CHAPTER 3

THE NEEDS AND LIFE TASKS OF CHILDREN IN THEIR DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENTAL PHASES

3.1 Introduction

It is essential for anyone undertaking work with children to understand how children develop. Such knowledge enables the professional role-player to

- Understand how the child has reached his or her current stage of development and, equally important,

- It provides an understanding of which factors, among many in the child's social environment, are most likely to influence how the child develops in the future.

From this perspective, a clear focus for intervention (targeting the most significant factors) will be possible and a responsible, respectful way of dealing with children.

Cunningham (1993: 2) substantiated the above by saying the following:

There are three reasons for studying child development. First, on a personal level, we get a chance to see how the events of our own childhood may have influenced us to become the people that we are today. Second, on a practical level, if we know how

different events can influence development, then we have the
opportunity to help all children reach their full potential both as
children now and as adults later. Third, on a theoretical level, as
we learn more about how children change over time, we should be
better able to explain why they change the way they do and why
they differ in their responses to similar events.

Researcher strongly agrees with the following opinion of Garbarino & Stott (1989:1):

As adults learn more about the child's perspective, they will begin to
see children as intelligent, respected actors in the adult-child
communication process. As they learn that children have a
comprehensible point of view, even though it is immature compared
to the adult perspective, adults can improve the validity and ethical
soundness of their efforts to communicate with children.

What professional role-players are seeking is a perspective on children as sources of information for adults – a perspective to inform professional practice. According to the current draft of the new Children's Bill (B 70B – 2003), it is enquired in terms of Section 6(2) that all proceedings, actions or decisions in a matter concerning a child must

- respect, protect, promote and fulfil the child's rights set out in the Bill of Rights
- respect the child's inherent dignity

- treat the child fairly and equitably

- protect the child from unfair discrimination on any ground

- recognise a child's need for development and to engage in play and other recreational activities appropriate to the child's age

- recognise a child's disability and create an enabling environment to respond to the special needs that the child has.

This can only be done if all stakeholders or professional role-players

- have knowledge about children's needs and life tasks in the different developmental phases.

- knows what the rights of children entail (as will be discussed in the next chapter).

- combine above into a practice model.

In other words, the necessary knowledge of the developmental process will enable the adult (professional role-player) to view aspects from a child's perspective. This in turn, will enable them to be more effective in what they do and how they do it, and ensure that it is in greater harmony with the needs and rights of children.

3.2 Defining the different terms

3.2.1 Developmental phases

Smith & Cowie (1991: 5) defined development as

> *The process by which an organism (human or animal), grows and changes through its life span.*

They further state that the most dramatic developmental changes in humans occur in infancy and childhood, as the newborn develops into a young adult capable of becoming a parent him or herself. This *process* referred to, is known as the different developmental phases and, as Smith & Cowie (1991: 5) indicated, is related to age. In Bemporad (1980) the following phases are distinguished, to which researcher would like to adhere:

- Infancy → birth to 18 months

- Toddler → 18 months to 3 years

- Pre-school years → 3 to 6 years

- Primary school years (middle childhood) → 6 to 12 years

- Adolescence → 13 to 19 years

Reynolds (1992: 63) as well as Garbarino & Stott (1989:9) emphasized that this developmental phases are divided into four areas (spheres) which are interlinked and dependent upon each other:

Figure 12: Developmental spheres
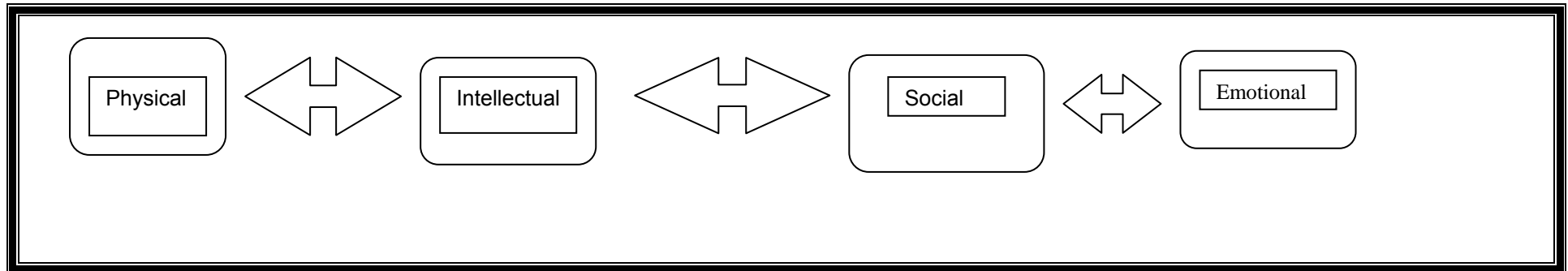
As Garbarino & Stott (1989:9) explained:

> ***Rather than viewing development as a steady progression from the time of birth, when the infant knows nothing, to adulthood, when the person has accumulated the adult store of knowledge, we see children proceeding through a series of qualitatively different stages. These changes reflect successive reorganizations of shifts in the quality of functioning and occur in all spheres of development, physiological, cognitive, social, and emotional.***

This brings us to the next term, namely life tasks.

3.2.2 Life tasks

According to Garbarino & Stott (1989:9), the major task of childhood is maintaining the capacity for continued development. Gary (2003:1) referred to Professor Robert Havighurst of the University of Chicago who proposed that stages in human development can best be thought of in terms of the developmental tasks (life tasks) that people need to master in order to move on to the next developmental phase. Jackson & Rodriguez-Tome (1993: 145) defined developmental tasks as problems that arise at certain periods in an individual's life. They hypothesized that successful achievement of these tasks leads to happiness and greater probability of success with future tasks. Failure leads to unhappiness, societal disapproval and difficulty with later developmental tasks. The importance of successfully mastering these tasks

should therefore not be underestimated. Researcher would like to link these tasks to the different needs of children. If these needs are not met, the general social, emotional and cognitive developmental processes are put at risk.

3.3 The developmental process

3.3.1 A historical overview

Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001: 21) pointed out that one of the earliest fundamental divisions between groups of child-development theorists stemmed from the belief among some that children are the way they are, because they are born that way, and the belief among others that the environment is the main influence on how children develop.

The first child-developmental theorists were John Locke (1632 – 1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778).

Lock emphasized the importance of environmental influences and held the opinion that the ways children develop are determined by their early experiences and interactions with people. He also seemed to appreciate the inherent nature underlying children's readiness to learn. As Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:23) pointed out, Lock realized that children had difficulty remembering rules in the abstract and therefore favoured a modelling approach to teaching. Piaget later developed the notion that very young children are not capable of abstract thinking.

Rousseau emphasized the importance of nature or internal forces. He believed that children already have their own individual natures at birth and adults are advised not to damage this individuality by trying to impose adult notions of reason or social order. According to Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:23) Rousseau had little faith in society's ability to guide children's development:

Individuals who are well socialized are too dependent upon how others see them and have forgotten how to see with their own eyes and think with their own minds.

Rousseau rightfully believed that we should be helping children to develop their capacity to think rather than teaching them *how* to think! He described nature as 'a hidden tutor' helping children to develop different capacities at different stages of their lives. According to Rousseau, children will arrive at a point where they can think logically through the progressive unfolding of inherent abilities. He was the first of the 'stage' theorists and identified four main stages of development in which the child's inherent capacities unfold namely infancy, childhood, late childhood and adolescence.

Following on from Locke and Rousseau, there has been no shortage of child-development theories. Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001: 26 - 30) made an interesting summary of how different theories were linked with the original theories of Locke and Rousseau:

Locke and the environmentalists	Rousseau and the developmentalists
Pavlov (1849-1936)	Freud (1856-1939)
Watson (1878-1958)	Eriksson (1902-1994)
Skinner (1905-1990)	Piaget (1896 – 1980)
Bandura (1925 -)	Kohlberg (1927 – 1987)
	Gesell (1880 – 1961)
	Maslow (1908 – 1970)

Pavlov embarked on Locke's suggestion that children learn from the environment through an association of ideas and used the association ideas with dogs. **Watson** adapted Pavlov's conditioning experiments to a child.

Skinner took the concept of learning by association and extended it to learning by reinforcement. **Bandura** expanded the theory and showed that children can learn from direct and indirect consequences of their behaviour. According to Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:27) Bandura's maxim was 'Children are more likely to do what we do than what we tell them to do.'

Several basic principles closely related to Rousseau's concepts, were found in the **Freudian** theory of psychoanalysis. **Erikson** took the emphasis away from the biological and psychosexual and looked at the psychosocial development over the entire lifespan. He proposed the following stages as given in Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:28):

- Basic trust vs. basic mistrust (birth – 1 year)

- Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (1 – 3 years)

- Initiative vs. guilt (3 – 6 years)

- Industry vs. inferiority (7 – 11 years)

- Identity vs. role confusion (adolescence)

- Intimacy vs. isolation (early adulthood)

- Generatively vs. stagnation (middle adulthood)

- Ego integrity vs. despair (late adulthood)

According to Smart & Smart (1978: 292-294) Erikson referred to the life cycle as the epigenesist of identity:

This principle states that anything that grows has a ground plan, and out of this ground plan, the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole.

Piaget focused on the cognitive development by saying that development is a progressive equilibration from a lesser to a higher state of equilibrium (Smart & Smart, 1978:295). Piaget's analysis of these progressive forms of successive equilibrium highlights the differences from one behavioral level to another, all the way from the elementary behaviour of the neonate through adolescence. Above authors explained that the variable structures – motor or intellectual – on the one hand and affective on the other, are the organizational forms of mental activity. They are organized along two dimensions namely intrapersonal and interpersonal.

Smart & Smart (1978:296-297) as well as Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001: 29) summarized Piaget's stages of development.   A combination of the summaries can be presented as follows:

- Infancy (birth – 2 years):

    – Reflex or hereditary stage at which first instinctual nutritional drives and emotions appear.

    – First motor habits, organized percepts and differentiated emotions.

    – Sensorimotor or practical intelligence (prior to language).

- Early childhood (2 – 7 years):

    – Pre-operational period.

      Pre-conceptual stage (18 months – 4 years).

      Intuitive stage (4 – 7 years).

    The stage of intuitive intelligence, spontaneous interpersonal feelings and of social relationships in which the child is subordinate to the adult.

- Middle childhood (7 – 12 years):

    – Stage of concrete intellectual operations, beginning of logic, of moral and social feelings and of co-operation.

- Adolescence:

    – Stage of formal / abstract intellectual operations, formation of personality, affective and intellectual entry into the society of adults.

Kohlberg extended Piaget's stages of moral development to three levels:

- Pre-conventional (based on punishment and rewards).

- Conventional (based on social conformity).

- Post-conventional (based on moral principles).

As Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:29) pointed out, each of the abovementioned stages or levels are sequential, and one cannot progress to a higher stage until one has passed through the stage before.

Gesell's approach focused on human traits as determined by genetics. According to him, children simply mature with age, and environment plays a minor role. **Maslow** developed a model of a hierarchy of human needs, with physical needs at the base of the pyramid of needs and self-actualization at the top. According to Maslow's thinking, the drive for self-actualization is seen as inherent: one needs to fulfil one's intrinsic nature and become all that one can be. According to Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:30), this drive is usually suppressed in early childhood by the needs of adults to have children conform to expectations. In adulthood, the drive is suppressed by the willingness of adults to conform to society's expectations.

Above statement confirms the denial of children's participatory rights during their developmental years - and the result thereof in adulthood.

3.3.2 The Social Ecological theory

The American psychologist – Urie Bronfenbrenner – expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional way of understanding child development in that the exclusive focus was invariably the immediate setting of the individual, and the wider societal impact on how children develop was generally ignored. Smith & Cowie (1991: 8) confirmed that Bronfenbrenner emphasized the importance of studying 'development-in-context' or, in other words, the ecology of development and is also in line with their point of view on this matter.

According to Smith & Cowie (1991:8) ecology can be described as

> ***The environmental settings which the person or organism is experiencing, or is linked to directly or indirectly.***

Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:45) are of the opinion that ecological thinking appears to be on the verge of gripping the imagination of those who are involved with children. They also acknowledge that one of the benefits for students and practitioners alike is that such a model enables them to see their clients in the widest possible social contexts.

The main thrust of the ecological model is the adaptation between the individual and his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979:21) defined the ecology of human development as follows:

> *The scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the lifespan, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives, as this process is affected by relation obtaining within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded.*

Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001: 46) explained that the mutual accommodation mentioned in the definition, is the result of the individual and the environment interacting with each other. The individual plays an active role in influencing the environment, which in turn exerts an influence on the individual, which takes into account previous influence. It is in other words a synergistic (combined) cycle of influence between the changing individual and the changing environment.

The environment itself is seen as a complex set of systems within systems and can be visualized as four concentric circles:

Figure 13: Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development
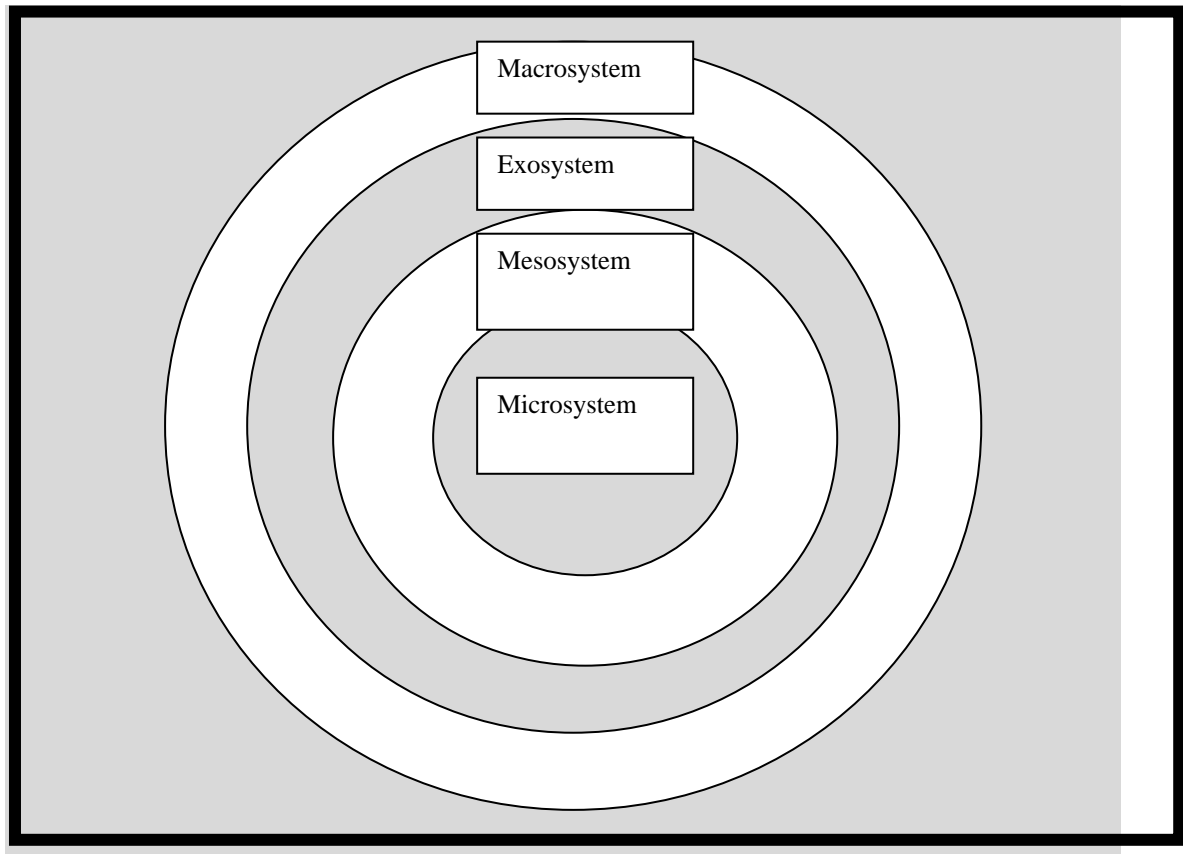
3.3.2.1 Description of the systems

3.3.2.1.1 Micro-system

Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) defined the micro-system (small system) as:

A pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics.

Examples of the micro-system according to Smith & Cowie (1991: 9) as well as Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:47) would be home (with parents and siblings): school (with teachers and peers) and workplace (with colleagues). Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:47) pointed out that most traditional theories of child development restrict themselves to this level.

It is important to understand that there are several micro-systems for each child and these become more as the child grow older. As Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:47) states:

Wherever there is a setting in which the child is physically present, there is a micro-system for his or her development.

Practical Example

As a baby, the child is largely rooted in the family system. As he or she grows, the child moves into the school system and learns to move back and forth between these two micro-systems. As the child gets older and becomes more independent, the child moves more and more between many different micro-systems – friends, church, work, sport, etc.

3.3.2.1.2 Meso-system

The meso-system (middle system) is defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) as:

> *Comprising the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighbourhood; for an adult, among family, work and social life).*

Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:48) referred to the meso-system as a system of micro-systems. Smith & Cowie (1991:8) explained that the meso-system refers to links amongst settings, which the individual participates in.

Practical Example

The quality of a child's home life may influence his/her school performance or confidence with peers. Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:49) elaborated on above example by emphasizing the importance to remember that the influence is reciprocal. Not only does the nature of the relationship between parents and school influence the child, but the child influences the nature of that relationship.

3.3.2.1.3 Exo-system

Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) defined the exo-system (outside system) as:

> *One or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person.*

Smith & Cowie (1991:9) explained that the exo-system refer to links of settings which the individual does not participate in directly but which do affect him/her.

Practical Example

A parent's work environment may affect the parent's behaviour at home and thus influence the quality of parental care. Children do not directly experience the parent's work environment but they do experience the effects indirectly.

According to Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:49) the exo-system is the most challenging to understand. They maintained the opinion that

understanding the impact of the exo-system on the individual is a two-stage process: The first stage is to demonstrate the impact of the exo-system on the individual's micro-system and the second stage is to demonstrate the resulting impact of the micro-system on the individual.

An interesting point by Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:49) is that the individual may exert an impact on his or her micro-system, in such a way that it has wider repercussions beyond the micro-system.

Practical Example

A child might interact with his peer group in a way that causes disruption in a youth centre and affects the local community. For instance to negatively influence other youths, start a gang and may cause havoc in a community.

3.3.2.1.4 Macro-system

The macro-system (large system) is defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979:26) as:

Consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies.

According to Smith & Cowie (1991:9), the macro-system refers to the organization of social institutions in the society or subculture the individual find him / herself in.

Practical Example

The effects of parental stress at work will be affected by factors such as working hours in that society, rates of pay, holidays and leave entitlement, occupational status or the degree of social stigma attached to unemployment.

Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:50) explained that examples of the macro-system can be both explicit (laws, regulations and rules) and implicit (belief systems as they are reflected in custom and practice). It is at the level of the macro-system that ways can be considered in which children internalize values in relation to gender, disability, race, sexual orientation and so forth. An important part of the macro-system is the way in which ideologies at the national level operate at the local level, through books that the child reads, television, the behaviour of adults, and a host of other influences. Researcher would like to add here the consideration of the effect it will have on adults (as responsible citizens) when they were in that position as a child that their rights to participate in their lives, were denied.

3.3.2.2 Ecological transitions

Bronfenbrenner (1979:26) defined an ecological transition as follows:

> *Whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting, or both.*

He emphasized the importance of changes in the ecological environment on development. Smith & Cowie (1991:9) explained that every time the person is faced with a challenge, he/she has to adapt to allow development to take place. Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:50) listed examples of ecological transitions as the birth of a new baby; the arrival of a sibling; the child's first day at school; beginning work, or the loss of a significant person from the micro-system. They explained it as follows:

> *Indeed any loss from the micro-system, any addition to it, or any change in the way the components of the micro-system* relate to each other could entail an ecological transition.

3.3.2.3 Practice value

In researcher's opinion, the main advantage of an ecological orientation towards child development is situated in its congruence with anti-discriminatory practice.   Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:50-51) confirmed this by saying:

> *It exhorts the practitioner to look widely at the influences on a particular child in a particular place, and in doing so challenges the practitioner to become aware of how structural inequalities within society are played out in the very immediate situations that the practitioner encounters.*

A developmental assessment of children should thus incorporate factors of the macro-system as they have a significant impact on and are integrally related to an understanding of the child in his or her situation.   Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:51) summarized the practice value concisely when they said:

> *A consideration of the macro-system for an individual child is important because it calls upon the practitioner to locate his or her practice in the widest possible political and social contexts, and can serve as a secure basis for developing anti-discriminatory practice.*

The Social Ecological theory allows the practitioner or professional role player to incorporate the Child Centered Approach and the developmental process with children's rights. From this foundation, the professional role-player can consider the effects on children when these rights are denied.

3.4 The needs and life task checklist according to the developmental phases

Fraiberg (1978: 6) said that:

> *If we understand the nature of the developing child and those parts of his personality that work for solution and resolution towards mental health, we are in the best position to assist him in developing his inner resources.*

Although human development forms an integral part of the curriculum in the training of relevant professional role-players, researcher experienced in practice that this knowledge is easily forgotten or not taken seriously. For this reason, the loophole (as mentioned in the beginning of the chapter) exists, namely that adults make decisions, and so justify their actions of ignoring the children's views, feelings and capabilities with the term 'best interest of the child'. Researcher considered the sentence '**bearing in mind the child's age, maturity and developmental phase'** and came to the conclusion that, because this knowledge is so important, the professional role-player working with children, actually needs a hands-on checklist that will enable them to

control which abilities the child is capable of at what age. In order to create such a checklist, many different theories and viewpoints were studied and summarized. First, it is important to visualize the developmental process as a whole – knowing the meaning of the different terms involved in this process:

Figure 14: Developmental process

Phases:

Infancy (birth – 18 Months)

Toddler (18 months – 3 years)

Pre-school (3 – 6 years)   each divided by *Spheres:*

Primary school (6 – 12 years)   Physical   Needs

Adolescence (12 – 19 years)   Intellectual   &

                                                 Social   Life tasks

                                                 Emotional
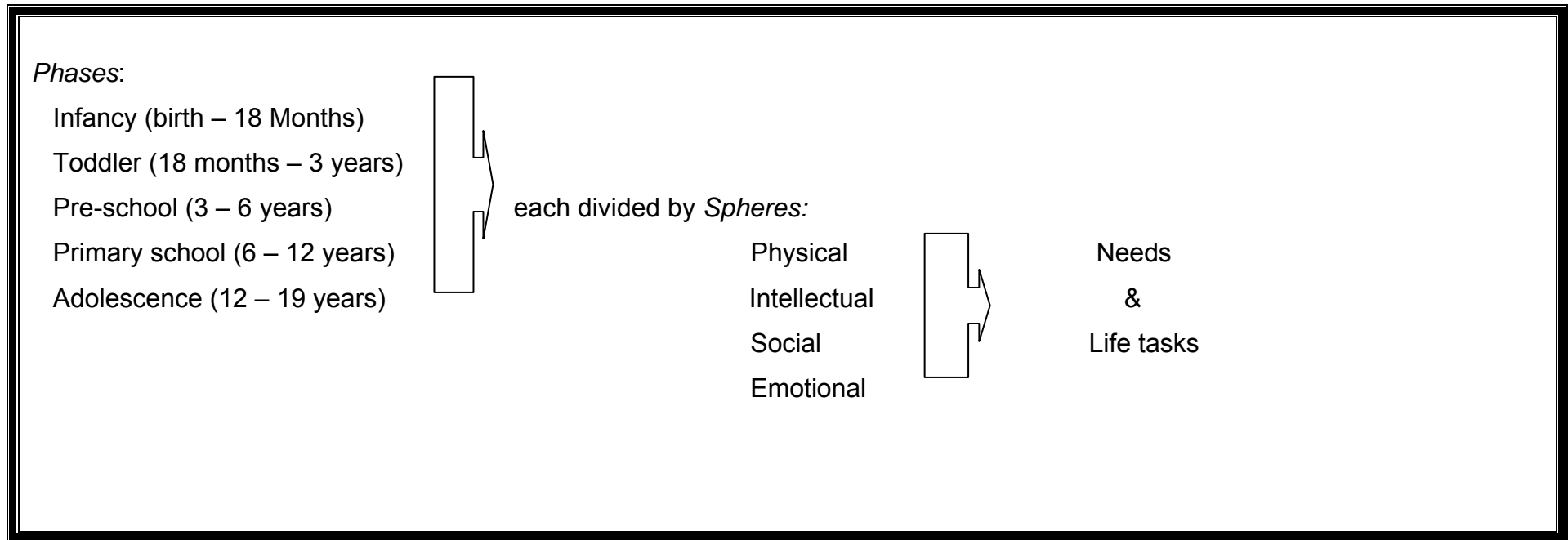
Four spheres characterize every developmental phase. Each Sphere has its own developmental life tasks. Each task must be accomplished before the child is ready to move on to the next phase. Whether the child has accomplished each of these tasks, the reasons if not and the effects thereof within the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-system of each child, should be taken into consideration.

To put above theory into practice, researcher compiled a checklist, mainly from the following sources: Levy (1953:113-122); Fraiberg (1978);Smart & Smart (1978); Bennett (1980:45-92); Kestenbaum (1980: 99-120); Sarnoff (1980:146-173); Sharp (1980:174-217); Sours (1980:121-144); Fahlberg (1988); Reynolds (1992:63-99);Cunningham (1993); Gillis (1996:67-75); Sharp & Cowie (1998:3); Colton, Sanders & Williams (2001:20-51).

All children, throughout the developmental phases, have certain needs and when these needs are not met, normal social, emotional and cognitive developmental processes are put at risk. Sharp & Cowie (1998:3) compiled a comprehensive list of needs, which are essential for all children from infancy through to adolescence and can be listed as follows:

- **Basic physical care:**

  Children need to be assured of warmth, shelter, food, rest and hygiene.

- **Security, guidance, support and control:**

  Children need to have a sense of continuity of care and the expectation that the family unit will remain stable. Routines and predictable patterns of care, reasonable sets of rules and consistent monitoring facilitate this sense of security. They need to be in a context where there is consistent, firm guidance on acceptable social behaviour and where adults act as 'good-enough' role models.

- **Love, affection and respect:**

  Children need to have affectionate, respectful physical contact, to be comforted when in distress, to be held with tenderness; to be listened to; to be taken seriously; to be given opportunities for challenge, exploration and the growth of a sense of competence; to be encouraged to share feelings, including those that express anger, bewilderment and hurt.

- **Stimulation to learn and access to schooling:**

  Throughout the pre-school years, children need to explore their world at their own pace; to have stimulating materials, playthings and books; their questions need to be answered. Once at school, they need to have access to appropriate educational opportunities in context where

there is a concern to provide them with resources to help them learn and realize their potential.

- **Autonomy and responsibility:**

Children and young people need to gain the experience of taking responsibility for themselves and others in age-appropriate ways (tidying of toys, household chores, managing their pocket money). They need to be given helpful information for example on sexual matters, to help them to make informed, reasoned decisions which affect themselves, their families and friends. This information should not be weighed with value-laden judgments.   There should be opportunities to deal with ethical dilemmas and interpersonal conflicts and to live with the consequences, whatever these may be.   Fahlberg (1988:13) summarized the needs effectively when she said:

> *A basic psychological task faced by every individual is to find a healthy and comfortable balance between autonomy or self reliance, and dependency or trust in others. No one achieves this balance once and for all. It is, instead, shifted and negotiated throughout life.*

Abovementioned basic needs should be considered from a Child Centered Approach when utilizing the following checklist.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHECKLIST

PHASE	NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
INFANCY: **Birth – 18 months**	To build a sense of safety, security and trust in other human beings	**Physical:**	Meeting of dependency needs	Active, stimulus seeking
			Develop motor skills	Sit, crawl, walk
			Fine-motor skills	Grasp and hold objects, building blocks, scribbling.
			Sensory development	Vision and hand/eye coordination; hearing; distinguish smell; awareness of sensation of touch and sense of taste

PHASE	NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
		Intellectual	Learning through senses – firsts gains knowledge through own body and then of external objects	Able to learn and respond to social stimuli; possessing Powerful control and signalling devices. Communication and language skills starts develop.
		Social	Beginning of sorting out perceptions of the world	Smile, differentiate between parents and strangers. At 18 months showing signs of independence and assertiveness!
		Emotional	Building up of trust and feelings of security (attachment)	Unable to control emotions/ feelings but display them freely.

PHASE	NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
TODDLER: **18 months – 3 years**	To separate psychologically from the mother; begin to develop self confidence and self esteem	**Physical** **Intellectual**	Rapid language acquisition Control of bodily functions Fine motor skills Need to develop a sense of autonomy and identity Develop cognition	Age 1: 3 words Age 2: 300 words Age 3: 1000 words Temper tantrums disappear with ability to verbalize feelings. Potty training Wash & dry hands, dress / undress; Drawing and painting. Developing a sense of self; resisting attempts of adults to control him/her; wish to do everything him/herself; Gender identity established

PHASE	NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
		Emotional	Separation from mother / parents	Attempts to see hem/herself as separate from parents and establish their own set of rules.
		Social	Continued sorting out of perceptions of the world; Relate to an increasing number of people; Learn people's reactions and how to respond	Age 2: play alone even in presence of other children; Age 3: engage in social activity; Fantasy important; Dreams = repetition of daily events. Egocentric.

PHASE	NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
PRE-SCHOOL: **3 – 6 years**	Proficiency in self care within home setting; Period of questions, time of play and continuing individuation and independence	**Physical** **Intellectual** **Emotional** **Social**	Learning to care for themselves Dramatic change in conceptual functioning Individuation and self-proficiency; Need opportunity to play with children of own age as well as family members.	Bathing, dressing; rapid physical growth. Able to understand logical rules, increased memory capacity; heightened ability to differentiate perceptual experiences. Capable of symbolizations; Learn emotional control. Move from solitary play to parallel play to cooperative play. Growth from egocentricity to companionship.

PHASE	NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
PRIMARY SCHOOL: **6 – 12 years**	To master problems they encounter outside the family unit; Devote energy to learning in school; develop motor skills, social interactions with peers of same sex. Issue of fairness or lack of it important at this phase.	**Physical** **Intellectual** **Emotional**	Acquisition of gross motor skills Increase academic learning. Concrete and rule-bound in thought. Specific personality structure develops	Control his drives – able to cooperate and participate in learning situation. Calm, educable. Able to evaluate a given setting. Age 6: Become aware of guilt; Age 7: Ability to remember abstract aspects of experience;

PHASE	NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
				Develops a understanding of the intrinsic nature of things / events; Able to express: Motor level > modelling clay; Verbal level> verbal description; Abstract level> metaphors, poems, theoretical interpretations; Age 8: Conscience is guided by tendency to move away from parental influence and begin to seek influence from outside (peers, teachers); Age 9-10: would like to be able to take responsibility for their own lives; Object to parental interference; desire to make own decisions. Influence of peers important.
		Social	Developing of socializing skills	

PHASE	NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
ADOLESCENCE: **12 – 19 years**	Adapt to physical and emotional changes.	**Physical**	To master problems experienced outside the family; Adjusting to changing body growth; Dealing with awakening sexuality and the powerful drives which accompany it.	Biological beginning in puberty and social ending with onset of early adulthood. Awareness of sexuality.
		Intellectual	Emphasis on his growing sense of autonomy and individuality. Vast expansion of the capacity for abstract thinking. Mastering new, complex ways of thinking / flexible.	Who am I? Where am I going? Developing sense of self-certainty, self-awareness and self-worth.

NEEDS	SPHERES	LIFE TASKS	CAPABILITIES
	Emotional	Psychological separation from the family; Identity issues; Achieving a satisfactory sexual identity; Attaining emotional independence from parent, family and other adults.	Great upheaval; discomfort; uncontrolled tension and inner turmoil. Become pre-occupied and absorbed in him/her. Integration of emotions.
	Social	Overhaul his/her outlook on life, his/her view of themselves and his/her entire personality. Learning to relate to peers and to society in a mature way.	Turn-away from adults towards devotion to peer group. Trying new relationships; accepting adult responsibilities and social acceptable values and behaviour.

3.5 Combining theory and practice

The decisions that professional role-players need to make when working with children, are life changing and, as Schofield (2005:29) said:

> **These decisions can create beneficial turning points or downward spirals that may affect the rest of children's lives.**

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child stressed the importance of listening to children and of taking their wishes and feelings into account. This places a tremendous responsibility on the professional role-player – especially with children who are involved in a judicial process.

Making sense of children's development is an essential part both of listening to children and facilitating their participation in decision-making. Schofield (2005: 29) confirmed this opinion by saying:

> *An understanding of developmental theory can help practitioners to identify children's strengths and difficulties, make sense of children's communications and enable children to feel more valued and effective.*

Too many professional role-players, especially from outside the helping professions, are still of the opinion that the child's right to be heard contradicts his/her right to be protected. Schofield (2005:29) expressed the opinion that one way of reconciling the potentially competing but potentially

complementary discourses of participation rights and welfare rights, may be to take an approach that draws on theories of child development. She explained that this can assist in both the task of ascertaining the wishes and feelings of children and in the way in which courts, panels and planning meetings take the evidence of those wishes and feelings into account. Dr Vera Fahlberg (Fahlberg, 1988:7), a well known author on child development, expressed the opinion that behaviour should be perceived as a child's way of communicating need rather than as an inconvenient problem in the path of an adult. Furthermore, children should be seen in their historical context and within their total environment if they are to be understood and helped.

Not only is it a child's right to participate in decision-making but, increasing the accuracy of the professional role-players' understanding of the mind of the child, their thoughts, feelings and hopes for the future, will also contribute to a more accurate assessment. Listening to children when making decisions that effect their lives, is not simply about offering them the right to contribute views, it is about understanding children's point of view as well as their developmental needs, striving to make sense of what their lives have meant to them and seeing the world through their eyes. It is about working with them to anticipate, plan for and create a pathway that will bring them their best chance of stability, happiness and personal fulfilment in family and community life.

Researcher would like to enable the professional role-player to combine theory and practice by providing them with a compact set of 'tools' to utilize.

These 'tools' will include the developmental checklist as discussed above in combination with the developmental model (to be discussed in detail). Utilizing it in practice should enable the professional role-player to enhance their effectiveness in their work with children, ensure that children's rights are protected and experience the reward of satisfaction when listening and understanding children.

3.5.1 The developmental model

As co-director of the Centre for Research on the Child and Family at the University of East Anglia, Norwich Gillian Schofield linked key areas of development together into a model that highlights the complex transactional, psychosocial and ecological nature of development, while encouraging practitioners to use this knowledge to support and empower children. Although this model was developed for use in children's court enquiries – deciding which alternative placements will be best, researcher considered it as most suitable to apply in all cases where children are part of a judicial process. Through this model, the professional role-player will have a compact, practical framework which will allow them to take into consideration children's developmental needs and abilities as well as their participation rights, before making any decisions. The developmental model of Schofield (Schofield, 2005: 29-44) is of the latest research and offers the possibility of using developmental insights to assist with the dilemmas around both listening to children and taking what they say into account.
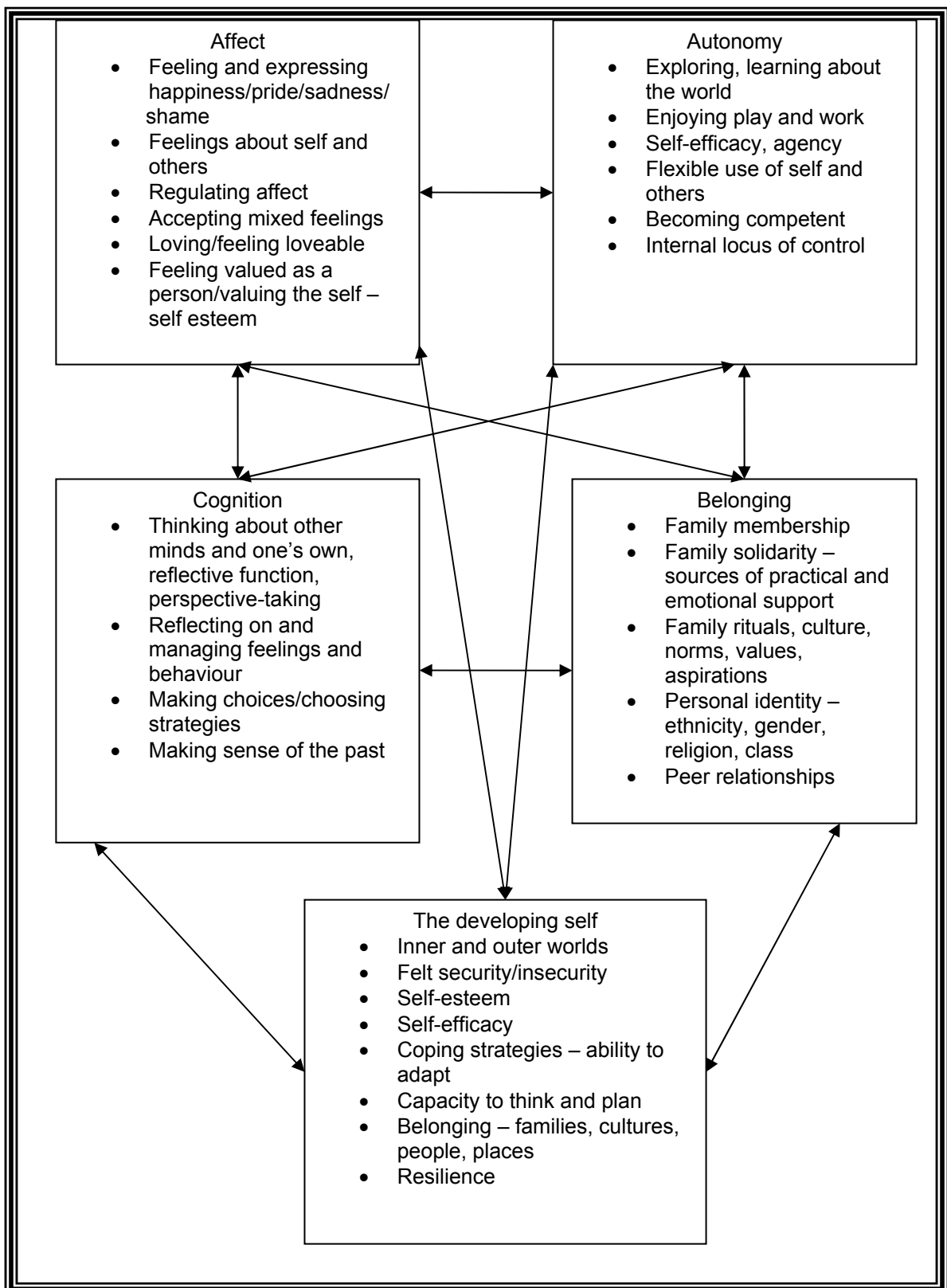
Affect
- Feeling and expressing happiness/pride/sadness/shame
- Feelings about self and others
- Regulating affect
- Accepting mixed feelings
- Loving/feeling loveable
- Feeling valued as a person/valuing the self – self esteem

Autonomy
- Exploring, learning about the world
- Enjoying play and work
- Self-efficacy, agency
- Flexible use of self and others
- Becoming competent
- Internal locus of control

Cognition
- Thinking about other minds and one's own, reflective function, perspective-taking
- Reflecting on and managing feelings and behaviour
- Making choices/choosing strategies
- Making sense of the past

Belonging
- Family membership
- Family solidarity – sources of practical and emotional support
- Family rituals, culture, norms, values, aspirations
- Personal identity – ethnicity, gender, religion, class
- Peer relationships

The developing self
- Inner and outer worlds
- Felt security/insecurity
- Self-esteem
- Self-efficacy
- Coping strategies – ability to adapt
- Capacity to think and plan
- Belonging – families, cultures, people, places
- Resilience

Figure 15: The voice of a child: a development model

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3.5.1.1 Explanation of the model

Affect, cognition and autonomy interact developmentally from infancy to adulthood. According to Schofield (2005:30), a sense of security and a capacity to manage feelings liberate children both to think flexibly and to be effective. In contrast, abuse, neglect and fear make it hard for children to trust other people, to think clearly and to communicate in words about their feelings.

As Schofield (2005:30) explained:

> *Children will have strengths as well as vulnerabilities that derive from their genetic, birth family and care histories. Both must be identified in order to maximize the child's capacity to speak and be heard.*

It is therefore essential that children's stories must be set in an ecological framework (see Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory above) since children's minds and behaviour develop both in the context of close relationships and in the world of peers, school, community and culture.

The aim of the model, according to Schofield (2005:31) is to provide a concise but holistic picture of the development of a child's mind and behaviour, a framework in which the significance of listening to children can be understood.

3.5.1.1.1 Affect

Reports about children to courts, panels and other planning forums should describe children's *feelings* about their birth families (foster families, adoptive families), their siblings, their friends and themselves in detail. In order to do that, it is helpful to start by thinking about children's emotional development and the ways in which feelings are both felt and expressed. It is important to remember that a child's expressions of emotion and ability to put their feelings into words will vary greatly depending on their experience in close relationships. Particularly important will be those experiences in the formative period of infancy, but also through the pre-school years as language develops. As Schofield (2005:32) stated:

> *The capacity to name emotions, for example, relies on the child's developing sense of the meaning and specificity of different emotions, on their developing language skills and on the ability to put those two together in conversation with others.*

Research has demonstrated the consequences of synchrony between the infant and the caregiver. When a child has experienced a lack of synchrony, such a child becomes confused and uncertain about the feelings that he or she is experiencing. Children in neglectful or maltreating families often have difficulty in expressing emotions. Schofield (2005:32) also pointed out that children who have been maltreated will show fewer negative emotions and may display false positive affect. This is a developing strategy for managing

their feelings in order to stay safe when close to people they do not trust. In working with children, the professional role-player needs to portray that such contradictory feelings are understandable.

3.5.1.1.2 Autonomy

One of the major developmental tasks from infancy, through adolescence to adulthood, is to manage and balance dependency and autonomy. Schofield (2005:35) mentioned that negotiating how much autonomy to allow when decisions are made about children's lives and their futures, causes anxiety to practitioners / professional role-players.

> *The risks and benefits of giving or withholding power and choice in situations of very great seriousness lie at the heart of the debate between children's participation rights and children's best interests.*

Schofield (2005:35) explained that autonomy is about the flexible use of self and others and says throughout childhood, children are expected to make decisions – (who shall I play with? What shall I make from the play dough?) When children are invited to participate in decision-making, they are offered the opportunity to influence decisions that will affect their future in highly significant ways. For children who have experienced exercising appropriate autonomy, making decisions is achieved by a combination of careful thinking through and asking advice from people they trust. They can think, act and plan rather than only react to events. Children, who have been discouraged

from asserting themselves in their birth families, find it difficult to know where to start. Schofield (2005:36) emphasized that these are the children who need most help to ensure that when momentous decisions are made about their lives, they are considered to have views worthy of consideration:

> *This moment in their lives is a time of crisis, but it can also be an opportunity for a different experience of being valued, one that itself can be a positive turning point.*

Children need to be treated with respect as an autonomous being but they also need to feel that their interests are protected. Schofield (2005:36) quoted from the Children Act Guidance (1989, Vol. 3, par 5.53), offering wise counsel:

> *Children should feel that they have been properly consulted, that their views have been properly considered and that they have participated as partners in the decision-making process. However, they should not be made to feel that the burden of decision-making has fallen totally upon them.*

3.5.1.1.3 Cognition

As Schofield (2005:37) stated:

> *The expression and regulation of feelings and the appropriate development of autonomy in children cannot be achieved without the fundamental development of the capacity to think, about the self, about others and about the world around them.*

This capacity has many components: some have genetic roots, such as intelligence; others are associated with age and developmental stage; and others are influenced by environmental factors. When referred back to the developmental checklist, it is evident that cognitive development moves from sensory-motor stages in infancy to be more concrete and rule-bound in middle childhood. In adolescent and adult minds, thinking is more flexible and abstract. These shifts in thinking towards increasing complexity and abstraction have great significance for professional role-players. Schofield (2005:37) however pointed out that such shifts towards increasing complexity are not automatic with advancing age but will still depend on the quality of experience. Cognition, like affect and autonomy, is particularly affected by the more extreme experiences of maltreatment and the professional role-player need to take cognizance of it.

As Schofield (2005: 37) explained:

> *Listening to children, reaching an understanding of the thinking as well as the feeling mind of a child, requires a firm foundation of knowledge about nature, nurture and the interaction between the child's mind and the environment in which they are growing and developing.*

The importance of the development of a flexibly thinking, reflective mind that can approach new situations with confidence and adaptive strategies highlights the risks and difficulties for those children who do not have this capacity. This is highly relevant for the professional role-player who seeks to ascertain, understand and take into account the wishes of children. Schofield (2005:39) mentioned that the challenges for professional practice operate at several levels, namely that problems with children's thinking interact with difficulties in naming feelings and exercising autonomy. It is important for the professional role-player to realize that a relatively high order of thinking is required when for example children are asked to offer a view on future placements.   Children and young people cannot exercise autonomy without having some understanding of the options or legal choices and the meaning it will have on their everyday lives. Children whose thinking is at a very concrete level because of their age, or who are anxiously confused, find it difficult or impossible to engage easily in a discussion about hypothetical situations. For children to think about the risks and benefits of possible futures is not only difficult but also painful.   This implies that the professional role-player need to

take into account the child's developmental capabilities and put in more effort into using that knowledge to promote children's effective participation. Schofield (2005:39) effectively summarized the importance of above when she said:

> *Such understanding can be used to ensure that as accurate a picture as possible of the way children think, as well a feel, about their world is available for those charges with deciding a child's future.*

3.5.1.1.4 Belonging

All the children exposed to the judicial process and with whom the professional role-players come into contact , are hurt or confused – either because they have or are likely to be removed from their birth families or because their parents are going through a divorce.   It is thus important to include in the model a more psychosocial dimension of development – the significance of belonging. Schofield (2005:40) said that:

> *Although understanding the quality of close relationships within families is an essential part of listening to children, family placement decisions almost invariably have to deal with options that will potentially re-orientate the child in terms of their family memberships and their identities.*

Although 'belonging' may seem a relatively straightforward concept, many children find it hard to think about or express their ideas and feelings about where they currently belong or would like to belong in the future. For this reason, the professional role-player needs to do such a weighing process about belonging (respecting the quality of relationships) with a lifespan perspective in mind. Belonging to a family is often linked to a number of other sources of identity, such as ethnicity, religion, school and community. All of these areas of belonging may also be affected by placement decisions. Schofield (2005:42) pointed out an important aspect namely that, although a conversation with children about family belonging provides an opportunity to gather evidence for the decision, it also helps the child to think about and evaluate aspects of their family membership as part of the process of refining their sense of self.

3.5.1.1.5 The developing self

All the different aspects of children's development are inevitably linked to the child's evolving sense of self. As Schofield (2005:42) described it:

> *Feeling loved and loveable and knowing that caregivers are predictable and available, for example, liberates the child's capacity for exploration and for autonomy, but also increases the likelihood of an improved capacity to think things through.*

Schofield (2005:42) described this as a psycho-social and ecological model in which inner and outer worlds interact so that experiences in school and peer

groups will be both affecting and being affected by the child's capacity to think, manage affect and behaviour, and feel competent to use their own resources and the support of others.   The more secure children feel, the more likely it is that they will be able to think logically and flexibly and be comfortable in expressing a range of feelings.   The more insecure and anxious they feel the more help they will need to be able to access and communicate these feelings.

The developmental goal of resilience is, according to Schofield (2005:42) built from building blocks such as security, regulating emotion, self-esteem, autonomy, self-efficacy, reflective function, identity and a sense of belonging:

> *These all contribute to fortifying the child in times of stress and enabling them to meet developmental and life-event challenges.*

Although we must use theory and research to help understand the likely interaction between children's development and their environments, the professional role-player still need to keep in mind that each child's pathway will be unique.

3.5.1.2 Implications for practice

Listening to children as part of decision-making processes entails taking account of this rich developmental picture. It involves being aware of the challenges and subtleties of establishing a partnership with children that can enable them to communicate what they think or feel and to express their views on the directions, which their lives might take.

According to Schofield (2005:42), children themselves will not be aware of this complex developmental picture, but professional role-players need to recognize it on their behalf and can very often use this awareness to help children make better sense of their experiences.   The message that it is not unusual for children to have mixed feelings, for example, is a simple one, but can bring a great deal of relief to troubled children.

Schofield (2005:43) concluded by saying:

> *Active listening by workers who understand the complexities of development, the need for children to take the lead in a safe environment and the need to find ways to reach each child, whatever their history or ability to communicate, is the only way in which we can hope to achieve the best outcomes for children.*

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3.6   Concluding remarks on development

Landreth (1991:49) remarked that some people mentioned that space is our last frontier to explore but in fact, he is of the opinion that childhood may our last frontier. As he explained:

> *We know so little about the complex intricacies of childhood and are limited in our efforts to discover and understand the meanings in childhood because we are forced to allow children to teach us. Many adults do not want to be taught by children, but we can only learn about children from children.*

Development is indeed a process of complex intricacies although adults do not deliberately think about the efforts it involves from the child to achieve the developmental tasks – managing to balance dependency and autonomy. Fraiberg (1978: ix) echoed this statement when she said:

> *It is only in the minds of adults that childhood is a paradise, a time of innocence and serene joy.*

Yet, adults (parents, professional role-players) need to be aware of these efforts and give recognition to these achievements because, as stated by Gillis (1996:72):

> *The manner in which young people come to view their efforts in achieving success – or otherwise- in the different developmental*

areas, greatly influence the extent to which they eventually emerge with a positive or negative self-concept.

The professional role-player working with children thus have a greater impact on children's lives, and therefore a greater responsibility, than they would realize otherwise.

Having reached more clarity on the needs and life tasks of children of different ages, the important role of the judicial system and the need for a protocol to follow when working with children will now receive attention in the next chapter.