EARLY CHILDHOOD, EDUCATION AND THE PHENOMENAL GROWTH OF 'PLAYSCHOOLS':

A SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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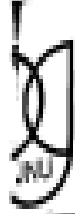

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL SYSTEMS

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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INDIA

2015

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Early Childhood, Education and The Phenomenal Growth of 'Playschools': A Sociological Enquiry**" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is an original research work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any University/ Institution.

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This dissertation entitled: **"Early Childhood, Education and The Phenomenal Growth of 'Playschools': A Sociological Enquiry"** submitted by **Rituraj Sharma**, to the Centre For the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for the award of the degree of the **Master of Philosophy** is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University/ Institution.

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DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER &

GRANDMOTHER…

the two strongest ladies in my life

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

her cooperation during this work. Contribution of my grandparents is also important who are the constant discussant, their knowledge and views on childhood, about family, mothering (parenting) have enriched my understanding.

I owe my profound gratitude to my dear friend and companion S. Balakrishnan for his continuous encouragement and inspiration. From the technical help to the emotional and moral support which he has provided to me is beyond words. It is with his ardent support only I could overcome the difficulties and complete my work.

Sweta and Vijeta, my closest friends must get special mention who have provided me with the motivation and support when I extremely needed it. I am also grateful to my room-mate Renu Gupta for her help and support she extended during this endeavor. I want to express my sincere thanks to all my friends and seniors at JNU and elsewhere- Aakriti Bawa, Arpita Sahoo, Aruna Bejentri, Meenakshi Gautam, Sabiha Mazid, Rinki Chokhani, Fousia Shukoor, Arutselvi Devaranjan, Dhiren Kumar, Dipali Chaudhary, Rashi Bhargava, Suraj Beri, Praveen Pillassery, Aafreen Mustafa, Sudipta Garai and Vishwambhar for always extending their help and being patient listeners during this work and otherwise. I would like to thank Ishwari Bhattarai for helping me give the final touch-ups to my work to make it 'presentable'.

Last but not the least I would like to extend my gratitude to The New Leaf Team for organizing meetings and discussions. I am equally indebted to the participants who have attended those meetings and discussions; they are also indirect but significant contributors to this work.

To all those who stood by me in difficult times, and made it possible for me to write this dissertation, I owe you a lot. Much thanks!

RITURAJ SHARMA

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- B.El.Ed.: Bachelor of Elementary Education
- BHK: Bedroom, Hall, Kitchen
- BNC: Brats N Cuties (name of the playschool)
- CCTV: Closed Circuit Television
- ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education
- ECE: Early Childhood Education
- ICDS: Integrated Child Development Scheme
- LPG: Liberalization Privatization Globalization
- NCF: National Curriculum Framework
- NCR: National Capital Region
- NPC: National Policy for Children
- NPE: National Policy on Education
- OTP: One Time Payment
- PTM: Parents Teacher Meeting
- VCE: Vishweshraiya College of Education

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

'Research' no doubt can be done on any topic by anyone. However, for any kind of serious and meaningful research deep passion and interest is needed. For me, the domain of 'Education' arouses intense passion. It has always been a topic of great interest to me. My experiences of being a student for more than two decades and now as a researcher have helped me to make sense the arena of education more meaningfully along with its stringent practices, dynamics and politics. The kind of personal experiences which I had during my schooling have kept me questioning the way schools work. Often students are punished, made to think that they are 'useless' if they don't score or if they don't follow the rules (both explicit and implicit rules) laid down by the institution. Until B.El.Ed. I used to believe that by going through such stress, depression, and daily humiliation only one can get educated (at the school). Afterwards, a broader understanding on the topic of education I had acquired during my training of being a Sociology student. So, all three including my (not so good) experiences of schooling, my B.El.Ed. training and now as a research scholar at Sociology department together made me select a research problem in 'Education'. This work in a way could be regarded as a synthesis of much broader understanding of mine on focused 'issue'. It was schooling which touched me most and therefore it became a central theme in my enquiry of current research. Schooling in a way is an inescapable reality of our times. It constitutes a major part of one's[1] childhood socialization. Thinking about my schooling that began when I was four years old. My schooling began with the nursery school. I decided that I want to do some research that involves the beginning phase of schooling when the very first contact children face with a formal institution. But to my surprise this picture was altered already. Now, it is not the nurseries anymore which marks the beginning phase of one's schooling

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[1] Referring to only those 'lucky' children, who manages to get formal education.

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yet another institution precedes it and these are 'playschools'(also called as preschool/ pre-nurseries). These playschools cater to the children of age group eighteen months to three years old (and occasionally four years old). Now the first formal contact children have with an educational institution is much earlier, at the age of eighteen months or often at the age of two years old. This dropping of age again brought with it many questions about the changes in our society, different educational and career aspirations and so on. Nowadays one can see young children going to playschool and then are tied up with so many other formal training sessions for example dance, music, skates, etc. Children nowadays are left with no or minimal time for free-play. One would question: are these kids super-kids (Elkind 1987) trying to excel in everything? Or is it just an imposition of our anxieties on kids? Are we not giving children the time to think, realize what they want to learn? Is it our restlessness that is making us to push children from starting itself to learn each and everything, what we think is 'right' for children? These were the questions that made me choose my 'research problem'.

To begin with playschools, these could be regarded as one part of the services provided under early childhood care and education programme. Playschools being the part of privatized services made it necessary to enquire about the increasing impact of privatization on early childhood care and education. These days the increasing grip of privatization is actively transforming early childhood care and education into an 'educational and care market'. Within private sector there are various kinds of playschools which vary from garage playschools to elite playschools. To supplement and enrich the research on the issue of privatization, I have taken a branded playschool as my field of enquiry. This playschool is situated in Delhi and also running its multiple branches across various cities. The private playschool is chosen to capture the ideological continuity with privatization and consumer practices prevalent in early childhood education. Situated in a metropolitan city (Delhi), the playschool is having physical proximity with the 'global culture' and thereby facilitates our understanding on the issue of privatization and consumer practices. Often at playschools/

institutional child-care centers, the 'care' is provided to children in a very measurable way, in return for money. Bringing from my experience during fieldwork:

> *"When a new child is admitted to the playschool, he/she would resist, would cry, despite of the teacher's effort to help the child feel comfortable at the school. But the young child who has been left in the company of total strangers and that too alone, who is not able to find his/her mother (or family member) is not ready to listen to anyone. At a playschool where many other children are present, one cannot devote hours of time on 'just one child'. Often then the inconsolable sobbing child is made to sit inside the classroom (at times forcefully) and rarely is taken into arms and consoled. The justification given is that if one child would cry and his/her demands would be fulfilled then other children would also ask for the same 'care'. Playschool is not children's home where their mother would come and comfort them now and then. It is the impersonal school-like setting meant for preparing children to be 'independent'. It is this calculable and measurable 'care' which is provided to children."*

There were many such incidents where I have also felt the pain that children are going through. This exercise has made me reflect on my childhood and beginning of schooling phase that was very different[2] and yet appeared same[3]. The changing society of ours is inducing changes in education whereas this 'privatized education' is again bringing a different set of aspirations that we imbibe. Our times are marked with immense possibilities of globalization are indeed surpassing the barriers of time and space, establishing meta-connection between countries. But it also has led to the exchange of anxieties and miseries[4]. Modern

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[2] I have not been to a playschool. At the age of 02 or 03 years old I could just relax, be at home with my mother, grand-parents, watch my favorite cartoon shows, play with my neighborhood friends and not worry about waking up early morning, to get ready for the school.

[3] During my initial experiences of schooling with nursery, I have faced difficulties in 'adjusting' according to strict rules of the school. For e.g. there were strict rules regarding when one should go out of the class...just after morning-prayer and just before the lunch- break one must not go outside not even to washroom, students must be seated inside classroom and must not be roaming outside and various other similar but strict rules and disciplining practices compose my childhood memories of schooling.

[4] Discussed at length in chapter 3.

living and highly individualized society where people are busy in satisfying their individual needs and left with no time or energy for others (even their family/ kin members), is absorbing us. Earlier form of communities that used to extend support to people are now actively replaced by new institutionalized quick-fixes like playschools for younger children, old-age home for elderly people, therapeutic care services to patients, etc. Our fast changing society has not been given time to think or to reflect rather we are just made to join the race of being a 'global citizen'. In this race, we are supposed to shed our cultural markers, the identities that we might have gained from our community, our mother-tongue as soon as possible. We are in a hurry to learn the exotic language, mannerisms in order to imbibe the 'global culture' which promises to us a successful life. Since it is this knowledge or say the ability to carry certain (elitist) global traits which are rewarded by our education system. Partly it could be this understanding that is making more and more parents to send their children to 'playschools' which further would prepare children to be a 'global citizen'.

One could argue that is it the well-established importance of 'school' in our society that is now appropriated by these new institutions called 'play-schools.' No doubt playschools do carry a legitimacy of school with them. As these are the educational agencies that would secure chances of children to gain admission to good schools further. Had it been any other name, these institutions might not have gained much popularity. It is also the added legitimacy of 'school' which is giving these institutions an authentic image of the educational institution. With all these concerns, the questions that come into my mind which I intend to answer in the succeeding chapters are:

- What are the sociological reasons for the phenomenal growth of playschools?
- Is it related to the dynamics of middle class living in urban centres in India?

- Are playschools causing an added burden and putting heavy pressure on children?

Three pivotal points which the study would engage in are:

- Sociology of education with a focus on playschools and early childhood education;
- Sociology of urban living which is reinforcing the need for 'institutionalized care mechanisms' and;
- Participation with a selected playschool.

These three locations help in making sense of larger transformations happening in our society.

The study borrows insights from the 'new sociology of childhood' (James and Prout 1997) that treats childhood as a social construction and children as active agents, the study follows an eclectic approach. Taking up from various streams say child development, child psychology, education psychology, social psychology and sociology the study has tried to investigate about various social transformations in early childhood and education relating it with urban living. With the awareness of tremendous impact of privatization, and market-oriented approach of educational institutions; various theme like early childhood education, being a child in modern times, the ideals of childhood and motherhood are looked at with a specific standpoint, from the perspective of a special class which consumes this 'playschool service'.

After doing a preliminary reading on the subject, multiple visits were made to two different playschool centers (Mother's Pride and Brats N Cuties) in Delhi. It helped in evolving the structure of dissertation that is theme based, where every section is dealing with a particular set of studies along with investigating the broader theme. I have also referred various forms of secondary literature for the study ranging from books, journals that are also supplemented by discussions with

friends, seniors, parents, and teachers. For the clarity on the issue of various dynamics and day to day workings of a playschool a short engagement was made with one such playschool in Delhi. Together with the reading of literature on sociology of education and early childhood education my engagement with a Delhi-based playschool has enabled me to look more closely the day to day workings of the school and to make sense of the 'popularity' which these institutions have bagged in recent times.

My participation in various activities at school, conversations with parents, teachers, and other staff members have added multiple perspectives to the study. It has allowed me to capture the explicit and implicit peculiarities of the institution that would have been difficult to get through the reading of secondary literature only. It is this engagement which made me conscious about various roles of the researcher and ethical positions attached to it. The ethnographic method that is followed to generate a picture of daily workings of the school in a way enabled me to understand various peculiarities, various roles and responsibilities which a researcher needs to put up inside the school setting. My multiple roles included being a participant observer inside the classroom, working with teachers as their fellow (making weekly worksheets, doing arrangements for Christmas and New Year celebrations etc.), playmate and friend for children. As an outsider initially I have faced little difficulties in rapport making with teachers, other staff at school and with children. Teachers and staff, however, were having a restricted conversation with me; children right away rejected my presence during some of the initial days. To gain acceptance from children I have learned their poems, various other rhymes, participated in dance, exercise sessions and played along with children during lunchtime. Many techniques that I have used in order to understand multiple realities of the school and classroom's workings included observations (participant and non-participant), casual talks, staff-room conversations, conversation with parents and interaction with the helps (three aunties provided at the school) along with an informal discussion with the principal.

Working in a modern institutional set-up in an urban area provides the different set of challenges as there are certain restrictions on the researcher. The researcher is often subordinate to the higher officials of the bureaucratic organization (here the playschool) and has to mold his/her course of doing work as per the suitability of the organization. Unlike rural setting[5] where the researcher still holds an upper hand, in urban setting working with an established corporate institution has its own difficulties. Often various meetings held with employees are not in the range of researcher's reach. At this playschool, since me being an outsider had no access to many conversations and meetings that used to take place between the school staff and director. It is because of this reason, some of the sensitive incidents (highly confidential for the school to let it be known by the researcher) I have constructed by eavesdropping. At times, my presence was perceived as of an assistant teacher who is there to help in classroom management that hindered the possibility of moving around in the school premises. Also, some of the initial interactions with parents that I had were mediated either through the teacher or another staff at the school. Interactions happened at school premises might have coloured the conversation as there could be many uneasy things which parents might have discussed had the conversation happened outside school premises. Time and again, I was reminded off by the school's authority that I am an outsider; a potential threat to their organization. As even during the PTM interaction where I wanted to have conversation with parents, despite my resistance the branch coordinator was made to be present there during the entire interaction session.

As far as my ethical positions are concerned, as a researcher I have tried to be as objective as possible throughout my work. But as I have mentioned earlier that schooling is something to which I am passionately connected, at times even

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[5] Recently while doing fieldwork at a village in Jharkhand (on malnutrition) I have experienced that people there were comparatively receptive and were easily taking-up conversations with our research team. But in urban context it is hard to make people to spend time in conversation, here people are concerned about the amount of time going in 'useless' research conversation which might not fetch any immediate benefit to them.

during fieldwork there were instances where I faced dilemmas. Many instances of crying children wanting to go out; babbling with tears filled eyes 'mumma…mumma' were dragged and made to sit forcefully inside the classroom; children struggling to have their meals with the help of spoon and fork and end up leaving their plates without finishing the food; continuous dance practice sessions which children had while preparing for annual day's programme, were some of the instances that were quite disturbing to me also. Even now while writing these instances, I am falling short of words to put the trauma that children go through on daily basis. At times I also felt helpless to intervene with these situations since time and again I was reminded off by one or other teacher about school's rules.

In this research children were equal participants along with teachers and parents. The prior consent was gained from school authorities and parents. During the fieldwork, children's consent was also respected. Various resistances or unwillingness of children to participate like rejecting my presence totally, not having any conversation, crying or just simply walking out were respected during the course of study. As suggested by Skanfors (2009) about 'ethical radar' in child research, that a researcher should follow, I have tried to follow the same in my study.

This dissertation is structured thematically, where each chapter caters to a research question relating to the larger inquiry. Apart from introduction and conclusion there are three core chapters.

To start with the second chapter that is 'Contextualizing playschools in the existing discourses on Education' deals with all-pervasive importance of school as an institution in modern society. Playschools that are usually understood as schools thus holds the similar legitimacy that is accorded to the sacred institution 'school'. The chapter discusses the presence of playschools in globalized setting of current times. Making sense of privatized services of early childhood care and

education in the present context the chapter tries to relocate its presence through playschools. On a broader level interpreting playschools similar to schools, the evolution of schooling and necessity of institutional body called the school in modern society is also discussed. Bringing many perspectives into account the chapter has tried to evolve a broader picture of school and its workings along with various power dynamics and disciplinary practices which schools follow. Playschools are part of early childhood care and education, so there is also a section devoted to historical and philosophical roots that discusses the evolution of idea of education and care for young children. Further discussing the importance of childhood and care in Indian context and role of the state in this arena, the chapter ends with emerging questions and confusions that are dealt further in other chapters.

The third chapter 'Modernity, urban middle class living and the induced need of play schools' deals with the induced necessity of institutional care mechanisms in the context of urban middle class living. Playschools as such an institutional care providers that are becoming popular in urban centers must have some connection with urban living. Being privately owned, these playschools charge a certain amount of fee which is not in the reach of everyone. These playschools provide a certain kind of service to some section of society that we could term as middle-class or say the class which can 'afford' to purchase and utilize these services. Later, the chapter relates popularity of playschools with various complexities of modern society say emerging new family types, the changing urban landscape, impersonal nature of work in which even 'care' has been treated as part of 'work'. The firm grip of globalization and its impact on children, ideals of childhood and motherhood are also explored. Reasoning out with ongoing transformations how even parents are also made to believe in the primacy of institutional care for their children is also a focal point of the chapter. Effect of strong grip of capitalist and market-oriented approach is also explored.

The fourth chapter 'Insights from the field: An engagement with a playschool in Delhi' supplements the arguments and discussions took into consideration in other chapters. A playschool was selected in Delhi and after an engagement a comprehensive picture of the playschools has been evolved with ethnographic description.

All the three core chapters are developed in a fashion that a connecting link could be easily made amongst the chapters as well as with the larger theme. Many overlapping issues say of early childhood education, childhood, impersonal care of institutionalized settings, globalization, and peculiarities of modern society are certain ideas that are running throughout the dissertation. For further research, each and every sub-theme could be developed into a broader research. This research could be further expanded in multiple directions. Commercialized children's media, comparative studies of rural-urban playschools and childhood, studies taking childhood as focal point could be helpful in evolving a broader picture of the privatized care services and changing society at large.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUALIZING PLAYSCHOOLS IN THE EXISTING DISCOURSES ON EDUCATION

Playschools could be understood as a new kind of 'educational (and care)[6]' settings for children aged between eighteen months to three years (occasionally four years) old. These are meant for providing 'the right environment and the right stimuli for children's (mental) growth' (as quoted in website note of one such playschool- Brats N Cuties). Playschools often claim to be informed with 'developmentally appropriate' practices and curriculum, asserts to provide the best learning environment for children, right from their early childhood years. Now we might question that what is this learning about? Are these playschools providing certain different set of knowledge and exposure to children, which is not possible at home? What is the need for a child as young as eighteen months old or two years old to be associated with a formal institution in order to learn? Is learning only possible when one is tied-up with a formal institution? Do children as young as two years old need institutional set-up for getting educated or the familial setting as part of early socialization would be enough? Early socialization of the child which used to fall under the arena of familial responsibilities is now taken over by these institutions called 'playschools'. In a way these institutions for young children's socialization and education have appropriated the element of care into their hands. One might argue that these institutional settings are important for children in order to give them exposure (global) which might not be possible in just familial settings and thereby making families to opt for playschools for their children. These above questions demand an exploration about playschools as part of educational set-up. The changing ideals of education

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[6] Playschools are part of privatized services under early childhood care and education programme. Along with education these also provide care to young children. But here in this particular chapter the focus would be more on the 'educational' aspect of playschools. It is this educational aspect of playschools which makes it similar to any other educational institution. Playschools as care institutions would be dealt with detail in chapter 3.

in current globalized setting of our society, where specific kind of educational skills (to be able to talk in English, technical skills, certain mannerisms etc.) are given preference need to be discussed in this context. Usually, when the institutional legitimacy of a certificate or a degree giving agency is attached with one's skills it provides one the additional edge over others. Knowledge without a degree or legitimate institutional certification is hardly acknowledged in our highly bureaucratic society. In similar fashion playschools could also be understood as similar certificate giving agencies which would certify a child's ability and label him/her 'fit' to get admission to further formal school. The chapter engages with enquiries like, what happens at a playschool? Is it for play as the terminology suggests or is it something different? Could playschools be understood as an informal setting or a group meant for early socialization of children or is it the other way round, treating playschools as a more formal and school like setting meant for preparing children for further formal schooling? What made these playschools so popular? Could it be associated with a particular kind of class where children from a particular section of society are consuming the playschool service? Here in the light of these questions this chapter would aim to revisit the literature on sociology of education in order to understand the immense popularity and phenomenal growth of 'playschools' in current times.

In order to understand 'playschool' as a school like institutional and educational setting with its added importance in modern societies the chapter would also try to outline the evolution of school and schooling. Playschools being part of early childhood care and education would also be dealt in the chapter by referring to the historical roots of early childhood education and tracing it to current complexities. The chapter would not deal various other central and state programmes on early childhood care and education say ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme), anganbari, balwari programmes but the focus would be on various policies related to early childhood care and education policy, national policy on children in order to grasp the state's role and its various links in relation to the mushrooming growth of these privatized services- 'playschools'.

To maintain a sharp focus on the issue of playschool services and its specific consumers[7], the chapter would only take into account the privatized services early childhood and education and would not extend the exploration on presence of playschools, their roles and functions which they are serving in rural or semi-urban spaces. The new meanings of education, pressing need of education in early-childhood years, its importance would be major focus of the chapter. With privatized education and schooling in general the role of privatization and globalization would also be dealt with a special focus on early-childhood years.

2.1. Brief Overview of Current Setting of Playschools:

Playschools as we have discussed are educational and care institutions meant for children aged between eighteen months to three years old (occasionally four years old). The age group they cater to comes under the arena of early childhood where children as young as eighteen months old get the exposure of 'school-like' setting when they attend playschool. If I were to recall my own childhood, growing up as a kid in 1990s my first exposure to the school happened at the age of four years. But now children's first exposure with the school is happening at the age of two years or before. Here one might ask that what is the reason for such a pressing need that is making us to send such young children to playschools? Is it the knowledge becoming more complex that families are finding it hard to socialize their young children at home and therefore are dependent on institutional solutions? Or could it be related to other changes brought in our society over the period of time with globalization and privatization? Necessarily its link could be traced with the LPG era which marked its beginning in the 1990s gradually transforming our society along with new choices in education and various other sectors. Playschools which could be understood as a part of privatized educational service (for young children) also flourished during LPG era.

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[7] 'Specific consumers' (a certain section of society) of playschool services are dealt with detail in chapter 3.

Amongst middle-class parents the importance of schooling is such that it is one of the major concerns. Regardless of familial income it is expected that the child's admission should be done in 'good school' i.e. a well-known larger institution with it's established 'brand' and market value (Donner 2006: 375). The admission procedure to these playschools is relatively easy than the formal schools. At playschools parents are just supposed to submit the fee and they can get their child enrolled. These schools generally prepare children according to 'global standards', by teaching English, certain kind of mannerism, and also preparing them for further educational race. As far as the functional aspect is concerned these institutions are supposed to serve are teaching of 'discipline' and making children familiar with school-like setting. The average monthly fee structure of these schools falls somewhere between 1000/- and 2000/- (depending on their popularity and services available in school premises) apart from admission charges and other expenses, which makes it clear that these are catering to middle and upper-middle classes of the society and thereby maintaining the specific and homogenous class character[8]. Donner (ibid: 376) asserts that the English character of these schools could best be described as 'global Americanism'. The peculiar thing is that generally at these playschools being well versed in English is the preliminary eligibility for a facilitator. Referring to the teachers, Donner (ibid) mentions that they are not often qualified but hold degrees in unrelated subjects. Further these schools often use exotic names like Little Angles, Mother's Pride, Brats N Cuties, Euro Kids, Kidzee, Tiny Tots etc. in order to give a sense of English medium surrounding (ibid: 377). The Anglicized names are again adding to the popularity element for these playschools which emphasize to provide an English rich environment for children who are treated as future global citizens. Often to indicate the environment of 'fun' and 'playful learning' these playschool building (walls and floors etc.) are decorated in colorful popular (Disney) cartoons, English alphabets, rhymes etc. Another feature of these schools includes display of foreign-made toys which are quite attractive and pull attention of parents and visitors. Donner (ibid) has rightly mentioned that 'pre-schooling is

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[8] Further the specific class character of playschools would be discussed in chapter 3 and 4.

clearly about tapping into what is represented as a 'global' culture'. Referring to the flourishing market of these playschools, ECE (2006: 15) position paper noted that within the private sector also there is wide variability in terms of the service that these playschools provide. Ranging from a handful of well-established elite playschools[9] offering high quality care, to the great mass of poorly managed, overcrowded, and under-equipped 'garage' schools occupies the two extremes of these privatized services. ECE (ibid) mentions that majority of these playschools are running into tiny unhygienic spaces which squeeze children in an enclosed building and attempt to force-feed them with the three R's at an unsuitably early age. A recent entry which has been imported by these privately managed services is of the 'franchise', making it possible for these educational and care institutional chains to expand their reach and establishing more and more such branches and centers across various cities (and even countries). Franchises could be understood as a highly expansive model running as part of larger organization and providing the related services. Usually these franchises with their western and bureaucratic global model of services cater to the new urban middle class. These changes could be understood as the part of larger picture where liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG). Since 1991 the roots of privatized firms are getting stronger at the same time washing out the public sector and subverting its services. This franchise model of 'playschool' along with its various procedures and dynamics is discussed with detail in Chapter 4.

2.2. Globalization and Its Impact on Early Childhood Education

It would not be wrong to assert that the private services in the area of school/ schooling and early childhood education have multiplied under the era of globalization. Donner (2006: 374) has mentioned that 'preschool education' is provided entirely by the private sector in nurseries which are collectively known as 'Montessori schools'. With globalization the categorical importance of

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[9] Elite playschools could be understood as the English medium schools having exotic curriculum, charging high fees, have a good infrastructure and are having various branches across cities and at times in other countries.

'English' language has made it necessary for parents to send their children to English medium playschools that in a way would be one of the means of securing their future. Since English often is equated with one's status and knowledge so studying in English medium school provides children an edge in the highly competitive educational environment. Sending a child to a preschool or nursery at an early age, as Donner (ibid) would say 'has become a precondition for admission to better English medium school'. Referring to mushrooming market of private schools, Donner says that these playschools and nurseries could be regarded as simply a foreign import. Mentioning the need of preschool in European and American context, Donner (ibid) has showed that pre-schooling in West, emerged as a solution for the childcare problems of working mothers and it was largely for children from working class background. However, in current context of India playschools are targeting the privileged class. Education in this way could be understood in terms of securing one's social status and a means for upward mobility. Donner (ibid) further added that the preschooler child who earlier used to be the responsibility of family and conceptualized in a domestic environment is now increasingly seen as in need of institutional care. With the globalization this heavy reliance and dependence on institutional mechanism has arrived where for nearly everything we are provided with a sure shot 'readymade' institutional solution. The effect of globalization and privatization through these privatized services of childcare could be read in a way which is further marking the class-based differences more firm and distinct, leading to a hierarchized society. Donner (ibid) added that the model of early childhood as a 'developmental stage' was directly imported from Euro-American context which is providing the current reasoning for introduction and the popularity of early-years of education. The effect of this developmental model could be seen where the learning is associated with child's chronological age. The strict correlation between age and tasks or skills to be learned is again producing the sources of anxiety amongst parents who often make their children to learn or go through each and every successive pre-defined universal developmental stage. No doubt childhood could be regarded as a universal biological stage also but it essentially

must also be understood in relation with one's social milieu (James & Prout 1997). It is as much as a social category as it is biological. Various communities and social groups have their different ideals of child and childhood which cannot be understood in singular fashion i.e. only by applying the Western developmental model. Different sections of societies have interpreted 'child' and 'childhood' in a different way for example a child belonging to a tribal society would have certain different roles and responsibilities and expectations of his/her parents would also be different in comparison to a child from non-tribal society. Globalization in a way has brought to the front a singular discourse on child and childhood which these playschools are embracing and is usually reflected in their aims and certain kind of curriculum prepared for children.

To contrast with the current global view of early childhood model as put forwarded by Donner (2006), Kakar's (1979) study on *Indian Childhood* can enrich our understanding of traditional views on childhood. Kakar (ibid: 30) maintains that child in Indian tradition is considered "valuable human being to whom adults are expected to afford their fullest protection, affection and indulgence". Comparing the terminologies for child rearing Kakar (ibid: 31) mentions that in Indian context the rearing is termed as '*palna posna* (emphasis original) which means protecting and nurturing children in contrast to Western terms like 'rearing' or 'bringing up'. Also, referring to Bhakti songs and poems, Kakar shows that there is a specific stream in Indian childhood which values the attributes of child which have not been 'socialized' yet. According to him, it is the child who is 'considered nearest to a perfect, divine state and it is the adult who needs to learn child's mode of experiencing the world'. Here in India the proper form of interaction between the adults and children is not conceived in terms of socialization but *interplay* (emphasis original). About India, Kakar (ibid: 32) mentioned that the theme of 'childhood' would have multiple interpretations in relation to different castes, religions which have their own practices. Giving example of Hindu childhood, Kakar (ibid) says that in India great amount of care and nurturance is provided by the primary care giver 'the mother' and other care-

takers (other members of family) to the child. An Indian mother is inclined towards the total indulgence of her infant's wishes and demands, whether these be related to feeding, cleaning, sleeping or being a constant company. Minimal demands are placed on Indian infant to master the world around him. But in contemporary times this homely care is taken over by institutionalized care where working mothers living in nuclear families find it hard to nurture their child alone and thus have to rely on institutional care. The dynamics and composition of urban middle class living could also be treated as one of the reason for popularity of institutional mechanism for child care (playschools, day care etc.). This thread would be explored with detail in Chapter 3.

Kakar (ibid: 34-35), further mentioned that

> "…the child in Indian context is not seen as a *tabula rasa* unlike in Western philosophy, but as entering the world with 'innate' psychic dispositions from its previous life…there is little pressure or no urgency to try or to 'mold' a child in one or another parentally desired image."

But the contemporary understanding of early childhood as Donner (2006: 375) has mentioned is imported from Western educational theory where the 'early childhood' is presented as a phase during which children are susceptible to acquire discipline and 'manners' through schooling. This discipline and mannerism again plays important role in ensuring academic success of the child thus early education is more favored. Also, with the societies going more complex the large amount of information exchange is taking place which is putting an added pressure on developing countries like ours to match up with the developed ones. Necessarily it is partly by this irrational race of matching up with developed countries that is putting an added load on children (cited in Learning without burden 1993) and they are supposed to know more and more right from the early years of their childhood. Childhood years which earlier used to mark the relaxed time span during which children could just play and not much bother about

anything is changing at a fast pace. Since there is so much to learn that even the early years must be utilized in order to make its fuller use.

Nowadays sending a son or daughter to a preschool/ nursery has become a precondition for admission to a 'good school'. This 'good school' is generally characterized as one with English medium of instruction and which provides the global exposure to children. The private sector is booming at a very fast rate and it is virtually out of any kind of regulation or state authority. This was also one of the major areas of concern noted in various documents like: Early Childhood Education position paper (2006: 11), Education for All report (Kaul 2009: 39) and Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (2013: 06). The subsequent mention in the paper that there is no survey undertaken on private sector the facilities these are providing and there are no accurate figures available to estimate the commercial ventures undergoing, makes this arena an immediate focus of concern. The position paper (2006) noted that,

> "according to some rough estimates, the number of children enrolled in private-sector initiatives (including day-care centers, nurseries, kindergartens, and pre-primary classes) was about ten million, or about as many children enrolled as the number of children under ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme, run by central govt.) during 2001." (ibid: 11)

The major concern is that since this area is unregulated it has grown many folds in recent years and its initiatives are in a way equally huge as center run ICDS programme. It is also important to note that ICDS which caters to underprivileged sections of society, the growing private sector is targeting mostly to the upper and middle classes in cities and also extending its reach to small towns, villages, semi-urban areas, urban slums, etc., reflecting the unprecedented demand for and popularity of such services (ibid: 12). Thereby, at this juncture it becomes important to study the sociological reasons of the popularity of playschools that despite having state and center run programs and schemes why still the private sector is first choice of parents? Despite charging high fee what is so special about

these (alien[10]) playschools that these are becoming more and more popular with time?

2.3. Conceptual Framework of Early Childhood Care and Education

As the name suggests ECCE is about the early childhood stages and it focuses on providing education and care along with taking care of holistic development of children. According to the position paper on Early Childhood Education (2006)

> "The first 06–08 years of a child's life are known as the early childhood
> stage, and are globally acknowledged to be the most critical years for
> lifelong development, since the pace of development during these years is
> extremely rapid." (ibid: 06).

Referring to ECCE, the paper mentions that it could be understood as:

> "a philosophy of providing opportunities/experiences to young children up to
> age 08 in order to promote their holistic development, as well as arranging
> and providing services and support systems to communities and families to
> meet the needs of their young children. For the sake of convenience, and for
> purposes of programming and institutional location, ECCE can be divided
> into three sub stages: birth to 2+, 3 to 5+, and 6 to 8+. Each sub-stage can be
> located in a different institutional setting." (ibid: iii).

Since the chapter is focusing on playschools and its importance so the primary concern here would be with the first and second sub-stage of early childhood that is from the age of 2+ to 5+ years. The increasing attention to early childhood years is making it more and more important arena for research. Various early childhood programs (preschool programs) are aimed at catering to 03-06 years old children are termed as nurseries, kindergarten, preparatory schools, playschools

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[10] Alien is used because there is not much familiarity exists with these playschool settings and government itself is not aware of various practices and programmes which these playschools are conducting in the name of early childhood education as these playschools also very greatly from garage schools to branded schools.

etc. Though having different terminology, these schools are all the more similar in their approach and the age-group of children they cater to includes largely 02+ to 03+ or rarely 04 years. Early childhood education also known as early childhood care and education, here the component of care has been broadly defined by the position paper (ibid: 01) with a special focus on children below 03years. The position paper (ibid: iii) makes it clear that the 'care' component signifies the recognition of the fact that young children need care and nurturing in terms of health and nutritional needs along with their psychosocial and emotional needs for holistic development.[11] Through crèches and home based parent education the broad understanding of care for children has been outlined in the ECE position paper. Whereas the component of 'education' covers 'learning, acquiring knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes along with preparing a young child to enter formal educational system' (ibid). Also, the education component has made itself clear that ECCE could also be treated partly as a 'school readiness program' for children, which helps children in familiarizing the school-like setting and various rules beforehand. The continuity of Donner's argument of treating childhood as a developmental stage could be found in ECE position paper as follows:

> "Child development is a continuous and cumulative process, so that what precedes influences what follows. In terms of programmatic interventions, it is, therefore, important to plan for and address the entire childhood continuum, from prenatal to the end of the primary stage, as opposed to intervening during any one sub-stage exclusively. For example, primary-education outcomes cannot be improved significantly despite high investments unless the early-childhood outcomes that ensure preparedness are also ensured." (ECE 2006: 04).

ECE position paper (ibid: 02) also recognizes the impact of globalization that with the process of globalization only the international focus on early childhood years and education has come to the forefront. Along with Millennium Development

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[11] Here we can refer to psychosocial theories of Erikson and Maslow (discussed in later sections of the chapter).

Goals in 2000, various programs the ECE position paper (ibid) cites which brought the issue of early childhood education to the forefront are:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. For the first time, there was a set of international standards and measures intended to protect and promote the well-being of children in society.
- The creation of the Human Development Index, a summary measure of human development, by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1990. The Human Development Index measures the achievements of countries on three basic dimensions of human development: (1) a long and healthy life; (2) knowledge; and (3) a decent standard of living; it includes indicators that specifically relate to children, namely, mortality, education, and child labour.
- World Conference on Education For All (EFA), held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, where a global commitment to education was made in a document beginning with the famous words 'Learning begins at birth'.
- World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, reiterated the importance of ECCE through the involvement of the state, the family, and the community.

Further the early childhood education and its importance with the changing aspects of parenting and motherhood can be established as done by Donner (2006: 375) which in turn got defined by globalization processes[12]. Formal schooling which earlier used to start at class I is now marking its beginning with 'playschools'. Playschool as part of formal educational set-up needs to be discussed in close relation with the schools. The unconditional importance of school as an institution of modern society and its influence in early childhood years could be understood in the way importance is accorded to playschools. In the last 15 years playschools have gathered enormous importance and this is the

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[12] The changing practices of parenting (motherhood) are discussed with detail in Chapter 3.

reason which makes it necessary to understand the process of evolution of school and schooling.

2.4. Evolution of School and Compulsory Schooling:

With the phenomenon of universal and compulsory mass schooling, schools as an educational institution are gaining more and more importance and legitimacy in contemporary times. The general understanding is that one goes to school in order to get educated or so to say to gain knowledge. But the question arises that 'is it only schools which can impart education or knowledge to people? Or are schools just a single source out of multiple sources of education? If somebody who has not attended any school does that means he/she don't have any knowledge and education?

Taking insights from Dewey (2004: 02) we can say that schools are one of the many sources of education. He maintains that there are multiple sources and ways through which one can get knowledge and education. In fact earlier, when schools did not exist that time also people had knowledge that was born out of day to day processes. People used to learn things while doing it themselves in the company of elder members of society. To give example when child takes birth he/she is not aware of the things his community do, the language they speak, meaning of different gestures and symbols. It is when the child grows gradually he/she learns various things including language. It would not be wrong to quote here Dewey when he says 'education in a broadest sense is the means of continuity of social life' (ibid). Dewey again says, 'whole social life is an educative experience and by the very process of living together one learns many things.' He maintains the view that most of the education which one learns is incidental and natural. The education which Dewey is talking about need not be having a specialized setting of an educational institute. Knowledge without a school is also possible but school as an institution holds importance in complex societies. 'Schools are intentional agencies which are meant to provide knowledge' (ibid), and these

'intentional agencies' he asserts that are 'helpful in complex societies where through the educator all the achievements, progresses, skills are taught to younger members of society' (ibid: 08). He further adds that since many books and symbols constitute the knowledge to be mastered with their accurate meaning, which is difficult in the immediate setting of family and community. Thus, there arose the demand of a special educational institution- the school, the need for intentional teaching adult- the educator and a specialized body of knowledge- the curriculum. Quoting Dewey (ibid: 21):

> "Roughly speaking, they (school) come into existence when social traditions are so complex that a considerable part of the social store is committed to writing and transmitted through written symbols. Written symbols are even more artificial or conventional than spoken; they cannot be picked up in accidental intercourse with others. In addition, the written form tends to select and record matters which are comparatively foreign to everyday life. The achievements accumulated from generation to generation are deposited in it even though some of them have fallen temporarily out of use. Consequently as soon as a community depends to any considerable extent upon what lies beyond its own territory and its own immediate generation, it must rely upon the set agency of schools to insure adequate transmission of all its resources".

This way he maintains that schools are one important institution of transmission of societal knowledge to the younger generation in a complex society and he asserts that out of multiple ways of acquiring knowledge school is only one mean to do so. He compared school with other agencies of socialization by saying that schooling is 'relatively superficial' (ibid: 02) as during schooling the 'focus is on formal/intentional learning'. Dewey classifies schools as the part of formal and intentional agency as compared to other forms of socialization where the learning happens unintentionally and that is the reason he mentions schools are relatively superficial. He further adds that education has to maintain a proper balance between informal and formal, incidental and intentional modes of learning.

Concerned about the authority which schools might gain by having an upper hand in the process of acquiring knowledge he expresses that:

> "There is the standing danger that the material of formal instruction will be merely the subject matter of the schools, isolated from the subject matter of life-experience. This might lead to the ordinary notion of education which ignores social necessity and relation of that particular knowledge with society. As formal teaching and training grow in extent, there is the danger of creating an undesirable split between the experience gained in more direct associations and what is acquired in school." (ibid: 09).

Dewey was aware that there is this inherent risk in allowing an institution to take a responsibility of teaching and of education, this might make it just a distant activity, far from the reality of children. This altogether nullifies the wider role of education and reduces it to learning of mere subject- matter. Playschools similar to the schools could be understood as the educational institutions which apart from education are also taking the responsibility for child's socialization. This socialization then is not according to the local societal or community's standards rather it is of global standard, where a child is supposed to learn the language, mannerisms of not his own family or community but of a larger global community.

Having faith in broader meaning of education Dewey mentioned that 'education should not cease when one leaves school.' Rather schooling according to Dewey "must ensure the continuance of education by organizing the powers that insure growth, the inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living" (ibid: 55). Education according to Dewey is not dependent on one's age and there could be no terminal phase in the process of getting educated. According to him education should be considered as the continuous means of 'supplying the conditions which insure one's growth…irrespective of age' (ibid: 56). This aim of education which Dewey has laid down is somewhere missing in current times when there is this strict

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correlation of one's intellectual level is made with one's chronological age. We as restless adults who want to check, to measure each learning with accuracy within a given time frame has made it mandatory for (all school going) children to show results of their learning at each and every stage. Playschools necessarily are making this correlation stronger by laying down certain different set of skills, learning to be acquired by children of different ages and failing which then would invite labeling the child as 'dull', 'slow' and 'unfit'. In this process the broader realization of education, its goals are then not given due attention and education is then often is understood in narrower terms.

Dewey (ibid: 06) further maintains that 'education is incidental, is natural' which means not necessarily it has to be bound by a packaged curriculum and happen within the tight time slots. But if we closely look at the workings of a playschool, the opposite of this is happening. Now even at preschool level children are supposed to be in institutional setting (for most of time) in order to learn, have to sit and study in a classroom (laboratory like structure)[13], have to follow a fixed curriculum, are supposed to learn specific poems, alphabets, counting and so on which then certifies them as 'fit' as per their age. Incidental or natural learning is nearly out of the context in which these playschools are operating. It is only the expert knowledge, expertized adult matters and not the naïve understanding of child or his/her community.

As far as direct teaching is concerned Dewey maintains that 'schools are in a way an intentional agency to provide knowledge' (ibid: 08). Schools are helpful in complex societies where through the help of an educator all the resources and achievements of a community are taught to young members of society. He further adds that in a complex society huge accumulated knowledge in the form of various books and symbols are to be taught to children which is no way possible in a familial setting. Therefore one needs a special educator and institution to take care of that particular thing. In a way it is similar to what Durkheim mentions of

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[13] Discussed in chapter 4

organic solidarity that in a modern society different people have specialized roles to fulfill, in the same way teaching/ education which earlier used to be the arena of family or (immediate) community, in modern society has shifted on to a special institution which holds the responsibility of teaching/ educating new members of society. These special institutions are termed as 'School' and it is this (nearly) compulsory learning is termed as 'Schooling'. Education helps in maintaining the continuity of 'social life and its self-renewing capacity' by teaching or making the new members familiar with their society in terms of its beliefs, ideals, hopes, happiness, miseries and practices. Thus, we can argue that education as a means of renewal of social group/ heritage is common to all societies but there is surely a qualitative difference between different societies (Dewey cited in Pathak 2002: 16). One could argue that if this was the understanding behind setting up schools that they are just one of the many means of transmission of knowledge and not the only agency/institution then we must question that what gives schools such a legitimacy and importance that now schools tend monopolize every sphere of our life. Why the schools are regarded as sole agencies entitled to specify one's level of knowledge? Starting from childhood an individual spends his/her formative years with school in order to get educated. School constitutes the formal institutional setting. Schools no doubt are an important part of reality especially in modern society (of educated lot) which cannot be missed and its impact could be sensed in one's reality. Formal schooling is seen as a singular major source from where one can get necessary education, the required skills and specialized knowledge. It is regarded as an important factor which measures one's level of education in terms of the certificates and degrees one has on the basis of which one's selection and rejection in job market is confirmed. With this utilitarian function of education many times formal education is given immense importance. This is the reason our society does not want to waste time by delaying the schooling process. It is considered that as early a child start going to school is good for his/her future. This possibly might be the reason which is making 'playschools' so popular in contemporary times. Nowadays parents don't mind sending a child as young as eighteen months or say two years old to playschool.

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The image which school has maintained in general perception is that it is the 'only' place where 'learning' happens. One can gain knowledge at school only. This irrational dependence on institution is again making us to rely on institutional solutions which we can see is translated in setting up 'playschools'. Now it is not the mother or the family who is the sole care-giver to the child, rather a specialized set-up with its all expertized knowledge of the developmental tasks to be mastered by child at each and every stage, would take care of the child's learning during early-childhood years.

Schools as a specialized certificate giving agencies have attained enormous importance in current times. It is an undeniable fact that in order to get certified as 'educated' one need to attend school, study prescribed textbooks, pass various exams and earn a certificate. In other words this kind of education is seen impossible without having attended a school. This unconditional importance makes school and schooling an important phenomenon which must be studied with a great detail. It is this unconditional superiority of schools in contemporary times, which is the reason behind downward expansion of schooling resulting in 'playschools'. For a simplistic explanation one could refer to the book 'Danger School' which along with verbal description and pictorial representations illustrates the evolution of school and portrays its rigid structures of workings by following the strict time-table. Also, by shedding light on various processes through which school reproduces the societal order and inequalities, Danger School maintains a critical eye towards the sacrosanct institution called 'school'.

2.5. Early Socialization versus Early Education: Hidden Agendas

Socialization could generally be understood in terms of getting aware with one's community and society's knowledge where a child (or an individual) learns the particularistic values of his/her kin members whereas education helps the child in learning universalistic values of society. Distinguishing between socialization and education a famous cultural anthropologist Yehudi A. Cohen (cited in Pathak,

2002: 18) mentions that "socialization means the activities that are devoted to the inculcation and elicitation of basic motivational and cognitive patterns through an ongoing and spontaneous interaction with parents, siblings, kinsmen, and other members of community" and education as "the inculcation of standardized, stereotyped knowledge, skills, values and attitudes by means of standardized and stereotyped procedures". This distinction made by Cohen makes it clear that what he calls 'socialization' is a characteristic feature of society in which particularistic values of kinship are given emphasis whereas 'education' is the knowledge of universalistic values of society. Further Cohen mentioned that "these universalistic values or say education is of primary significance in organization of economic, political and social relations in the modern and state societies" (ibid). Here in the respect of state societies comes the importance of school and education where societies need to inculcate a larger and universal set of values in their future citizens. For schools he maintained that "the development of schools-the institutionalized predominance of education over socialization in the shaping of men's mind is the characteristic feature of state societies" (ibid).

In the respect of modern and globalized setting of our society where people are migrating and settling in different cities, in other countries, leaving their kin members and communities behind certainly need to have a universalistic set of values. Since meeting with people from different communities, culture demands sensitivity which is possible through education. But these playschools instead of focusing on the understanding of mutual respect and sensitivity for multiple cultures are blindly following the Western notions and it is the singular set of Western values which are imposed here on children right from the early years in order to prepare them to be 'adults' of the global community. The kind of learning at playschools say English medium environment, emphasis to adopt certain mannerism, eating habits etc. are in a way making children divorced from their local milieu. This total rejection of one's community might lead to a distorted image. It is clear here that these playschools have a hidden agenda which could be read as training of children right from early childhood to be the potential global

citizens who would constitute a global workforce which could be deported to anywhere in the world. Schooling and early schooling thus could be read as part of larger projects of new capitalistic order.

School education and schooling have acquired much greater importance in modern society than ever before. Education could be understood as a form of communication through which school passes on the social heritage, knowledge and skills to children and thus, prepare them for adult roles (Pathak 2002: 09). But there is another narrow understanding of education in which school education is viewed in instrumental light, just as a thing to be consumed in order to pass exams, getting a degree and further using it to find a source of income and thus material stability. Pathak (2002) mentions that:

> "No wonder, there is an ever increasing emphasis on compulsory schooling. As a result one also witnesses parents' anxieties with respect to their children's (school) education. It is argued that for excelling in life one has to have 'good schooling' (ibid: 15)".

It is necessarily this understanding of 'good schooling' which Donner (2006) also argues that in order to ensure children's admission to a good school their early training with 'good preschool' has become a nearly mandatory situation. In modern societies one spends significant number of years at school. Now these years have been extended by the addition of early schooling say exposure to schooling with playschool education. Earlier schools used to be the first institution where a child learns about world outside his/her familial setting. But now, it is playschool which has taken the place of school in matters of providing exposure to the young child about his/her broader global community. Playschool like institutions aims to serve many purposes in modern society. Playschools could be equated as a formal educational set-up with its soft disciplinary practices relatively less stringent than school. Organized with its specific time-table, curriculum these aims to teach certain universalistic values of 'global' society. Playschools in current times could also be understood as an agent for

modernization which are teaching the global values in terms of language, the mannerism, etiquettes, the working style, the specific lifestyle to children from early years itself. These indeed aim to create a 'global community' which is informed by western notions of lifestyle and career orientations. To maintain discipline, playschools act as similar to schools in using certain disciplinary devices and following the 'scientific' understanding be it for teaching-learning, handling children or in the matters of curriculum.

2.6. Various Purposes and Functions Playschools Serve in Modern Society:

Playschools similar to schools serve many direct and indirect purposes. At first sight one may think of it as an education and care providing agency along with a fixed curriculum, textbooks, and different measures of assessments. But, if keenly observed and assessed various processes of playschool, it is easy to make sense of the indirect purposes it serves, say whose knowledge the textbooks are referring?, which sections of society are sending their child to playschool? How these are serving in maintaining global order and tight grip of capitalism? As the representative educational institutions for modern society in what ways are these maintaining principles of 'global society'? How these schools are playing an important role in creating a hierarchized society?

In this context we can refer to Cohen who extracted two major characteristics of modern society (state society) by dissecting education and school's function. Schools according to Cohen serve the very purpose by promoting uniformity in terms of standardized aspirations through a standardized curriculum and universalistic values. It is these standardized aspirations of globalized and consumer society which are perpetuated through the playschools. Through teaching this global and consumerist values playschools are in a way attempting to create a homogenous society. Cohen also made a critical point that 'schools were not established originally to foster the life of the mind or the spirit of free enquiry but for the establishment of conformity to the aims and imperatives of a

state system' (cited in Pathak 2002: 19). This argument of Cohen does not view schools in positive light rather it shows that schools instead of functioning for inculcating the critical mind is doing the opposite that is trying to maintain consensus. Further the work of Green (ibid: 20) enriches our understanding of schools from a different angle. He maintains that 'schools exist for certifying, sorting and selecting personnel.' Schools this way serve a particular function of certifying and selecting people for their contributory roles for the market in the complex societies. Indeed the playschools can also be seen as similar certifying agencies as school which certifies a child as 'fit' to be admitted to further formal schools. Being associated with an English medium playschool in a way increases the chances of getting a child admitted further at 'good school.'

Apart from the above ones there are many other ways to look at school and its functions. In relation to prevailing needs of that particular time and societal aims every thinker has looked and made sense of education from their vantage point. Beginning with the positive orientation towards schooling and education by taking insights from Durkheim 'education', according to him, "is a part of socializing process which prepares a child for his/her further adult roles in the society". Durkheim (ibid: 21) says that "it is idle to think that we can rear our children as we wish…each society at a given stage of development has a system of education which exercises an irresistible influence on individuals." It could be understood as that there is no universal content of education; it varies from society to society. Also, Durkheim further states that in a complex society education cannot be same for everyone as it would vary greatly according to the (adult) roles of different individuals and skills they need to accomplish the particular task associated with role. Education according to Durkheim prepares the child for his/her future role and also helps in learning the core values of a particular society. To Quote:

> "Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those who are
> not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and develop in the child
> certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded

of him by both the political society as a whole and the social milieu for which he is specifically destined" (ibid: 22).

For Durkheim major function of education is to instill moral sensibilities in child which are to be done by school. School helps children to learn how to discipline themselves and help them in emerging as moral agents of society. Schools are characterized as a set-up which is different form family and having an impersonal approach. It acts as intermediary between the family life and the life in a society. Durkheim argues that schooling marks the beginning of serious life. Durkheim was of functionalist view and he accords a great importance of school as an institution which contributes to the development of social cohesiveness and maintaining a moral order in society. This moral order which could be attained through education, according to Durkheim would help in maintaining cohesiveness in a highly differentiated society. Along with providing knowledge about universalistic values of society schools would also help in order to bind society together by and realize larger collective goals of the society. But again here comparing Durkheim's larger view of maintaining social and collective order has now been changed with strong forces of new capital order. In current context it is the market and capitalism which holds education in their hands. Playschools as part of privatized services could also be read in the similar fashions which instead of trying to focus and maintain a social and moral order are rather realizing the goals of new capitalist order. By setting up very bureaucratic and impersonal institutional care mechanisms these are reducing the 'care' to a commodity and 'children' as 'consumers' of that particular service. Another functionalist sociologist Parsons also saw schools with the same positivity as Durkheim viewed. Parsons (ibid: 27) asserts that "school is the place where children learn the basic values of achievement oriented society". This is applicable in present context also wherein children are taught from starting to do better than their peers, to perform best in every task. In Parson's view 'initial equalization' makes children realize that the school situation is like a 'race'. Further schools contribute in maintaining the stability of a society. Referring to

Weber's work, Thapan (2015: 09) has mentioned that "the purpose of education was to cultivate the student for a '*conduct of life* (emphasis original), whether it is of mundane or of religious character". This conduct is then the conduct of a 'status group'. Currently playschools are focusing on the twisted understanding where children are made to learn certain peculiarities pertaining to specific social status group at the cost to one's own social and cultural understanding. These above instances show that schools serve many useful functions in a modern society. But there are many disagreements also existed in contrast to the views on education portrayed by Durkheim and Parsons. The dissenters generally held the opinion that school tends to monopolize the domain of education, knowledge and thus ultimately minds which indeed is true. The schooled mind becomes conservative and always is thinking in a singular direction only. It begins to conform. Playschools are in a way teaching this discipline- the way how to sit, talk and behave etc. to children right from early ages.

It is also argued that schools perpetuate inequality and reproduce values of unequal social order. They make one believe in competition, social divisions and one's success at the cost of someone else's failure. Competition being the basic value of modern society where individuals are encouraged to compete and to be a winner is again one of the stated aims which these playschools follow. Moreover schools tend to become oppressive (Pathak 2002: 16). In this regard S. Bowels and H. Gintis (ibid: 29) in their study have showed that schools promote the 'technocratic-meritocratic' ideology, a belief which could be interpreted as the economic success is dependent on the possession of appropriate skills or say education (in a narrow sense). They further assert that schools rather than maintaining equality in society are reproducing the social differentiation in class dominated society. Their thesis shows that schools are not an innocent institution rather are at the very base of reproducing inequalities in the society. Further the extension on the similar thought could be seen in the writings of Ralph Miliband (ibid: 30-31), who also says that, "educational institutions at all levels generally fulfill an important and conservative role and act, with greater or lesser

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effectiveness, as legitimizing agencies in and for their societies". Schools teach 'mass confirming' role by instilling submissive acceptance in pupils. In the same tone Louis Althusser has also classified education as a 'state apparatus'. Althusser mentioned two components of state apparatuses namely: repressive state apparatus which consists of police, army, legal system, administration and government and ideological state apparatus which includes literature, politics, education, religion and communication. Education thus, according to Althusser helps in maintaining the hegemony of ruling class. Here we have seen how education serves as a tool for ruling class, in the same line Pierre Bourdieu asserts that, education only serves the purpose of dominant classes by providing the favorable environment to the children who belong to a particular class whereby rejecting the working class children. In this way education further reproduces inequality in the society. According to Bourdieu schools favor the culture of dominant classes and thereby reproducing the existing class hierarchies and inequalities. Referring to Reed-Danahay's work, Thapan (2015: 14) invokes the idea of Bourdieu and his concepts like structure, habitus and capital in context of education. According to the cited work, the family is the important source of inculcation of the 'primary habitus' which later in contact with school becomes 'cultivated habitus' which is the source of privileged for a particular (dominant) class and ensures the social division of 'ideological-labor' (manual/intellectual, thinkable/unthinkable). Basil Bernstein, yet another sociologist, with his path breaking work in sociolinguistics has established a strong connection between language, power and education. Referring to numerous works of Bernstein, Bernstein extended his theory on Bourdieu's idea of 'symbolic violence' in schooling practices (ibid: 18). Bernstein identified language acquisition in relation to social class as a critical component of this inadequacy among working-class children (ibid: 18). Also, in his book 'Class, Codes and Control: The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse, Bernstein (2005: 02) compares his concept of 'code' with Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' whereby mentioning that habitus could be understood as a general concept but code could be regarded as a subset of habitus He treats code as a 'cultural grammar specialized by class position and fields of

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practice' (ibid: 02). Through his thesis Bernstein made strong connections between working–class children, their language adequacy and the chances of success in educational setting. He maintains that since schools use standard language as medium of instruction whereby not recognizing the language of working-class children and thus minimizing their chances of success and at the same time implicitly favoring the middle and upper-middle class children by providing favorable environment. Similar instances could be related to playschools where English is used as the standard language and Hindi or any other regional language would be given no or minimal importance.

Another theorist Michael Apple (2004) apart from hidden curriculum also informs us that how schooling and its processes creates a distinction between work and play. His study of kindergarten made him to bring to the forefront that right from the early age children are taught to make distinction between play and work. 'Work' is seen as an activity which is compulsory to do whereas 'play' is self-chosen/directed activity which is usually meant to be done in free-time. From the starting itself children are made believed that 'work and play' are two opposing activities and there is no connection between them (ibid: 48-57). Similarly at playschools also the play with instructions becomes mundane and is reduced to another teacher-directed activity rather than free-play. Also, in his another work Apple (2006) critiques school and education for becoming just a tool in the hands of corporates to serve their purpose. He noted his worries as he wrote: "for all too many of the pundits, politicians, corporate leaders, and others, education is a business and should be treated no differently than any other business" (ibid: 01). He maintained that nowadays schools are being forced into a competitive market[14]. Apple asserted that, "education seen as the 'next health care'—that is, as a sphere that can be mined for huge profits". The goal is to transform large portions of publicly controlled nonprofit educational institutions into a

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[14] Competitive market and marketing strategies which playschools use would be dealt in chapter 4.

'consolidated, professionally managed, money-making set of businesses that include all levels of education' (ibid: 06). To quote:

> "The public had to be convinced that the unregulated marketplace of the neoliberals was not only the truest expression of individual freedom, but the marketplace must be expanded into every sphere of life. Only through market competition can "people get what they want." Why should a marketized society keep schools out of such a market? They must be "freed" as well." (ibid: 13).

These playschool services could also be seen in similar light where these institutions offer care for children in return to money. Further critiquing curriculum and textbooks Apple stated that often prescribed text books are boring (2006: 03) and do not appeal to students since it appears that the 'curriculum planners live in an unreal world, a world *fundamentally* (emphasis original) disconnected from the life of children'[15] (ibid).

These above instances demonstrate that schooling and education has become a mere tool of economy and capitalistic society and is not serving any other purpose rather just reproducing the old social order. Further the theme of discipline in school/ educational setting has been decoded by yet another theorist Michel Foucault. Discipline for Durkheim, Parsons and other functional theorist held a very positive way of maintaining a society but Foucault gave a different interpretation to it. As Foucault talks in Discipline and Punish (cited in Pathak 2002: 37-38) that how different ways of punishment have evolved over a period of time which are no longer related to only physical pain but these new set of punishing techniques included disciplining the mind, body along with surveillance. Playschools have also adopted these disciplining techniques where s strict time-table is followed and children are supposed to follow teacher's instructions. Foucault characterized the modern institutions as new prisons of the

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[15] The same was registered during fieldwork where the prescribed books by 'Nurture group' had certain different depictions which children usually do not come across in local setting here (further discussed in chapter 4).

contemporary society where along with various disciplining techniques surveillance is major part of maintaining order. Also, by invoking Jeremy Bentham's idea of 'panopticon'-which is a circular building enclosing a central inspection tower he brings out the importance of different kind of architectural setting in these institutions.[16] Foucault maintains that in modern societies it is these 'prison like institutions' which maintains a society by techniques of disciplining and surveillance rather than by army. For discipline he says the distribution of each pupil to the separate space/class makes it easier in supervision. Along with space the time was also divided into sections by a strict time table. This way every activity was directed by a certain time and within a certain space under the supervising authority made disciplining possible. The need of timetable referred the 'proper' use of every fraction of time. It is believed that schools must create a 'normal' child. To quote Foucault:

> "The judges of normality are everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor judge, the educator judge, the 'social worker' judge; it is on them that universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual whether he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements. The carceral network, in its compact or disseminated forms, with its systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support, in modern society, of the normalizing power." (ibid: 39).

This darker side of the school as a disciplinary space without any scope left for freedom and creativity could be easily equated with prisons. School is hegemonic in nature and it causes extreme dependence in its expertise and legitimacy. Resultant of this it denies any scope for the individual to have faith in his/her ability to do things outside institutional settings. In these similar lines Joel H. Spring (ibid: 40) makes his observation about the important role which school has grabbed in contemporary society. Currently, schools tend to take over every

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[16] The architectural structure of playschools and other institutions resembles with 'fortified enclaves' and the element of surveillance is an integral part of these modern institutions too where each and every corner of the school is covered by the CCTV cameras installed in various corners of the school.

responsibility starting from the teaching to thinking, acting, dressing, playing and even leisure. Also, the 'experts' who are there for each and everything, defines a 'proper' way of doing everything. This tells us that there is no escape from 'expertise'.[17] To quote Spring here who says, 'this form of institutional dependence can potentially freeze and deaden all human activity…Death education and sex education will probably become important elements in our educational system if current practices continue' (ibid: 41). Spring holds an extreme view about the schools when he says, "adaptation is the chief purpose of schools." It is vain to expect that the school is creating a free/reflexive/ imaginative mind. "The only type of personality that the school can support and approve is one that fits smartly into the institutional organization" (ibid). With schooling begins alienation (losing one's faith in oneself and the resultant dependence on institution and expertise), and it is this alienation that defines the technological system. One cannot deny the overdose of technology in our times and its influence even on schools which shapes the whole environment of it also by defining the knowledge and meaningful education. The ultimate dependence on expertized knowledge, various disciplining practices are also part of playschools which are acting as a training ground for preparing children to fit into new global capital order. Along with children their parents are also made to believe the expertized knowledge and which in turn brings their dependence on these institutional educational and care mechanisms. It is here in this context that how even parental aspirations have changed over the period of time, now parent want their children to speak English right from childhood, to compete with other children and secure a place in 'good school'. The whole globalized and capitalist order has brought with it a different set of values and aspirations which our society is imbibing. Here one can refer to Ivan Illich who called for disestablishment of such schooled thinking. Our school conscious rather school maniac society wants their children to be at school at the early age as possible and utilize each and every second in learning one or other skill. This in turn is

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[17] In context of early childhood education also, various seminars and programs happening in schools where parenting experts are telling parent the 'proper' way to rear their children (dealt in Chapter 3 and 4).

building up the pressure on both, parents as well as on children. Ivan Illich instead of doing moderate reforms to current school system and schooling asked for total deschooling. To quote:

> "Modern society engulfed by the new logic: the more treatment at school the better results would be generated in life and further it would lead to success. Thus it makes people confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence etc." (Illich 1971: 04)

Illich maintained that institutionalization of values has led to physical pollution, social polarization and psychological impotence[18] which has resulted in global degradation and modernized misery. This indeed is true in current times where a mother feels the need to send her child at school thinking that she alone is not able to give the 'proper education' to her child at home. This idea of 'proper education' is again propagated by various institutional organizations which urge parents to be their partner that is to consume their services. Illich further adds that the when the non-material needs are transformed in the demands it led to degradation (ibid: 04). Heavy reliance on schools have made it so authoritative that now it guide's one's world-view by defining what is legitimate and what is not. This ultimately is leading to 'progressive under-development of self and community' (ibid: 05). According to Illich the understanding which schools propagate is that 'idleness is bad' (ibid: 45) which means one has to be tied-up with certain institution which would generate results for a modernized society. Critiquing schools Illich has mentions that,

> "School appropriates the money, men, and good will available for education and in addition discourages other institutions from assuming educational tasks. Work, leisure, politics, city living, and even family life depend on schools for the habits and knowledge they presuppose, instead of becoming themselves the means of education. Simultaneously both schools and the

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[18] Psychological impotence according to Illich is the increasing reliance on institutional solutions which ultimately leads to helplessness of people (1971: 05)

other institutions which depend on them are priced out of the market." (ibid: 09).

This argument holds importance in context of playschools where children's life is totally structured by school's discipline and any kind of other knowledge say their mother-tongue or knowledge about any regional festival is sidelined in order to create and establish a singular standardized knowledge system. Illich says that schools as an important institution of 'modern society' have become the world religion of modernized proletariat and serving their hidden goals whereby making futile promises of salvation of the poor (ibid: 10). He further asserts that 'neither learning nor justice is promoted' by schooling because educators insist on 'packaging instruction with certification' (ibid: 11). Similar to Foucault, Illich has also critiqued school and their total claim on their participants' time and energy. To quote:

> "Schools create jobs for schoolteachers, no matter what their pupils learn from them. School, by its very nature, tends to make a total claim on the time and energies of its participants. This, in turn, makes the teacher into custodian, preacher, and therapist." (ibid: 23).

Illich rejected the schools and their importance since he maintained a view that schools make individuals to internalize a myth that knowledge is impossible without gaining certificates. The institutionalization of myths and values done by school makes one to believe that no knowledge exists outside the realm of school and whatever the school is teaching is pure and valid knowledge. Schools portray a singular understanding that learning only takes place in the context of a specialized institution outside which learning cannot takes place. It is this myth only which is frequently coming in conversation with parents that if their child won't go to school he/she would not be able to learn. It is understood that only institutional association can ensure their child's 'successful future'.

Alike Illich the views held by an Education Psychologist John Holt (1974), who also considered schools as most anti-democratic, most authoritarian destructive and dangerous institution of modern society (ibid: 100). Similar view about school and schooling are registered in his other works namely 'The Underachieving School (2005)'; 'Instead of Education: Ways to Help People do Things Better (2004)'. The way school and schooling are engulfing childhood and molding or say reconstructing it in present situation as informed by global and capitalist order is not healthy.

In contemporary times given the immense importance of schools and other institutional tie-ups are making it possible for the downward expansion of schooling in the form of pre-primary and playschools. The ideas about early childhood and education have got influenced by various ongoing transformations this demands one to give due importance to the phenomenon of early-childhood education. In the contemporary times when the desirability of early schooling is at peak, it is important to go back and explore the roots and reasoning with which the early education has been established.

2.7. Historical and Philosophical Roots of Early Childhood Education:

During the dark and middle ages (as mentioned in Biddle K.A.G. et.al. 2014: 31) there was no specific emphasis on early childhood and children's education. In fact young children were treated like adults, wore the garments like adults and even were expected to do chores like adults. During this time children participated in all adult activities. Children were treated as 'miniature adults'. Also, children were seen as inherently evil and that is why bodily punishment was regarded as suitable for them. Medieval society in a way not regarded childhood as a distinct period. Innocence and special needs of the young individuals were suspended until the time of Renaissance. It was during the period of Renaissance that the concept of childhood began to emerge. Philippe Aries, in his book 'Centuries of childhood' (ibid: 31) captures the new understanding on the topic of childhood

and how the whole paradigm shift took place. Aries noted that by 16th and 17th century, children were considered as distinct from adults and they were given separate costumes. Also, the art, literature, iconography of this era portrayed the sweetness of child. It was in this time that childhood was seen in positive light.

In the early 16th century Martin Luther (1483-1546), a young religious leader from Germany put forwarded surprisingly liberal ideas of education. Luther proposed three major ideas about education. According to him people needed to find their own way to God by reading Bible for themselves. This idea was directly challenging the authority of church as reading Bible means that one has to be literate, which led to another idea of Luther of advocating education for entire population including girls as well as boys. Luther asserted that all town and villages must have schools and again these schools should be governed by state and not by any religious institution namely church. Lastly, for ensuring that educated people become good citizens Luther also supported for children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development along with religious instructions in school. It was Luther's contribution which resulted in the 'most complete public school system to exist in Germany before the nineteenth century' (ibid: 32-33).

Added to this by Luther's contemporary Erasmus (1466-1536) who emphasized humanistic view by "here and now" doctrine which believes that human beings need to develop within the context of culture. After Luther and Erasmus, Moravian Bishop named John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) contributed to the field of early childhood education. It was his personal experiences in the field of education which led him to condemn the teaching methods used in schools. He described teaching methods as severe that he compared 'schools as terror and slaughterhouses of mind'. Similar to Luther he also broadened the aim of education beyond its religious goals. His writings offer insight about a harmonious relation between teacher and the taught. To quote: "School should strive for the method where teachers teach less and the learners learn more"

(Biddle. et.al 2014: 33-34; Nutbrown et.al.2008: 23). His influential book 'The School of Infancy' introduces the idea that 'home is the first school'. He stressed that it is important for the mothers to recognize this so that children's first educative lessons could begin at home itself[19]. He stressed importance of giving freedom to young children to explore and learn through their experiences. In his another book 'The Great Didactic' Comenius extended his ideas on how children grow and develop as well as how they should be taught in schools. For this Comenius gave nine important principles of instruction which are as follows:

1. Instruction must begin early and before the mind is corrupted.
2. The mind must be made ready for it.
3. It must proceed from general to particular
4. It must proceed from the easier to the more difficult
5. Progress must not be rushed
6. The minds of individuals must not be forced to do anything but that to which they aspire according to their age and motivation
7. Everything must be related through sense impression, if possible.
8. Everything must be applied immediately
9. Everything must be taught consistently according to one and the same method.

(Biddle.K.A.G. et.al 2014: 34)

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[19] But nowadays the trend is changing fast as we have discussed before that given the immense importance of school and schooling it is believed that child should go to school at the earliest age possible. Since, the idea that 'learning only happens at school' has hierarchized the knowledge system whereby only institutional affiliation and certification is given utmost importance and not the unintended and incidental education happening outside school. Also, as Comenius stressed roles of mother in young child's learning is indeed important but again in the contemporary times marked with higher career aspirations and with the changing gender roles, women choosing employment making it difficult for them (mothers) to give ample time in their child's learning (to be dealt in chapter 3 urban middle class living).

In his another book 'The World in Pictures' Comenius elaborated on principle 7 of learning by stating that meanings of the word should be represented in the form of visuals so that it would be easy for the children to relate sounds with written script and the visual for a more meaningful understanding.   After Comenius it was John Locke (1632-1704) whose writings associated the idea of 'tabula rasa (blank slate)' with the newborn child. It became a pivotal idea along which the educational activities of children were centered in that time period. Following Locke, Jean- Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) marked the beginning of an enhanced view of childhood in mid -16th and 17th centuries. During this time children were viewed as a separate and special category in human development. Rousseau's influential book 'Emile' which is a fictional account of education of a young boy marked the departure from earlier religious authoritarian views of upbringing of children (ibid: 35). Rousseau believed that all children are born 'innately moral'. A teacher according to Rousseau must protect child from the morally degraded society and should provide the exposure of experiences according to his/her stage of development. According to Rousseau education is divided into four stages of development. From these four stages the first which is from birth to 05 years of age has a mention that educational focus during this phase must be on motor activity, sense perception, children's individual development. Whereas the second stage which marks from age 05 to age 12 has a mention that the focus must be of deriving learning from the immediate environment according to the requirements of the child and not by the demands of other (ibid: 36).

After the interventions of Rousseau, began the period of unique educational approaches towards children and for their early education. The educator and theorist Johann H. Pestalozzi (1746-1827) who like Rousseau believed that education should follow the natural development of child. His focus on proceeding from concrete to the abstract and from particular to general was a way of placing instruction in sync with the child's development. Freidrich Froebel (1782-1852) like Pestalozzi respected the dignity of children and wanted to

establish an educational program that provide children with emotional stability (ibid: 37). Incorporating the use of play, games, stories and activities Froebel started the childhood school which was later known as kindergarten. Froebel can be regarded as the first early childhood educator who placed a strong emphasis on the 'play' in the life of young children. He started kindergarten movement. His literary work focused on distinct periods of childhood between the ages of 07 and 10. He was the first early childhood educator to put a strong emphasis on play in the lives of young children. He maintained that play enables children to express their desires, innermost needs and thoughts and help children in expressing themselves. After the interventions of Maria Montessori (1870-1952) in late 19th century, early childhood education registered much importance. She was way ahead of her time as she developed her educational methods by working closely with children. She started a school named *'Casa dei Bambini'* or 'Children's House' providing a welcoming and home like environment to young children. She was of the view that children should be allowed to work independently with minimal instructions and this approach of hers is known today as 'hands-on approach'. Her pedagogy included: encouraging teachers to observe and pay attention to children rather of the opposite, allowing children to work at their own pace by providing a stimulating environment for learning, encouraging children to correct their mistakes themselves and not to be dependent of the teacher. Her educational contribution and influence still could be seen where majority of preschools claimed to be having Montessori techniques of education at their centers (ibid: 41).

With these there are also pioneering works of constructivists like Jean Piaget (1896-1980), Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and others who have contributed to the understanding of early childhood education. Jean Piaget gave four stages of cognitive development namely: sensorimotor (birth-02 years), preoperational (02-07 years), concrete operational (07-12 years) and formal operational (12 years to adulthood) which in a way informed the curriculum choices and subject matter along with pedagogical techniques to be used for children of specific ages. Piaget

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accorded immense importance of child who according to him is "an active learner" in his/her education. Where Piaget gave the universal stages of child development, Lev Vygotsky proposed for sociocultural theory of development. Vygotsky asserted that human beings are embedded in the sociocultural context and it is nearly impossible to explain cognition, knowledge and individual's thoughts without referring to his/her social context. His educational ideas include Zone of Proximal Development, importance of scaffolding and belief that language precedes the development.

By the early 20th century educational thought could be regarded as progressed considerably and new type of educational reforms were now paving the way for modified and democratic education. John Dewey (1859-1902), who is regarded as the father of progressive education pioneered for a much egalitarian model grounded on the ideals of democracy. He put forwarded the 'child-centered approach' of which child's individuality, creative expression, social interaction discovery learning were the main features (ibid: 44). In his famous work 'My Pedagogic Creed' (1897), Dewey laid down the important features of education, of school and curriculum and subject matter, the pedagogic methods. He in a way provided the master plan for a child-centric, activity based learning.

Many education and child psychologists also proposed various approaches towards early-childhood education. Erik Erikson (1902-1994) gave the theory of psychosocial development which classified human development into eight stages or say the crisis namely: basic trust versus mistrust (infancy), autonomy versus shame and doubt (1 to 3 years) initiative versus guilt (3 to 6 years) industry versus inferiority (6-12) identity versus role confusion (12-20) intimacy versus isolation generativity versus stagnation, ego integrity versus despair (Erikson: 1993). Erikson believed that healthy psychosocial development would occur at resolving each crisis successfully. Education starting from early ages should focus on helping child to resolve these crises in order to achieve a healthy personality. Similar to Erikson, Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) also explored for human

motivation which led him to propose a theory based on hierarchy of needs. According to him psychological needs marks the basic needs following which there are safety, belongingness, love, esteem and self-actualization. He suggested that individuals will succeed as this hierarchy of needs[20] would be met. Jerome Bruner (1915-) an influential figure in the field of cognitive development maintained a view that children are active learners and they usually organize their learning in three phases: enactive stage from birth to 02 years (learning through active exploration and manipulation), iconic (learning happens by using mental picture) and at around 07 years of age children move from iconic to symbolic representation stage where learning happens by making use of symbols to represent knowledge. Also, along with these three modes of representations, his concept of 'spiral curriculum' is still used while organizing subject matter for children, according to which it should provide numerous opportunities to revisit the same concept again and again. It allows pupils to revisit basic concepts and ideas repeatedly. Bruner mentioned, 'we begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development' (Biddle.K.A.G. et.al. 2014: 50). Exploring the philosophical and historical roots of early childhood education now the following section would discuss about education with a focus on early childhood education in Indian context.

2.8. Indian Thinkers and Role of State on Education and Early Childhood Education:

During colonial period education in India changed substantially. Macaulay's civilizing mission has changed the course of Indian education by very local and life centric to English oriented alien education. This form of education brought about a form of linguistic inequality in our society which is still continuing till date. The linguistic inequality which brought with itself the whole new English

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[20] The need for safety and belongingness is hardly available to young children during impersonal care at playschool (discussed further in Chapter 3 and 4).

culture paved the way for ruling elite in India and set the roots for ever-widening divide of private and public schools. Along with foreign education, efforts to push India for industrial growth were the motive of Nehruvian ideology. Whereas opposing to this Gandhi's philosophy of Basic Education (Nai Taleem) emerged out of mistrust in 'modern' education (Thapan 2015: 19-24). Gandhi wanted India to get rid of its desire for Westernization, industrialization, and 'modern' progress. Indian educational philosophy is also indebted towards Tagore and Aurobindo who were concerned with the 'education of the whole person' (ibid: 24). In Krishnamurti's (1974) work on Education he asserted that, "Education is not only learning from books, memorizing some facts, but also learning how to look, how to listen to what the books are saying, whether they are saying something true or false" (ibid: 02). Thus, the concept of holistic education one can say is not new to India rather is part of age old tradition.

In the field of early-childhood education, Swaminathan (1998) mentioned that the first formal institutions for young children were kindergartens set up by Scottish missionaries in the closing years of 19th century based on philosophy of Froebel (ibid: 15). The native pioneers in this field were, Gijubhai Badheka and Tarabai Modak who were influenced by the ideas of Montessori, Froebel along with Gandhi, Tagore, Aurobindo.

Khalakdina (1998: 163) in her essay documented evidences of child care of early seventeenth century and afterwards. From the documented evidences one can relate that earlier the primary care giver was the immediate family only and state had no role to play in child care. The similar argument, as discussed earlier was provided by Kakar (1979). Khalakdina mentions that child rearing was done in continuance with one's society/ community where the divisive elements of society could be felt in upbringing of children. Early beginnings in education were made by putting children under the guidance of (respected) gurus. But it was restricted to upper caste groups only and was not available to everyone (ibid: 165). It was during colonial times that formal education with schools got introduced to Indian

society. Later in newly independent India the first two five year plans (1951-56 and 1956-61) registered no segregated efforts on age specific child care activities. Child was conceptualized as a unit of family and not as a separate entity. Preschool education in the first three five year plans was enmeshed in the child welfare concept (ibid: 168). Much later, only in 1974 during the fourth five year plan a well thought National Policy on the Child was initiated. Following the recommendations of *Ganga Sharan Committee Report* (ibid: 171) the study group on the Preschool child decided to integrate all the services for 0-6 years olds and resulted in the conceptualization of ICDS model. Thus, in the fifth plan (1974-79) ICDS emerged as an experimental project which expended till eighth plan.

It was only in 1980 that the young child was intensively studied in terms of Early Childhood Education. Then National Policy on Education announced in 1986 was a major breakthrough for the concept of Early Childhood Care and Education. It main aspect were recognition of the holistic development of child, emphasis on play as a medium of informal teaching, use of non-formal methods and a pluralistic and continuous approach. ECCE was essentially conceptualized and promoted as play based program which should not be reduced to 3 R's (ibid: 171-172). But the private sector (as referred by Khalakdina) was born as market response on the emerging needs of middle and upper class employed women in cities. There are two types of child care services in the private sector- the commercial play care/day care preschools and home-based child care or the charitable agencies (ibid: 182-183). Quoting the study by Sriram, Khalakdina (ibid) mentioned that, "it is interesting to note that day care/play is not considered a social service when established by individuals; instead, it is viewed at par with shops". The current situation were these playschools are charging high fee in return to the care and education they provide to children is again could be read in similar contexts where these schools could be viewed as nothing more but just 'teaching shops'.

Early Childhood Care and Education was one of the focal point of National Policy for Children (ECCE 2013: 06) and it reiterated for maintaining quality care for children below 06 years of age. ECCE (2013) policy mentioned that India has 158.7 million children in the age 0-6 years of age group. But despite these governmental efforts still a large section of society is not able to afford these services as the private services are very expensive in nature whereas the governmental services are minimal, relatively negligible for children from such a large section of under-privileged group. The constant concern of unregulated growth of private sector was the part of ECCE (2013) policy, ECE (2006) position paper, NPC (2013) policy, NPE (1986) and others. The table below shows the comparative situation of governmental and private sectors in ECCE.

Class	Rich/Middle	Poor
Location	Urban/Semi-Urban	Rural
Language	English	Regional
Auspices	Private	Public
Curriculum	Academic	Holistic/ Welfarist
Supervising Departments	DEE & L	WCD

Table 1 'Social Divides in ECCE Programmes' (Source: ECE Position Paper 2006: 14)

The ECE paper (2006: 14) noted that despite various schemes and programs like: The Factories Act, 1948 (amended in 1954); The Mines Act, 1950; The Plantations Labour Act, 1951; The Beedi and Cigar Workers Act, 1966; The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961; The Contract Labour Act, 1970; The Interstate Migrant Workers Act, 1980; The Construction Labour Act, 1996 still there is lack of general understanding and the early child care is seen treated as the primary concern of family and of the mother and not of the state. The patriarchal attitudes of society that a woman should provide care to her baby instead of being full time employed is another reason for the lack of governmental interest in establishing these services.

The comprehensive table below of comparison between governmental and private sector can help us in understanding the current scenario:

Item	Government (Semi-Government and aided)	Private
1. Goal	Policy implementation	Profit
2. Name/ Worker Name	Anganbari/ Sevika	School (Nursery, Pre-primary etc.)
3. Objective and Scope	Comprehensive, Holistic development	Formal education and school preparation
4. Components	Package of six	Education, some care, and nutrition custodial
5. Approach to teaching-learning	Activity based, non-formal	Formal, school-like
6. Target group	Defined by Policy	Following social demand
7. Cost to parents	Free	Varying payment
8. Worker preparation	3 months of job training with some ECE component, occasional refresher courses	Minimal, none or irrelevant training
9. Community involvement	Low	Minimal/ none
10. Flexibility in program	None, Standardized and fixed from above	Standardized and arbitrarily decided
11. Management Style	Hierarchical, non-transparent	Hierarchical, non-transparent
12. Perceived ownership	Government	Individual/ Company

Table 2 Comparison between Governmental and Private Services of child-care

(Source: ECE position paper 2006: 16)

In earlier sections also we have seen how the importance of education has been established by giving importance to schools and this in turn translating its effect to early childhood years. Education no doubt is a socio-temporal entity which according to society and time has transformed again and again and held various forms. It is seen that how Dewey established the school's importance as one of many means of socializing agency. But it is evident now that schools are appropriated by state in order to maintain a consensus and its hegemony through subtle ways of teaching certain books, propagating certain knowledge at school. Later, visualizing school as an important institution of a modern society many other thinkers have put forwarded their views that schools in a way classify people according to their credentials which in turn is beneficial for market. Schools sought to maintain discipline and order in the society by appropriating individual's time and activities in a strict time-bound manner. With a brief overview of globalization and its effect on education, thereafter we have discussed the emergence of early-childhood education and locating its roots in philosophical tradition. Tracing the time period from renaissance and bringing in the ideas of Luther to Erasmus, Comenius we have acutely discussed various strands and perspectives of early childhood education. To complement our understanding the chapter has also brought in the perspectives of education psychologists, constructionists and tried to locate the early-childhood through various angles. Later on with reference to various initiatives pertaining to ECCE in Indian context the chapter has also tried to compare the programs and loopholes which has led to the popularity of playschools in contemporary times. Government's lack of interest in making rules or regulating the private services could be understood as having deeper connections rooted in ideologies of LPG and belief in the sacred nature of market (which gives illusion of choices).

Also, the demand by middle and upper-middle class for a different kind of education for their children which could be characterized as an education informed with global standards of information, values and which provide children

an opportunity to polish their cultural capital and further use it in achieving material success. The knowledge or say the ability to speak English is a pivotal to this argument since English is considered as the marker of one's status which further might help in social mobility. The pressing demands for a particular 'globally oriented' education and lack of government in providing the quality care and education, no regulation on private players has together led to the unprecedented growth of privately owned 'playschool' chains affiliated to various 'global' and 'international' schools and thereby establishing themselves as a brand in the market of education which was made open during the LPG era.

Finally to mention the argument of Kapoor (2006: 133) who in relation to globalization and immense migration process has pointed out that the break-up of the joint family types and change in labor markets, restructuring of business and a distinct way of modern living had made it possible for the women to achieve a successful career and thereby has brought to the forefront demand of 'playschool' and 'day care centers' for children of upper and middle class working mothers who have the money at their disposal. This arena of urban middle class living, their lifestyle and various other dynamics of an urban setting would be dealt in proceeding chapter.

CHAPTER 3

MODERNITY, URBAN MIDDLE CLASS LIVING AND THE INDUCED NEED OF PLAYSCHOOLS

The larger unifying question of the thesis is about investigating the ever increasing popularity of playschools which also demands an exploration of this popularity in specific context of urban living. Since, it is cities which are registering the enormous growth of playschools. It is not to deny the presence of playschools in rural areas but in comparison to its outgrowth in cities its presence is minimal in rural areas. One must question that what is so special about cities and urban centers which are attracting these playschools and other kind of institutional care services? Can it be linked with the lifestyle and way of living of the people who inhabit urban centers? There must be some reason behind for such a prolific growth of playschools. It is these questions which led to the genesis of this chapter. Here the attempt is to investigate the urban living, lifestyle people adopt in cities, residential complexes, urban geographies, phenomenon of migration and certain aspirations of good life, career and education which might be the possible reasons behind the normalized presence of large number of playschools in cities. Thus, the central question which the chapter aims to explore is that are there any connections/ linkages between the dependence on playschool and the way urban middle class is living in the cities? Can we link it to various transformations brought by whole modernity matrix like emerging new family types, high migration rate, intense dependence on institutions, increasing institutional care mechanism (be it for children or older members of family), changing nature of work/ employment[21], changing perceptions towards education and treating education as a commodity to be consumed and gaining mobility in order to secure high status in social ladder?

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[21] Here work and employment are used interchangeably.

The unprecedented growth of playschools also brings with it other set of questions like: Why more and more parents are sending their children to playschools? How have parents easily accepted the idea that a child as young as of two years old must be send to playschool? What is the reason playschools are gaining importance among a certain section of society? Could the greater anonymity, diminishing 'safe' public spaces in urban landscape, life in isolated 'gated apartments' also be linked with heightened popularity of playschools in urban centers? In the same line this chapter seeks to carefully investigate the nature of urban living.

3.1. Brief Overview of Modernity and New Middle-Classes

Modernity which is ubiquitous has registered its origin during 15th century in West. But it was only in the 18th century during enlightenment various philosophers like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Rousseau, Kant and Adam gave a specific meaning to modernity. The core characteristics of modernity that one could mention are reason, empiricism, science, progress, secularism and universalism. Kant called modernity the 'light of reason' which in general marked the awakening from the dark clutches of superstition and ignorance (as cited in Pathak 1998). Modernity brought with itself a promise of optimism, a possibility of creating a new world through secular reasoning and techno-scientific exploration. Later in 19th century Modernity associated itself with industrialization and increasing fast changing social, economic and cultural changes (Pathak 1998; Giddens 1998). Afterwards, many non-Western societies like ours began to embrace the ethos of modernity.

Modernity which initially appeared to be positive has later put forwarded many ambiguities. It has also brought with it malicious instrumental rationality which has resulted in utilitarian human interactions, objectification of almost every thinkable entity, leading to dependency on institutional system. Along With modernity (as cited in Pathak 2006) also arrived massive techno-industrial

structures, legal systems, educational and bureaucratic machineries. These transformations successively have resulted in a distinct section of society called the 'new middle class'. The concept of middle classes has been dealt differently by various people in different contexts. For example, A.R. Desai has described middle classes in nationalist context whereas Bourdieu has described it in terms of cultural symbols.

In Indian context, the middle class constituted a new class of people which emerged in post-Independence era and relied on Nehruvian model of awareness and sensibilities. But in the context of present enquiry, the new middle classes have been understood as a group of service professionals which grew during LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) era. With the new opportunities on global front, these service sectors arose leading to the emergence of a class (not strictly in terms of economic status) which could also be understood in terms of a distinct set of social and cultural symbols. In other words, the new middle class has emerged as a byproduct of economic liberalization policies in 1990s. Middle class (Donner 2011) could be characterized by various markers *viz.* Income, education, status, cultural affinities and ideals, different set of values and anxieties, consumption practices, lifestyle etc. Donner (ibid: 16) maintained that, "Today, middle-class citizens belonging to different communities share not only specific cultural traits through their involvement with formal education and commodity consumption but [also], more often than not, aspirations for a distinctly urban lifestyle". She affirmed that the formal education and consumption practices which this new class is sharing are directed towards creating a homogenous society. Referring to this, one can say that this new middleclass is becoming increasingly homogenous with the effects of globalization. These new middle classes could also be understood in congruence with Bourdieu's (cited in Donner) ideas, who established that certain class specific characteristics are reproduced through amalgamation of everyday practices, subcultures and different kinds of capital, namely social and cultural. Taking from Bourdieu one can argue that these new middle-class subjectivities

and lifestyles could be read as resultant of economic, social and cultural capital. Further, their specific class positions may be defined in cultural terms through values, skills, expertise, tastes, manners which further modify the hegemonic networks of knowledge. In the same line, Fernandes (2007) also supports the relation between consumption and new middle class where she asserts that consumption can be understood as a way of expression in the era of globalization. She has argued that post-liberalization, new strategies in labor market, private sector employment, changing educational strategies and new forms of civic associational life in urban neighborhoods are the places where 'newness' of the 'new middle class' is expressed and further shapes the discourses of inequality. Srivastava (2015) further adds that an important aspect of middle-classness is the self-identification as 'good' consumers (ibid: 94) which is visible in consumption of various services like housing, education, health etc. by this class in return of huge economic capital.

But Indian middle class is in a way quite different from western as evident in the analysis given by Dipankar Gupta (2000) wherein he put forth the new image of India as an oscillating pendulum between different worlds of tradition and modernity. According to him, the new middle class could be perceived as a mix of traditional values along with caste and religion ideologies. He referred to this as 'westoxification' which he states is just a shallow imitation of western ways of living. Gupta asserts that without a particular set of values, the elite calls itself as 'middle class' just because of their habits of consumption. On the other hand, Srivastava (2015: 122) interpreted Indian new middle class in a completely different way. By referring to contemporary magazines which seek to define middle class, Srivastava (ibid) points out that these magazines define an 'authentic' Indian middle class which unlike westernized middle classes- can come back to its Indian roots.

In the light of above arguments, the current enquiry aims to explore the lifestyle, residential preferences, work patterns, educational aspirations and changing ideals

of childhood and motherhood according to this new middleclass. Since playschools being the privatized services, it is these middle class parents only, who constitute the major clientele of these services.

3.2. Modern Society and Its Complexities

Current society of ours is marked as modern society. It is supposed to be having certain features which make it modern. Time and again many people have described modernity in different manner. According to Giddens (1990: 01), modernity refers to 'modes of social life or organizations which emerged in Europe' from about seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence. He has equated modern society with 'information society' (ibid). Here in context of playschools one can see the impact of modernity as an information society where right from early childhood it is expected that child would go to school, learn the complex knowledge of the society which further would enable him/her to cope with information explosion happening around. The effect of information society could be sensed with the changing norms i.e. sending a child to school as early as possible.. Earlier, until the age of 06 a child could be left playing, enjoying the comforting nest of family, spending time in neighborhood, friends and other kin members, could afford to play outside home, in street/gardens etc. But gradually this practice has changed. As the society became more complex with its various forms of specialized knowledge, there arose a need to teach a child at an early age. To fulfill this need then the child was send to school little early i.e. at the age of 04 to nursery school. But now in the globalized era when information explosion is taking place the child is expected to know much more than earlier which has resulted in early schooling and exposure to school like environment called 'playschool'. The first contact of child with school which earlier used to be at the age of 06 has now come down to the age of 18months and often 02 years. Parents who used to be relaxed earlier with their child's growth are now making it a hurried process. This hurriedness could also be understood in terms of 'time' and as one of the

characteristic of modern society. It is often said that children have to adapt with time. The notion of time and its importance has increased so much that in a way it has engulfed the playful phase of childhood and made children to go through formal training of becoming a competent and an independent adult as early as possible. This speed, competition and restlessness which are brought by globalization and can be understood as a carrier of modernity, are making parents anxious about their children's future and altering the very image of child, childhood, motherhood and child rearing practices. Modern society, according to Giddens (1990: 01), could also be equated with 'consumer society', a society in which almost every sphere of life can be understood as a commodity to be sold, purchased or consumed. Here one can invoke Fromm who says, "life has no goal except the one to move, no principle except the one of fair exchange, no satisfaction except the one to consume" (cited in Pathak 2009: 18). It can be understood as a complex combination of economic institutions, market economy, consumerism and commodification which are put forward in the era of globalization. About globalization, Giddens (1990: 175) has maintained that it is one of the 'fundamental consequences of modernity'. He asserts that, "globalization is more than diffusion of Western institutions across the world. It has actually crushed various local cultures. Globalization in a way is a process of uneven development through which new forms of world interdependence are emerging". No doubt globalization has certainly brought the change in our society, for example, these institutionalized care services could also be understood as part of global care chains which have brought change in child rearing practices and has infected the mother-child bond by making it open to commodification. In connection to globalization and child rearing practices, Hochschild (cited in Manne 2005: 280) has also criticized globalization where she describes how first world working mothers are under the constant pressure of breadwinner model[22] who are full time employed and exhausted by long working hours, rely totally on the babysitters for their children's care. These babysitters are usually migrant

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[22] It is the old patriarchal model which demands absolute attention from mothers (working lives) which make them 'cram their education, indulge in career-building, marriage and then children, all by their mid-thirties' (Manne 2005: 304).

mothers from not so rich countries who have left their own children behind in order to provide love and care for children of richer mothers. This has led in an international trade of mother's love which has all become possible by globalization. This tragedy[23] of modernity has also brought with it the pain of separation which surely these mothers and their children must be facing. The new form of capitalism has evolved with its wicked ideas of commodification and commercialization which has now reached to private spheres of life. Tempering the very ideals of childhood, the new capitalism has reshaped it fully. Early capitalism induces mass compulsory schooling whereas the new capitalism has gone further in its reach of institutional life over early childhood (Manne 2005: 243).

Modernity is generally understood in terms of scientific temperament, rationality, technological development, secular orientations towards life and a democratic society (Pathak 1998). Ideally, a modern society is free from the clutches of irrational authority of church or religion and it is the place where new logic prevails. A modern society, can be said, is gifted with positivity, progress, prosperity for all, equal treatment of every citizen. But if we try to extend this meaning of modernity to our society, we would find many contradictions. The changes brought by modernity and its various processes are doing more harm than good to people. It has also brought with it the suffering, pain, loneliness, detachment and scarcity of human emotions. With immense possibilities in career front, education and so on, it has emptied people of the very essence of being human. Modernity, it is said acknowledges the individual but this acknowledgement has further bounded people in their discrete individual spheres where human to human relation has reduced to a utilitarian purpose. By opening the gates of many possibilities and choices, modernity has made it possible for people to 'dream big', to aim for a 'good life' and in order to fulfill that, one can

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[23] It is said tragedy because the working mothers are caught in their professional work and its unending demands, putting their time, energy, attention and care towards their clients and leaving behind their own children with a secondary caregiver who again, often is a mother caught in the similar situation.

migrate and settle down anywhere, wherever they want. These opportunities promise to provide soothing sense but in reality are illusions which result in nothing but a feeling of 'loss'. People are constantly migrating from one place to another in search of this 'good life' but again this dream robs them off, of the living contact with their community and their culture which again is an integral part of one's identity. The search for better job, better lifestyle, education and the better mode of living, leaves people struggling on their own in the alien land (often city) far from their own community.

3.2.1. Emerging New Family Types:

Modernity has induced various changes in our society which have brought a different set of problems as well. Higher rates of migration shows that more and more people are leaving their native place and settling[24] down in cities. Cities, which in turn are the site of modernity, have its own rules and character. Having high cost of living in the city, people are often trapped in the vicious cycle of work and spend. The cost of living is such that joint families with one earner, find it difficult to survive in this ruthless space of city. Even the nuclear families also find it difficult to cope with single income. The new kind of economy makes people to earn more and then spend more. But one might ask that ours is the same society where people could very well survive on just one income, joint households used to share the familial responsibilities together unlike current situation where nuclear families are struggling all alone in cities. What has made the living so expensive in cities? For a probable answer we can refer to Manne (2005: 242-243) who relates these designed[25] necessities with 'affluenza'- the luxury fever of conspicuous consumption. She sets the correlation with high

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[24] Settling is used instead of setting because immense possibilities of migration from one place to another are making people always ready to move in search for the better life, career, education etc. This has resulted in multiple migrations, temporary residential arrangements. Setting where refers to a kind of permanence, settling has been used in present context to connote temporary arrangements.

[25] It is called 'designed' since people are made to believe in conspicuous consumption, without putting in a thought people are just consuming material things as well as services. It is just diminishing the gap between 'necessity' and 'luxury'.

income and high rates of consumption by arguing that as the income rises it creates a 'false need' to consume more since with high income levels now people have money at their disposal with which they can buy different kind of services of which, she says, child care is one. To quote "there is a simple correlation—the more mum and dad earn, the more likely they are to use childcare…it is the wealthiest who are most likely to use childcare, and most likely to use it for the longest hours" (ibid: 242). Manne asserts that it is this new 'induced necessity' for family which needs more than one adult earning. It is actually inseparable from 'affluenza'. This, then, makes it mandatory to have dual income plan in order to meet the daily expenses. Here one can also bring in Marcuse's (1964) explanation when he distinguishes between 'true and false needs' (ibid: 07) mentioning that , "the most prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with advertisements…belongs to the category of false needs". Since, these needs are determined by external powers, they can only provide 'repressive satisfaction'. It is called repressive because it promotes one to enter the rat race of catching up with one's peers in order to achieve 'good standards of living'. This false projection of good way of life (ibid: 14) then leads to the emergence of one-dimensional thought and behavior. This rat race, in a way has absorbed parenthood inside it, where parents are working day and night in order to provide good life to their children whereby sacrificing the very quality time and care towards them. Referring to this rat race, one can see how even 'motherhood' is getting soaked up in the faulty interpretations of good life, individual freedom. Jean Bethke Elshtain (cited in Manne 2005: 243) has brought under light the harmonious relation between corporate capitalism and (upper) middle class professional couple. By pointing out Betty Friedan's work 'The Feminine Mystique' which has praised women joining this rat race, Elshtain has demonstrated that it, in a way, supported capitalism. Further the old idea of dependent, vulnerable child has revised in context of new idea of working mothers and capitalism as the independent and resilient child who does not need much parental time or nurture (ibid: 244). It, indeed, is the paradox of progress which modernity has brought to us - the more one earn the more they feel the urge

to consume. The ugly form of human competition has given rise to the feelings of relative deprivation where in the pursuit of finding happiness by consuming more one gets more deprived and caught in work-spend cycle. It has resulted in families which devote more family hours to paid work and still feel deprived, exhausted and stressed. This new form of modern life has idealized long hours of work and less time for family and intimate life (ibid: 252). Ethics of work are given preference than ethics of care in this new order of capitalism.

The present society which has promised to provide individual freedom has made it possible for women to go out and work but this again has to be assessed in conjunction with its empowering and disempowering discourses. With changing gender roles more and more women are joining work force. The childcare practice which earlier was the arena of not only the biological father or mother but of the whole family and community along with neighborhood has now fallen upon the shoulders of mother and father solely especially in the nuclear families living in cities. Nuclear families which again lack the presence of grandparents or other adult / care giver makes it necessary for the parents to rely on 'institutional care services'. These institutional care services- a product of modern society are driven by the principles of capitalism and commodification which in turn got strengthened in the era of globalization. The evils of capitalization and commodification have not left even the private sphere of family rather it has exploited every bit of human relation (parents, children) to generate profit. On one side, parents are busy in earning and from the other side they are made to spend on these care services. Parents often find themselves trapped in this work-spend vicious cycle. Capitalism has thus managed to intrude the intimate mother-child bond and has brought 'care' under its grip. The necessity of day care[26] could also partly be related to these working parents who are full time employees, have long working hours and are under the load of professional job which demands their absolute attention and energy leaving them totally exhausted to be able to give

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[26] Day care usually provides services from early morning to evening hours (often from 08 a.m. to 07:30 p.m.). Brats N Cuties also provides similar service with minimal holidays.

attention to their children. The situation is worse in the case of single parent families where the whole responsibility of running the family is on the single caregiver (mother or father) who herself/ himself doesn't have any support in alien city. The multiple responsibilities of job, child care and other familial responsibilities push these parents to look for an alternative care mechanism which often is readily available in the form of 'playschools' (or daycare center/ preschools etc.)

In modern society, various other processes like job insecurity, reduced agricultural activities, high consumption pattern, rising housing prices, migration have all led to the growth of dual-income families which in turn has made it mandatory for both the parents to be employed in order to sustain life marked with high consumption patterns.

3.2.2. Urban Landscape in Modern Times

"We are always in the middle of urban life as it swirls around us, perhaps desperately seeking out familiar places in the distance, even as every other day (and sometimes hour) the dizzying rate of spatial transformation- a shopping mall here, a flyover there- mocks that gesture of knowing the city".

(Srivastava 2015: xx)

Modern life has brought with it, the need of specialized and scientific living, as it is generally said. Every space needs to be utilized in best possible manner. The old housing designs which used to have verandah, courtyard, garden or any other kind of open space are changing at a fast rate and adapting itself to the highly efficient apartment style housing. These apartments often in the form of gated and fortified enclaves offer a different kind of sociality to its residents. In a way, urban housing has led to marvelous designs of sky scrapers, gated enclaves. These huge buildings are now becoming more and more efficient in accommodating greater number of families/ offices etc. Every inch of city's space is turned into a

'useful[27]' structure. For example, say 120 square feet of space which earlier might be occupied by a single family can now be shared by more families living at each level of the building. These (caged) apartments promise higher standards of living. A preferable apartment in a city could be a 3/4BHK flat where every family member is assigned a separate room[28]. The open space (of garden, courtyard) which earlier used to be an integral part of home has now been replaced with an essential space for car parking. Having a 'car' it seems has become a mandatory condition for middle class where one's status is often measured by the number of material assets one has. The urban landscape where one can find ample space for parking a car, for huge malls, are example of the places marked by structural bias towards children. There is enough space for clubs, malls, car parking but there are no enough spaces assigned for children's playground. This structural biasness again is impacting children and restricting their play, making them confined to home or say inside 'cage'[29] like playschools. It would not be wrong to bring in Manne's (2005) work here where she has quoted a play environment consultant who brings to our view that nowadays 'more space is devoted to (childcare) car parking' (ibid: 291) rather than 'actual spaces for children to play' in open. This has resulted in 'child ghettoes and baby factories' (ibid) where children are always confined in four walls of playschools. Children in cities hardly get to see the open sky as they are mostly confined to closed spaces either of playschool/school, of home, malls, clubs, theatre etc.

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[27] Useful is used in context of commodification and capitalism where the lands are taken and a profit generating structure is made say malls, theatre, restaurants etc. Also, it emerged during fieldwork BNC principal mentioned that, *'the school was a result of simple mathematics they started school since they had the vacant space and they wanted to utilize it'* (Discussed at length in chapter 4).

[28] This modern notion of dividing and assigning different spaces for different work was also evident during the fieldwork where in school itself different activities were meant to be carried in specific spaces, there was strict demarcation of spaces meant for children/ for teacher/ for having food/ for playing etc. Also, one of the prescribed books for children at BNC 'My Home' had pictorial representations where separate activities were represented which meant to be conducted in specific spaces (further elaborated in chapter 4).

[29] Many playschools are also running in closed spaces (of multilevel buildings) where no playground or say open play area is assigned for children.

The increasingly small families inhabit these residential complexes where each apartment signifies a separate insulated space. In these apartments, the connection[30] with the outer world is minimal and people are most of the times surrounded by super luxurious facilities inside their homes. In cities we often don't know our neighbor by sight. There is no exchange of words, talks between neighbors. Only physical proximity is there otherwise a neighbor is a total stranger. In this context one could refer to Pathak (2006: 41) who mentions that

> "Modernity seeks to evolve a new community which is qualitatively different from the one in which an individual is born. These modern communities of cities include housing complexes, literary associations, book clubs and drama groups. And it also provides with institutional solution of the breakdown of family support system or the loneliness/ suffering of old people. It could be measured by the growing number of old age homes/ boarding schools etc. Yet these modern solutions are there but there still exists a deep absence of real intimate living".

From the above illustration, one can get a sense how anonymity is taking over the modern life and making people deprived of the actual organic connection. Also, as we have discussed earlier, a family in which both the parents are employed and they do not have any other family or kin member to fall back upon in combination with anonymous life where no or minimal connection with neighbors, make parents to depend on these institutional care mechanisms for their children. But this can make us think, if living in a city could bring such hard situations and robs one off, of a quality human to human interaction then why do people prefer to stay there? This significant point has brought up by Srivastava (2015: 159) where he recorded a high preference amongst his participants who prefer living in gated residences. To quote from Srivastava "people want community here, but not like a mohalla[31], not like those older localities..." Certainly, a subtle preference for a

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[30] Here the connection is used in context of real connection where people would actually know each other talk with their neighbors, friends rather than just maintaining a superficial link and physical proximity.

[31] Literally 'neighborhood' term deployed to suggest an older locality, with 'village-like' bonds and kin-like relationships among its residents (Srivastava 2015: 159).

particular lifestyle is attached with living in these fortified enclaves which seduces middle class to pick one over other. Also, it could be understood in terms of the security which these fortified enclaves (might) provide to families in an alien land where one is not very familiar with one's neighbor also. The growing anonymity which is also leading to growing mistrust amongst people is in turn making one to prefer these enclaves which come with their own security arrangements like huge walls enclosing the residential space with strict entry/exit rules and hi-tech security systems, like centralized CCTV camera recording etc., ensures the security of these families in an unfamiliar city. Not only these enclaves rather this fear from unknown and wanting to be in a secure boundary is also part of playschools[32], schools and other modern institutions as well. These bounded spaces in turn again restrict children's access to neighborhood area, public parks and street. Also, the need to secure children results in their confinement to institutional spaces. In addition to this, the tempting power which these residential complexes have could also be sensed by the way they advertise themselves. Quoting an advertisement of Omaxe Heights, a gated enclave in Lucknow which says that it offers, "in-house club with swimming pool and wave pool, tennis court, basketball court, banquet/community hall, squash court, steam room, Jacuzzi, gymnasium, and television lounge' indeed promises a different world" (cited in Srivastava 2015: 113). It, in a way, promises to provide utmost luxurious life (attached with high status) to a particular section of society which can afford to pay for purchasing the luxury they desire. In a sense, in return of money it assures the middle and upper class of their private kingdom. But, we must not forget that these private kingdoms of gated and fortified enclaves lack a connection with their immediate surroundings, their neighbors and from the outer world. In such heightened boundaries of unfamiliarity and anonymity, children find no escape and they are restricted to either home or other institutional spaces like school, playschool, day care, children's clubs, malls etc. In these apartments, one can have limitless material luxuries but the human connection is often

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[32] Security is the major concern for parents at schools and playschools also. BNC's feature which is providing the 24*7 live feed of the school through internet, captured attention of most of the parents which led them to enroll their kid at the playschool.

missing. Families (as we have discussed in earlier section) are becoming equally small, say single parent, single child families miss out on the personal front since parents are employed, they are not available to children most of the time and in this situation either a child is left alone at home or otherwise need a daycare/ activity center[33]. Older children can still manage to go out and play but preschool children who are dependent on caregivers find no (familiar) companion of their age to play with. Also, increasing cases of child-abuse are further restricting children's access to safe and open spaces for play. This again is making parents to opt for these alternative care mechanisms where in absence of parents at least the 'security' of child is assured, then be it at the cost of their healthy play.

Apart from these huge gated enclaves, many other extraordinary projects say underground metro, overhead bridges, flyovers, clubs, gymnasiums, malls are all promising for higher efficiency, ease and leisure living. But these structures have hardly left any open spaces for 'playgrounds'. Playgrounds and parks for children with swings which, earlier, used to be a public property where anyone could go and enjoy regardless of their income (affordability)is now being rapidly replaced by clubs, malls, sports complexes. To be able to utilize these, one has to pay huge membership fee, thereby making these spaces increasingly differentiated and within the reach of only specific class (middle/ upper class). Modernity and globalization which have promised of a democratic society and equal treatment of all now only prefer to those who can afford its services.

One of the major sights of urban landscape is malls. The omnipresence of malls in urban spaces could be understood as a close link between built environment and consumerist capitalist spaces. These are an attempt to turn more or less public spaces into consumerist spaces (Sklair cited in Srivastava 2015: 214). Malls are considered as the places providing ample opportunity to quench one's desire of

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[33] Daycare is for smaller kids whereas activity center caters to children enrolled in formal schools. Activity center at BNC usually offers English coaching, arts and craft, personality grooming courses, teaching various other skills and claims to inculcate 'winning potential' in children and thereby grooming them according to global standards.

consumption. But it also symbolizes a private space in a public realm which is only made available to a particular class. Nowadays, rather going and visiting relatives, family outings have been restricted to meals at McDonald's or spending leisure time at malls. A usual sight can establish that in malls the parents are often busy in purchasing material things and meanwhile their children are also consuming a distinct kind of service. Nowadays, malls have come up with a separate section for children where all sorts of videogames, toy cars and gadgetry materials are readily available. The whole commercial industry behind these electronic games and gadgets make use of the condition where children are always inside in confined spaces like malls, playschools, home etc. It has also made it easy for various advertising firms and children's media to bombard children with various forms of images and products. In this respect, Susan Linn (2008) has discussed about this, at length, in her study on commercialization of childhood and effects of electronic media on children. She has recorded a steep increase in 'screen-time' of children, where most of the time they are surrounded with television, mobile phone, video games, internet which are actually shaping children's mind to consume more and more whereby destroying any possibility of creative play. According to Linn (ibid) the screen time robs children off activities like creative play, imaginative play, make believe play etc. that do build the brain. The time for quiet and imaginative reflection, conversation and hands-on exploration has decreased and according to Linn it may cause adverse effect on children's cognitive, social and emotional development. The lack of availability of open space for children and the reluctance of governmental regulation on children's media in combination with commercial ideology are making children exposed to video games which are mostly showing violent and aggressive scenes thereby distorting their healthy growth.

3.2.3. Nature of Work in Modern Societies

One must not forget that these institutional care services are a phenomenon of modern society, a society which carries itself on the shoulders of capitalization,

globalization and commodification. It is also obsessed with instrumental rationality, excessive materialism and objectification of human spirit (Pathak 1998). These care services must be interpreted, keeping in mind that, these exist in the times when everything is under the purview of commodification. Starting from health and education, even food and water is being commodified. These institutions are further taking this course ahead where even mother's love and care are commodified. Care services which are largely dominated by women workforce who are employed with these private firms, in order to carry out their work professionally are made to leave their own children in the company of *ayah* or other care giver and are supposed to provide care to children enrolled at these institutions. We can invoke Peter Berger (cited in Manne 2005: 262) here who has warned us about the pathology of modernity which is segmentation, separating one's consciousness into different compartments. Necessarily these working mothers themselves are going through this emotionally charged state where in order to meet professional demands they have to manage their own emotions. In return of providing care, these institutions often extract huge fee from parents but do not provide a decent salary to their own employees[34]. Being itself into the arena of providing care services these institutions do not recognize the need of their own employees. The ethics of work has also been crushed totally by the infectious greed of profit making.

The nature of work in modern times has marked with many unpleasant situations where most of the jobs are in the hands of private organizations, are contractual in nature, without any job security which in turn makes parents constantly on their toes and they need to be always ready to move in search of better options of livelihood. This could well be explained bringing Bauman's 'travelling light' concept (cited in Manne 2005: 301-302) relating it to the 'move on' phenomena both in personal as well in professional life where people are encouraged to be detached and holding attachment to workplace, people, colleagues is considered

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[34] It was told by one of the teacher at BNC and because of low salary she wanted to change her job.

as a weak point. In new capital order, this 'move on' phenomenon is highly appreciated along with competition which helps in assuring one's success even if it is at the cost of failure of the other whereas the values of loyalty and honesty towards employer and employee are considered outdated. The performance pressure, high bureaucratization, impersonal roles, disparity between amount of work done and salary leaves parents frustrated. Also, often these workplaces do not provide daycare, crèches, no care leaves and home care allowances to their employees leaving them struggling with their professional as well as familial responsibilities alone. The profit driven work of these private firms and reluctance of government in making strict rules related to child care services could be possible reasons behind flourishing market of these playschools.

Also, the urban landscaping is such where residential complexes and workplaces are situated at separate corners of the city increasing duration for commuting, making parents usually running out of time (for their children). Here again we can refer to Manne's work (2005: 253-54) in which she has mentioned that, "5'o clock dad was the thing of past" since long hours of professional work and added hours which goes in commuting makes it difficult for parents to spend more quality time with their children[35]. Often, within the families where both the parents are working there is minimal interaction amongst family members like a business appointment, where they just meet, do the assigned work and then get back to their individual spheres. Necessarily, the notion of time has attained a greater importance with this new capital order. In this new economy, 'time' has become as important as 'money'. The industrial understanding of time where each and every second must be utilized in highest productive manner has been absorbed by people living in modern societies. One can see people talking, 'time is going, time is running, one has to finish a certain work in time' etc. are all the effects making ours a restless society. In this context, Arlie Hochschild (Manne

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[35] This indeed is true in context of our society as well. During fieldwork this was a common reason which most of the working parents (usually fathers) gave and then added that, "mother's role is more important in child's socialization since fathers are busy with their jobs".

2005: 265) has portrayed that how working mothers find themselves short of time and often get caught in the logic of industrial time. Hochschild gives an account of working mothers who are usually fully exhausted trying to make room for achieving little efficiencies by indulging in multitasking at home. For example, an employed mother hurrying her child to finish his/her meal, meanwhile she is also answering e-mails on phone and then later 'speed reading' the bedtime story since, the next day again the mother has to rush to office after dropping her child at daycare. Time is considered as the ultimate treasure which has to be saved and utilized in best possible manners. Parents themselves are caught in this trap and often they extend this hurriedness to their children which results in heightened anxieties about their future (Manne 2005: 302; Elkind 1987). Also, along with this industrial notion of time other values of market place like being independent, 'ability'[36] of detachment, to be always ready for competition are also seeping into the private spheres of life.

One could say that it is necessarily this anxiety that is adding to parental reasons for sending their children to playschool since they want them to be independent, competent and detached as soon as possible. In order to make children independent right from the early ages, parents are all set to leave them with an alien institution, mothers restrain themselves to breastfeed their children every now and then. To quote a mother who feels that 'it (breastfeeding) might teach her baby to expect more than what s/he is going to get out of life' (Manne 2005: 304). Inevitably the breast feed and attention from mother would give a soothing effect to child, children might get attached to their parents and later they would expect this caring attitude from society as well. But our society which has already left behind the language of emotions and care is now ruthlessly running on the ideals of competition, survival of the fittest, detached individuals who are always ready to move on, would not be able to offer anything to these children. In order to make children survive in harsh society, their early training is needed which is

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[36] Being able to detach easily is the new value of modern society. 'Detachment' which gets rewarded, attachment is considered as the trait of weak of one who is not able to move on, is not able to control his/her emotions (Manne 2008: 302).

partly performed by these institutionalized care mechanisms. This, then, brings us to explore the desirability of playschools. Furthermore, to explore whether they only engage in teaching the ideals of society or also provide opportunities for the children to play.

3.3. Induced Dependence and Desirability of Playschools in Modern Society

In earlier sections we have discussed how in modern societies more and more nuclear families are emerging. Families in city are devoid of grandparents and other kin members. To meet the expenses, both the parents have to earn. In these circumstances a young child cannot be left alone at home. It is this specific lifestyle of urban middle class living in combination with middle class anxieties of child's success and his/her survival in increased competitive environment that has resulted in the popularity of playschools. These 'playschools' (daycare centers) claim to provide a sure shot readymade solution to these parents' anxieties. Also, we have discussed that modern society where different values of being a global citizen are needed to be taught to children from early ages are increasingly taken over by the institutional legitimacy. It is conceived that these new teachings are not in the reach of familial socializations and therefore, one needs institutional support. Child rearing and child care which earlier used to be the responsibility of whole family and kin members has now shrunk to these ever small nuclear families. Earlier, the responsibility of child care was shared by grandparents in home who also used to guide young parents in the matter of their child's growth, which is now been taken over by experts in parenting. Nowadays, the absence of grandparents in families has been exploited well by these parenting gurus also known as experts in parenting techniques. The obsession with scientific knowledge has made parents trapped in the dependency web where it leads from one institution to other say from playschools to schools then to other educational set-ups etc. One could sense through the anxieties that these young parents are

equally confused[37] as their children are, in this highly anonymous and scientific era of globalization. Playschools even conduct 'parenting seminars' which indeed are helpful in a way but these are also the occasions where these experts propagate their universal plans of (scientific) child rearing and child caring without even listening to the particular child, his/her mother, their problems/anxieties, their family history etc. This creates an illusion to parents who believe that these experts are endowed with all superior knowledge and naïve mothers have to be bound (and sometimes imposed) by their directions of child rearing. With the expertise syndrome, a certain kind of dependency has also come where people are dependent on experts for almost everything. This institutional dependence is also making parents feel incompetent in their child's socialization. It is this faith in expertise and importance of school which is trickling down to these early childcare institutions. Thus, Modernity in a way, instead of making people more independent and confident has brought the feeling of helplessness and total dependency on institutional set-ups where even for the socialization of a young child one needs to be dependent on institutional and expert knowledge. Then, in this situation, parents have to rely on another 'modern institution' called playschool which would socialize children for nearly everything beginning from eating, drinking, interacting in English, thinking, to becoming obedient, to be able to become a global citizen from early childhood years itself. Also, by analyzing the nomenclature of these institutional childcare mechanisms say playschool/ preschool one can get a sense that there is an attempt to create a buffer medium by incorporating both 'play' as well as 'school'. Usually in our society, 'play' is regarded as unimportant activity whereas 'school' has been understood in terms of something very serious and important. School is perceived as a stern but useful place (also discussed in Chapter 2) which is meant for the goal oriented socialization of the child. In the school setting, the child is supposed to learn the formal skills of reading and writing where the freedom and fun is no longer the part of bigger picture (Anandalakshmy 1998: 272). Playfulness and light-

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[37] This was shared by BNC principal where she told that parents often ask that 'what her/his child's inclination are' and 'how they could make them engineers, sports person from now itself?'

heartedness are given less weightage than schooling. School as we have also discussed in previous chapter, is a part of legitimate modern institution and over the years has gained immense importance. Ideally, school is considered as the place where the serious business of education is carried. Any enjoyment by children would be suspected for its utility and usefulness in terms of education.[38] It is treated as one of the most important institution of modern society which can give 'expert knowledge' to child. School also brings with itself a whole discourse of scientific and expert knowledge which is considered important in our society. In modern society, the expertise syndrome is prevalent which is establishing the importance of these educational institutions in relation to child's learning. The organized 'educational time' with 'certified professionals', is considered far superior in comparison to unstructured time with 'uncertified parents'.

Sharing the responsibility of socialization of the child, many playschools also act as training ground for future education of the child. Current educational set up which is marked with high levels of competition and importance of English language are making these playschools more appealing. English along with a particular lifestyle has become a marker of global culture (Pathak 1997: 88). It is an undeniable fact that there is a strange power which is associated with English; it is a language of pride which symbolizes the expression of domination. Keeping our colonial history in mind where English was the language of colonizers, it is still maintaining the same status. As one can say now, English is the language of dominant class. The knowledge of English can be classified as a form of 'cultural capital' which ensures one's success in global market. This is one reason which is fueling the craze for English language and thereby making English-medium playschools popular. Also, these playschools which cater to the middle classes have recorded strong preferences for English and are making it sure that their children learn this as soon as possible. Prevalence of this hastiness (of teaching English) amongst (middleclass) parents has also been established by Srivastava

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[38] It is because of strict image of school as a disciplinary institution. Parents also hold the view that 'schools' are for 'study', to 'educate' and not a place meant to 'play' (further aspects of playschool and its functioning would be unfolded in Chapter 4)

(2015: 173) by bringing a conflicting situation where the parents' desperate desire to bombard children with English is often accompanied by children's reactions of incomprehension towards parental demands. The importance of English is such that it becomes the deciding factor while choosing a playschool for a child. Playschools in a way guarantee in helping the parents make their child a global citizen through exotic toys, reinforcing English language, exposure to Western culture, teaching etiquettes etc. are all provided at playschools. Treating children as part of future global work force, who might be settling or going abroad has made it mandatory in certain kind of learning.

Also, the preoccupation with technology has also added to the preference for these playschools where at the school children learn operating different kind of gadgets like mobile phones, computer, tablets etc. The exposure to technology which might make children competent enough with highly technocratic society is adding to the importance of these institutions. It would not be heightened to mention that even playschool kids could be seen talking to each other of various video games[39]. They are very much familiar with the terminologies like computer, internet, tab, laptop etc. Also, at times, in schools instead of books, children are provided with tablets on which they operate.[40] This obsession with technology and the race of making children familiar with the latest technology is restricting their actual experiences. Now, instead of actually going outside and playing, children are playing on virtual T.V. screens. This obsession has also paved way for a whole new market which forces children to become consumer of their goods like electronic toys, video games, CD/DVD player, e-books/ videos etc. Similar to this, the concern was also raised by Pathak (2009: 49) where the link between technology and educational institution's infrastructure has been established. In addition, to attract the attention of parents, often playschool buildings are installed with CCTV cameras, hi-tech security system, air conditioners, computers, audio-

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[39] It was observed during fieldwork that children were talking amongst themselves about the games (temple run, car racing, subway surfers etc.) they play in cellphones. Even children as young as 03 years old knew how to operate cell-phones.

[40] Tablet based learning a prominent feature of BNC (discussed in Chapter 4)

visual rooms. These technologies no doubt might be utilized but must not replace the actual tactile experience of learning which children would get from actual teaching learning material. Marcuse (cited in Pathak 2006) referring to technology mania asserted that

> "…life itself is equated with the gratification of ever-expanding needs that technology creates. In such environment people recognize themselves through their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split level home, kitchen equipment, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced".

This conspicuous consumption is making parents and their children trapped and if any marketing is done by schools then it attains more legitimacy since the authority of school is also attached with that. Along with children as captive audience, commercialization activities through schools are making this phenomenon of affluenza firmer.

Apart from the above reasons, it is also the growing impact of developmental psychology which perpetuates the understanding of strict coherence between chronological age and intellectual age of children making parents anxious. While discussing the concept of 'time in childhood' James and Prout (1997: 229) maintained that 'age' exerts a powerful and constraining force on the daily activities of children. Their study emphasized on age-class (educational standard) correlation where an individual child should be competing with his/her peers of same age and must not be lagged behind. It is partly this understanding which is making parents to send their 02 years old child to playschool. The strict universal divisions in terms of stages by the developmental psychology has made parents to believe that by 02 years of age their child must start speaking, by 03 he/she must start reciting poems etc. It is this specific age related tasks associated with development which are making parents uneasy and they often end up hurrying their child. This understanding is translating itself in reinforcing the age related

learning of children and has resulted in lowering the age phenomenon where even young children are supposed to show measurable results of their learning.

3.4. Tempered Ideals of Childhood and Motherhood

Childhood no doubt is a biological stage which can be understood in a universal stage pattern. But childhood is also social since various societies/sections of societies have their own ideals of child and childhood. Therefore, childhood has to be located in specific structural and cultural context of society as emphasized by James & Prout (1997: 08). It can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity. Therefore, in present chapter, the emphasis is on new middle class's perception of childhood and its differing ideals in globalized era. With the effects of modernity and globalization even most private spheres of life have got influenced. This also includes mother's love and child-care which with time has left the very private space and has come under the realm of market.

Time and again, various people have warned us about the over emphasis of adult anxieties on children and their childhood which in turn could distort the very harmonious phase of a child. Taking insights from Dewey (2004: 56) who held a view that adults often express 'impatience towards the immature child' and they want to 'get the immaturity be over as soon as possible' by teaching and making the child educated. This process, he says, would result in an "adult formed by educative methods, who would look back with impatient regret upon the childhood as a scene of lost opportunities and wasted powers". In this regard, Dewey quotes Emerson who says, "Respect the child. Be not too much his parent. Trespass not on his solitude". Dewey, in a way, was aware of the dangers of fast changing society in which childhood is considered as just a stage to get over as soon as possible. Children instead of 'being' are perceived as 'becoming' adults of our society. The constant hurrying of the child in order to get mature is in a way robbing them off their childhood. In similar lines, David Elkind has also

asserted in his work, where he writes, "If we do not wake up to the potential danger of these harmful practices, we may do serious damage to a large segment of the next generation" (Elkind 1987: 07).About miseducation, Elkind adds, "the media both reflected and encouraged this 'hurrying' with its abundant images of 'adultified' children. And the schools cooperated by downward extensions of the curriculum and test driven instruction" (ibid: 04). The similar disenchantment with this hurried and enforced from of education was also sensed by Tagore which prompted him to portray the forceful training and deficits of education system through a story of parrot. Quoting the excerpt:

> "Once upon a time there was a simple bird. It would sing songs, but could not recite any of the sacred books. It would freely hop and fly about, but it knew nothing of rules or manners. 'Such a bird is useless', 'declared the king'. In fact by eating the fruits of the forest, it damages the royal fruit-market. Calling his minister, the king commanded: 'Give this bird an education' (Tagore 1993)".

This kind of training is again deepening the importance of institutional training which is resulting in playschools/ schools in order to make children more mature. Also, globalization which is seizing current times has tempered with the idea of child and childhood. Now children are considered as potential migrants for emerging global economy and this is the reason why since the very early age their socialization begins, according to global standards (Donner 2006). To be able to migrate along with submission and obedience are accorded a high value[41] in modern society. In this regard, one can refer to Donner (ibid: 378) who cites a conversation about the admission procedure with the headmistress of a well-known Montessori school.

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[41] Similar understanding of a 'good child' was observed during the fieldwork at BNC where the child who would listen to the teacher, follows every instruction, does his /her work well in time is always appreciated in comparison to the one who is always crying, wanting to go outside classroom etc. (discussed with detail in Chapter 4)

To quote:

> "In the interview I am looking for a well-rounded child, I show them this pencil holder here for example, and say 'this is a key' and wait how they react, and if they react-if they shake their head or if they say no, then that is a good sign…Or I show them my keys and make a sound with them and ask them 'do you want this?' and if they take it I will say 'give it back' and if the child then gives it back, that's a good sign-I don't want a child who is grabbing everything and who is demanding and shouts 'I want this and 'I want that'. Of course you cannot expect a two-year old to say much, what can you see in a two-year old-but I rarely make a mistake, I can tell. In general I am looking for a well-adjusted child, not for one clinging to his mummy'..."

This clearly shows that there is a subtle preference for the child who is submissive, easily adjusting, following the instructions. But, if still children cry, protest, beg, they are gradually silenced down[42]. It would not be wrong to say that children are at the receiving end of all transformations brought by modernity and its associated lifestyle. In present conditions children are now more vulnerable since from a very young age (18 months or 02 years old) they are submitted to an alien institution (outside home) called playschool. Here one could question how and in what terms are children making sense of these transformations? How are they adjusting to these situations where, from a very protective care of mother/ father or of familial care they are transferred into the professional hands who are no longer their mother or father? Young children those who are not even able to express themselves fully (or in the intelligible manner to adults) what kind of impact are these impersonal care mechanisms having on children? An important insight has been provided by Manne where she talks of these young children who are left in the institutional settings where one care-giver is successively replaced by another leaves no possibility for children to stay attached. The shifting sea of faces of multiple caregivers provide a 'fragmentary experience' (Bauman as cited

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[42] Incidents of children crying, wanting to go out of classroom or school, protesting firmly was also recorded during fieldwork at BNC.

in Manne 2005: 293) to these children where right from early years they are made to cope with temporary relationships instead of permanent and long –term relationships (as earlier was the case where mother and family members used to be consistently present throughout the child's growing years). It results in severe consequences on identity often ending in an incoherent self. The sudden disappearance of the loved ones, the primary care givers (parents) who are also absent most of the times leaving children in institutional care and shifting secondary care-givers at the institutional setting where even the constant secondary attachment is not available to children must be bringing an intense pain of separation to these children. In a way, it is contradictory where, in our modern society, the rights and individuality of an adult are respected and kept intact but in respect to children these are often sacrificed. It is, we, as adults who decide for these young children and often we end up making terrible decisions for them.

Childhood and parenting are part and parcel of the same thing. In our society, where a mother is considered as the primary caregiver, childhood could also be understood in close relation with motherhood. In earlier sections, we have discussed how changing roles of women with time (in modern societies) has made it possible for them to join work force. But this professional life, in a way, is tempering with their motherhood. Now, in our society, a successful career oriented mother is given more preference than a sole mother. As described by Manne (2005: 267-268) in contemporary times with 'super-kids' have emerged the 'super-mum' phenomenon which is idealized in current corporate and capitalized world. Under the pressure of demands from their professional work, mothers are nowadays going under speedy deliveries which Manne has mentioned as 'career-caesarean' (ibid: 269) she states,

> "In the world of the nanosecond, just as the conveyor belt of cars moves
> swiftly through the drive-through service at McDonald's, modern mothers
> are borne in on the conveyor belt of birth, which efficiently carries women
> into the operating theatre, unzips them and dumps them back at work shortly
> thereafter".

This heightened urgency of getting back to work does not allow working mothers to cherish the birth of their new child. Absence of maternity and child care leaves are further leaving these mothers and their newly born child as vulnerable. These mothers then have to be dependent on hired caregiver or institutional care for their children. The institutional model of care giving is again based on the efficiency model of market. Mass child rearing has born out of this which could also be understood in terms of Mc Donaldisation of childhood (Manne 2005: 282-302) where many children are kept under the (professional) care of handful of care-givers. Manne has elaborated that these highly crowded playschools where teacher-pupil ratio is high sometimes lead to unintentional neglect of children. Referring to 'demazin dump syndrome' Manne (ibid: 292) has pointed out that, "children who are sick are dosed up with cough and fever suppressant and then left at child care" since there is no availability of carer's leave and mothers have to rush to work. The hazardous effects of early and forceful training in the name of education were also recorded by ECE position paper (2006). In this regard the study by Gulati (ibid: 19) as mentioned in ECE observed that, "…in the area of health, respiratory problems, pain in legs, hands, and back, recurrent fever, and poor weight gain were commonly seen. As many as 82 per cent had irregular bowel habits, and this had also affected their sleep patterns"[43]. In the name of making children, competent adults we are also sacrificing their health by imposing our anxieties and forceful training.

Further this institution/playschool- gain acquires a stringent (disciplined school like) character which takes the responsibility of child's socialization in its own hands and at times it overrides the familial values, or say crushing the parental anxieties if it blocks their way of a grand project-of socializing child according to 'global standards'. Bureaucratic set up of these child care services rejects parental

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[43] The similar situations were also noted during fieldwork at BNC, where children were complaining about body pain since they were made to dance continuously for school's annual day's performance. Also, children's irregular bowel habits were a frequent complaint which teachers used to make to children's parents.

concerns say for example if the parents want to sit with their child in school, relaxation with timings etc. Running on the principle of making profit these childcare chains are only concerned about profit making and in order to make profit they can even do budget cut, appoint less staff[44] which in turn, results in compromised child care. These profit driven corporate chains are always in the aim of maximizing their profit rather than focusing on quality care.

The urban living which we have discussed in this chapter is not only a mix of many possibilities but also of despair. We have seen that how changes in one sector is inducing transformation to the other, e.g. as a result of globalization many opportunities are paving way for employment, making migratory possibilities easy but at the same time uprooting individuals from their very humane and personal community. Also, the corporatized education which has led to the whole market-like set up where the packaged curriculums, tablets and various things related to it are available in the market, one can just go and buy the combination which he/she wants. The craze for English language, the techno-centric education, commercialized children's media which are successively reducing even toddlers into active consumers. Parental anxieties related to the success of their child make them pressurize their children pushing them towards 'miseducation' (Elkind 1987) which might lead to hazardous effects on children. In this whole scenario of urban anonymous setting with diminishing trust, the quality of life also gets affected. Changing child rearing practices and new concepts of childhood and motherhood are now informed by neo-liberal ideologies. The whole irrational business of making child ready for future (age) life is pressurizing them. Childhood in current times, no doubt, is qualitatively different from what our parents may have gone through. In the light of discussions in this chapter, the following chapter would focus on bringing some insights from the field. Exploring what is actually happening at playschool. Are playschools really doing any good or are they just burdening children by putting loads of parental anxieties/ desires on children in the name of educating them? This would

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[44] This was also true in case of BNC where only two teachers were appointed for 22 children.

be explored further in the next chapter which looks at various day to day activities derived out of an engagement of two and a half months with a reputed and branded playschool's franchise in Delhi's Dwarka region.

CHAPTER 4

INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD: AN ENGAGEMENT WITH A PLAYSCHOOL IN DELHI

In previous chapters I have referred to the increasing importance of school and schooling in modern societies. The strong preference for school and schooling is again seeping down to the early childhood education, resulting in popularity of playschools. With the growing competitive nature in education, going to a playschool has become nearly a mandatory condition for securing admission to a 'good school'. I have discussed in the previous chapter that the urban living and its associated transformations brought with it the new type of families (nuclear, single parent, dual –earner families), work culture which new middle classes follows, the anonymous life and urban design of cities have further reinforced the need of playschools. The extending reach of market and commercial ventures into early childhood years have made it easy for these playschools to establish themselves as a global 'care chain' which are running on the idea of maximizing profit and thereby at times compromising on children's care. The efficiency model of Mc Donaldisation (Manne 2005: 285-302) and commercialization of childhood (Linn 2008: 32-38) has made its strong presence at the playschool level (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Taking the above understanding further the current chapter tries to explore everydayness of the selected playschool (in Delhi). Searching for various reasons of playschool's popularity by talking to parents, teachers and other care takers in the school premises and in school's neighbourhood the broad picture of a playschool has been evolved. Reasoning out the functional aspect of playschools, the chapter tries to investigate the role and meaning of the playschools for children. Whether the playschool is causing an added burden and putting heavy pressure on children? Or is it the other way round? Are playschools becoming

another kind of training ground for children? Are these playschool preparing children for future grand project right from the age when children are 02 or 03 years old? Or Are playschools providing opportunities for children to play and socialize with other children of similar age group? Are children happy to attend playschool or is it something imposed on them from us adults (parents, teachers etc.)? Amidst higher expectations of parents and different anxieties related to education and children's future career, how the playschool is providing assistance to parents? What is the power dynamics between teacher and children, between teacher and the administrative body and between the school and the parents? Looking for various meanings which teachers and parents attach with schooling, education and playschool I have tried to make sense of the workings at playschool. Along with the very packaging of activities at particular school the objective is also to comprehend certain underlying meanings of day to day activities at school by talking to teachers, school staff and parents. The chapter has evolved after an engagement at the selected playschool which lasted for two and a half months starting from December 2014 to mid-February 2015. The nature of involvement was such that as a researcher I had to take multiple roles in the school setting. These included being a teacher (for children), co-teacher or assistant teacher, researcher (in my own interest), playmate and friend with children. A constant engagement with children, teachers and administrative staff at school and timely interaction with parents/ guardians were also an important part of the engagement in order to understand the popularity of playschools among urban middleclass.

The explorations in this particular chapter are largely based on participant observations (inside the classroom and at school's premises) and working with teachers as their fellow to understand the dynamics of classroom and other bits (making weekly worksheets, doing arrangements for Christmas and new year celebrations etc.) of the school processes. Various techniques, I have used in order to understand multiple realities of the school and classroom's working included observations (participant and non-participant), casual talks, staff-room

conversations, conversation with parents, interaction with the helps (three aunties provided at the school) and an informal discussion with the principal. But there were some limitations as well, since me being an outsider had no access to many conversations and meetings. And thus, some of the sensitive incidents (highly confidential for the school to let it be known by the researcher) are constructed by eavesdropping. Also, there are certain limitations as most of the times my presence is perceived (by the school-staff) as an assistant teacher who is there to help in classroom management (most of the times in maintaining discipline)[45]which at times hindered the possibility of moving around in the school premises.

4.1. Site of Enquiry: The study aimed at developing a comprehensive picture of a playschool, situated in an urban residential colony of Dwarka, New Delhi. The selected playschool is the site of enquiry for the study. Instead of drawing a comparison between different schools and different branches of the same school/organization, the study focused and took a single organization's specific branch in order to observe day to day activities in a focused and detailed manner. The selected school has 22 kids enrolled for playgroup. The centre also provided various programmes ranging from toddlers to day-care along with activity centre.

The specific branch which is chosen for the fieldwork also functions as a higher education institute called Vishweshraiya Group of Institutions[46] since 1997 and

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45 At the selected playschool, classroom management included the centrality of discipline. This discipline was such that the children should be inside classroom, sitting on their respective chairs and must not roam outside. The maintenance of discipline often accompanied forceful dragging of children inside the classroom and later locking the classroom door so that children could not go outside, regardless of children crying out loud.

46 Vishweshraiya Group of Institutions under its aegis has Vishweshraiya College of Engineering and Technology (VCET) and Vishweshraiya College of Education (VCE) whose respective campuses are at New Delhi and Meerut respectively. VCET is offering technical, management and I.T. courses in the distance education mode through Karnataka State Open University, Mysore and Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak. VCE offering regular B.Ed, B.B.A, B.C.A and M.B.A. programs also.

the playschool is started in 2014 as a franchise[47].This branch of Brats N Cuties is running in a residential colony called Palam extension of Sector-07 (near Ramphal Chowk), Dwarka. The area is well connected by metro and bus routes and thus is easily accessible. Also, adjacent to Palam extension there is Palam village on one side and the other side it is Bagdola village which comes under sector 08 Dwarka. This location of Palam extension is considered humble[48] as compared to Brats N Cutie's (hereafter would be called as BNC) main branch which is identified as posh locality, situated at sector 11 Dwarka.
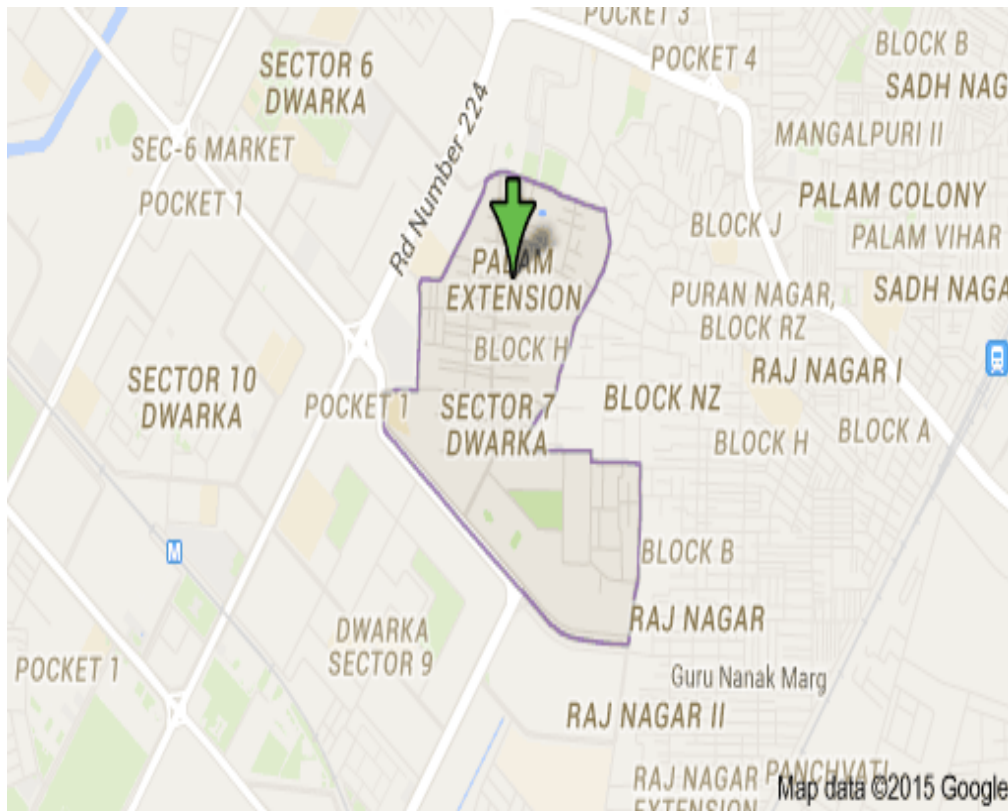
Map 1: Geographical location of Palam extension Sector 07 Dwarka, New Delhi

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47 The principal provided the reason for opening BNC's franchise that opening the playschool was a part of simple mathematics; they had the rooms and open area which is only utilized on weekends so in order to make use of the vacant space they started with the playschool. Also, the principal mentioned that, "*since investment is not very high and it's not something for which you have to think much to get into, there is no red tapism, no government bureaucracy involved in it, just certain rules and regulations and you can run as you want.*"

48 During interaction with the principal it came out that she is not very happy with the location of the school. Since this franchise is in a local colony unlike the main branch which is in posh area. The principal added that, "*the main branch manages to attract more children for admission despite high fee which this particular branch lacks.*"

4.2. Location of the Playschool in Palam Extension
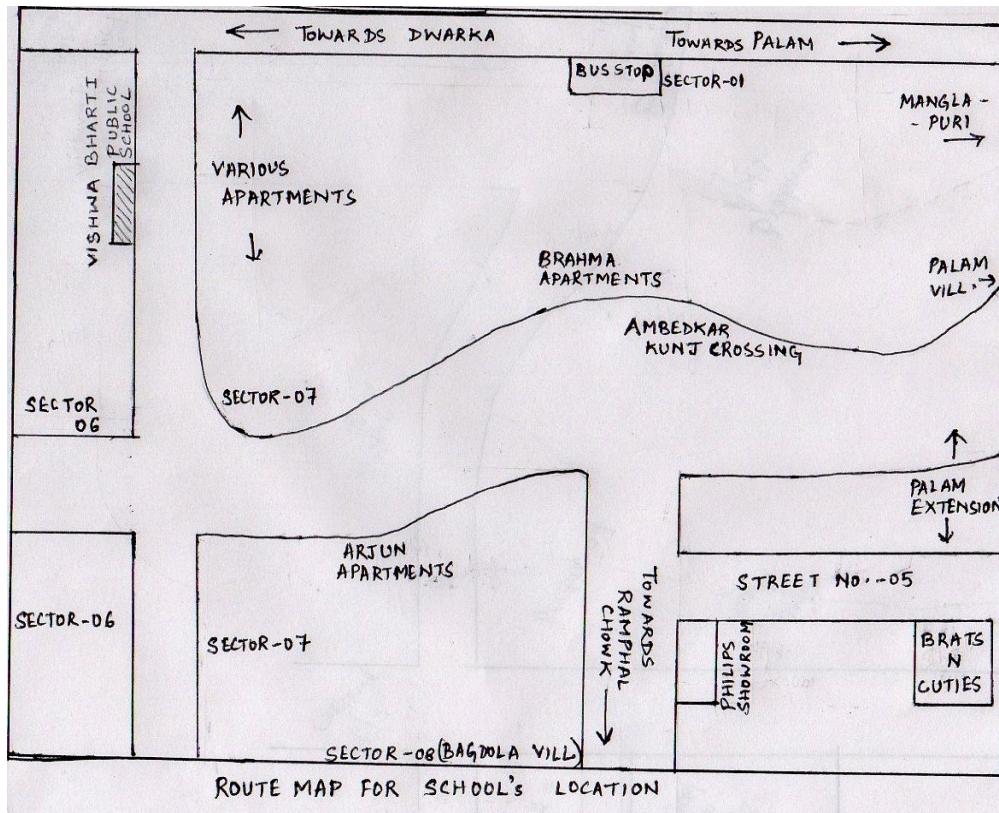
Map 2: Location of the playschool Brats N Cuties

It is clearly evident in the map above that the location of the school (Brats N Cuties) shown in the downward right hand side corner of the map, is in the residential colony which adds to its accessibility.

Brats N Cuties largely provides five major programmes. Keeping children's age as a marker these programmes have devised, where similar age group children are enrolled under a particular programme. A short description of the programmes is as follows:

- **Toddler's programme** which is also titled as "the beginners" meant for children of 18 months. The activities include oral interaction, recitation of rhymes with actions, dance, listening to stories, nature walk and yoga with other playing activities. Various developmentally

appropriate learning materials for gross motor play (swings and slides, stuffed toys) ; fine motor play (puzzles, toys, stacking objects); imagination and quiet play (doll items, kitchen sets, play food etc.) are also available for children. All this is added on with music and dance with creative art and exploration session which includes colouring, pasting tearing activities.

- **Two's programme** (pre-nursery) titled as "active and curious" which largely focuses on child initiated activities. As per the information given in the school's website it says that, the programme asserts to give children the right environment and the right stimuli for their growth. The morning-prayer which includes shloka chanting (Gayatri Mantra) and school prayer are the activities with which children are supposed to start their day. All the 22 children at school were enrolled for this programme.

- **Three's programme** also known as "The explorers". At this the typical day starts with morning-prayer which includes "Gayatri Mantra" followed by 'massive stage exposure to make children become more confident and stand out in the crowd' (as mentioned in the school's website). Also written work is taken at this stage which is followed by outdoor activities such as karate, tennis, pottery, splash pool etc. depending on the schedule.

- **Day care facility** which is called "The Nest" is open for children of 18 months to 12 years old. The timings which centre provide is from 8'o clock to 07:30p.m. Emphasizing its importance to working parents, the website added that "the day care work with minimal holidays to provide its quality service for working parents"[49]. Further mentioning about various activities at day care, one is that, "they try to create awareness amongst children towards society, respect for elderly, compassion for underprivileged and concern for wild life and nature are

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[49] With extended timings that is from half day care to full day and also during leave/ holidays, these institutionalized care mechanisms are in a way pushing away the family time.

some"[50]. Along with this the moral and value based education is also considered as an important part of curriculum. Special emphasis on personality development is placed which according to the school could be achieved by 'grooming social etiquette, table manners, English conversations'. No doubt the etiquettes, table manners and English conversations were integral part of children's training at the school. But the opportunities for socialization in the company of other children were partly restricted given the higher importance to discipline.

- **The Kaleidoscope** also called as "activity centre" meant for children of 04 to 12 years age group. The website mentions that, "the charm of an attractive personality is unparalleled. Not only does good grooming makes an individual socially acceptable, it opens doors to new opportunities of growth". So the idea behind activity centre is that children could fit into the (global) society by making children to learn the social rules (of talking, behaving etc.). Further the website adds that

> "…this programme promotes self-expression, good articulation and linguistic skills for harnessing the 'winning potential' in each child to set him above the crowd. It is a platform for formal grooming and to cater to the needs of students/children who opt for foreign universities. As it is important to groom them according to global larger picture about different traits (self-expression, linguistic skills, winning potential etc.) which are being valued according to global standards and a particular social class and thus it must be inculcated into children from the very beginning" (taken from website of Brats N Cuties).

Here one could sense the explicit goal of the school which in congruency with modernity and globalization. It emphasizes on 'competition', talking about 'winning potential' of the child, preparing the child to be able to survive in the society. The aggressive need of being a winner is put into children from early

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[50]Though these bigger aims were written in school's website but in actual there was a strict division of labor between helps, teachers and the administrative staff. The respect for elderly was replaced by very bureaucratic relationship in the hierarchical setting.

years itself. Also, the grooming referred in the above mentioned text as per global standards shows that children are indeed visualized as a part of global workforce who would be settling in foreign countries for their education, career and so on.

4.3. Brats N Cuties, Ramphal Chowk (Palam Extension) Branch: The map which is given below shows the spatial setting of the school. The physical space is utilized at the school in a particular way by assigning different rooms and corners for different set of activities. The area of school is 10766 square feet. As visible in the map below, there are two classrooms, one activity room, one lunch room and open area with garden was allotted for the school purposes. The front portion with reception (common for school and VCE), office 1 and 2, conference room along with the library are meant for conducting tasks related to VCE (Vishweshraiya College of Education).
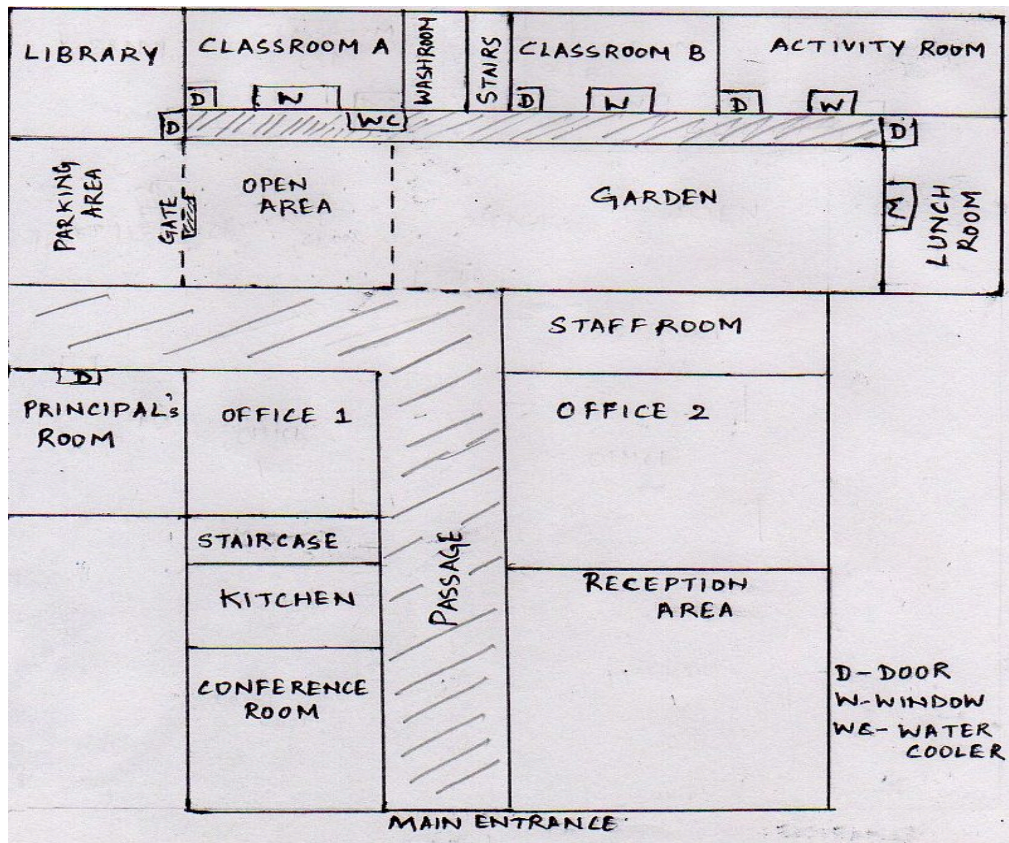
Map 3: Spatial arrangement of the playschool

In total there are 22 children (12 girls and 10 boys) enrolled for the playgroup and one child name Ishaan (name changed)[51] who had started his school in last week of November 2014. Admissions at the school are open throughout the year. All the children enrolled at the school are form nearby places i.e. from sector-07/ 08 Dwarka, Sadh Nagar, Raj Nagar, Palam Extension.

The staff at school included two teachers who are assigned for both the classes, three helps out of which two are assigned for each class respectively and one is given the duty with the cab driver of picking and dropping children from home. The branch coordinator and the receptionist are looking after both the school and VCE works. Also, three more (men) staff are there that are entirely looking after the VCE work and are not involved with the school. Two separate classrooms which accommodates 10/11 children each are supplied with small tables, chairs and also a white board. Classroom A is little smaller than classroom B and this might be the reason the seating arrangement of both the classes are made differently. Both the classes had essential supplies of colours, books, chart papers and other teaching aids. Inside classrooms there are numerous charts on vegetable, fruits, numbers (1-10), different shapes etc. i.e. classrooms were print rich and colourful.

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51 Ishaan stayed at the school for around 10-12 days only and later the principal asked his mother to send him to another (special) school. Since according to the school staff (including principal, teacher and the helps) Ishaan is differently abled but according to Ishaan's mother he is perfectly 'normal' (word used in conversation amongst teachers to denote that Ishaan is not like other kids). Ishaan never spoke in class, he just used to shout and make different kind of sounds. He used to like roaming in garden (outside their classroom) but since the school premises had CCTVs installed in every corner so children are expected to be seated inside classroom and not roam outside. Most of the times the help (aunty) allotted to the class could be seen firmly holding Ishaan no matter to what extent he would shout, cry, push and rebel against her. In the absence of his mother at times Ishaan used to go restless but when his mother used to arrive at school just by her sight he would go calm and quiet. While asking the teacher that, "why is she not letting him go to the garden area and play?" she replied that, "*iski mummy kahegi ki hamare bacche ko kyu nahi padhate khelne ke liye nahi bhejte school"* (his mother would complaint that why are you not teaching my child? We send him for studies and not for roaming or playing at the school). Later during the discussion one teacher mentioned that "*Ishaan needs extra care, need to be taught sign language which we don't know it's for his benefit if they admit him to another school. His mother is not able to accept that her child is not normal, he can't get settled in normal school he needs a special care".* The similar (traumatic) instances are a usual scene when a new child gets admitted to school.

Figure 1: Classroom A during Christmas celebration and Classroom B during regular activity

The lunch room is provided with small tables and chairs on which children could sit in groups and have their lunch. The meals are provided by an agency from outside, here at the kitchen they would prepare tea and snacks occasionally.

Figure 2: Lunch Room and Activity Room

Activity room is used for activities such as exercise, morning assembly etc. This room has three, two level beds along the length, in one side of the room meant for children who avail day-care facility. The walls of activity room are covered by colourful wallpaper showing rainbow, trees and jungle characters. Also, various stuffed toys are kept on beds but children are not supposed to touch or play with them.

The open play area and garden have three slides, one swing, two toy cars and two footballs. By looking around the school one could say that the physical space is clean and well maintained. The walls of corridor, activity room and school's main gate have depictions of Disney cartoon characters. The effect of commercialization could be sensed where the decorations on walls of the school are directly imported from a commercialized children's media.

The presence of Disney characters shows the reach of commercialized children's media inside the school. Usage of the Disney characters in the playschool in a way legitimizes the commercialization of children's media. Linn (2008: 35-36) shows that the fairy and princess tales makes young girl conscious of their skin colour, their body type which in turn make them worried about their weight and appearance. Also, the sexualized clothing which these characters depicts, distorts the self-image of girls (children) right from the childhood. Linn (ibid) marks this as the case of sex-violence.

Figure 3: Main entrance of the playschool Brats N Cuties

Figure 4: Showing various cartoon characters at the wall used as decoration

Both the classrooms, activity room and reception area are air-conditioned. The reason provided in the website for air-conditioning is, 'to pamper the kids', also having an air-conditioner is something which parents look for while selecting a school for their children. More than the environment for teaching learning say library or reading room for kids or various kinds of educational toys/puzzles, number of adequate and well paid staff, these fancy infrastructural fixes are given preference by the organization. This fancy show of infrastructure on which schools generally spend large amount of money at times able to attract parents' attention but might not guarantees quality learning. One of the parents told that

> "…have visited other playschools as well and later on narrowed it down to
> BNC since it has air conditioner in classrooms and has an open area for
> play unlike many other playschools in the locality which are running in
> closed buildings."

Here we can again imagine the underlying motive of 'pampering children' in air conditioned and closed environment divorced from the local weather, local realities (slums, child labour etc.) to fulfill the aim of preparing these children fit for adjusting in other countries in the wake of global era as a global citizen.

4.4. Continuities and Discontinuities: Ideals and Practice

This particular section would compare the information given about school/organization in their website and its practice at the particular (Palam extension sec-07 Dwarka) branch. It would not be out of place to mention that the information provided in the website covers large amount of idealistic things pertaining to how a school is (should be), the ideal environment (homely and secure) for kids, the ideal curriculum which is a mix of both academics as well as exploratory activities which generally parents seek for. But in some arenas things are practiced very differently at the school.

4.4.1. Conception and Aim: Brats N Cuties was conceptualized in November 2006 and got into operations in July 2008 with the 'primary aim to provide high quality care in a fun learning environment' (quoted from BNC website). Since

2006 with its main branch located at Sector-11, Dwarka the organization has evolved with 10 more franchises in the city (Delhi) as well as in NCR (National Capital Region). It has referred itself as 'a new generation learning laboratory' (ibid) indeed it is a laboratory only where for most of the time children are confined in the four walls of laboratory like classrooms. The organization of BNC claims to be the pioneer in the structured nursery education in which activities are planned according to chronological order and going from simple to complex, for the entire academic year. Though the quality care environment is there but at times with teacher's excessive intervention and instructions, even the play becomes monotonous. The environment provided is so secure that at times to ensure children's safety they are not allowed to run/jump etc. since running or jumping might hurt them. This way the excessive pseudo-care[52] in a manner is obstructing children's free-play. In figure 05 it could be seen that children are playing in teacher's guidance. Teachers act as permanent protector and helper to kids who help children in learning almost every act say eating, talking, sitting and even playing thereby making children dependent and obedient.

Both inside and outside the classroom, it is the teacher who directs children every now and then on various things like which activity to commence, which colour would children use while colouring activity, what and with whom to play and how to play etc. Children had minimal say in day to day activities at school. It is all pre-decided by the teachers. Also, play instead of being an independent and self-directed activity for children has become a teacher directed exercise. But despite such authority of teachers, kids also resisted in their own ways.

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[52]This care has been referred to as pseudo-care since in the name of caring, children's freedom and autonomy to move around, to play at will is curtailed and they are made to listen and follow the authorities (teachers/adults) all the time.

Figure 5: Morning session of outdoor play in teacher's guidance

As far as the **school's philosophy** is concerned it is mentioned that, "the bedrock of learning at "Brats N Cuties" is a combination of academics and activities with the freedom to explore, express, inquire, learn and understand" which is partly true in context of this particular branch. As the academics are there but the freedom to explore, express etc. is hardly given to children. The grip of discipline is such that children get less opportunity to move around at will, be it inside the class or outside in garden. Since, it is evident from figure 06 that inside classroom children are sitting into their respective places and are playing with the given toys. During free-play also children are instructed not to shout or talk much with each other and to be seated in their respective places only. If children need anything they are supposed to call the teacher rather than going and grabbing any toy or thing themselves (as it accounts for bad manners). The possibilities of associative and cooperative play are minimal whereas solitary play and teacher directed play are given more preference at the school.

Figure 6: 'Obedient children' sitting in their respective places, busy in free-play activity

Usually, the toys are distributed to children by their respective teachers. For most of the time, it is the teacher who is speaking, directing, instructing children on do's and don'ts leaving negligible time and space for children to talk amongst themselves and use the toys and puzzles on their own. The freedom to explore is just a face value thing which is not really provided to the kids. It is just an outside show. It is also observed that teachers are strictly instructed for not to leave children alone as one of the teacher made a remark that, "*school mein bacchon ko kuch ho jata hai toh sara blame hum par ata hai, parents complaint karte hain*" (if children got hurt during school hours then teachers only would be blamed, parents would question us). So in order to make sure that children are safe, teachers (or helps) have to be constantly present and directing children's activities.

Figure 7: Children playing in yet another adult's presence

But it is also interesting to note that these preschooler kids have their own mechanisms of resisting teacher's constant presence. At times crying, pretending that they are not listening, not answering as per teacher's will, slipping away from the spot or turning away are some of the tactics which children uses to get away or say to bypass teachers/ helps presence. Children are active agents and are constantly negotiating with the authoritative adults in their own ways. My presence as another authoritative adult was right away rejected by children initially. Children's disapproval of my presence often included non-responsive behaviour. It took me around 12-15 days to mingle with children at the school.

Apart from safety and excessive care as the reason for curtailing children's freedom, one could also argue that it is done in order to serve the essential purpose of school which is to start teaching children, to orient them as early as possible with rules and regulations of the school. As it is generally said, *"bacchon ko school mein baithna sikhate hain"* (playschools/ nursery schools are generally

meant for kids to learn how to sit in a classroom, how to behave, how to ask for permissions, and to make them able to follow teacher's instructions). While having interaction with a teacher she mentioned that, "it is important for kids to learn alphabets, counting as soon as possible since now they would be taking admission to nursery and if they would not know things beforehand then they would find it difficult in adjusting." Necessarily this shows that playschools are in a way preparing children for much important and grand objective that is for future education. Playschools thus could be regarded as a school readiness programme, which functions as a training ground preparing children to be able to survive in highly competitive education market.

4.4.2. Vision for Children: As per the details given in school's website 'children at school are made to acquire leadership qualities'. It is mentioned that "a child emerging from the portals of Brats N Cuties is set to be a winner in life and is groomed ideally to fit into a top of the line in formal school". This clearly shows that, to be a winner and having leadership qualities are rewarding and very desirable characteristics according to school. The preference for the same gets demonstrated both by teachers as well as by parents. New values of modern society (as discussed in Chapter 3) i.e. of leadership, being a winner, constantly competing to be in the top etc. are rewarding in new social order which is marked with capitalism. The similar culture and understanding finds its way in urban middle class living also. The school instead of questioning this ruthless race of competition is further reinforcing the belligerent will to be victorious even if it is at the cost of the failure of the other. Children are taught that everybody has to be a winner, a leader. Humble qualities of working together in a group, listening or learning from the other, helping each other are nearly outdated in the competitive environment of education. Another rule which school claimed to be following is that, "the child learns better when there is no pressure on him". But recently only in order to make children learn dance so that they could perform well at school's annual day function, children are subjected to immense pressure, are made to dance continuously (from morning to afternoon with minimal breaks in between).

Even teachers along with children had performance pressure since it is teachers' job to make children learn dance steps well. Once the choreographer also made a remark, "*maam bacchon ko khub practise karaya karo, stage pe accha perform karenge toh aapka hi naam hoga*" (madam make children practice as much as possible, if they would perform well at stage then you would be famed). During the annual day practice children went through such a pressure that some of kids didn't turn up at school for 03-04 consecutive days, many used to cry in morning while coming to school and a couple of children complained that they are not well, have pain in legs. During practice days, out of three hours at school (09:30 to 12:30) children used to get only half an hour for lunch break otherwise whole time they were supposed to be doing the practice for grand event that is annual day celebration. This is just a single incident to mention that how pressure exists in school's working in terms of parental and teacher's aspirations from the kids. Similar incidents happened during exercise i.e. pre taekwondo sessions as well.

4.4.3. Parent-Teacher Interaction: As per the information given in website, the school organizes various interactive sessions which includes orientation programmes, parenting seminars and parent-teacher meetings with parents and grandparents of children treating them as 'equal partners in their child's learning'. But during fieldwork it is observed that, there is no equal relationship between parents and teacher since the teacher and school staff holds authority and with the children sometimes even parents need to submit to it. For e.g. one teacher at school holds very strict notions on gender. In her class there is a girl child who is keeping short hairs. On the occasion of Parent Teachers Meeting (PTM) she ensured it to discuss with that child's mother that let her hair grow long as other children are calling her a boy and teasing in the class. Later, this teacher while discussing the matter with another teacher said that, "*maine toh uski mummy ko bol dia ki iska baal mat katao ab, wo ladki hai uski personality toh banne do,usko kajal laga ke bhejti hain, baal chhote hai earrings bhi nahi ek dum ladka bana ke rakha hai accha nahi lagta. Class mein bhi usko sab bacche bolte hain ye boy ke jaise dikhti hai, usko class mein sab ladka ladka chidhhaate hain.*" (I have asked

her mother that not to cut her hair shorter, let her personality grow as a girl, make her wear earrings. In class also other kids tease her saying she is a boy, it does not look good). Teachers and the school as part of institutional set up gave the expert assistance to parents and their children plus served as the ultimate authority even in most personal matters of children and their family. Also recognizing parents' participation, the website mentioned *"school works with parents as partners to give children 'roots' seeped in Indian culture and 'wings' to be global citizens."* Thereby putting the emphasis on Indian as well as global culture which further could be seen in the very workings of school- the way how activities (Gayatri Mantra in morning assembly) are being planned, ensuring conduct of proper table manners during lunch sessions, medium of instruction as English and so on.

4.4.4. Curriculum: BNC's curriculum is designed by in house research team called the 'nurture group' which is part of Nature Nurture Eduserv Pvt. Ltd. along with outsourcing agencies which are working in content developing. In their introductory note the nurture group asserts that, "their curriculum is based on the universal design for learning". And in the form of this curriculum they have "created a package of classroom resources and situations that can be used as desired to meet the needs of all [53] the children". The prescribed books at school include eight theme books, eight working books on the same theme and eight life skills books. The books consist of various themes which are: Head to toe (about body parts); Let's get ready (about clothes we wear); My home (on family and home); Big and Strong (on food); Take me around (on vehicles); Thank you so much! (on people who help us); Hooray! (on celebrations); Roar! Woof! Moo! (on animals). Life skills books are: mom- mom; I know how; safe at home; please; Ted learns to be safe; dirty hands (talks about washing hands before eating); ted on stage and who will help. Though the books are colourful but the pictorial representations are not gender sensitive and are indirectly strengthening

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[53]Here "all" certainly refers to the children from higher socio-income background or at times middleclass who can afford this education. Since one of the teacher told that there are various unfamiliar things nurture group has incorporated in the syllabus which these teachers are constantly replacing with more familiar ones for e.g. she added that, *"here we teach 'I' stands for 'ice cream' rather than 'iguana' which was there in syllabus."*

the gender stereotypes. As shown in figure 08 'girl' is characterized as wearing a frock, having long hairs with a necklace and mirror in hand whereas a boy with short hair, wearing pants and having briefcase in hand ready to go to office. Also, in figure 09 a strict distinction is shown in the clothing style of boys and girls.
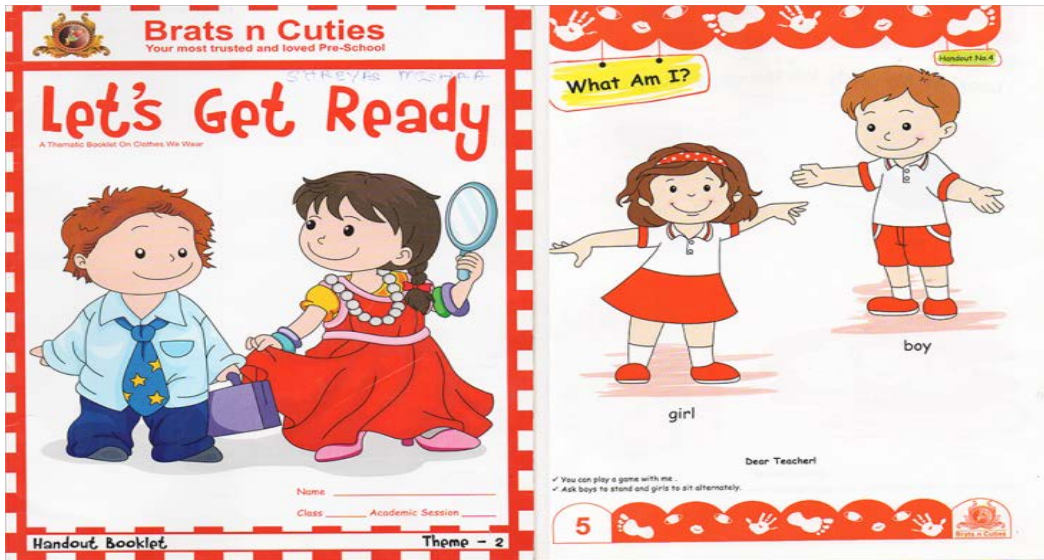

Figure 8: Stereotypical illustrations of boy and girl in one of the prescribed textbooks
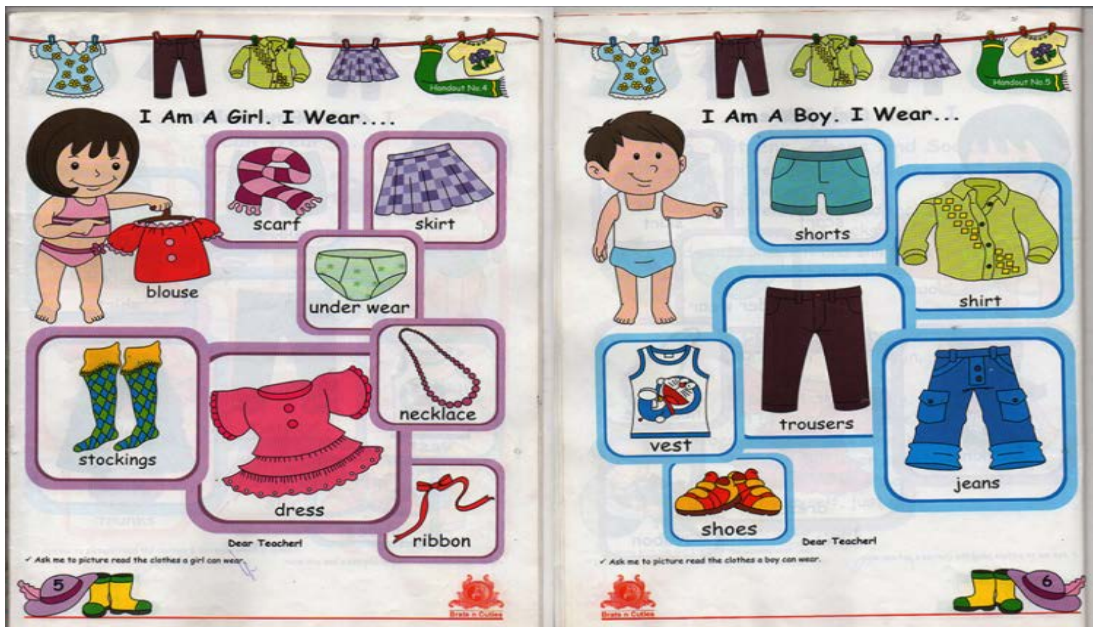
Figure 9: Distinct clothing styles indicated for boys and girls in one of the prescribed books

Also, other books dealing with the themes like the food, the vehicles, my home clearly portrayed middleclass and global culture through it that the family is going

to restaurant, eating burger and french-fries, going on a vacation with family in a car, in home having separate rooms for kids etc. All these examples implicitly reinforces the preference for certain kind of behaviour, actions, things to be desired as having a car is important in order to enjoy. Similarly, primary food items like chapatti and parantha, though managed to be part of the prescribed book but the examples of junk foods like noodles, burger, pizza, french-fries are over represented in the books. The whole fast-food culture thus penetrates through textbooks to children's minds. Also, the marketing of food which popularizes junk food and various soda drinks amongst children makes its easy way through various activities of the school say the food being served during birthday celebrations, school's picnic to Mc Donald's etc.

Figure 10: Sample of textbook illustrations reinforcing the idea of junk food

Figure 11: Birthday celebration at the school

Figure 12: Children, enjoying their meals after birthday and Christmas day celebration

Figure 13: Children at Mc Donald's restaurant as part of school's excursion programme

The figures 11, 12 and 13 are all reinforcing the idea of junk food, soda drinks which when served in school adds to its legitimacy. The illustrated food preferences, eating habits are making children to prefer packaged and processed food. School instead of questioning the marketing of packaged and processed food is itself reinforcing it through various activities.

Middleclass values, distinct lifestyle in some other forms are also getting legitimacy through the text books which are producing these coded messages and pictures making children to believe in a particular way of living and preferring one over the other. Figure 14 is such an example of selective class representations that implicitly induce the preference for a bigger house with separate rooms for each and every member of family wherein also separate spaces are marked for carrying out distinct works. The aspirations of good life, bigger houses and higher standards of living (but small i.e. nuclear families) that we have discussed in Chapter 3 (on urban middle class living) are making their way through children's textbooks.

Figure 14: Illustrations from the book 'My Home' showing different spatial settings marked for leisure time, for having meals, for relaxing and separate bedroom, washroom for family members; perpetuating the preference for lavish lifestyle.

4.4.5. Question of Language: Amongst 16 books (08 life skills and 08 theme books) there are only 15 rhymes in Hindi against 33 English rhymes with other pictorial representations which are also in English script. This over representation or usage of one language is clearly pointing towards the strong preference for English. The selection and representation of text in certain language gives a message that essentially one's own language- mother tongue (be it Hindi or any other regional language) is less important than the one which is used in books. This way denial of one's mother tongue brings the denial of one's existence and leads to a distorted formation of 'self'. As Advani (2009: 03) writes that through 'selective tradition' this way textbooks 'legitimizes a particular construction of reality'. She further argues that "role of English could be read as part of the hegemonic nature of linguistic imperialism" and she linked it with 'westernized global capitalism'. In this context the discussions from Chapter 2 and 3 can be referred where the role and importance of English has been discussed which essentially fulfills the agenda of making young children as part of future global workforce. While asking about the reason for keeping medium of instruction as English at preschool the principal mentioned that,

> *"if my location is a Hindi medium area that does not mean that a parent who does not know English, his child has no right to know English…the entire formulation of school is English based. Every parent wants their child to learn, to be well versed with English. In classroom bilingual teaching is there but English has to be kept as medium of instruction where out of 03 hours 02 hours must be in English so that a child picks up. Playschool segment and a brand like BNC is not a Hindi centred segment."*

It is learnt from the conversation with parents as well that they also want their children to be able to speak in English and that is the most sought after characteristic while selecting a (school) playschool. Since both according to parents and the school staff, to be able to speak or have conversation in English provides confidence to the child and of course it is one of the basic characteristic of a global citizen. In a country like ours, English is not just another language of

commerce or communication. It is essentially the language which defines power relation also along with being the language of market and international trade. The casually accepted link between modernity and English makes it most sought after language. The knowledge of English can be regarded as a kind of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1986). Our colonial history in combination with current globalized market economy has accelerated the craze amongst people for English language. Schools instead of breaking this relationship are further reinforcing the hierarchy of language and thereby creating a dual society. In current times the authenticity of English has become so grand that nowadays not to know English is read in terms of inviting failure. The knowledge of a person is often equated with his/her knowledge of English. But Anandalakshmy (1998: 284) questions this craze of English. According to her, English that children learn at school is not of much use in communication, but it rather is a badge of social status. She makes a remark that, "…however inadequate Humpty Dumpty and Jack 'n' Jill may be as topics for communication, the hope that this knowledge will ultimately lead to socio-economic status is held strongly by Indian parents" (ibid). Overruling the recommendation of National Curriculum Framework(NCF) 2005 on three language formula till primary level (ibid: 37), Learning Without Burden Report (1993) and ECCE policy (2013) which have stated that children's early education should be in their mother tongue, the irrational desire of making children learn English at the cost of their mother tongue might lead to deleterious effects. But through my experience at this playschool, it is observed that the teachers make it a point that children learn to greet teachers and their friends by saying "thank-you", "Welcome" or asking for their belongings (water bottle, workbook, colour etc.) in English all through the day and parents are also happy that their children have started speaking English by catching some words and phrases.

4.4.6. Craze for Technological Tools: Tablet based learning is another special feature of BNC which is supported by the understanding that 'it helps to keep our kids abreast with the latest trends in education' (website BNC). This branch does not rely heavily on technological tools the whole teaching learning is happening

through books, oral methods stories and through colouring pasting activities etc. But at the main branch of BNC, tablet based learning is very important part of day to day activities[54]. Nowadays it is this fancy packaging which appeals to people rather than the actual substance of learning. With this tablet based learning the entire commerce is involved. Suppliers of gadgetry material are replacing books with their gadgets and in turn making money. Parents have to chip in extra money for buying these electronic gadgets. The emerging technological comforts are causing an illusion of learning. Now techniques of finding information, various skills related to it have acquired more importance than the actual critical understanding and reasoning. Now it is the technically efficient consciousness which is replacing the reflexive and imaginative mind (Pathak 2009: 47). The whole technology mania is making children dependent and dormant. Even from preschools now this dependency has been injected into kids. This gets heightened with the anxieties of parents who think that without technology their children might lag behind. This excessive dependence on technology right from the early age is rather hampering children's motor development where instead of going out and playing children are spending more time on video games, computers etc. Here form our previous chapter discussion we can recall Linn's (2008: 32-38) argument where she critiques the irrational dependency on technology which is increasing 'screen-time' and thereby hampering their opportunities of creative play. Linn further mentions that children are deprived of 'quiet-time' which is important for imaginative reflection. The similar obsession with English language and technology resulted in one more action where during free play a speaker is kept in the corridor near garden area on which various rhymes like Baba black sheep, rosy lips, twinkle-twinkle etc. are being played. All the rhymes played are

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54 It came out in conversation with one teacher that the main branch is more consumerist as compared to this (Ramphal Chowk) branch. She mentioned that, *"all sort of gadgets and many more useless activities are being conducted there since adding to more number of activities means one can charge more fees. Also, the children going to that particular branch are very different (belong to upper middle class) and their parents won't mind spending thousands of rupees on useless activities".* This particular teacher emphasized on the commercial aspect which many schools employ to charm parents and making them spend more and more money on buying various commodities and services which are of not much use. She reiterated that, "*at the main branch parents throw money and they want to see result in terms of meaningless activities, projects, air-conditioned classrooms etc."*

in English. Children when inside the classroom have the teachers talking for most of the time and when they get some time for playing outside then the speaker strikes out the possibility of 'quiet-time' or say conversation with other children for children.

Figure 15: 'Technologically aware' children posing for a photograph

4.4.7. Pedagogical Issues and Overburdened Teachers: Monthly themes and projects are also a highlight of BNC's curriculum. Several themes and project say like save electricity, save tigers, save water; about evaporation etc. were part of the curriculum which included making charts related to the particular theme and putting it in reception area for display also at times using the same for discussion in class. But these fancy charts and monthly projects in a way are just adding a burden on the teachers since teachers are the ones making the charts instead

making it a joint affair and involving children in making charts. The discussion around the themes and projects is such that it just adds up to the burden for the teachers (employed mothers)[55] that after doing a particular workbook they are supposed to discuss monthly projects and particular theme also. For e.g. when explaining about evaporation one of the teacher used a very fancy chart which she has prepared for display board at reception area but while discussing it with class she told to children that, "*apko pata hai rain kaise hoti hai? sunlight se water hot hoke upar clouds mein chala jata hai aur fir rain hoke neeche aa jata hai*" (Do you know how rain comes? It is through sunlight which is heating up the water which goes to clouds and then from clouds it falls off) and at this children had lots of question "*paani ko upar kaun leke jata hai? Roz paani upar jata hai? Kaise jata hai?*" (who is taking water to the clouds?, is water going daily up? How do it goes?). Some children even asserted that they have seen water going to the clouds. Later on the teacher then wrapped up the chart and kept it aside without engaging children into discussion and started with the revision of alphabets, fruit name and counting. The hurry of completing the prescribed books, monthly projects and themes along with annual day preparation left no time for the teacher to entertain children's queries and one after another the topics are just covered in rush.

Various other facilities include school transport, doctor's visit twice in a year and celebration of various national and cultural festivals round the year. Ideally, according to the school's understanding celebrating various festivals (national and cultural) inculcate social bonding between children whereas for teachers celebrating various festivals means an extra and added burden of preparing charts and decorative items. As only the teachers are supposed to make decorative items

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[55] As mentioned before that there were only two teachers at school. Both of these are mothers who are always caught up between familial and professional responsibilities trying hard to manage their work life and family life. Also, the shortage of staff at school with minimal leave/ holidays made these teachers work for extra hours and in turn reducing their family time (as discussed about employed mothers in Chapter 3). But these teachers despite of being overburdened and exhausted were trying their best to provide fullest and quality care to children at BNC.

(hangings, charts etc.) and do the decorations so these celebrations are just part of a job for them and not much. Amongst the unique features of BNC, *Edudrama* is one. It is the dramatization of stories by teachers. This indeed a very important pedagogic tool which could be used by the teachers but here teachers are relying heavily on textbooks which made even story books to be read line by line. This in turn loses on its narrative structure and the story is just left only with the moral lesson which says one should wash hands before eating, wear headgear before going for cycling etc. In a similar fashion a special story telling session was also conducted at school (see section 4.4.10).

4.4.8. Security Arrangements: The school has its own security arrangements with a centralized CCTV security recording system which provided a mobile view of 24*7 live feed of the school to parents. As discussed in chapter 3 about anonymous life at urban centres these security systems then help in making a secure boundary of schools (like other places say residential enclaves/ malls etc.) where children could be kept safe. Conversation with parents have also registered that along with the open area at school that is the garden, it is this security arrangement that made them to choose this particular school. Every corner of the school (including classrooms, activity room etc.) is under constant surveillance. Even children have this knowledge that the principal and their parents are watching them when they are at school.

4.4.9. Taboo Topics: Fieldwork registered certain issues that are not discussed at all (in open) since it is considered 'bad' so are smartly slipped under the carpet. Some of such issues about which I have gathered the details are possible because of my presence during those instances otherwise it would have been difficult to record as they are never been discussed openly ever. Once during morning assembly a girl child hit a boy. At this one of the teachers instructed her not to fight and asked her to apologize she told that, "*hug him, say sorry and don't fight again*". After hugging the girl also kissed the boy on his lips, at this sight both the teachers got angry and shouted, "*no…don't do that*" and said, "*Santa will punish*

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you…very bad girl". After this incident the assembly resumed but there happened no discussion about what went so wrong why is it bad? And the girl was equally puzzled since she has followed the teacher and asked apology, as the teacher directed. Another instance is that mother of a girl child visited the school. She wanted to have a talk with class teacher but the teacher was not available, then the mother whispered something to the receptionist. Later the receptionist called another teacher in person and told the instance to her. During PTM interaction also I tried to ask about the matter from the mother but she just told that, "*bacche class mein gandi baatein kar rahe the teri shaadi iske saath hogi*" (that children were talking in class that you would get married to him/her). Later the class teacher was being told about the incident by another teacher that, "*usne apni mummy ko gandi baat boli*" (the child has told some bad things to her mother). Afterwards in bits and pieces it was found that the child had a query about genitals and the difference which boy's and girl's body have. This could have probably originated from the fact that children (both boys and girls) go to washroom with the helps (aunty) and maybe then they have confronted something. Also, the contradiction is that in very first theme book (Head to Toe) children are taught about body parts but these things were not part of the discussion at all.

These two instances are quite common since children nowadays are exposed to media which is showing these images, kissing scenes etc. and may be from there the child has picked up. In another incident this, curiosity about one's body is natural and in the growing phase when people are talking about body parts but some essential and important things are slipped under the carpet leaves children wandering about that. In fact, we as adults are also not taking these queries in healthy manner and treating it like a taboo. With growing cases of child-abuse, children must be taught about these things in some or other manner since in institutionalized and impersonal set up of playschools these young children are in the company of total strangers and in this situation it becomes important for them to know to understand about their own bodies. At school even teachers also right

away rejected the incident or any possibility of discussion on the matter. At this stage child is learning about body so it becomes very important to discuss these things with children. Instead of being ruthlessly judgemental we as adults have to accept and cater to these curiosities in a healthy manner. This kind of straight denial in a way creates a blockage to children's mind where the curiosity is left unattended and later it might lead to a distorted or partial understanding about one's body.

4.4.10. Special Story Telling Session: For the special "story-telling" session all the children gathered in classroom A (which is already small as compared to other rooms). Before storytelling both the teachers were revising previous day's activities (about different modes of transport) and rhymes with children. Then there arrived two resource persons, first they asked names of a couple of children then they abruptly started discussing about animals with the help of a picture book (about dog, cat, elephant) meanwhile the electronic speaker was placed on teacher's table from which different sounds of animals moo/meow etc. were coming. At this, children got so amazed that rather than listening to the story almost everybody came in front and wanted to touch and hold the speaker. At this sight both the teachers were trying hard to make children seated in their respective place. After sometime when children got seated then the resource persons started with their story which was in English with occasional sentences and words in Hindi. It is only when the teachers asked questions in Hindi children were able to tell but otherwise majority of children were distracted by the speaker rather than being interested in the story. The story discussed was about birds and animals in jungle it told that 'owl is nocturnal' and to this both the resource persons halted the story in between and asked children to repeat the word after them. Children repeated "nocturnal" 3/4 times and then they proceeded with the story without telling its meaning. When in between the teachers were asking any question in Hindi, children appeared quite participative and answering, for e.g. the teacher asked what do we do from our nose? One child said, *"isko aise karte hain"* (through actions the child was showing that we clean our nose with finger). Later

on after completing the story, it was asked that, "how was it?" at this one boy (sitting in front) said that, "*mujhe kuch bhi samajh nahi aya*" (I did not understand anything). To this the teachers just smiled and carry forwarded their next activity which was 'colour the boxes'. Children were given worksheets to colour in which every child was supposed to colour the boxes red and blue or green and teacher gave instructions to children in English, "you have to colour the top box with red colour and the down (bottom) box with blue to which some children followed and others coloured both the boxes with same colour." Then teachers collected worksheets and resource persons then left the class. Later after the class dispersed while discussing about the story telling session it came out that both the teachers acknowledged that the session was not of much use since it was majorly in English and she further added that,

> *"most of the children don't speak English, they don't follow it easily it's just sit down, stand up they understand...so for them a full sentence, a full paragraph in English is a lot...it would be helpful if the story would have been a combination of both Hindi and English and secondly children were not familiar with the sound-box so it also distracted them"*

But acknowledging the importance of English another teacher mentioned that,

> *"this way only children would learn and it has to start with preschool because at this age they will pick up easily and once they enter into formal school there medium of instruction would be totally English and teacher would not be able to give much time on each child as class strength is usually more in formal schools as compared to preschool."*

It is clearly evident that the playschools are understood as a preparing ground for children for further (formal) schooling and making them capable enough to survive in highly competitive (educational) world.

4.4.11. Profit Driven and Impersonal Approach of Institutionalized Care Mechanisms: As we have discussed in Chapter 3 also that how these global child

care chains are profit driven, it is partly true in context of this franchise also where for 22 children only 02 teachers are appointed which in turn made it difficult at times for them to provide individual care to each and every child. In the name of efficiency, quality of children's care is compromised. Because of the shortage of staff these teachers had to stay back after school hours also at times they had to carry their work home- of making worksheets, monthly projects and theme charts or other decorative items at home. As far as the principal is concerned according to her the daily workings are efficiently managed at school and with (only) 22 children she does not feel the need to appoint more staff. Even I, despite being there for my research work, was supposed to conduct classes (when one or the other teacher was on leave). I was also supposed to stay back there full time with teachers and assist them in various works say making decorative items for Christmas, new year celebration, lohri celebration, various charts for PTM meeting, monthly theme and projects, conducting dance sessions with children etc. It would not be wrong to say that during my fieldwork, I was totally absorbed in the school's workings as another staff there. Even knowing that I am conducting research there,[56] noticing my long working hours and stay at the school with teachers, at times parents used to ask me that, "*have you joined (started a job) here?"* Along with the teachers I myself have also experienced the professional demands from working at a playschool.

This efficient mechanism of Mc Care has adverse effects on children as the strict timetable is such that before and after lunch all the children together are taken to washrooms where they are supposed to 'pee' (urinate or defecate) on command. This process of 'joint pottying'[57] (also discussed by Manne 2005: 292) though is efficient from the point of view of us adults but has not much to offer to children. Children might have gone through many experiences of humiliation where in front of strangers (the helps) and their friends (other children) they are made to

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[56]Along with taking permission from school for conducting fieldwork, parents were also informed about the research during PTM meet and also before then by personally meeting (in the school premises when they used to pick or drop their child) in order to obtain their consent.
[57] At day cares also various activities like giving feed to children, nap time etc. are all pre-decided and all children are made to eat, sleep regardless of they are feeling sleepy or hungry.

urinate and also their nappies were changed by stranger aunties- 'the helps' in the school premises. This exercise was not less than a terror for kids where in front of a stranger they are undressed. Children in the name of efficiency thus are attended at the school in half-hearted manner might develop the feeling of mistrust (as Erikson has mentioned, referred in Chapter 2) since they are not attended properly when they need it. Similar instances of efficiencies and saving the energies of care-givers, could also be registered during lunch break when all the children in the lunch room could be seen struggling to have their lunch (with spoon, forks) on their own. During this time if any child is not able to manage the spoon or fork and his/her food fells down from the table, it then makes the child recipient of scolding and soft negative remarks from the adults (i.e. helps and teachers respectively). These instances can also bring the feelings of shame and guilt in children which further might disturb their development and healthy self.

Figure 16: 'Independent children' having lunch on their own

4.4.12. Marketing Strategies of these 'Care Shops': This playschool unlike other business organization is following certain marketing strategies. January onwards almost every week some or other information brochure or pamphlet of one or other 'global' school was given to children. The school has tie-ups with further formal schools which offer discounts if any child from Brats N Cuties takes admission to those particular schools. About the fee-structure even the principal has admitted that since they are new in the market so they cannot keep fee charges high once they would establish a 'market-value' then gradually can add on the facilities and increase the fee-structure. Adding on to this she mentioned that the main branch of Brats N Cuties is managing to get admissions despite high fee since they are providing facilities like tablet-based learning, kid's gym. Further she added that, *"parents are also happy to spend if they see their children are getting these many facilities"*. This particular branch has a tough competition (since it is their first academic year) with other playschools in the locality. So, in order to know why other schools are getting new admission and why parents are not approaching to this particular school, often teachers are given an added task. Teachers are supposed to extract information on what are the added facilities which other schools (in the locality) are providing so that this school can add some more facilities in order to attract new-admissions. This school apart from the official website also has its own 'Facebook' page where children's photographs of doing various activities are uploaded.

4.5. My 'First Encounter' with the Playschool:

Figure 17: The passage from main gate towards classrooms and Reception Area

On entering the school premises, first sight would go at big table kept at reception. Alongside the sofa and table are kept properly. Whole area is so clean and well lit. Then proceeding towards the school through a passage one could enter in the open area where different kinds of toy cars, swings and slides are kept for children. One gets tempted to go and play with the colourful and appealing toys. From outside the atmosphere appeared lively at school. After entering the class one could see that all children are sitting in their respective places and are listening to the teacher[58]. The unusual thing was that all the kids were in proper school uniform (winter's uniform included trouser and sweatshirt) and alongside one wall everybody's bag were kept which again looked exactly same. Since

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[58]Thinking of a 'playschool' one could construct a very lively picture of children running around, talking to each other, playing here and there in groups. But with BNC this was not the case. This playschool appeared relatively rigid. The traditional notion of discipline was accepted uncritically here. At BNC discipline meant that children must be clinging to their respective places no matter what the urgency is. Even for drinking water, having food, going to washroom children must ask their respective teacher and wait for their permission. Inside as well as outside classroom it is the teacher (or in her absence other adults like helps or administrative staff at school) who would speak and direct children's activities and even their 'play'. These rigidities in the name of discipline shattered the larger philosophies of school which have been verbalized in their website information (also discussed on previous section of the chapter).

everything from the books, bags and uniform are all provided by the school. At this very moment one could relate the disciplinary practices of schooling, even at a playschool level where all the children are supposed to come in proper uniform. This very rule is somewhere appropriating the differences that children could have brought up to the school and added up to the diversity of school. Here one could relate very well with the idea of school's underlying agenda of producing 'BNC product' where each and every child looks so similar, similarly dressed up, using same bags etc. and maybe by one or two year of rigorous training (schooling)[59] they might also acquire a new manners and thinking- 'thinking like a global citizen' but divorced form one's own community or locality. BNC product then would be similar to some product from a factory resembling assembly line where everybody is thinking alike without the criticalities and reflexivity, they are just following what is being said to them.

4.6. A Typical Day at the Playschool:

The school timings for children are 09:30 a.m. to 12:30p.m., whereas for teachers it is from 08:30a.m. to 02:30p.m.Teachers are supposed to arrive at least an hour before children. Also the helps at school are supposed to clean the classrooms and make necessary arrangements (putting table and chairs properly) before the arrival of children. Usually after 9'o clock children starts coming. Both the teachers have to be present near the gate or in the passage area to receive children (in morning). And they are instructed that they are supposed to wish children "good-morning" by taking their names for e.g. *"Good-morning Ishaan*" so that children would learn these manners (of wishing teachers/parents with a smile).There is not any harm in teaching these manners to children but keeping it as an imposed part of daily routine for both teachers as well as children is of not much use. Teachers (working mothers) no matter how exhausted they are but still they are supposed to put up a plastic smile and receive the child in morning. Similarly, children are

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[59]Here training is used deliberately in order to imply schooling. As it is a measured and calculated form of training, of behaving in a particular way, the mannerisms etc. which are imposed on children at school.

also going through the pain of separation where their parents are leaving them away from the cozy comfort of home, in early (winter's[60]) morning itself, in the company of stranger adults. Children are then in no mood to have conversation with the teacher or to receive her 'good-morning' wishes. This makes the entire exercise superficial and of not much use. Here the traces of Mc Donaldised system (as referred in Chapter 3 also) could be seen where these free-flowing exchanges of superficial wishes passes away without even touching one. After the arrival, children's school bags are supposed to be kept in the open area or near the entrance only as it was the duty of helps to keep those bags to respective classrooms[61]. Children those who usually arrive 15 or 20 minutes before commencing the morning assembly could manage to get time for playing in the garden area as sharp at 09:30a.m.is the time allotted for morning assembly[62]. For morning assembly children are supposed to gather in activity room where in circle formation everybody stands (including both the teacher). Children then are instructed for closing eyes, joining their hands and getting ready for the prayer. Though many children used to keep eyes wide open, at times they could be seen talking amongst themselves, playing with handkerchief and saying hello to each other. But when the teacher starts the *Gayatri Mantra* children could be heard following the teacher. Though it was difficult for children to learn and pronounce the chants but still they managed to murmur the chants after the teacher. Once

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[60]The fieldwork was conducted in the months of December, January and February which marks the coldest months of Delhi's winter season.

[61]Once I took children's school bags and was taking it towards classroom then one of the teacher instructed to me that, *"leave it there only, aunty would keep the bags in classroom"*. The hierarchized division of labor was very much part of school's daily workings as the works like keeping chairs properly into classroom, serving food to children, taking them for washing hands and other similar jobs were done by helps only and (strictly) not by teachers. Again here referring to school's website information about their day care programme that, "*it helps children in having awareness towards society, respect for elderly and compassion for underprivileged",* in this context it all got shattered where the 'helps' at school are being disrespected, given menial jobs, less salary and strict division of labor marks their different zones even at work place.

[62]School timings were same throughout the year. Though many parents were demanding that at least for winters school timings should be relaxed a little but the branch coordinator mentioned that, *"school timings are decided by the main branch only and nothing can be done about that".* This very instance shows that how global care chains work, where under the highly hierarchized and bureaucratic settings franchises don't have even the freedom to relax or alter the school timings, even when demanded by parents. This ultimately effected children and added to their miseries.

asking the teacher about the importance of Sanskrit chant she told that, *"I do not think that children understand its meaning but because we are directed to conduct assembly this way so we are doing accordingly"*. This shows that teachers themselves have not much authority to carry out things on their own as one of the teacher (while during casual conversations) remarked that, *"since our school is working as a franchise so we do not have much things to plan it's all pre-decided be it the curriculum, school outings or anything, our ideas or suggestions are hardly incorporated."* Morning assembly includes stretching exercise, jumping etc. and reciting different rhymes with actions. Usually from 10'o clock onwards the classes commences with attendance and for Class A the lunch timings are from 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. so after half an hour of class interaction children are taken for washing hands and to washrooms and then to lunch room. After finishing the lunch again children are taken for washing hands and then left in the garden area for playing. In the meantime class B children are called for lunch. After lunch half an hour is allotted for free-play following which again children go to their respective classes and further the remaining activity for the day is carried on. During free play a speaker is kept in the corridor i.e. outside classroom on which various rhymes (Baba black sheep, rosy lips, twinkle-twinkle etc.) are being played. All the rhymes played are in English. At 12:30 p.m. children are taken to the reception area and made to be seated quietly, from there they are handed over to respective guardians. After this both the teachers discuss that particular day's happenings then plan and make worksheets for the following day. Also, if any festival is approaching then they are supposed to make decorative items or charts for various themes and projects. They are not supposed to sit idle. Meanwhile after children leave both the helps are supposed to clean the classrooms, activity room and lunch room.

4.7. Desirability and Necessity of Playschools: From Parent's Point of View

During interaction with parents (mostly mothers as usually it was their duty to drop and pick their child at school) asking about 'the need of sending such a small child to the school' invited various responses, some of which are:

"*Schools mein agar aapne prenursery kara lia hai toh nursery mein they are very active. Ab jo hai system bada fast chalta hai, agar hamne pre-nursery nahi karaya toh we are lagging behind*"(it is a general thinking that if a child has done pre-nursery then he/she would be participating actively once they enter nursery. Nowadays system is very fast, if child has not done pre-nursery he/she is lagging behind). This shows the amount of anxieties which parents have nowadays. Considering our highly competitive education system, parents want their children to be well prepared before entering into the formal schools, so that they would be able to survive longer. This educational race[63] which is marked with such a constant performance pressure is making children vulnerable (also discussed in chapter 2 and 3).Also, it is not only an imposition form outside rather parental aspirations which play a major role in establishing the importance of an institution like a 'playschool'. Parents want their children to be able to speak in front of strangers, preferably in English. This obsession with a foreign language rather English again could be considered as one of the factor adding to the popularity of English medium (play) schools. With this counting on the benefits of a playschool another parent added that,

> "*benefit toh bohot saare hain school bhejne ke bacche ko shuru se hi ek line dena ki educated ho unki routine wise kaam ho. Baad mein toh school join karna hi hai toh agar thoda pehle chala jaye kuch seekh lega, aas pados mein bhot bacche nahi hain, kisi ke ghar bhi bhejne mein dar lagega toh*

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[63]Race could be interpreted in terms of competition which our education system is posing to children. It could be recorded in day to day conversation where at school, teachers want their children to out shine in the crowd, parents want them to be the best, about being able to get entry in one of the 'best' schools, then surviving through it with good grades. This in turn is making it mandatory to start as early as possible, without wasting any time.

isiliye school bhej dete hain, school mein at least safe toh rehta hai baaki baccho ke saath aur seekh bhi raha hai, khel bhi raha hai enjoy bhi ho rahi hai sab kuch ho jata hai" (from starting only playschool helps in disciplining, the child is able to work according to the routine. And later the child has to go to the school anyway then why not start early? Also, in neighbourhood there are not much children of his/her age and you cannot send your child to someone else's home also as it is not safe nowadays. So at least at the school child is safe and gets to mingle with other children also).

Also referred in Chapter 3 that how the anonymous urban life, diminishing trust is making parents to opt for safe and secure service results in going for these institutionalized care mechanism. One more parent recalling his childhood added that,

> *"in earlier times it (sending a child to playschool) was not necessary because most of the times it was a joint family and there was plenty of area to play as nobody is staying in flats, everybody is staying in own house with a courtyard there would be other children in the house itself. But in Delhi like city they don't see any other person other than their parents in their house."*

And further added that, *"now all over India nuclear families so children are familiar with two three faces only. In school they get a chance to mingle with others."* This added another dimension to it apart from educational importance that playschools provide a safe, secure environment to children. Referring to the mode of living where nuclear families are on rise, living in gated apartments having minimal or no interaction with the neighbours, absence of trustworthy neighbourhood, and lack of playground in vicinity are some of the reasons which compelled parents to send their child to playschool (discussed at length in Chapter 3).

During PTM interaction, a mother of 03 year old child mentioned that she is happy with the progress of her child and she proudly told that at home they taught their child English words first and later only gave the exposure to Hindi words. The mother is giving tuition to other kids in locality and during that time her child usually sits with her she told that, *"being in the company of other kids and in educational environment at home my child even learnt the table of 2 and he doesn't like to play or do colouring but he likes to study."* Here it is apparent that even at young age like 03 years old still the preference is being given to studying rather than to play. The mother is happy with her child's accelerated growth of learning. Maybe in order to earn a good boy/girl image children are needed to be (seen) studying and not playing.[64]

Even the teacher at school also recognized the increasing competitive environment and pressure at kids but she also demonstrated her (and other parents') helplessness against increasing competition. She told that, *"nowadays pressure is there both on parents as well as on kids. The environment is so competitive that if you don't push your child he/she would lag behind"*. As discussed in chapter 2 that how our society has accorded immense importance to the school as a sole knowledge giving agency. It is believed that without the school there cannot be any learning or rather it is the school or institutionalized set-up which one needs in order to gain legitimacy for his/her learning. School's certification for further admission in good school has become so important that even from the early age children are supposed to go to playschool/ school. In our school conscious rather school dependent society where even parental consciousness has also been absorbed by the institutional authority making parents to transfer that same pressure and anxiety to their kids right from the small age.

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64 Usually 'studying' is understood as something in which textbook is involved as the mother emphasized that, *"ye toh hamesha kitaab lekar baitha rehta hai, book padhna isko bahut accha lagta hai"*(he is always sitting with books, he likes to read books a lot).Play here includes any activity in which prescribed (school) books are not involved. And play generally holds lower importance in comparison to study (Anandalakshmy 1998: 272).

Giving example of a reality show named Dance India Dance the teacher further added that, *"in that also children do so well even that require training similarly for children to learn anything they need training"*. About hurrying of children's learning Elkind (discussed in chapter 2) has also mentioned that partly it is the media also which is reinforcing and projecting the 'super-kid' image of children and making them go through various formal trainings right from the early age be it swimming, dancing, singling or academic training. Similarly, Linn (2008) has also argued that it is necessarily the media which is portraying that 'kids are getting older younger' (ibid: 34), referring to the practice that from very young age they are getting exposure to various kinds of media images, sexualized clothing, violent video games etc. Not only children rather parents are also caught in the trap of 'super-kid' psychology where referring to media and various reality shows now parents want their child to excel in many fields. The teacher further added that,

> *"If suppose you got transferred to any other city and you want to put you child in some school for class 2 or 3 then the child would be needed to pass the test and if he/she fails then you won't be able to get your child through. So by any means you have to make sure that your child passes the test."*

This temporariness of urban living (discussed in Chapter 3) where parents are constantly migrating from one place to another and the mandatory examination and interviewing rules are making it mandatory for children to go through early training. Later, referring to mandatory dance practice sessions for annual day the teacher reflected on the issue that,

> *"...day by day expectations of parents are rising that their child should be perfect in dance, in academics in extra (co-curricular) activities like painting, the child should be able to sing in front of huge audience and then from school authorities you have to make sure that each and every child is participating in every activity. So if you like or not you have to pressurize children."*

In the similar tone another teacher registered her helplessness by responding that, *"it is a situation from which one cannot escape."* She told that, *"nowadays, parents are busy, are giving less time to children but they have money to spend so in that situation playschool plays a very important role."* As discussed in chapter 3 that for working parents, money is not the problem, it is this abundance of money which has made playschools an easy option for working parents to rely on for their children's care. These parents generally belong to new middle class, which have a different set of aspirations for their children, for good life, etc. As while discussion with the principal regarding the group or people, whom do the school provides services? The principal told that they are basically providing facilities keeping in mind the middleclass. She further added that,

> *"...because our infrastructure is not that lavish, we are targeting the middle class because normally preschools are charging 3200/- per month and initial one-time payment (OTP) is around 25000/- and above but we are charging less, our fee is 2000/- per month and OTP is somewhere around 15000/- thus I can say that we are catering to a segment which wants to educate their child, want to do it properly but not in a lavish manner."*

About the fee structure at main branch she added that, *"at main branch it is double"* About her school's location she mentioned that, *"initially we did hike the fee but in this locality it would not work, also we are a new school it takes time"* Lastly she made a remark that, *"initially you are beggars not choosers, so slowly and gradually you can put your terms and conditions"*. This clearly shows the marketing strategy which school is following that once establishing its status amongst neighbourhood and by adding to the facilities the school later can also charge high fee. The school's website also reads that it 'basically serves to working parents living in nuclear families', which is complementary to the principal's words. Further the website mentions that, 'at school they provide a complete package which an ideal mother would want to inculcate in her child and a working father would have loved to have them in his children'. Here close link could be sensed between child's education and good-parenting. The idea of

sending a child to a particular playschool is being idealized in terms of perfect parenting and setting the roles of ideal mother and working father. Implicitly, it is encroaching to ideal mother image which demands a mother's active participation in consuming such services (as discussed in Chapter 3).

The above data which I have tried to generate from my short engagement at a playschool has helped me in complementing my understanding about the growing popularity of 'playschool' and 'school' as modern institutions, the on-going transformations in modern societies leading to changing nature of families, work, lifestyle, preferences regarding career and education and the changing landscapes in urban centres. The central research question with which I began my exploration was that, 'are playschools causing an added burden and putting heavy pressure on the children? With months of engagement at playschool I understood closely that there is still the ambiguity attached with which we understand 'playschools'. Necessarily the terminology makes us relay that the playschools are for kids to enjoy, to play there in company with other children. But as per my fieldwork experience that was just 'a part' of the reality which has much more things to it. To me playschool at times resembled more like a formal school where children are supposed to follow certain rules, it had fixed timings for lunch, play (also fixed interval of nap for children availing day-care[65]). Even children's play was directed by the teachers. Instead of free-play it was more or less like any structured-activity with added instructions on do's and don'ts.

Added anxieties of parents and teachers to prepare kids for grand project of future formal education has made them to pressurize kids in matters of their learning English, in teaching various co-curricular activities say dance, painting, singing

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[65]It was found during pre-fieldwork exposure with another branch of BNC (at Lajpat-Nagar, Delhi) where at day-care, children were supposed to take a nap of fixed interval, regardless of the fact that they are feeling sleepy or not and were supposed to wake up at call, for the following dance session, no matter if they still want to sleep more or not. Being in a structured setting of an institution, children had minimal choice to sit back and relax or to refuse to take part in one or other activity. Either actively or passively, with half-heartedness children had to comply with the rules of the 'playschool'.

etc. in order to make them all-round 'super-kids' who would then have an edge over other kids (trained from other schools/organizations) and would hereby these means can secure their chances of being successful in the highly competitive education environment. But still in the middle of all these things children also devised their own mechanisms of resistance against the things or say activities which they don't like to be part of. For example at times they would, cry, shout, won't listen to the teacher and would do what they want to do. Through these ways children themselves managed to assert their freedom.

Lastly, I would add that these playschools cannot be fully rejected or accepted as they do have certain aspect of utility for the working parents, living in anonymous cities when it comes to the care of their children. Also, playschools indeed help children grow in the company of other children of similar age group which otherwise would have not been possible in a ruthless city. But again these institutionalized care systems cannot be idealized since they put an immense pressure on children in order to achieve pre-decided goals. Many times children are just treated as 'show-pieces' for the marketing purpose of the school. Children must be respected as 'beings' rather than 'as becoming adults' and must not be rushed by compromising the important phase of childhood. It is our moral responsibility that we as adults must make an informed decision for children since they are the ones who are deeply affected by our decisions.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The presence of playschools cannot be overlooked. The alternative care that these institutions are providing cannot be rejected straight away. But one has to question about these institutional care mechanisms by going a little deeper. Reasoning about the very existence of these services must make us uneasy that why do we need a separate institution to care 'our' young children? Do families lack in any respect when the question comes of taking responsibility for children? But no! As a developing nation, we have to match-up with other developed nations. We don't have much time! The prevailing understanding resembles that "to make our children compete at a global level, we need a certain kind of 'specialized' socialization which is not possible at familial level". Therefore one needs the readymade solution called 'playschools'.

Institutions with their global approach, a universal curriculum that claims to suit 'all' children are present amongst us. These institutions promise to make a child 'winner' in life and thereby to secure a 'good career and lifestyle'. It is indeed this promise that makes us believe, and we end up entrusting the responsibility of our children on these institutions.

But we must halt and think, think a little deeper that what the larger aims of establishing these institutions are? Are these schools meant to provide quality care to children? Do these provide helping hand to working parents? Do playschools provide safe and playful environment to children in ruthless cities? Or are these playschools nothing but teaching shops opened with the motive of doing business? Are these institutions are exploiting parents who do not have any help or community to assist them in child care? Whose purpose are these playschools serving? Is it the childcare that is at the core of working of these institutions or is

it just a utilitarian market-based model? We know that these playschools are part of privatized services and not of charity groups. One could smell the business motives of these institutional care mechanisms.

Our profit based individualized approach has created a crisis of open play spaces for children. Every other space in urban centres is looked at with the eye of making money. Not only children, even parents who are supposed to keep up the ideals of modern society. Career oriented mothers (parents) are in a way punished by their employers who refuse to take the responsibility of their employees. Minimal or no care leaves, the absence of home care allowance, no crèche facilities are making it hard for the families to survive in urban spaces. Mothers who choose not to be employed or other caregivers who are working at these institutions are also facing 'care-penalty' (Manne 2005: 310). Full-time motherhood is looked down upon and many teachers/ facilitators who are employed as caregivers are underpaid (but overworked). We as a society are taking it for granted the amount of engagement and nurturance that goes in bringing up children.

It is quite evident in this research that these institutions are important part of 'modern society' and cannot be overlooked. It is the strong presence and popularity which is making these institutions grow in numbers. Since first of all these are received well by certain section of society and secondly it is the lack of governmental accountability to provide 'quality' child-care to every child regardless of their membership of certain 'privileged or unprivileged class'. Also, the private sector must be made accountable and certain regulations must be made binding in matters of the curriculum they follow, regulated fee structure and must be made responsible to provide care to children in neighborhood rather than being exclusionary in their approach.

Various governmental reports often boast about children as they say children are our future citizens, our future dwells in them. But have we ever paused and

thought of what children are going through? More than half of the population of young children is not getting any quality care at ICDS, anganbari centers[66], majority of preschooler kids are malnourished. At other extreme are those children who have the privilege to 'buy' privatized care, are also struggling through various hardships. Children who are 'not so rich' are already burdened with various household responsibilities while their parents are busy in earning livelihood. On the contrary children belonging to middle and upper middle classes are also at the receiving end since their families have long been embraced by ethos of modernity, where parents are having separate set of ideals. Career oriented parents are hardly able to make time to care their young ones and have to be dependent on institutional settings. The irrational wish to make children 'independent' as soon as possible is doing no good to children. In our modern society children right from the age of 02 years old are facing mental pressure, separation anxiety, other health problems and loss of (actual) freedom to go out and play. Our irrational urge to make our children 'super-kids' instead of securing their future is actually taking it away.

Ultimate dependence on institutions and expert knowledge have left us paralyzed where even to solve problems related to child a mother has to be dependent on 'expert advice' of counselors. Instead of providing familial care to the child we are encouraged to take 'institutional help'. At these educational institutions if the child is not listening to or following the instructions of teacher he/she is labeled as 'problematic child'. The legitimacy of experts and insensitive institutions does not think before labeling a young child. These do not care what harm the label which child has got during his initial experiences of schooling might do to him/her. If these irrational choices of ours would continue with the same speed then that day is not far away when we would need another expert 'psychiatric help/ mental hospitals' for our children. It is not only the responsibility of parents, rather we as a society must be held responsible for our fellow members of society. It is we who

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[66] This was registered during a recent study which I was part of. The study was on malnutrition where various states were covered assessing the socio-cultural causes of malnutrition among children.

are blindly following the Western ideals and making our society miserable for the coming generation.

We must devise a mechanism where 'all' children could get the 'quality' care. Policies for parental leave, flexibility of office hours for working parents must be provided. One of the possible alternatives Manne (2005: 311) has provided which could be: opening of 'open-preschools' where along with children their parents also could go and sit in classroom, make their child comfortable in the new environment of school. Also, she reiterates that instead of full-day care, part-time care should be encouraged. Against the efficient Mc Care model Manne (ibid) proposes 'primary care' model as the ideal where one person looks after a baby.

We must not take away children's rights of living in a healthy emotional, social environment by making worst choices on their behalf!

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APPENDIX

Points for interaction with parents:

1. Importance of Play schools (formal schooling)

   a. Why do you think schools are so important nowadays?

   b. What is the appropriate age according to you, a child should be sent to school?

   c. What is the need for sending a young child of age 02/03 years old to a school?

   d. What are the characteristics of a 'Good School' according to you?

2. Details of family: No. of family members, age, gender, employment status, approximate income, local residence (permanent residence) If migrated / shifted to Delhi recently or are living for more than 05/06 years?

   a. Whose role do you think is more important (has a major role to play) in child's education, is it mother, father, other family members or all equally? Why and How?

   b. Do you agree that 'playschools' are providing an assistance for parents as well, in terms of parenting and helping with child caring? If Yes, Please elaborate.

   c. Do you agree that with 'playschools' taking the responsibility of taking care of your child, the role of family is decreasing? If Yes/No, Please elaborate.

3. Enquiry related to specific playschool

   a. How you selected this particular school? Which all features/characteristics you considered?

   b. Are you happy with the school's working or do you wish to seek some changes/ modifications? Please mention them.

   c. What do you think, does your child enjoys at playschool? Please share experiences related to the same.

Points for interaction with the teachers:

1. Share some of the important moments of your journey as a teacher (early childhood educator).
   a. Was it an informed choice of being a teacher or it just happened?
   b. Was 'Brats N Cuties' your first choice or have you been to any other school as well?
2. Would you like to continue with the same job at this school or would like to switch to some other?
3. Discuss about the work culture at school, is it enabling or restricting?
   a. Freedom of voicing your opinion in classroom matters, in school matters, designing weekly schedule.
   b. What are your views on (bureaucratic) hierarchy at school?
   c. About usage of cameras in the school premises
   d. What is discipline according to you?
   e. View about dance sessions and annual day practice for kids
4. Share the experience of admitting your child to 'formal school'.
5. What is 'play' according to you? How important/useful is it for children at this (preschool) age?
6. How do you conceptualize a 'child' to today? What all things he/she should know before entering into formal school?
7. Do you think you childhood was any different than it is nowadays? How? Please explain. Which one do you think is better then or now?
8. What are your views on sex-education? Should it be given at playschool?

Points for interaction with the principal:

1. Allowing for the research work at your school, was it your autonomous choice or you had to take permission/inform at the main branch?

2. Since you are already in the field of higher education with VCE then how the motivation came of starting a playschool?

3. Why you chose to be a franchise rather than opening an independent playschool centre?

4. With so many prevailing organizations into the preschool field (BNC, Mother's Pride, Euro Kids, Tiny Tots etc.) how you narrowed it down to BNC? What was about this particular organization which appealed to you most?

5. As a franchise, how far do you think you have freedom to make changes in matters (like curriculum, recruitment procedure, architectural design, extending on facilities like library etc.) pertaining to school?

6. What according to you is the 'target group' which your school is catering to or providing facilities/services for?

7. Please share the reason for keeping medium of instruction as English.

8. What constitutes a 'good classroom' according to you?

9. What is the notion of 'discipline' according to you?

10. What kind of assistance is provided for the parents in terms of fee-concession, providing reference for admission to formal school or any other?

11. How do you conceptualize a child of today? What all things he/she should be knowing?

12. What is 'play' according to you? How important /useful is it for children at preschool age?

13. What are your future plans with BNC?

14. What are your views on sex-education? Should it be given at playschool?

15. Do you think you childhood was any different than it is nowadays? How? Please explain. Which one do you think is better then or now?