Psychosocial Development , Change and Transitions of Children and Adolescents

Dr Chong Wan Har
Psychological Studies Academic Group
National Institute of Education
Nanyang Technological University

School Transition

- Seen in terms of a set of skills and abilities where the focus is on school readiness,

- Responsibility of the school to induct the child into the ways of the school.

School Transition

- A period of change in which children and families adjust to new roles, identities and expectations, new interactions and new relationships.

- May require an adjustment to the greater levels of activity, structure, and, for some, pressures associated with school life.

- Assert an influence children's attitudes, confidence, and performance both socially and academically.

How is the school environment different?

- Academic expectations and demands of school,

- Physical environment of school,

- Communication strategies between teachers and families,

- Social environment at school,

- Philosophical underpinnings of teaching and learning.

Where ?

- Within the individual - developmental

- Within systems – in the family

- Between systems – degree of cultural fit

Eight Ages of Man

STAGE

CRISIS

1, Infancy
2. Early Childhood
3. Play age
4. School age
5. Adolescence
6. Young adulthood
7. Adulthood
8. Mature age

1. Trust vs Mistrust
2. Autonomy vs Shame & Doubt
3. Initiative vs Guilt
4. Industry vs Inferiority
5. Identity vs Role Confusion
6. Intimacy vs Isolation
7. Generativity vs Stagnation
8. Integrity vs Despair

Developmental Perspective

- Developmental level of a child cannot be viewed solely in terms of discrete behaviors within one context of development.

- Developmental level is marked by how the child's capacities are organized to produce patterns of adaptive responses to salient developmental challenges.
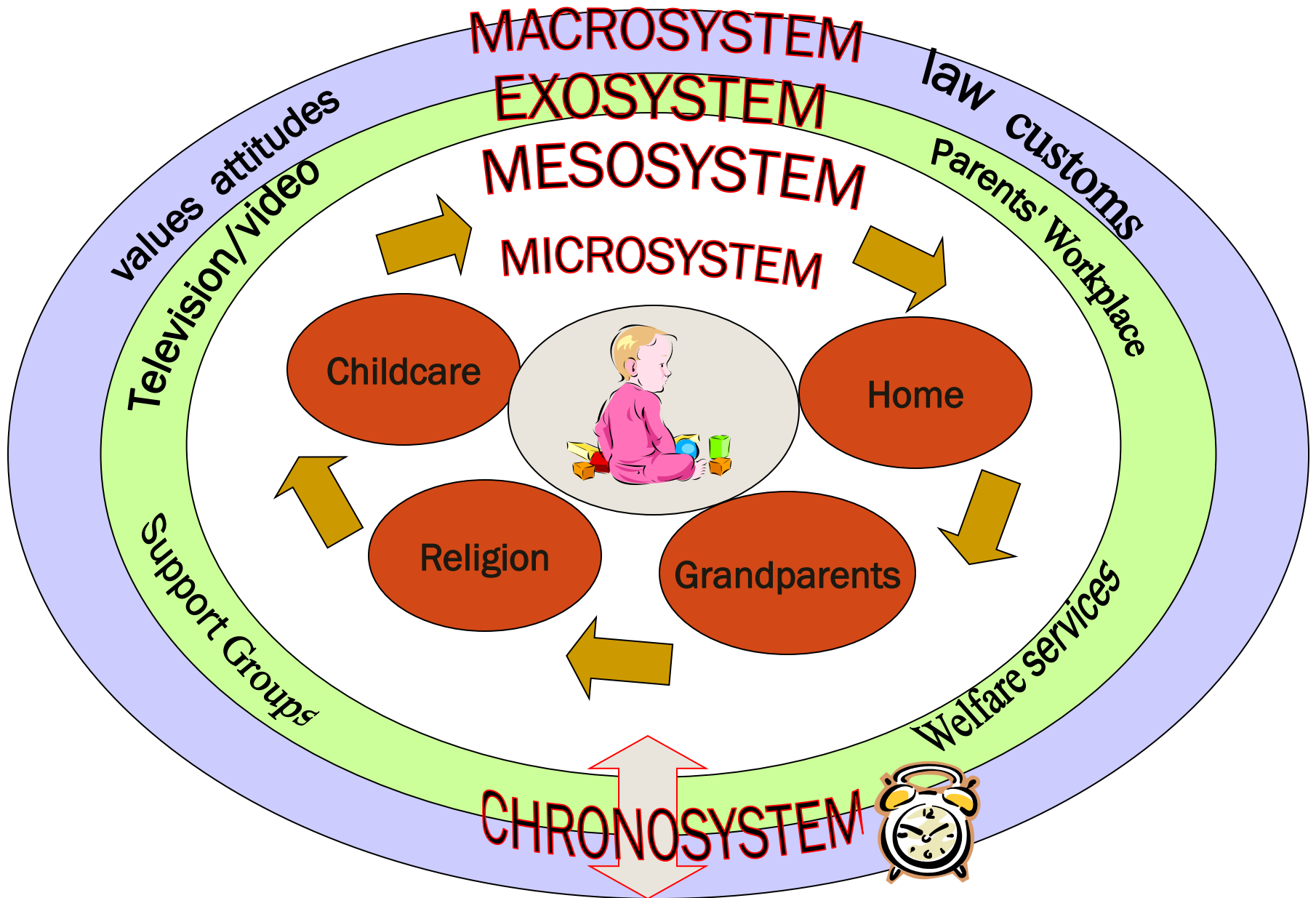
Contextual Perspective
(Pianta &Walsh, 1996)

- The child comes to school from a web of relationships with parents, peers and neighborhood, that will be played out as patterns of interactions in the classroom.

- Classroom experiences and expectations will trigger these patterns of interaction, directly or indirectly.

- Secure and supportive relationships with adults enable children to regulate anxiety and behavior and work at problem solving.

The Family Life Cycle
(Carter & McGoldrick, 2005)

Family Life Cycle

- Leaving home: Single young adults
- The joining of families through marriage: the new couple
- **Families with young children**

- **Families with adolescents**
- Launching children and moving on
- Families in later life

Emotional Processes of Transition

- Adjusting marital system to make space for children, Joining in child rearing.

- Shifting of parent/child relationships; refocus on midlife marital and career issues

The Family Life Cycle

Stress is often greatest at transition points from one stage to another in the developmental processes as families rebalance, redefine, and realign their relationships

The Individual in Context

- Critical dimension of healthy psychological development – that the individual is connected to and interdependent on other people.

- Children bring their experiences from other systems (e.g., home) to impact on their development in other systems such as school.

- Teachers need to attend not only to the ways a given system regulates development but also to the interactions among systems.

Two Elements in Successful Transition

- Settling well into school life

- Getting used to new routines

Impact of Transitions

Academic Adjustment

- Following transition to secondary school, pupils tend to decline in academic performance.

- Academic attainment in the first year at secondary school seems to be related to pupils' decreased interest in academic activities and an increase in non-academic activities in these years.

Impact of Transitions

Social adjustment

- Transition is stressful – having adequate information and social support activities that help pupils to form friendship networks are crucial factors in coping.

- Increased self-esteem can help with academic motivation.

Impact of Transitions

Linkages between schools

- Continuity of curriculum suffers on transition. Secondary schools may not have sustained linking arrangements focused on the learning progression of individual pupils.

- Teaching expectations often differ between primary and secondary school.

- Previous experience or achievement may be often disregarded by secondary schools.

Impact of Transitions

Organizational Issues

- The difficulties some pupils have in moving from the primary to secondary school structure have been shown to be temporary.

- Prior to transition, pupils need to be held more responsible for their learning, to be taught about strategies for learning on their own, and to be provided with a more challenging curriculum, with clear goals of academic achievement.

Impact of Transitions

Pupils' perceptions

- Primary pupils tend to view transition positively.

- At-risk pupils may need intervention prior to transition.

Impact of Transitions

Cultural factors

- Transition can pose specific problems and concerns for pupils whom they perceived to be different from the others.

- Teachers and pupils have different perceptions of where problems lie. Pupils tend to think there is a problem with delivery of lessons; teachers tend to think that the pupils bring problems with them.

Impact of Transitions

Socio-economic factors

- SES is a factor commonly associated with poor achievement and school engagement.

- Family support is linked to achievement after transition and the influence of effective parents is cumulative.

Impact of Transitions

Gender differences

- At the time of transition, girls' attitudes towards teachers and learning may be different from those of boys.

In co-ed schools, the following have been found:

- Early maturation in girls is a risk factor for their involvement in delinquency.

- Girls may have lower interest in math & science but this may be attributed to teacher expectations.

- Boys tend to be given greater time, attention, and encouragement in class.

Factors in Successful Transitions

Children:

• greatly expand their friendships and boost their self-esteem and confidence once at secondary school;

• settle in school life so well that they caused no concerns to their parents;

• show more interest in school and work in comparison to primary school;

• finding it easy getting used to new routines;

• finding work completed in earlier year to be very useful for the work they were doing in the current year.

Experiences with Poor Transition

These children tend to :

- Experience bullying,

- Worry about their ability to do the work,

- Worry about having new and different teachers for subjects,

- Worry about whether they can make friends.

Effective transition-to-school Programs

- Establish positive relationships between the children, parents, and educators;

- Facilitate each child's development as a capable learner;

- Differentiate between "orientation-to-school" and "transition-to-school" programs;

- Take into account contextual aspects of community and of individual families and children within that community.

How do we go from here?

- At the school level, continue to offer transition activities,

- Work at establishing regular communication with home,

- Work at developing supportive relationships with the child particularly in the early stages of transition,

- Optimize the use of 'white space' to understand what the child brings to school,

In the Classroom …for teachers

Provide

- **Sense of security** (e.g. trusting, positive response to authority, not anxious, handles change)

- **Sense of identity/self-concept** (e.g. ability to take risk, accept criticism, express emotion and knowledge about self)

- **Sense of belonging** (e.g. ability to co-operate, comfortable in a group, accepted by peers)

- **Sense of purpose** (e.g. self-directed, sets realistic goals, tries new things, good work habits)

- **Sense of competence** (e.g. uses strengths, sets goals, knows weaknesses, seeks challenges)

How?

- define what is expected
- build a positive environment
- build trust

- accurate feedback
- feelings of self-worth
- self-awareness

- self-acceptance
- acceptance of others
- service to others
- part of team

- foster a climate of risk-taking
- convey realistic expectations
- translate goals into actions

- makes choices and decisions
- self-evaluation
- tolerates frustrations
- uses resources

How can the School Counselor help?

Helping to Develop Connectedness matters!

Teach soft skills to teachers to enable them to provide supportive & facilitative relationships to help with successful transitions.

Teachers themselves need to feel supported through the provision of regular consultation with AE (Counseling) or a program of teacher support.