a whole; but after that the muscles grow much faster, so that some 75 per cent of the five-year-old's weight consists of musculature (Mussen et al. 1969, p. 283). At this time the major muscles develop more rapidly than the smaller ones, so that the child is better at general movements than at fine coordination. Development of the neuromuscular system forms the basis of psychomotor skills and sets the pace for manual skills. The four-year-old can run, jump and even skip fairly well. He has enough spatial orientation and control of his movements to draw figures, but he is more successful at drawing a circle or a cross than a star or diamond. The five-year-old has better muscular control and can jump or skip with fluent motions. Usually, muscular coordination is confined to the major muscles: he can run, climb, balance, push and pull. Better coordination is needed to throw a ball properly, and this is usually not achieved until six years of age; but individual differences are considerable.

Physiological changes enhance the child's powers of endurance. He

becomes capable of more strenuous activities. His heart-beat slows down and stabilises; blood pressure slowly rises.

The nervous system grows rapidly during these years. At six years of age, the mass of the child's brain is ninety per cent of what it will be in adulthood (Mussen et al. 1969, p. 283). Myelination of the nervous tissue in the brain is usually complete by the age of six.

The child now has a better grasp on life and becomes more resistant to diseases, but unless immunised he is still very susceptible to infectious diseases.

This physical state and psychomotor competence determine the quality of relationships demanding physical skill.

4.2.2 The psychological basis

Since the child's psychological capacity increases with maturity, we need to make a broad assessment of what it is in early childhood. It is this that enables him to form relationships. This capacity matures, not only by development but by effective interrelationships with the world in which he grows up. We need to distinguish cognitive, affective and conative powers and also verbal articulacy. The child learns language and develops psychologically in relation to other people, and we are explicitly concerned with the level of these abilities in the presence of such interaction.

4.2.2.1 Cognitive powers

Researchers, especially Piaget, have tried to characterise the functioning of the child's cognitive powers, and we shall be drawing on these results. The period two to six years of age is called the period of pre-conceptual cognitive functioning. The transition from the preceding period to this one, and from this to the next, is a gradual one and individual differences are always operative. Bearing this in mind, we may distinguish the following characteristics:

- (a) The child is still mainly concerned with his *immediate surroundings*. He has difficulty in judging or comparing objectives and situations that are remote in time and space.
- (b) The child's thought is largely linked with *action*: language is slow to become operative. As his command of language increases, language symbols as well as actions become a medium for thought.
- (c) The child probably thinks in *images that represent specific people, objects or situations*. As a result, the child has difficulty in classifying things. He sees his playmates as individuals; it takes time before he

can speak of boys and girls. Luria and Yudovich (1966) found that an increase in functional verbal articulacy also helps the child with activities usually seen as non-verbal, for instance jigsaw puzzles.

- (d) Because of this way of formulating things, we could call the child's mode of thinking *transductive*. He thinks from the specific to the specific. He is incapable of generalising by inductive thinking. This transductive thinking is clearly in evidence when a child relates everyday events or explains or elaborates something. An example: a child was given a container with wooden shapes consisting of cubes, balls and prisms. Half of these were red and the other half blue. The child was asked to take out four blocks that looked alike. This specific child produced a red cube, a red ball, a blue ball and a blue prism. The argument was that numbers one and two had the same colour, two and three the same shape and three and four the same colour again. The child could not isolate a universal characteristic. Since the child cannot arrive at an abstract concept by inductive thinking, he uses transductive thinking to form preconcepts that do constitute a general idea but are linked to perceptual characteristics.
- (e) *The child's observation and thought are strongly centred.* Observation is centred on a single characteristic, area or sound. If a cylinder half-filled with water is shown to children of this age and then emptied into a wide bowl, they will be inclined to think that the bowl contains less water than the cylinder. One reason for this is that the child's attention is centred on one characteristic – the height of the water level.
- (f) *The child has difficulty in attending to more than one relation at a time and makes no effort to be consistent in his opinions.* He may assert today that a lake is a hollow filled from a tap, tomorrow that it is filled by rain and the next day, once again, that it is filled from a tap.
- (g) *There is little logic or direction in a child's thought.* He struggles to distinguish between cause and effect. There is the child who said, 'I feel sick because I didn't go to nursery school.'
- (h) *The child's thought is strongly animistic:* lifeless objects are readily personified. He assumes that an object feels, wills and acts like a human being, and so one gets pronouncements like these: 'The chair bumped me'; 'The tree got hurt'; 'My doll is crying'.
- (i) *The child cannot mentally compare different relations.* A child was asked: 'How many brothers have you got?' He replied, 'Two – Alan and Mike.' 'And how many brothers does Alan have?' 'One'. He tends to omit himself. It is difficult to see that if Alan is his brother, he is also Alan's brother. He has difficulty with all interrelationships such as bigger and smaller, left and right, north and south, friend and

enemy. Such distinctions are difficult because his thoughts are centred: only one person or characteristic at a time can serve as a criterion.

We can understand the relations a child forms and how he forms them only if we bear all these points in mind.

4.2.2.2 *Affective powers*

The small child experiences emotions such as love, fear, anxiety, anger, jealousy, grief, joy, etc. The intensity of these emotions will of necessity influence the forming of relations. A child's emotionality follows a characteristic pattern. *The child has strong emotional ties with his environment.* so that situations are affectively experienced. Temper tantrums reach a climax between the ages of two and four: after that anger begins to be expressed in a more mature way.

But the level of emotionality remains high, and *the way he expresses emotions like love, pleasure, frustration or anxiety shows how intensely they are experienced.*

Educational help is essential if the child is to gain control of his emotions.

(a) CHARACTERISTICS OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

(i) A child's emotions are *fleeting and variable*. We all know how rapidly a child can switch from crying to laughing and vice versa, which expresses a wide range of emotional experience.

(ii) *Fear*

The pre-school years mark the climax of specific fears. The child fears the dark, imaginary dangers like giants or dragons, and also people and animals which seem to threaten him. What he sees is a potential danger. As he grows older and understands better – and if he receives the right educational support – he learns to discern that not all of these dangers are a threat to him personally.

– Lively, intelligent, uninhibited children appear to have more imaginary fears, probably because they are unusually sensitive to danger.

– Girls generally show more fear than boys. This is also more acceptable socially.

– Children who are in poor health, or hungry or tired, are more prone to fear than healthy children.

– Children subject to violence at home show more fear than children from tranquil homes.

– Individual differences and the quality of education are dominant factors in a child's experience of fear.

Of course, frightening situations become rarer as the child matures intellectually, simply because he is better able to understand and distinguish.

(iii) *Anxiety*

Fear arises from an objective source which, even if imaginary, is real to the child. Anxiety, on the other hand, derives from a subjective problem he cannot solve, e.g. real or imagined inability to perform a task.

– Anxiety depends on an ability to picture a situation that is possible but not yet actual. For this reason anxiety does not normally appear until school-going age is reached. After that it persists for the rest of a person's life.

– Anxiety is characterised by nervousness, depression, irritability, moodiness, restless sleep, quick-temperedness. The anxious child feels insecure.

– Anxiety occupies the child's awareness to such an extent that he is either restless and hyperactive or else withdrawn, unable to concentrate or to feel interest. Anxiety inhibits exploration and the readiness to take risks.

– Secondary anxiety-based problems like stomach-ache, headaches, enuresis and other psychosomatic complaints, like the rest of the manifestations and experiences, tend to occur towards the end of this period when the child is ready for school. This is the time to attend to them.

(iv) *Anger*

– Anger is experienced when the child feels frustrated or inhibited. A child easily becomes enraged when other children take his things, particularly toys, or when other children or adults interfere with his play or expect him to interrupt it and do something else.

– Anger responses may be impulsive – expressed as aggression – or they may be inhibited, characterised by withdrawal, escape and various forms of apathy. As the child's command of language grows impulsive responses like screaming, hitting, kicking, biting, spitting, etc. are increasingly supplemented or replaced by verbal responses.

(v) *Love*

Love is expressed in hugs, stroking, kisses and a general contentment and relaxation that may also be expressed in words. Affection for parents and others is the most common form. The child may also show affection for his toys. A neglected child may express great affection for a toy that replaces the parent. Physical expressions of love grow rarer as the child grows older; they now embarrass him. Especi-

ally after he goes to school he considers himself too old for such demonstrations and will not even kiss his mother when she drops him at school.

(vi) *Joy*

- A healthy child is naturally happy and contented. The small child is often exuberantly happy; he will laugh, shout and express himself in motor actions like jumping, rolling, clapping his hands, etc. This exuberant delight often occurs in situations involving playmates, especially when his exploits exceed theirs. The child is happy when he succeeds and feels accepted. A predominance of the pleasant emotions, like affection, love, joy and cheerfulness, are essential for normal growth to adulthood. They indicate, and enhance, the experience of security.

4.2.3 The social basis

Only in the company of people he esteems can the child effectively mature. Parents and other educators provide essential educational support. His peer group enables him to practise the norms assimilated from adults. In pedagogical terms we speak of pedagogical togetherness and pedagogical encounter. Togetherness must become a relationship where they realise they belong together. There must be fellowship as well as encounter between educand and educator. For self-actualisation the child needs to meet and be with his peers as well as with others whom he esteems (even when this is not a pedagogical encounter *per se*).

We now need to ask: *what are the marks and conditions of the encounter between the child and others?* We must remember that the small child has already experienced a good deal of educational intervention and approval. What is at issue now is future fellowship and encounter. The following aspects may be distinguished:

- (a) The child (person) encounters another person *by means of his body*. Apart from physical contact, friendliness is expressed through the eyes, facial expression, gestures, etc.
- (b) Fellowship and encounter become easier if the child's behaviour *coincides with accepted social norms*.
- (c) The child's *readiness to co-operate*. Up to four years of age, a child's play is largely egocentric; only after this age does he play *with* others. Even if he does not succeed in co-operating, willingness is vital. A generous child will be accepted.
- (d) The child's *eagerness to be accepted*. Where this urge is a natural one, the child is prepared to sacrifice his own wishes in order to be accepted, especially vis à vis his peer group. This deference to others

- (whether educator or peer group) eases encounter and fellowship; but when it becomes an obsession, it inhibits them.
- (e) *The child's verbal articulacy.* The child is by now talking well, and this becomes increasingly important as a medium of communication.

Language as a medium of communication

During the period two to six years of age the child usually learns to *talk fluently* and becomes ready for school in this way also.

His speech may be classified into *egocentric* and *socialised* speech. Egocentric speech gradually becomes socialised, but for a great many reasons there is no specific age barrier between the two. Egocentric speech is indulged in for the pure pleasure of talking: little communication takes place, since no ideas are exchanged. It resembles a monologue, and its value lies simply in helping the child to become more articulate. Egocentric speech or monologue may occur in adults also. Socialised speech is intended for communication, in addition to other forms of communication. The child speaks to other people, conveying a message to them, and he receives a message in return which he understands because he knows the language.

The meaning of effective speech. The sooner the child starts speaking, the better. The child who starts later probably learns faster, but he misses out on speaking practice that promotes fluency. Language as a communication medium plays a major part in the forming of relationships: it also serves as self-expression. The child can ask questions and express wishes. A child who is slow in learning to talk experiences a good deal of frustration which may be expressed in undesirable ways like aggression. The early talker, on the other hand, attracts the kind of attention that results in good social adjustment, and pedagogical dialogue is also better understood.

The more one talks to a child, the more effective his speech and vocabulary will become. Baby-talk inhibits this development. A child's speech is developed by encouraging him to speak correctly.

Speech problems are varied – slight problems that cause little difficulty, or serious handicaps that are difficult to remedy. They are often accompanied by emotional problems.

4.2.4 The cultural basis

A baby is born into a specific culture. The objects he encounters – clothes, bed, bottle, toys; later on furniture, tableware, etc. – are cultu-

rally determined. The care and affection he receives also have a cultural component. The child is educated to acceptable behaviour patterns and moral norms. His behaviour will also typify the subculture to which his parents belong. These behaviour patterns prepare him for further educational influences.

4.3 FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

The child is born into a world of meaning. *How does he himself assign adequate meanings to his world and to the people and objects in it?* Because of his own involvement he can only find a place in the world in so far as he understands it. Once the child begins to understand, a relationship is formed which may be ineffective and may be improved through greater involvement. The surrounding world can be divided into broad categories: *people* (parents, family members, peer group); *objects* (all the objects he comes into contact with); and *ideas* (concepts that concern his dealings with the world and make these possible). We must also take a look at the child's relations with *himself*.

There is an enormous difference between the child of two and the child of six, and this difference extends to the way he forms relationships. This, the nature of the relations and their effect on his development, will show a dynamic progression and can therefore not be described exactly, but as a progression reaching its culmination before the school years begin. The small child is one who starts by walking, then learns to run, jump, climb and delight in all kinds of motor activity. In the healthy child, sense perception is already well developed. He can see, hear, feel, smell and taste, but he does not have the experience to interpret it properly. His thoughts are concerned with concrete reality; with mental pictures and the concept of action. They are also transductive and strongly centred. Emotionally he is labile, but with educational help he learns to control his feelings. The child longs for security and loving acceptance and he longs to give love in return. Along with all his expressions of delight, he is easily overwhelmed by fear. He likes to play, and his use of language is functional enough for meaningful dialogue.

4.3.1 Relationships with parents

By this time the child knows his mother well. *Because of the consistency of her behaviour, she remains an anchorage point or beacon* for the forming of further relationships. A healthy relationship will be characterised by

love, security, self-giving acceptance, trust and esteem. The parent who knows his/her child not only *sees* and *hears* the child but also *feels*, and through this *empathy* knows what the child needs. The knowing, feeling and willing is mutual. The child knows the parent, who does not always succeed to hide his/her feelings. The child also quite easily understands the parent's intentions concerning himself. The polarisation effect of a healthy relationship is attraction. Even if the parent were to reject the child and feel estranged, the child will for a considerable time approach the parent. He is emotionally bound to the parent in such a way that separation brings pain. A child who feels accepted and secure can leave his parents on occasion with far less tension and anxiety, because he is secure. This certainty of acceptance is very important for a child's development, because he can venture and explore without fear of separation from the parent.

4.3.2 Relationships with peers

Up to the age of four the child's language and play are largely egocentric, but he greatly enjoys being with his peers. Between the ages of four and six, communication with playmates teaches him the beginnings of sharing. The urge to be accepted helps him control his own feelings and will.

4.3.3 Relationships with objects

Such relationships in his physical world depend on his ability to assign meaning to the concepts of space, time and quantity in regard to the concrete world.

4.3.3.1 *Spatial relationships*

The child's understanding of objects depends directly on the *permanence of their meaning* for him. When his ball rolls under the chest of drawers, he knows that it has not changed or disappeared, and he makes meaningful efforts to retrieve it. He is aware that his physical environment includes more objects than he has an immediate use for. He can picture familiar but absent objects and compare these with objects he can see. He can give a meaningful answer to a question like 'Does this car look like your father's car' (which is not present)? 'Is this car the same colour as your father's?' 'Is this dog bigger or smaller than yours?'

The mental images the child works with, and their relationships, are still primitive. He may know that the large aeroplane next to him is the same as the 'tiny' one high in the air, but space and distance are confusing and he finds it difficult to deal with *permanence of size* in relation to an increase in distance. This ability increases rapidly as he becomes older and more experienced. He becomes better at spatially structuring his world. This is important, for it enables him to take up a stance in regard to objects and their size relative to himself, for example. Spatial orientation, especially in regard to position, size and distance, makes accurate perception possible. A child with problems in spatial orientation has difficulty in distinguishing between left and right, above and below, before and behind, inside and outside. He mistakes shapes – for instance, confuses 'b' with 'd'. Exercises in perceptual development, especially at nursery school, are vital to the child's readiness for school. Most children achieve spatial orientation before they go to school: their relationships with objects in space are authentic. A boy knows, for instance, that he must run further to get to a stone ten metres away than his friend must run to a stone five metres off.

4.3.3.2 *Temporal relationships*

The child has problems with temporal orientation because he cannot understand that time proceeds at a constant pace, independently of himself, his wishes and his needs. His conception of time is very diffuse. The half-hour he spends waiting for a playmate is much longer than the half-hour they spend together. Only after the age of four can the child begin to form an idea of the constancy of the time indicated by clocks and calendars. He often develops his own time units, e.g. 'three sleeps to go before my birthday'.

To form relations with the world, then, temporal as well as spatial concepts are necessary. At first because of centring and egocentric thought, the child's concept of time relates only to himself, his needs and pleasures. Towards the end of the period a time concept according to a chronometer and calendar develops. The *permanence of time* begins to dawn on the child, also the connection between time and distance. He begins to realise that to run around the block twice takes longer than to run around once.

4.3.3.3 *Quantitative relationships*

If a child can count up to ten, this does not necessarily mean that he can

conceive of the number ten. A conception of quantity is born of much experience. According to Piaget and Inhelder (1962) the child considers that quantity changes along with shape. Everyone has heard of the classic experiments with clay. The child thinks the clay becomes less when its shape is changed from a long snake to a ball. Only when the *conservation* or *permanence* of volume (quantity, number) despite changes in colour, shape, etc. dawns on him can the child form authentic relations in this regard. On such evidence as the reports of the 'Head start' project in the U.S.A. it is still doubtful whether this sense of the conservation of space, time and quantity can be speeded up.

A child's concept of his physical world is a function of the unique interaction between the child and his environment, experience, needs and ideals. He makes no attempt to understand space as space or quantity as quantity. The concept appears as a part of his interaction with people and objects, and individual differences bring about a difference in the quality of these relations.

4.3.4 Relations with himself

The child's relations with family members and objects and his identifications with parents and others have resulted in a fairly well-defined self-identity. He knows himself – his name, sex, appearance, etc. Though he cannot express it verbally, he knows who he is. This identity formation is dynamic and continuous. Father's or mother's clothes are put on and their behaviour copied. The imitations are real and convincing, and a number of roles are tested. As a self-identity takes shape, the need to test roles diminishes.

The self-concept is supplemented by evaluating the burgeoning identity. Acceptance by parents, family and playmates brings self-acceptance. *Self-acceptance brings self-esteem*. This positive self-image is a precious assurance that he matters – is adequate and capable of exploring his world. The evaluated self-image has a clear *tendency to action*. A positive self-concept is largely the outcome of loving, caring, accepting education within clearly defined limits. It enables the child to forget himself (his own identity), and to take risks, to explore and to form relations. He becomes selflessly involved and successfully assigns meaning. As Canfield (1976, p. 4) says, a positive self-concept is a better indication of success than a high I.Q.

4.4 THE CHILD'S LIFE-WORLD

4.4.1 Meaningful relationships

It is essential for a child to orient himself in relation to his world; and for this purpose he must understand the significance of the people, objects and ideas in it and also of himself. Involvement with this world is possible only if he has formed meaningful relationships and in this way constituted a life-world. Knowledge of the world implies an effective assignment of meaning, and this calls for educational support and explanatory teaching. Meaning is enhanced by the constant assignment of meaning, and this is made possible by an increase in effort. This, too, calls for support to enable the child to participate in and take responsibility for his own development. Involvement in the attribution of meaning heightens the effectiveness of relationships by enhancing their meaning and by leading to pleasant experiences.

4.4.2 Conditions for self-actualisation

The child initiates relationships; these give him increased control of his world and let him actualise his potential. The needs of the child are a precondition for growth to independence. The following are a few of the important needs:

4.4.2.1 *The need for achievement (competence)*

A child must experience being in control of at least a part of his external world and being able to achieve success in it. The satisfaction of this need for achievement calls for increasing involvement in tasks and with the objects he encounters. Spontaneous praise even for small successes is another prerequisite. If others accept his achievements, he can accept them himself and go on to further achievement.

4.4.2.2 *The need for love and esteem*

A child must know that his people love him and consider him important; that he and his affairs matter to them. He needs loving caring adults who provide security and a feeling that he is valued.

4.4.2.3 *The need for understanding*

The child urgently needs understanding from his adults. His educator must be patient and must try to understand what he is after, even when he makes mistakes. The child may not be able to formulate this need, but it is a vital one all the same.

4.4.2.4 *The need to belong*

Togetherness is one of the indispensable pedagogical requirements. The child needs support and security. Support gives the child a feeling of belonging ("ons-heit" German "Wir-heit"). His mother does not have to be at home 24 hours a day: it is the quality of the parent-child relationship that matters.

These needs must be satisfied if further relations are to be formed and an adequate life-world established. There are other conditions for the quality of the relationships:

(a) GENETIC POTENTIAL

The child is an open energy system (Gordon) with the possibility of making choices and one who can transcend any substantive limit or characterisation. But the child with hereditary limitations – motor or perceptual – will be handicapped in comparison with others. These handicaps will show up in all his relationships.

(b) PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

A child who has experienced success in his explorations will show greater confidence in further exploration.

(c) EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

A child's self-esteem will be greatly influenced by acceptance, rejection or spoiling, and this self-concept, high or low, will tend to produce the corresponding behaviour. A child forced into the defensive by rejection will not expose himself to risks. The inferior scope and quality of his life-world will derive from a poor self-concept.

4.4.3 The child in his life-world

We can only speak of individual life-worlds. A common life-world would be so attenuated as to have little empirical meaning.

Education is of incalculable importance for a child's psychological development, which in turn affects his self-image and relationships. Different factors predominate with different children. Pedagogical influence can be seen in all the relationships a child forms at this age, and his life-world reflects the assimilation of educational support.

Mussen et al. (1969, p. 372) give the following description of Baumrind's interesting research. A study was made of the predominant method used by three groups of children in establishing a life-world. A study in depth compared the nature and quality of the parents' educational methods with the children's personality traits, which reflect their dominant means of forming relationships. (Results only are provided.)

Characteristics of the nursery school children from group I: This group was the most mature, competent, contented and self-reliant. They were realistic, confident and controlled, showed curiosity about the world, asserted themselves and got on well with other people.

Characteristics of group II: Self-control was fair, but they were relatively dissatisfied, insecure, afraid, reticent, distrustful, uninterested in peer groups and inclined to react either hostilely or regressively in tense situations.

Characteristics of group III: These children were immature and extremely dependent, had little self-control or self-confidence and tended to shirk new or tense situations.

The following data emerged from intensive idiographic research into the educational pattern followed by the three groups of parents:

Parents of group I: They were stable, warm and loving, conscientious and reassuring in their attitude to their children. The children's independence and decisions were respected; the limits of education were clearly defined and motivated. In structured situations the parents exerted strict control and required a high level of achievement. At the same time they gave more support than parents from the other groups. They succeeded in exerting control without provoking either rebellion or apathy.

Parents of group II: Their involvement in their children's education was poor. Control was firm and punishment common, but loving support was lacking. Communication with the children left much to be desired. They rarely tried to persuade the children to take a right view of things, nor were the children encouraged to express their opinions.

Parents of group III: These, like group I, were warm and loving, but their control of their children was poor. Little was expected of the chil-

dren, especially in terms of independent action. Discipline was lax; the children were over-protected. Independent behaviour was not explicitly encouraged. As nursery school pupils these children were immature, dependent and lacking in self-control.

A child's readiness to explore his establishment of relations and of a life-world, are best promoted by parents who give a great deal of love and support, enforce educational controls, and respect and encourage their children. Such parents give their children the best pre-school preparation for self-actualisation.

A vital factor in the life-world of a small child is *play*. At the start of this period, *play is largely egocentric*. Children play alongside each other rather than together. Towards the end of this phase they play together contentedly. In this way they get to know not only one another but also the world of objects. The child's greatest pleasure is the activity, especially the shared activity. He learns to use his strength and skill and also how to obey rules – even though the rules are often arbitrarily changed. While play is voluntary, there is considerable identification with toys, so that a favourable climate is created for the solution of personal problems. Van der Zeyde (1963, p. 159) explains this as follows: in playing, the child has no need of secrecy, and this promotes mental hygiene. Mussen et al. (1969, p. 411) quote Erikson as saying: "To play it out" in play is the most natural self-healing measure childhood affords.' As a result, various authorities advocate the treatment of children's problems by pedagogical play action (Van der Zeyde 1963, Erikson 1964, Jackson and Todd 1950).

4.5 SCHOOL-READINESS AS A DEVELOPMENTAL TASK

School-readiness refers to the child's total readiness to benefit by formal education in a group context. School-readiness is not directly linked with chronological age but with the child's level of development. Readiness for school includes maturity, which is directly linked with biological, neurological and motor development. Maturity refers to the physiological growth that takes place when the child is physically fit and receives the right feeding and care. Readiness refers to the child in his totality, who has achieved a level of independence in his relationships that enables him to meet the requirements of school with a minimum of tension and exertion. In this connection we may distinguish physical, psychological, moral and social levels of development.

4.5.1 Physical development

This includes general health, the development of the body and motor development.

- (a) The child must be well enough to have the energy for his school-work.
- (b) He must be able to run, jump, climb and perform rhythmic actions in a controlled way. He must also be capable of finer coordination, e.g. fastening buttons, making bows, handling a pencil or scissors, and sitting still for protracted periods.
- (c) He must have achieved lateral preference and spatial orientation so as to distinguish between up, down, in front, behind, etc.

4.5.2 Psychological development

A child's level of cognitive, affective and conative development permits him to do his schoolwork independently.

4.5.2.1 Cognitive powers

He can see, hear, smell, feel and taste properly.

He is able to memorise shapes, numbers and names.

He recognises people, objects and situations.

He can count up to five – often further

Language is well developed so that he can communicate, understand instructions and listen to a story.

He is able to group objects according to colour or shape.

He is capable of laying down rules and detecting (ir)regularities.

He is ready to learn to read, write and calculate.

4.5.2.2 Affective powers

His emotional life is still very labile.

Outbursts of anger are rare.

Emotional expression is controlled.

Emotional experience plays a considerable part in cognition.

He is full of interest and enthusiasm for objects and phenomena.

His achievements give him intense pleasure.
He is cheerful and lively.
He is prepared to share the affection of teachers with others.

4.5.2.3 Conative powers

He wants to learn and achieve.
He wants to go to school independently.
He wants to associate with his peer group and can keep his own wishes in abeyance.

4.5.2.4 Moral powers

Being morally aware, he is prepared to try and do a task as it should be done.
He can adjust to the rules of a game.

4.5.3 Social development

He is ready to go to school without help from the family.
He is ready to form relationships with teachers and school-mates.
He plays with school-mates.
He is prepared to share toys, interests and attention with others.
He can identify with significant others but also with characters from stories.

The primary school child

5

- 5.1 **Who is the primary school child? 85**
- 5.2 **What are the developmental tasks of the primary school child? 88**
 - 5.2.1 Introduction 88
 - 5.2.2 The mastering of physical skills necessary for play 88
 - 5.2.3 The formation of a sound attitude towards the self 89
 - 5.2.4 Learning to get along with friends 89
 - 5.2.5 Learning the appropriate sex role 89
 - 5.2.6 Mastery of the basic scholastic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) 89
 - 5.2.7 Learning everyday concepts 90
 - 5.2.8 The forming of the conscience, morality and scale of values 90
 - 5.2.9 Stability of personal independence 90
 - 5.2.10 The development of attitudes towards social groups and institutions 91
 - 5.2.11 The forming of a self-concept as developmental task 91
- 5.3 **How does the child realise developmental tasks? 92**
 - 5.3.1 Introduction 92
 - 5.3.2 The relation between the child and his parents 93
 - 5.3.2.1 *Introduction 93*
 - 5.3.2.2 *Love 94*
 - 5.3.2.3 *Research results regarding the effect of the parents' attitude towards the child 97*
 - 5.3.2.4 *Parent-child relations and the cognitive development of the child 99*
 - 5.3.2.5 *Synopsis 100*
 - 5.3.3 The relations of the child with his peers 101
 - 5.3.3.1 *Conditions for acceptance in the peer group 101*
 - 5.3.3.2 *Developmental tasks in the relations with the peer group 103*
 - 5.3.3.3 *Functions of the peer group 104*
 - 5.3.3.4 *Synopsis 106*
 - 5.3.4 The child's relations with objects and ideas 106
 - 5.3.4.1 *Introduction 106*
 - 5.3.4.2 *The primary school child's cognition 107*
 - 5.3.4.3 *Synopsis 111*

5.3.5	The child's relations with himself	112
5.3.5.1	<i>The nature and meaning of the self-concept</i>	112
5.3.5.2	<i>Development of the self-concept during the primary school years</i>	114
5.3.5.3	<i>Characteristics of the child's relations with himself</i>	115
5.3.5.4	<i>Components of the teacher-pupil relation advantageous for a positive self-concept</i>	116
5.3.5.5	<i>Synopsis</i>	119
5.3.6	The child's relation to the Lord	119
5.4	The life-world of the primary school child	120

CHAPTER 5

The primary school child

5.1 WHO IS THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD?

Between the ages of six and twelve the child usually attends the primary school. This is a very extensive category which depends entirely on practical organisation. The difference between a standard five pupil ready to leave the primary school and a grade one child who has just entered the school is enormous. There is obviously no typical primary school child. In our consideration of these children the focus is on the development they all undergo from grade 1 to standard 5.

We are likewise kept aware of the fact that during this period the child can only fulfil his self-actualisation with educational support.

The child who enters school for the first time moves away from the sheltering home and the ever present mother to the peer group and community. He enters a world where the criteria for acceptance are physical abilities and neuro-muscular skills. He also enters the rational world. Here he is expected to understand because concepts, symbols, logical systems and the modes of communication of the adult world are presented to him, albeit in a simplified form. The child who wishes to become an adult, desires to move away from the safety of the home physically, intellectually and socially in order to explore the unknown. The parent should facilitate this by assisting him to move away from the home without anxiety. The school provides ordered, adult formal systems with which the child can form relations.

At the beginning of this period the child is pure possibility – waiting to be realised by the developing power of his body and mind. As we have said, the healthy, balanced child has confidence in his mother, his family and in himself. This basic trust remains a developmental component which develops further during the primary school years. The child already has a great deal of independence. This is in fact one of the criteria

for school-preparedness. This qualified independence with which the child enters school can and should only be developed with educational support. The educator (parent or teacher) should only expect as much independence as the child's sense of responsibility can support. The pre-school year or two is characterised by activity for the sake of the pleasure of activity. This *activity continues in the primary school* although the child is now *capable of ordering and structuring the activity in rule-governed games* and of enjoying it.

A new feature of personality development emerges with the coming of the primary school years, viz *task completion*. The child is now prepared to listen to instruction and to persevere with a task until it has been completed. Erikson (1950) calls it the era of "industry, duty and accomplishment". This willingness prepares the child to stay occupied with a task until it has been completed. The experience of pleasure on completion of a task paves the way for the ability to find pleasure in labour.

The educational support which the child needs in this respect is indispensable. He must experience appreciation, encouragement and praise with every attempt that may lead to success. A very real danger during the early primary school years is the possibility of developing feelings of inferiority and inadequacy that may suppress his attitude of daring.

In the child of approximately six we recognize new drives and hankering that direct him in his self-development. He wants to play with friends. He is prepared to sacrifice the independence of his will to be able to play with others. Thus new dimensions are added to his involvement. An involvement testified by task completion is evident. He wants to complete whatever he is doing. A year earlier he gave meaning to his will by measuring it against new demands from one moment to the next. He is now *prepared to subject the autonomy of his will to the need for task completion and the pleasure of accomplishment*. Once we understand the situation we realise that the child now experiences meaning on a higher developmental level. It becomes important to him to employ his autonomous will in the service of the new meaning. He decides to stay occupied until he has finished. The way towards the child's future involvement in task completion is paved by the educator who determines the length and degree of difficulty of each task, supports the successful completion and praises his success.

The language competence of the child is such that he *can communicate*. He can listen, understand the instruction and follow the story. When going to school he already possesses a certain general knowledge, thanks to the involvement of educators and his daily experiences in a particular culture. He already knows a wide variety of concepts and functions. The healthy child's *cognitive functions* such as awareness, per-

ception, recognition and memorising, recollection and understanding have already developed to such an extent that they can be *directed towards learning skills*.

We recognise the primary school child as someone who is sufficiently independent to be able to move away from the protection and safety of the home and who wants to become involved in his peer group. He is interested in and wishes to be involved in the activities of adults such as reading and writing.

The six year old who goes to school does not do so in order to play. He wants to work and to revel in the experience of task completion. Many a teacher knows of the child's disappointment if he does not receive a reader on the first day.

In the child's search for meaning he has to begin by discovering *who* and *what* he is. *Self-identity* appears during his association and interaction (dialogue) with people and events that are important to him. When Brennicke and Amig (1971, p. 40) say that "significance is the realization that you are part of all that is going on, that life includes you" it means that man only finds meaning in life in his relation to others and in the manner in which he understands himself.

The child's main task is to discover and assign meaning to everything he is involved with. In this manner relations are formed and a life-world is established. Attention will hence be given to the child's relation to others, to things and to himself.

The significance attribution which leads to the forming of relations takes place with educational support and this continuously makes new demands on the educational support needed to assign meaning in order that such relations may develop.

The physical development of the primary school child continues gradually. Increase in height and mass and the appearance of typical sexual features become evident. Boys become more masculine and girls more feminine not only in forms of dress but also in forms of conduct until secondary sex features appear at the onset of puberty.

The child's increasing *powers of co-ordination* are of special significance to his development. His co-ordination is directly linked with his success in school and in the peer group. Co-ordination manifests itself in reading, writing, running, jumping, cycling, etc. Changes in co-ordination are characterised by an increase in complexity. *The criterion is efficiency*. Success is the criterion for acceptance in the group and an awareness of a body image emerges depending on the fact whether or not the body enhances or hinders acceptance in the group. Individual differences lead to great deviations (both positive and negative) from the average.

5.2 WHAT ARE THE DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD?

5.2.1 Introduction

It is only possible to characterise the primary school child if it is also possible to observe the development of his independence. Therefore the empirical educationist has to find criteria of comparison for determining the advancement of the child and for determining the characteristics of each stage of development.

The uniqueness of the individual has already been emphasised. Genetic make-up determines the initial differences between individuals. Biochemical individuality remains (such as finger-prints) and even increases in uniqueness as a result of perceptual idiosyncracies in the midst of cultural experiences.

Despite this fact it is also true that two children born at the same time in different parts of the world have more common characteristics with each other than differences from each other. *Commonness and uniqueness are not mutually exclusive.* Within certain cultural communities where the same values and ideas are considered valid and where similar organisations and situations exist, children will display many common attitudes, convictions, and linguistic and behavioural patterns. Children have to master many common educational skills within this primary school phase.

It has already been said that the child gradually manages to move his safe basis from the home to the peer group. He goes to school to meet the demands of the school. The community expects a great deal of independence, and subsequently, responsibility from him. In his endeavour to hold his own in these situations the following developmental tasks may be distinguished (Havighurst 1953) as they emerge from the physical, psychological, social and cultural basis we have been dealing with.

5.2.2 The mastering of physical skills necessary for play

The child who goes to school at the age of six gradually plays more *with friends*. He is accepted in the age group if he can conform. A prerequisite for this identification is that he should be able to run, kick, climb, etc. like the others. This requires physical development and muscular co-ordination. The age group sets relentless standards. Their play is such that each member must be able to run, jump, etc. The mastering of basic physical skills required for play is a developmental phase

that renders more difficult and complex skills possible. Efficiency is the measure at each level of development.

5.2.3 The formation of a sound attitude towards the self

The child has to learn to wash his face, take care of his clothes and to be neat. The establishment of such good habits requires much monitoring, encouragement and support. These habits are valued in society and demanded by the school. If the primary school child masters these habits successfully they become automatisms.

5.2.4 Learning to get along with friends

He no longer plays *alongside* others but *with* others. He must make friends and suffer enemies. His desire to get along with others is so strong that he forfeits the autonomy of his will and his sole right to his toys. He learns to play according to rules that imply fairness in the game. His success depends on physical skills and personality traits. The child who experiences difficulty in mastering these skills often develops scholastic problems. The teacher should be aware of this.

5.2.5 Learning the appropriate sex role

During the early school years there is little difference between the physical drives and abilities of boys and girls. In the senior primary phase differences that manifest themselves during adolescence, become evident. From the early years a boy is taught to act like a boy and a girl to act like a girl.

During the early years of group identification not much notice is taken of the other sex. Boys especially, consider it humiliating to look or act like girls. Being a sissy means being rejected. The actualisation of the sex role is closely linked to the identification with the parent (or other important adult) of the same sex. The shortage of male teachers poses a real threat to the sound development of boys.

5.2.6 Mastery of the basic scholastic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic)

The particular task of the primary school is to teach the basic skills. Children do not acquire these skills at the same tempo, but towards the

end of the primary school years automatisms should have been acquired in the three R's.

Not all children develop a complete mastery of the basic skills. Many learning problems are related to a poor mastery of reading, writing and calculating.

5.2.7 Learning everyday concepts

In the school and in society at large the child communicates with other children and adults and thus learns a vast number of concepts. General concepts such as *animal, food, square, round, red, traffic, anger, love*, etc. are functional at an early stage.

It may happen that a child uses any number of concepts abstracted from too small a sample of concrete examples. Consequently these concepts are impoverished and have a limited applicability.

5.2.8 The forming of the conscience, morality and scale of values

The child learns from an early age that certain forms of conduct are accepted and others not. He learns that certain acts meet with an approving *good* and others with a reprimanding "*bad/naughty*". As he grows older he learns that *good* and *bad* are norms of conduct irrespective of the presence of the parents. The internalisation of the norm eventually comes from the child. "One should not do this." By identifying himself with the examples of his educator the child comes to accept the norms as his own; to form a scale of values and to activate his conscience. This system of values and these conscious ethical norms are manifested in his behaviour and this makes him acceptable in his community. He displays a preparedness to give more than he claims for himself and as a result he is acceptable to his friends.

At home, and especially in the school, his conduct should reflect ethical norms as matters of fact. Lying, stealing, the use of abusive language, ill-manneredness, aggression, etc. are unacceptable in any decent society. For this reason the establishment of ethical norms and a scale of values is a developmental task which is indicative of self-actualisation.

5.2.9 Stability of personal independence

The child should become an autonomous person who can plan and take the responsibility for his decisions without depending on parents, teach-

ers and other educators. This independence becomes evident when the small child starts to walk, eat, talk, etc. Physical independence which enables him to go to school is followed by psychological independence. On the cognitive level the child assimilates ready knowledge in school of which the parents may know less. This body of knowledge gives the child a measure of authority to make decisions independently from the parents. In the peer group he has to make many decisions. It is expected of him to make decisions that do not concern his parents. He has to join team A or team B, take first place or last place, etc. He has to free himself from his identification with his parents to such an extent that he is capable of making such decisions independently.

The child's geographical freedom increases: he wanders further afield and stays away longer without any anxiety. Later he may even spend the night at the homes of friends. Psychological independence increases to such an extent that during adolescence he realises that his parents also make mistakes and that he may differ from them without injuring their dignity.

The primary school child's strong drive towards activity requires sufficient freedom of movement. He should be able to wander out of sight of parents or friends and to return of his own accord without feelings of anxiety.

In school the child should be given the opportunity of experimenting with alternative methods, of making his own arrangements both in school and after school.

5.2.10 The development of attitudes towards social groups and institutions

The grade one child has as yet no fixed attitudes towards social groups. By the end of his standard five year he has definite attitudes towards his church, race, school, etc. and towards groups with which he does not identify himself. Apart from pro or con attitudes he has also learnt the nature of attitudes such as respect, awe, contempt, etc.

5.2.11 The forming of a self-concept as developmental task

When the child enters school he is already linguistically competent. His successful relations have already contributed much to a clear evaluation of his identity. He knows his name and sex: he can recognize his image in a mirror or on a photograph and he is conscious of any number of his attributes.

On going to school the child constitutes new relations with his age

group, with his teachers and with things. The effect this has on his self-concept depends on his experience of efficiency, adequacy and success. The image the child forms of himself is related to his skills (Havighurst 1953). His self-acceptance is related to his control of his world (Gordon 1969). *The child's self-acceptance is directly linked to his being accepted* by his parents, friends and teachers (Coopersmith 1967). His physical skills contribute towards a positive body-image (Shilder 1935).

The crucial question concerning the self-concept is: What is the personal meaning of the child's experience? (Gordon 1969). From an objective point of view the child's assigning of meaning may seem incomplete and erroneous. For the particular child, however, it is absolute, real and true. He will protect and nurse this self-image and it will remain the source of reference for his relevant future decisions and experiences.

Developing the self-image during the primary school years is an almost super-human task. The purpose is a complete reorganisation of the personality structure around the self (Ausubel 1954). Because of the dynamic nature of the self-image it may rightly be considered to be the moderator-variable of the personality (Vrey 1974).

The child's own expanding constituting of relations that depend on significance attribution and orientation in a world with others interacts with his self-image. Because of the change in experiences and increasing orientation in his life-world the self-concept only stabilises when adolescence is reached (Douvan and Adelson 1966).

5.3 HOW DOES THE CHILD REALISE DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS?

5.3.1 Introduction

From birth the child has to try orientating himself towards the world into which he has been born. He finds himself in a community of people and things. To these he has to assign *meaning*. Orientation depends on certain fixed points that may serve as points of reference in his future exploration of the world. The initial anchorage points are the mother, the physical environment which includes all the things he knows, and his own self-image. The initial naive meanings are obtained through the child's own involvement. His experience of his mother's care and devotion indicates his involvement: on the strength of his experience he can anticipate the mother's pampering at the sound of her footsteps. The nature of initial meanings depends on affective experience therefore these meanings are emotionally coloured.

It may be stressed that the child assigns meaning, i.e. he forms relations because he is *involved* in certain situations. He is a participant. He replies when he is spoken to, laughs in reply and evokes reactions from adults (or things) by his actions. The bigger the child, the bigger his conscious involvement in the educational event and the communication with friends. His involvement with things can be seen in his handling and manipulation of these. The primary school child is often reprimanded: "Look with your eyes, not with your hands." Even for the smaller child the lounge has to be made *child-proof*: fragile objects have to be placed out of reach.

Only during the primary school years can the child perceive without manipulation. The pre-school child can become intensely involved when listening to a story (e.g. Little Red Riding Hood). It is by means of the senses and bodily activity that the child becomes involved in significance attribution that leads to the forming of relations. By means of these relations developmental tasks are actualized. The specific act of involvement takes place through handling and manipulation, observation (seeing, hearing, feeling), communication. The child can only become involved if he wants to be involved.

5.3.2 The relation between the child and his parents

5.3.2.1 Introduction

The parent answers the child's cry of distress, regardless whether he be an infant, primary school child or high school child. The parent gives meaning to the cry and knows what to do even if this means withholding help in a case where he knows that the child must be given the opportunity of making his own attempt. This kind of help and support is called education. The relation between parent and child is more extensive than the educational relation because the parent is not continually educating (Van Praag 1950). The associative relation forms the pre-formed field for the educational relationship (Langeveld 1957). It should always be possible for an educational relationship to emerge from the parent-child relationship. This means that the educational relation is intrinsically given in the parent-child relation. Montagu (1953) claims that love is the most important component of human nature. We know from experience that love is the most important attribute of the parent-child relationship.

5.3.2.2 *Love*

The relationship between parent and child is based on love. This quality of the relationship will always be significant in the child's involvement. In the relationship between mother and child the features of pedagogical love can best be identified. This does not mean that parental love is identical to pedagogical love.

It is quite possible that – because of love for the child – the parent may over-protect or spoil the child. This can lead to a wide variety of pedagogical implications. “The opposite does not hold: where pedagogical demands are met, love cannot be totally absent” (Oberholzer 1972, p. 111). This means that if the association of parent and child is such that pedagogical criteria are met, pedagogical love is a pre-condition for the possibility of such an event.

Anyone who uses the word *love* intuitively assigns meaning to it. To come to grips with this concept in scientific terms it is necessary to describe it in distinguishable terms. We shall make use of Erich Fromm's (1956) description. We shall identify the following components of pedagogical love: knowledge, care, respect and responsibility. Each of these will be discussed separately.

(a) KNOWLEDGE

A relationship of love requires that the participants know one another. Parent and child should know one another. This does not presuppose an objective, denotative description of the one by the other. Knowledge means more than intellectual insight. The one should experience the other. The parent is involved in the child's weal and woe. The mother interprets the baby's crying and, later on, its coughing, restlessness, shyness or rebelliousness. For this she needs little objective knowledge. The parent's involvement leads to a co-experience of the child's experience. The parent gives meaning to these co-experiences in an empathic manner.

Likewise the parent cannot hide his dissatisfaction, aversion or unhappiness from the child. The child “senses” this. He also has co-experience of the parent's moods and emotions. In his dealings with the child the parent dares not put his best foot forward. Similarly the child cannot pretend to be what he is not, in the presence of his parents. Without this mutual intuitive knowledge and empathy parents and children cannot love each other.

Should the parent be too busy or have too many other interests to create a conversational situation where the child can reveal himself

or unburden himself to someone who understands, the child retreats – and the parent will no longer know him.

If the parent is unable to evaluate the needs and hankerings of the child for what they really are in terms of the child's own experience, the love relationship between parent and child will be severely hampered.

The primary school child no longer wants to be cuddled on the parent's lap. The parent should appreciate the child's growing independence and give him his support. He even finds it embarrassing to be kissed by his parents in the presence of his peers. The parent who knows his child, is not concerned about this. He knows that the child is struggling with his own emancipation and his identification with his peer group and that, as yet, he is unsure of the requirements of this new loyalty. The parent therefore supports him and facilitates matters for him by not expecting him to kiss his mother at the school gate.

If the child develops problems at school it is often very difficult for the parent to distinguish between illness and shamming; between indolence and inability or between real injustice and a mere need for letting off steam. Knowledge of the child is only possible if the parent lives with the child and not merely alongside him.

It is a common occurrence during the primary school years that the child will rather do what the teacher expects of him than do what the parents expect of him – should there be a difference. It often happens that the child refuses to wear a jersey because his friends do not wear jerseys. This is not disobedience; he also has to obey the authority of the teachers and that of the peer group. *In the peer group he has to earn his acceptance.* On the other hand he knows that *at home he is accepted for what he is* and not for what he does. The parents still accept him even if – in his emancipation – he moves further away from them.

(b) CARE

Knowledge of the other person goes hand in hand with care. *The one should care about the other; be concerned about his well-being, health, joys and sorrows. Love can also be taken to mean: I care for you and I am concerned about you. Therefore I want to know how you are and what is happening to you. Furthermore: It hurts me when you get hurt. I feel and share your joy, your sorrow, your enthusiasm, your loss and your confidence. In fact, you matter.*

Care is much more than the provision of food and clothing. The

parent guards over the welfare of the child even when the child thinks that he does not need it. The mother steps back and gives the child the opportunity of carrying his own burden. Parental care is not reduced; it becomes more reserved. The child should experience neither over-protection nor rejection. The opposite of care is indifference.

(c) RESPECT

A third facet of the relation between parent and child is respect. There is no fear and subjection, only appreciation of the uniqueness and self-being of the other. True respect has no need of humiliation or ridicule or assault on the integrity of the other. Respect means the acceptance of one by the other for what he is in an active, positive sense. Respect implies concern and that one wishes the other nothing but the best. Respect demands that you should be you and not a type of reflection of me. You should be recognized as "you".

Respect implies the recognition of the uniqueness and integrity of the other without wanting to shape him according to one's own image. The parent who happens to have been an accomplished sportsman or scholar often finds it difficult to accept that his child does not meet his expectations. Pedagogical love requires *respect for the dignity of the person* – my child – even though he might be retarded or handicapped.

(d) RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility implies the willingness to respond; to answer the distress cry of the other; to assure him that his needs, distress and hankerings will be taken care of. The parent of the primary school child retains the full responsibility for the welfare of the child and for the educational support he needs. Because he loves him, he accepts this responsibility. On every level of development new demands are made on the parent's responsibility. The primary school child is away from home for several hours every day. This requires that the parents retain and adjust their responsibility even though the child is not under their supervision. Another facet of the love relationship between parent and child which Fromm considers to be present implicitly, i.e. trust, can best be discussed separately.

(e) TRUST

A particular developmental task for the infant is to trust the mother. He has learnt to depend and rely on her sameness, stability and her continuous provision of his needs. Trust is earned the hard way and only gradually. It is obvious that trust presupposes knowledge. If the child is to trust the mother he should know the mother. This knowledge is obtained during the mother's involvement in his dependence. Trust depends on his internalisation of the continuous sameness of the mother's consolation and provision in his distress. This experience of trustworthiness, dependency and stability fosters the child's trust so that he surrenders himself to the parent without effort or anxiety. The perception of trust leads to such generalisation that it includes his personal behaviour and the functioning of his body. Eventually the child develops trust in himself. Trust implies belief, a belief that what took place once will take place again. As the child believes in the consistency of the mother, he gradually comes to believe in his own ability to do things on his own: eat, dress, cycle, reach the school, do homework etc.

Trust is a basic prerequisite for sound and satisfactory interpersonal relations. Love does not thrive without trust. Trust is a pillar that supports love. The primary school child should retain his conviction that his parents trust him. Should the parent's trust be shaken by the child's telling lies, they should take the initiative to regain his trust rather than calling him a liar. Trust engenders trust. Pedagogical love means trusting the child to embody the norm presented to him. The parent who trusts his child, does not act on the assumption that the child is always doing something wrong. He does not police him all the time.

5.3.2.3 Research results regarding the effect of the parents' attitude towards the child

Having analysed the love relation between parents and children we may look at research results with regard to the effect of parental behaviour on the child. We have already considered dimensions of love as constructs with measurable components. However, investigators in this field all give their definitions of love.

Investigators (Mussen et al. 1969, p. 485) are agreed on some points. "Thus most studies suggest that hostility on the part of the parents tends to produce counter-hostility and aggression either in feelings or behaviour on the part of the children. Similarly restrictiveness tends to foster

inhibited behaviour while permissiveness encourages less inhibited behaviour." Hostility is not an unambiguous construct. A parent may be both hostile and indulgent. In such a case the child would be able to do what he likes as long as he did not bother the parent. Should he expect certain things from the parent he would meet with hostility. The other possibility is that of the parent who continuously enforces restrictions. Since two distinguishable forms of behaviour can be defined in this case, it is possible to determine the effect of such behaviour on the child. Becker (1964) came to the conclusion that both forms of behaviour evoke aggression from the children involved. The child of the hostile and indulgent parent gives direct expression to his aggression without any restraint. The child of the hostile and demanding parent expresses his aggression in *safer* areas such as among friends, especially smaller ones. More often the aggression is inhibited or directed towards himself or it becomes manifest in internal conflict. These children are not apt to direct their aggression towards the parents in spite of the fact that they are the primary source of their feelings of aggression and hostility.

The exercising of parental authority is also one of the qualitative determiners of the parent-child relation. Research is, however, made difficult by the problem of coming to grips with certain relevant concepts. One such term is *permissiveness*. It is not easily definable and definitions often have emotional overtones that impede objective handling. Coopersmith (1967) conducted highly significant research. His experimental design is described efficiently; his results are meaningful and his inferences logical. He studied primary school children and reports as follows on the matter of authority: "... individuals who are reared under strongly structured conditions tend to be more, rather than less, independent and more creative than persons reared under more open and permissive conditions." Coopersmith (1967, p. 187) is of the opinion that strict parents who state educational rules clearly and who enforce them, supply children with answers that eliminate uncertainty, doubt and anxiety. Such children also know how to act in order to secure maximum success.

The implication is that *unequivocal educational boundaries are advantageous for self-realisation*. When authority is exercised the child is often confused. He may only be able to report on a hiding as being painful and unpleasant. Significance is usually only attributed in context to this experience in the course of time. For this reason a retrospective view of such events gives a better indication of how they were experienced. Vrey (1974) established that adolescents with highly positive self-concepts hold the conviction that they deserved the punishment that their parents administered.

5.3.2.4 Parent-child relations and the cognitive development of the child

The controversy between the exponents of heredity vs. environment as the primary determiner of human behaviour, becomes irrelevant when we are concerned with the learning child. It goes without saying that heredity plays a role but so does the environment that makes the child's experiences possible. The child's basic or potential cognitive ability is hereditarily determined. We shall, however, not discuss this here. The question is whether the relation that the parent maintains with his child enhances or impedes his cognitive development. If we assume that nothing restricts the optimum functioning of the senses or the central nervous system, it is valid to say that intellectual development depends on the efficiency of the opportunities for learning.

Breckenridge and Vincent (1968, p. 285) say: "The effect of parents upon intelligence is one not only of hereditary potential to the child but one of parent-child relationship." Sigel (1960) also found that the child's cognitive ability is significantly influenced by his relationship with his parents. McCarthy (1954) has indicated that speech development is strongly associated with positive interpersonal relations. Newland (1960) claims that there is a correlation between speech (language) development and the child's identification with the mother (who teaches him to speak). Irwin (1960) established that babies aged between 13 and 30 months who had had books at their disposal and who had regularly heard stories had a more extensive vocabulary after the age of 17 months than did others who had not had such care. The child who assigns meaning to the mother's voice must have had certain experiences which he associated with the voice. The tone of the voice becomes meaningful and so do the words later on when they are repeated.

The evidence suggests that the wholesome development of the child depends to a large extent on the parent-child relationship. Breckenridge and Vincent (1968, p. 258) claim that the opposite also holds: "Serious and prolonged deprivation of learning opportunities, especially in infancy and early childhood, seem to result in permanent damage to intellectual growth which even a rich learning environment in later years can only partially improve. Even though children are usually in formal school by 5 years of age, the best school cannot make up for earlier serious deprivation."

While the child is in the primary school the parent will assist him with his homework; he will supply additional experiences and he will remain involved in the child's learning - thus developing his cognitive abilities. This involvement is indicated by the parent's sharing of the child's fail-

ures and successes. Support and encouragement incite the child to participate more fully and help him to develop a more realistic perspective on his experience. Encouragement and support are of paramount importance to the child's personality development. Vrey (1974) found that significantly more adolescents with high self-concepts than ones with low self-concepts ($p < 0,05$) testified to the fact that they received praise from their parents on their accomplishments even when they hardly deserved it. Likewise significantly more of those with high self-concepts than those with low self-concepts ($p < 0,001$) said that their parents had taken an active interest in their school activities and after school programmes.

We may now refer to the handicapped child, in whose case the situation is much more topical. The parent of the blind, deaf or brain-damaged child must genuinely accept him. Both rejection and over-protection will impede the optimum development of the child's possibilities.

5.3.2.5 *Synopsis*

For a pedagogical study of the maturing child the parent-child relationship is of primary importance. The child is dependent on parental care from the very beginning. Care is but one of the components of love. Because of the intrinsic interrelationship between care and other components, care must be undertaken with love. We have discussed the meaning of love in the parent-child relationship and we have given examples obtained from empirical research of the effect of this on the primary school child.

Education takes place during the stabilisation of the child's relations with his parents. They confront him with norms that encompass all facets of life. He develops sound attitudes towards himself. Habits of cleanliness, decency etc. are strengthened by means of reprimand, encouragement and praise until they become automatisms that are part of the child. The parent is responsible for conveying the features and functions of the appropriate sex role. The appearance of a boy with feminine traits can often be attributed to the quality of the parent-child relationship. From the child's earliest days the parent associates certain acts with being "good" or "bad". This gives rise to conscious ethical norms which the child internalises. Eventually he does or refrains from doing according to the meaning he has given to that value as norm. It then becomes "one does not do this" instead of "mommy says one should not do this".

The parent should facilitate the child's task of becoming independent by loosening his hold gradually and deliberately. While the child is being

accompanied by his parents, their conduct is his model for handling situations, people and groups. He learns for example that one wears one's best clothes to church and that one does not talk in church. If the child is accepted and respected he will accept and respect his self-image.

The quality of the parent-child relationship remains the prerequisite and the climate for the parent's supporting him in his becoming independent. It enables the child to give meaning to it, to accept it and to internalise it.

5.3.3 The relations of the child with his peers

5.3.3.1 Conditions for acceptance in the peer group

A peer group is an intimate and select group. Admission depends on mutual choice. Status within the group is a function of the group's values and the individual's role in it. Not all children belong to a peer group or to the group of their choice. The question arises: What are the conditions for admission to a peer group? We shall discuss a few factors.

(a) INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence in itself is not a criterion for acceptance in a group. Gronlund (1959) could find few direct links between intelligence and the degree of acceptance in the peer group. One does, however, get the impression that peer groups are formed by children of similar intellectual abilities. It may, of course, be the case because such children share the same interests. Naturally it is difficult to isolate intelligence as the only variable in a test situation of this kind. Both Torrance (1963) and Long et al. (1967) have indicated that the highly creative child is usually considered the black sheep and is not accepted.

(b) FAMILY BACKGROUND

As far as could be ascertained (Gordon 1969) broken homes do not have an adverse effect on the child's acceptability in the peer group. This is also the case in respect of only children and the ordinal position of children in the family. The influence of educational practice is felt in all cases of personality development. A friendly and jovial

child is much more acceptable to the group than one who is aggressive, unfriendly, uncommunicative and introverted.

(c) **SOCIAL CLASS**

The subculture in which the parents live is a dominant factor in the child's acceptability to the peer group. Sociometric investigations reveal that children of the same social class usually flock together.

(d) **APPEARANCE**

The child's appearance has prestige value. Tryon (1943) found that especially girls who are attractive, are more easily accepted in the peer group than the "ugly ducklings".

(e) **PHYSICAL SKILLS**

Physical skill is a criterion that includes or excludes potential members unconditionally. The child who cannot walk, run, climb or do tricks with the others in a group where these skills are high on the list of values, is not acceptable. Bodily activity and motor skills are very important to primary school children of both sexes. It is not before adolescence that social skills and emotional acceptability take priority (especially among girls).

(f) **PERSONALITY TRAITS**

Various investigators (Gordon 1969) have found that acceptability in the age group is enhanced by characteristics such as friendliness, cooperation, daring, enthusiasm, emotional stability and trustworthiness. On the other hand there is a strong correlation between a hostile attitude and rejection by the group.

(g) **THE SEX ROLE**

In the primary school and especially in the senior primary phase there is great solidarity among boys and among girls.

A girl is not acceptable in a boys' group and vice versa. This re-

quires that the child should know its sex role. A girl may still play an ambivalent role of girl and tomboy but the boy who is a sissy is not accepted by his mates.

5.3.3.2 Developmental tasks in the relations with the peer group

Having discussed developmental tasks and having discussed the conditions for acceptance in the peer group, we now turn to a discussion of the developmental tasks that the child has to realise in his relation to the peer group.

(a) PHYSICAL SKILLS

The child's physiological maturation and his socio-psychological relations must be such that his playmates will accept him in the group on the strength of these abilities. Requirements in respect of skills become more complex as children grow older. Self-realisation is geared to the mastery of physical skills.

(b) GETTING ALONG WITH PLAYMATES

The child must get along with others successfully. Personal whims must be sacrificed or at least be kept under control. The child must remain friendly in spite of unfriendliness towards him; he must retain his emotional stability in spite of adversity in order that his dignity as a person may remain unaffected.

(c) EXPRESSION OF THE SEX ROLE

The child must automatically express the typical modes of conduct that are highly valued in the particular culture.

(d) PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE

The primary school child leaves the safety of the home and whilst orientating himself he ventures into this unknown world. He must be physically and physiologically capable of moving about on his own. Psychologically he must be prepared – in spite of a measure of

anxiety – to let go of his parents' hand and to value identification with the group higher than his attachment to the home. He has to take increasingly more decisions for which he also has to accept responsibility. In the peer group he is given the opportunity of acting independently.

5.3.3.3 *Functions of the peer group*

Belonging to a peer group is extremely important to the child. An example of this was reported in the press recently. A fifteen year old London school girl committed suicide reputedly because her peer group would not accept her. The child fears nothing as much as rejection – albeit rejection by his parent or his peers. For this reason he struggles for his emancipation with all his might. He conforms to his peers in every respect and identifies himself increasingly with them.

The significance for his development of his relation with the peer group may be stated as follows:

(a) A SAFE HOME

The child needs a safe home in order to actualise his significance attribution and orientation. In order to emancipate from the role of child as subordinate, the parental home as sanctuary is functionally replaced by the peer group as a basis of safety. Since he is accepted there he conforms to them in matters of dress, speech and conduct.

(b) ACCEPTANCE AND BELONGING

The acceptance that the child experiences in the age group enables him to accept himself (Coopersmith 1967). He feels that he belongs to the group and this adds support to his dignity as a person.

(c) THE GROUP OF EQUALS

In contrast to his *role as child* in the home he now finds himself in the company of equals. He can hold his own; he can meet his peers on equal terms and his opinion is regarded as highly as that of any of the others. In this position of equality and of dignity he can venture and experiment with the others.

(d) THE GROUP MEETS THE NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT

Among equals he is capable of achievement. Achievement is used here not in the sense of scholastic achievement but in the sense of justifiable self-assertion. He gets to know himself and evaluates his self-identity more realistically. The demands made on him by the peer group are at his level of competence, which is not the case when he moves in the world of adults. Physical, mental and social achievement is made possible. These experiences are necessary conditions for his self-actualisation.

(e) THE PEER GROUP AS POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR EMANCIPATION

By means of educational aid the child is confronted with norms. In his relation to the educator he identifies the norm with the educator. During emancipation – which is only adequately actualised during adolescence – the child learns that the educator is also subject to the norm.

In the age group all are equals and they have to conform to the norm to the same extent. In this community he has the opportunity of obtaining practice in independence during his development towards adulthood.

The child joins the group in order to obtain status, recognition and security. The age group functions in accordance with the needs of the members. It provides the information that interest the members – albeit on sexual matters or world politics – even though it may be slanted or false. This information is directly relevant to those personal meanings the member wishes to expand. Self-assertion and the development of the self-concept take place in the age group. The relation of the child to his peers which is characterised by identification and conformity is made possible by the fact that at this stage the child no longer sees the other person (the playmate) as an object that has to succumb to his whims, but as a person like himself with ideas and feelings like his own by virtue of which the playmate forms a relation with him and with many others. At this stage the child can also appreciate the other person's point of view without forfeiting his own. Only at this level of cognitive development is empathy possible (Smart and Smart 1967). Because of the voluntary identification with the age the group values are absolute and binding. Each member of the group must accept these values or face rejection. If the values of the teachers and the school coincide with those of the age group, striving towards scholastic achievement produces no

anxiety or tension. Should there be a notable discrepancy between the two value systems it would be an ill omen for the child's progress in school.

5.3.3.4 Synopsis

The age group is established rather spontaneously because of the fact that the child's needs, hankerings and expectations are not met in the world of adults. The child moves the safe basis of the parental home partially to the age group. There he expects and receives the support and encouragement as well as the required situation needed for practising the internalisation of norms of independence. An efficient relation with the playmates in the group and thus with the group as such is dispensable for development during the primary school period.

5.3.4 The child's relations with objects and ideas

5.3.4.1 Introduction

The child also has to orientate himself in a world of objects and ideas. Relations are formed by the assignment of meaning. This takes place to a large extent by means of manipulation and an understanding of the ideas. In the latter case language plays a vital part. The self is the centre of significance attribution. This can be seen clearly from the functional meanings assigned to things, e.g. a chair is "for sitting" and a spoon is "for eating". These definitions stress the functional relations that hold between the child and things. The "hyper" activity of the primary school child improves his muscular ability and co-ordination with the result that he increasingly assigns more efficient meaning to the things he climbs on, handles and manipulates. The initial meaning of what he can do with things and what they can do to him becomes more complex, but it retains its utility dimension. Especially when the child enters school the denotative meaning becomes more important. The personal meaning that a child gives to things has both a denotative and a utility dimension – and very often a dimension filled with affective overtones. These dimensions are integrated and have Gestalt qualities. As the child grows older the utility dimension becomes less prominent while the more objective denotative dimension gains in importance.

The child does not only encounter physical objects and people. As a person who lives among people he must have knowledge of concepts. We

agree with Ausubel (1968, p. 505) when he says “. . . , man lives in a world of concepts rather than a world of objects, events and situations.” Figuratively speaking, the world is experienced through a filter of concepts that need to be psychologically meaningful. The child has to orientate himself to concepts and as he assigns meaning to them relations are formed. In the performing of this task language plays an increasingly meaningful and important part. It follows that the child must know and understand the language, because the relations with things and ideas are primarily cognitive relations. When studying the child's relations with objects and concepts one is not concerned with the nature and quality of relations. The primary concern is with the meaning assigned to a concept. Because of the infinite spectrum of meaning – the world consists of all and sundry – we move the emphasis to: **HOW DOES THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD ASSIGN MEANING TO OBJECTS AND CONCEPTS?** We therefore need to take note in a concise manner of the characteristics of the cognitive abilities of the primary school child.

5.3.4.2 The primary school child's cognition

When the child enters school, his language development is such that he can communicate effectively. His vocabulary is large enough to follow the teaching. The senses of the healthy child have developed almost to their optimum. He can see, hear, smell and taste. Perceptually he can assign meaning to sensations. Abilities such as memorising, recognition, integration and differentiation are already adequate. This makes cognition at a high level possible.

(a) CONCRETE OPERATIONS (PIAGET)

Attention must be paid to certain features of cognition since they are recognisable as means of orientation. According to Piaget the primary school period is the period of concrete operations. An operation may be defined concisely as an act of thinking. The child is now able to apply logical ways of thinking to concrete problems such as “concrete” objects and events. He is still incapable of solving hypothetical problems that are totally verbal. This is only attained during adolescence.

The most important feature of logical operations is the designing of schemata (= representation images) by means of ordering and classification. Improved concepts of causality, space, time and speed can now be observed. Logical operations are internalised cognitive activities that enable the child to reach logical conclusions.

These logical operations are directed by cognitive activity and meaningful and structured representations/images rather than dominated by perceptions – as is the case with smaller children. These logical operations that can also be described as representations of meaning or structured knowledge have developed from earlier structures by means of assimilation and accommodation. These operations should not be seen as the result of significance attribution as though meaningful representation images were fixed and available for later use. Piaget stresses the fact that operations always have these four features: (1) An operation is an action that may be internalised or executed – mentally or physically. (2) The action is reversible. (3) Any operation presupposes a measure of conservation. Conservation is the schematisation that the quantity remains the same regardless of changes in shape or position. His ability of conservation enables the child to comprehend that the quantity of plasticine remains the same irrespective of the fact that it may be modelled in the shape of a ball or a “snake”. Likewise the quantity of water (e.g. 50 ml) remains the same when it is poured from a wide bowl into a cup or into a narrow tube. Ten cents remain ten cents regardless of the arrangement of the coins. (4) An operation is never isolated. It is always related or attached to a system of other operations. During the primary school period these operations become logical operations i.e. they meet all four criteria. Reversability implies that the child is able to understand converse processes such as adding vs. subtraction and multiplication vs. division. Conservations of various measurables do not appear simultaneously. According to Piaget (1969) successes with conservation are reached in the following order: matter, numbers, mass, volume, length. By the end of the primary school years the child handles these concepts successfully, but the problems that he is capable of solving are concrete in the sense that his operations are conceptualisations of a piece of plasticine, ten bottle tops, a volume of water and the like.

(b) SERIATION (ORDERING IN SERIES)

This is one of the operations the child is able to perform at this stage. The pre-school child can compare objects by actually arranging them. The primary school child understands that if $A > B$ and $B > C$ then $A > C$. He is capable of keeping one variable constant and comparing the others to it. He can arrange objects according to a representation.

(c) CLASSIFICATION

The primary school child can classify according to more than one dimension at the same time. Criteria may exclude one another. Animals could for instance be divided into a class of carnivorous animals and a class of unguolata. Both these classes could be sub-divided into wild and domesticated animals for example. In this manner sub-classes may be identified that share features common to both major classes. The part played by classification and induction in the formation of concepts as logical schemes is obvious. The primary school child – a fanatic collector of anything he comes across – also classifies. Initially he classifies according to perceptual criteria; gradually he turns to more abstract criteria.

Numbers are concepts inferred from the operations of classification and seriation. A cardinal number is a class. Five means a class or set of five elements: bottles, bottle tops, persons, cars, etc. The ordinal number is a relation. *Fifth* stands in relation to *fourth* and *sixth* in terms of size and position. An understanding of *five* presupposes an understanding of *fifth* and vice versa. Classification and ordination are interrelated and both are indispensable in the forming of concepts, especially of numbers. These concrete operations which the primary school child performs depend on two cognitive processes which Piaget calls assimilation and accommodation.

(d) ASSIMILATION

By this process new experiences are included in existing schemata.

A small girl saw an ostrich in the zoo. Her response was: "Look at that big rooster!" On seeing this strange object she had scanned her schemata and the only one that corresponded to this novel stimulus was *rooster*. This is an example of how new experiences are integrated into existing schemata.

(e) ACCOMMODATION

When the child wishes to internalise new experiences, he tries to assimilate them into existing schemata. If they do not fit, these schemata are revised or new ones are formed. Both these cognitive processes are called accommodation. The child referred to in the previous paragraph would take a closer look at the ostrich and compare its features with those of a rooster. Differentiation would take place

as soon as she realised that the previous assimilation had been unsuccessful. Should she hear the name, the new scheme "ostrich" would be formed by means of accommodation. All experiences of ostriches could then be assimilated in the new scheme.

Accommodation is responsible for the formation of new schemata (qualitative change) and assimilation for the growth or development of existing schemata (quantitative change). The balance between assimilation and accommodation he calls equilibrium.

The primary school child who has to orientate himself in his environment must – by means of significance attribution, integration and differentiation – find a balance between accommodation (or the designing of new schemata) and assimilation (the incorporation of experiences into existing schemata).

(f) CONSERVATION

Personal security and the experiences of safety rest on the conviction that the parent's love and acceptance of the child will remain unchanged. This also applies to the intellectual province. The child has to distinguish between reality and semblance; between the appearance of things at any given moment and their realities. The masks of semblance on the physical, social and intellectual terrain should not eclipse the reality of the essence. This does not only apply to a spoon that seems bent under water but also to the parent who scolds the child not because he intended to do so, but because he had got a fright. For the sake of his orientation the child has to distinguish with conviction between constants and variables in the appearance of things.

Conscious of the importance of conservation, Piaget conducted empirical research to establish how the child distinguishes between stability and apparent change during his development. Piaget's general theory of cognitive development can be stated (in a simplified form) as follows: *The child discovers conservation permanence while there are observable changes by means of reasoning* (Elkind 1947). Piaget believes that man's knowledge of reality depends not only on his experience of reality but also on his reasoning concerning the nature of reality. Permanence cannot be presented. It results from one's own mental activity, one's own logic and one's own assignment of meaning. It cannot be obtained by sensory perception.

The parent and teacher can only guide and assist the child to make his own discoveries. When the child is encouraged to discover conservations and permanence he is assisted in establishing intellectual

security. This forms a new point of departure for relations with his environment.

With regard to the formation of concepts attention is usually focussed on the static or constant aspects of a concept, i.e. the criteria by which we recognise the concept through generalisation. The dynamic aspect of concepts also deserves attention. When will a particular example no longer be a member of the concept? When will a particular dog-animal no longer be a dog or a particular apple-fruit no longer an apple? This dynamic aspect leads to accommodation and supplements the scope of conservation.

(g) GENERALISATION (BRUNER)

Jerome Bruner (1959) describes the internalisation of experiences in terms of enactive, iconic and symbolic representations. For the primary school child iconic representation predominates. The child forms images of his experiences which are then organised in such a manner that manipulation is made possible. Generalisations formed on the strength of indiscriminate mechanical memorising "are the naked and useless untruth" (Bruner 1959, p. 185).

This statement by Bruner stresses the uselessness of mechanical memorisation *per se*. The reproduction of a memorised fact which the child does not understand or which he is unable to place in context is senseless. As far as the child is concerned, it does not have a single characteristic of truth. The relevance of concrete operations to image (iconic) formation indicates how Bruner's views are related to those of Piaget.

5.3.4.3 Synopsis

From our point of view where the emphasis is placed on the child's orientation in his life-world the formation of meaningful relations are extremely important. Piaget's concept of conservation is very relevant to the child who has to orientate himself. The child is confronted by changes daily. His world expands beyond the boundaries of home, school and community (by means of pictures, radio and television) and he has new experiences to which he has to assign meaning. Because he matures, he continually sees the world from new vantage points that appear as a result of an increase in physical, perceptual and cognitive functions. The child's ability to face the continual change is

founded on a conviction that there is stability.

Significance attribution is a central category in the life of the developing child. He is capable of making *representations* of his perceptual experiences *as he understands them*. These representations depend mainly on images which he organises in a logical manner in order to form generics by means of differentiation. These generics (generalised images) are concepts of which the scope widens as the child's experience with them increases. Gradually he handles and manipulates them better in his thinking. Significance attribution can only take place when the child is totally *involved*. Bruner stresses the active representation among small children and indicates further that internalisation of representations/images and symbols is accompanied by organisation (mental activity) in the formation of abstract concepts. Piaget emphasises the importance of mental activity when he refers to operations: "... the additions of two numbers, are actions characterized by their very great generality since the *acts* of uniting, arranging in order, etc. enter into all coordinations of particular actions" (Piaget 1969, p. 96). Significance attribution is only possible where there is mental activity demanding the involvement of the child. Each time the child assigns meaning to a situation he experiences success and satisfaction. These experiences give a unique character to the meaning he assigns to components of the situation or the situation as a whole.

5.3.5 The child's relations with himself

5.3.5.1 *The nature and meaning of the self-concept*

Apart from all the things the child has to get to know such as people, their attitudes, their behaviour and language, and all the objects that he might use or which might bar his way, he also has to get to know himself. This includes his body, his sensori-motor, perceptual and conceptual abilities. He gets to know himself through recognition but also in his relations with things and people. He applies subjective criteria to these relations for judging his own success.

The self-concept (the result of his relations with himself) is an integrated structure of perceptions, ideas and attitudes which the individual has formed of himself. The primary school child already has an established self-concept. In other words: he understands himself. His self-concept represents what he understands of himself. The self-concept is dynamic. It comprises perceptions and ideas concerning his developing body and maturing self, as well as attitudes towards himself

that are open to change. During his primary school years the child gets to know himself in a wide variety of new relationships. His conceptions of himself will not only develop and expand, they will also change both positively and negatively.

Experience moulds the self-concept but the self-concept plays a dynamic part in the choice of experience, the participation and the assigning of meaning to such experience (Felker 1974). The self-concept is important. It determines an individual's behaviour in a wide variety of situations. "The child indeed becomes that what he thinks he is" (Yamamoto 1972, p. 83). The meaning of the self-concept (a person's idea of himself) not only influences the quality of his involvement in situations but determines it to a large extent. Felker (1974, p. 7) has a three-fold view of the role of the self-concept: (1) The self-concept is the medium by means of which a person maintains inner stability. (2) The self-concept determines how experiences are interpreted (3) The self-concept determines the expectations the individual has of life.

The child does not enter the primary school with neutral experiences of himself. In his relationships with his parents and others he has already learnt that he is either good or bad/naughty; that he is accepted or rejected; that he has to fight for acceptance or hide from over-protection. He will therefore be inclined to behave in school in such a manner as to get confirmation of his ideas of himself. If the teacher should bring it to his mind unequivocally within the first few days that he is naughty, it would simply confirm what he believes of himself – and so he carries on.

The child who enters school with a negative self-concept is inclined to interpret all new experiences in that light. All the actions taken by a teacher will be interpreted negatively by the child with a negative self-concept – even though all the other children may interpret the action as highly positive. The self-concept is like an internal filter that gives meaning to all incoming perceptions or relates these to the person's idea of himself (Felker 1974, p. 9). A particular perception may be interpreted with either a smile or a frown – depending on the person's self-concept.

Since the self-concept is stable and since it is the person's conviction concerning himself, the person believes that all future experiences will be equivalent to this conviction of himself. One who accepts himself expects other people to accept him too and he acts accordingly. In order to maintain the stability of this self-concept he behaves in such a manner as to ensure the expected behaviour towards himself. Thus the self-concept is a determiner of behaviour.

5.3.5.2 Development of the self-concept during the primary school years

Since the self-concept is dynamic one should expect considerable changes and expansions of it following an increase in experience and ability. These changes are directly proportional to changes of relations with parents and the constituting of relations with teachers and play-mates. Because of personal involvement the development of physical and mental abilities will also play a meaningful part.

The variety of persons – first the parents, then the teachers and play-mates – who consecutively and intermittently act as models and evaluators contributes a great deal to the child's becoming independent. The "omnipotent" parent's role is now shared by the teacher. The child now disobeys the parent because "Teacher said so . . .!" The teacher becomes a better model because "She is prettier than mommy". Parental authority is also questioned as a result of the child's identification with the age group. If the mother should insist on his wearing a jersey he will defy her if the other members of the group do not wear jerseys. Achievements in sport and displays of manliness are highly valued in the peer group. This contributes significantly to self-evaluation.

The primary task of the school is its concern with intellectual activities. The child has to learn in accordance with the rules of the school and he has to stay occupied with cognitive activities in which he experiences success as well as failure. If possible he will avoid those subjects in which he is unsuccessful. Such an occasion arises in high school where he has to choose his subjects. Expectation of success in a subject is a more important criterion than the occupational possibilities the subject offers. At times he will create such an occasion by hiding in the wash rooms during a particular period or by playing truant.

The child's self-concept will develop in the primary school. It may be predominantly positive or predominantly negative. For the greater part it will develop unconsciously rather than consciously. One of the most important contributing factors in this respect is the challenge of designing a system for making a stand against success and especially for resisting failure and incompetence. As the degree of difficulty of learning tasks increases the child continually has to face up to the possibility of not being able to cope. The child who encounters problems in mastering tutorial material always regards this possibility of incapability a threatening monster. Since the child is involved in school activities for such a considerable part of his life, the school plays both a critical and decisive part in the forming of his self-concept. The child who develops a system that functions efficiently in the handling of his successes and failures,

may nevertheless constitute a very positive self-concept. The child who does not have such a system internalises every mistake and everything indicative of inefficiency into the self-concept – and the burden becomes heavier day by day.

The question arises: What can the teacher do to assist the child in this respect? (See Felker, 1974, p. 64.)

5.3.5.3 *Characteristics of the child's relations with himself*

The child's relations with himself are evident in his self-concept. This self-concept has particular features.

(a) *The self-concept is dynamic* (Rogers 1965; Combs and Snygg 1959; Sullivan 1973). The self-concept develops as the child grows older. It is always subject to change depending on the experiences of the person. During adolescence it probably reaches a measure of stability but until then it is dynamic.

(b) *Every individual strives at conducting himself in such a way that his behaviour resembles his self-concept* (Purkey 1970). The Gestalt of a person's self-conceptions is his self-concept. This self-image is his interpretation of himself. It is he. His spontaneous actions will necessarily be related to this interpretation. If a person underestimates himself and if he is convinced that he is not capable of success, his attempts at success will reflect this conviction. For this reason a person's behaviour is an indication of his self-concept. It will probably not always be inferrable unequivocally. In contrast to this equivalence of self-concept and behaviour, Festinger (1962) claims that dissonance, the mental condition of confusion, which indicates that someone is ill at ease, is caused when a person is forced to act in a manner which is incompatible with his convictions about himself.

(c) *There is interaction between self-concept and achievement.* We are not referring here to cause and effect but there seems to be a strong mutual relationship between these two phenomena. Barrett (1957) discovered in his investigation of talented children whose achievements were below their ability that feelings of inefficiency caused them to withdraw and to refuse to compete. Brookover (1965) found that changes in the self-concepts of children were related to corresponding changes in scholastic achievement.

Many investigators (cf. Purkey 1970, p. 25) have done research on the relationship between the self-concept and the experiencing of success or failure. They have found a significant drop in self-esteem among children who were under-achievers. Centi (1965) as well as many others have found that poor achievement leads to a lowering

of the self-esteem. Diller (1954) and Bills (1959) have found that successful achievement had elevated the self-concept of students.

These references confirm that there is a strong mutual relationship between a pupil's self-esteem and his successes. As yet there are not indications of which comes first: a positive self-concept or experience of success. What is of primary importance, however, is that this "reciprocal relationship . . . gives us reason to assume that enhancing the self-concept is a vital influence in improving academic performance" (Purkey 1970, p. 27). It seems possible therefore for the teacher who wishes to support the child that he may progress on his way towards independent self-realisation, to play a significant role in this field.

5.3.5.4 Components of the teacher-pupil relation advantageous for a positive self-concept

(a) THE TEACHER'S CONVICTIONS ABOUT HIMSELF

Many studies (Berger 1953; Fey 1954; Luft 1966) indicate that there is a clear correlation between a person's opinion of himself and his opinion of others. One who accepts himself is inclined to accept others. One who rejects himself is inclined to reject others. Combs and Snygg (1959) found that successful teachers could be identified on the ground of their self-esteem. The information indicates that teachers with self-esteem who accept themselves are in a better position to establish relations with children that will enable them to construct realistic and positive self-concepts. Felker (1974) recommends on the strength of his research, that teachers should praise themselves in front of children in view of the child's identification with the teacher. Such a method should be used judiciously – and only as a teaching technique – in order to get the child to admit his own success.

(b) THE TEACHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHILDREN

Especially in the primary school the child considers the teacher very important and gladly identifies himself with the teacher. It is important therefore, that the teacher should take a positive view of the child and have noble expectations of him. By expecting a better quality of work and better performance from the child in such a way

that he is genuinely aware of these expectations, the child is encouraged to meet these expectations. This enhances his self-esteem. Lang (1960) found a positive correlation between the child's self-perception and his perception of the teacher's attitude towards him. It follows that the more positive a child's perception of the teacher's attitude towards him the higher is his scholastic achievement. Brookover, Erickson and Jonier (1967) also conclude that the child's performance is related to his perception of the teacher's evaluation of him. It appears that if the teacher believes that the child is capable of better achievement he is inclined to improve his performance.

(c) REALISTIC GOALS

If a person has unrealistic or unreasonable goals he accepts an unrealistic standard of evaluation. It has been found that children with negative self-concepts have goals that are unrealistically high or unrealistically low. If the goal is unrealistically low, reaching the goal is no achievement. The person reaches the goal but perceives of it in such a way that *even he* can do it. It can happen if the goal is unrealistically high that it is perceived of as realistic in which case he is bound to fail. This would then confirm the negative view he takes of himself. The child with a low self-concept often hides behind unrealistic goals which he knows beforehand he cannot reach. The common encouragement *set your sights high* often leads to the setting of unrealistic goals.

Realistic goals must meet the following requirements: (1) They must be individual; (2) they must be proportionate to previous achievements; (3) they must be ordered. Besides immediate goals one should have ultimate goals, since all scholastic work is graded according to quantity and difficulty.

By helping children to formulate realistic goals one enables them to reach success that they recognise and experience as such.

(d) PRAISE FOR SUCCESS

Praise for success – a star; a *well done* or high marks – makes the child happy. Everyone likes to hear that his work has been done well. The child with a negative self-concept ignores his success by rationalising: "Anyone could have done that" or: "It was sheer luck" while he hankers for praise. If one likes hearing "well done" one will also know the enjoyment of saying to oneself: "well done".

Since one is critical when setting one's own standards one does not mislead oneself with "well done" unless one is convinced of the success.

One really helps a child to actualise a positive self-concept by helping him to recognise his success and by encouraging him with a "well done". The child with realistic goals who recognizes his own success is more capable of recognising and sincerely applauding the success of others.

(e) **THE ATMOSPHERE THE TEACHER CREATES AND MAINTAINS IN THE CLASSROOM (PURKEY 1970)**

The teacher is mainly responsible for the atmosphere in the classroom. An atmosphere advantageous to the development of a favourable self-concept has the following qualities:

(i) *Challenge*. A challenge can incite children to better performance if the teacher explains until the chances of success are high and then says: "The completion of this assignment is difficult and requires hard work, but I think you can do it." To secure the right effect the teacher has to choose the right moment; the confidence he enjoys is at stake. Furthermore the situation must be such that the children will assign such meaning to it as to value success in it.

(ii) *Freedom*. Self-esteem can hardly develop in an atmosphere where there is no liberty. During his self-realisation the child should have the liberty to take such decisions as he considers to be meaningful. Sarason (1961) has indicated that anxious children perform poorly only when they see the task as a threat. If children with a high level of anxiety are told that it is natural to make mistakes and that mistakes are to be expected then their performances are often better than those of children who do not suffer from anxiety. If the atmosphere in the classroom is such that the child feels free to try and even to make mistakes without fearing something dreadful, then there is scope and opportunity for the development of self-esteem.

(iii) *Respect*. If the child is treated with respect it enhances his self-respect. If a child is humiliated, embarrassed and confused it creates disrespect for himself and for others.

(iv) *Warmth*. Only with absolute dedication can a teacher create an atmosphere in which the child feels important, accepted and valued. Coopersmith (1967) says that a child accepts himself only if he is accepted by others.

(v) *Control and discipline*. Firm action – where the child knows what may and what may not – mingled with a high degree of respect and

love promotes the development of a positive self-concept. Coopersmith (1967) found that there is a relationship between permissiveness and low self-concepts.

(vi) *Success.* After studying a great many research reports Wylie (1961) came to the conclusion that students changed their self-evaluation after success and failure had been experimentally controlled.

The experience of success, i.e. success to which the child assigns meaning, has been the central concern of this whole study regarding a positive self-concept.

5.3.5.5 *Synopsis*

The child's relation with himself crystallises in a positive self-concept which means that he values himself, accepts himself, respects himself and believes in himself or – on the other end of the scale – in a negative self-concept which means that the child believes that he is inefficient and incapable of success. Many variations and combinations appear on this continuum since each person has a host of self-conceptions. The structured Gestalt of self-conceptions is the self-concept. It is the filter which evaluates experience and selects and assigns meaning to expectations.

5.3.6 *The child's relation to the Lord*

This relation is of a religious nature. The question is: How does this relation manifest itself in the religious situations in which the child is involved and what effect does it have on his other activities?

Religion cannot be discussed in abstraction. We are referring here to the child who grows up in a Protestant Christian home.

The child cannot give meaning to religion on his own although, by the time he goes to school, he has already given thought to life and death and a life hereafter. The possibility of developing a religious attitude is closely related to the quality of the parent's religion. In a climate of pedagogical love the parent's life embodies the meaning religion has for him. The parents do not only teach the child to pray. He sees them pray; he sees them live their religion; i.e. he sees the relation between their religious profession and their lives. Thus an attitude develops which is indispensable for a religious relation.

The primary school child goes to Sunday school. This is supplemented by the lessons in Scripture prescribed by the school syllabus. He

gets to know a lot about the Bible. However, he has to give meaning to it in his personal capacity. Since the child is in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development his image of Jesus and of God will be palpable. The content of his prayers will be mainly egocentric, concerned only with his own needs and problems. He will doubt many Biblical occurrences because he has to assign meaning to them. Miracles and the omnipotence of God pose no particular problems because he sees his parents as being capable of almost anything. They can even supply him with moral and religious judgements.

In spite of such problems as imitation, participation, identification and conforming which affect the child's assignment of meaning to religion either positively or adversely, there are many testimonies of genuine conversions during the primary school years. These conversions remain stable throughout adolescence and during adulthood. An increase in significance attribution is accompanied by intensity of experience. A particular characteristic of the primary school child's religion is his preparedness to accept the Biblical story and the facts of Salvation unconditionally in spite of the fact that he finds it difficult to give meaning to spiritual truths.

5.4 THE LIFE-WORLD OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILD

We have continually referred to the child's orientation in his environment. He cannot orientate himself unless he has knowledge of or assigns meaning to people and objects in his environment. Significance attribution demands that the person should be totally involved in the action. His cognitive, affective and volitional abilities and his expectations each play a part in the nature of his involvement. This knowledge depends on a fundamental cognitive structure because a knowledge of concrete objects and ideas is internalised and assimilated within a structure of meanings. As a result of such meanings the child is orientated towards people, things and ideas.

This integration of interacting relations which the individual has established and of which he is the centre point or, at least, one of the poles in a multitude of relations is called his life-world. This includes the whole world in which he lives. The relations with some objects or concepts will be highly meaningful and thus very important to the person while the quality of some of the other relations will be sparse and diffuse in respect of meaning and consequently of little importance.

The life-world of a person (child) is the integrated structure of interacting relations which he has constituted.

In spite of many individual differences and the uniqueness of the qualities of the relations which a person constitutes, there is nonetheless so much common to these relations that one can speak for example of the life-world of the primary school child.

The life-world of the primary school child incorporates the relations discussed in this chapter. It should be kept in mind that, since the individual is the core of these relations, his relation with himself will be the core of his life-world. His self-image (self-concept), the result of this relation with himself, is formed mainly through his relations with people and objects. On the other hand, his self-concept strongly influences the quality of other relations. Thus a child who, in his relation with his parents, forms an idea "I am clumsy" will approach gymnastic apparatus with trepidation in the secondary school and his chances of failure will be high.

The relation with parents is qualified by love which implies mutual knowledge, care, responsibility and trust. A child's behaviour is directly linked to his relation with his parents. If a child interprets his parents' attitude as hostile, the same aggression manifests itself in his behaviour. The parent who educates his child according to strict rules gives him security and diminishes his doubt and anxiety. As the child develops independence he internalises the norms that his parents have presented to him. He develops habits of cleanliness and decency as well as attitudes towards groups and institutions. If the parent accepts the child, he enables him to accept himself, thereby enhancing the child's self-concept. Encouragement, support, acceptance and respect are necessary to teach a child language and the meaning of objects as well as of the behaviour of his friends.

The manifestation of the parent-child relation accentuates the entwinement and mutual influence of the other relations.

The relation with peers is indispensable for the child's self-realisation. The peer group forms a safe basis for identification and conformity. It provides the place and opportunity for practising independence. The norms of the parents and those of the peer group are practised among equals. Evaluation and acceptance by friends support the development of a positive self-concept.

The development of relations with objects and ideas depends on examples and explanations. These are understood as the cognitive abilities develop. The support and guidance of parents and teachers enable the child to stabilise cognitive relations on the grounds of understanding and experience.

An own identity and evaluation is established in relation to other persons and things. This self-concept becomes the anchorage point or point of reference which directs the nature of future and developing relations.

The horizon of a child's life-world at a given time encloses the relevant relations that have been established. The child is orientated towards anything with which a meaningful relation has been formed. The religious relations of the pre-adolescent are probably the most diffuse of all. During adolescence religious experiences become fixed and their influence is transferred to other spheres of life.