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**CHILD AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT :  
ANTICIPATION OF THE FUTURE CHALLENGES AND  
PROBLEMS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SINGAPORE**

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CHILD AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT : ANTICIPATION OF THE FUTURE  
CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SINGAPORE.

by

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1. INDUSTRIALIZATION, MODERNIZATION AND WESTERNIZATION

Western and Asian countries which have undergone industrialization have become economic giants and this has not gone unnoticed by the less developed countries. Hence many less developed countries have launched economic development plans with a strong emphasis on industrialization, hoping that their economy would soon catch up with that of the economically advanced countries. Industries, it is logically reasoned, represent the engine of growth of an economically developed country.

New skills, new technologies, and managerial experience are expected to be learned and accumulated with the operation of factories and multi-national companies. The new elements introduced by industrialization into a culture, selectively chosen by a small section of the population, will eventually permeate the whole society.

Modernization which usually follows industrialization brings a new way of life to the country. With the advance of modernization, there are accompanying changes at the economic, political, social, cultural and individual levels and their intricate interrelationships. Empirical studies have shown that modernization rather than industrialization causes drastic changes in the indigenous culture which includes the traditional ways of life, attitudes and behaviour patterns of the people in most developing countries.

It has been agreed that modernization and industrialization are two separate processes and that some societies have experienced industrialization with minimum modernization. However, David Apter (1965) points out that modernization "first occurred through the twin processes of commercialization and industrialization" and led to social changes. He concludes that it is possible to modernize a country without industrialization, but it is not possible to industrialize without modernization.

Many people, including intellectuals have equated modernization with westernization and have attempted to implement western values and ideals in Asia and South-East Asia as a precondition for the successful implementation of western technology and solutions. This has inevitably undermined the traditional Asian culture and values. One outstanding example is the breakdown of the traditional family system. This in turn has serious implications for the development of children and their socialization.

But is modernity essentially identical with western values, practices, ideals and way of life?

Structurally, modernity is often employed as a synthetic term for urbanization, literacy, democratic polity, industrialization and overall economic development. Culturally, modernity is portrayed as a consistent set of values and general orientation permeating a society (Kahl, 1968, Inkeles, 1969, 1977). Its content is best described in terms of the Parsonian pattern variables, a culture that is universalistic rather than particularistic which defines roles in specific rather than diffuse terms, and which allocates rewards on the basis of achievement and not ascription (Parsons, 1956, Hoselitz, 1960). At the individual level, this set of values is reflected in a coherent syndrome of psychological orientation, characterised intrinsically by a certain mental flexibility in dealing with new situations and extrinsically, by similarity to an ideal type of behaviour proper to urban-industrial societies.

Inkeles' (1969, 1977) theoretical conception of the modern individual has been the following traits:

- 1) marked sense of efficiency;
- 2) need for achievement;
- 3) highly independent and autonomous in his relation to traditional figures of influence like parents, especially when making decisions about personal affairs;
- 4) time-conscious and value effective time-management;
- 5) future-oriented in personal and social planning

Inkeles and Smith (1974) tested Inkeles' model empirically in six developing countries (Argentina, Chile, India, Israel, Nigeria and Pakistan) and found strong evidence that the same syndrome of attitudes, values and ways of acting defined the modern man in each of the six countries and in all the occupational groups recognized, namely, cultivator, craftsman and industrial worker.

The accumulation of negative evidence on modernity suggests the existence of basic shortcomings in its conceptualization. The concept of modernity may have been too hurried and too careless an extrapolation of values and cognitions attributed to the "advanced west". Modernity in

the west is not identical with underdeveloped modernity if for no other reason than that the first is the organic product of internal processes of structural differentiation and growth, while the second is the product of cultural diffusion (Horowitz, 1970). Certain forms of tradition have in fact given powerful historical support to rapid development with Japan, Singapore, Taiwan and Korea providing the most relevant examples (Bellah, 1965; Apter, 1967; Bendix, 1967). Western economists have been intrigued by the influence of Confucian values on the economic development of these countries. Delacroix and Ragin (1978) noting that western films transmit western values incompatible with the social ethos that must accompany programme of national development, supported Portes' arguments (1973) that to the extent that modernization is westernization, and only westernization, it retards economic progress. Portes argues that modernization of the individual contributes to the emigration of skilled persons and stimulates prematurely high levels of personal consumption.

Evidence is substantial to show that modernization is not synonymous with westernization and that modernity in developing nations is not necessarily impeded by traditions (Gusfield, 1967). Hence, modernity should not be viewed as a set of immutable characteristics placed opposite tradition on a continuum and its impact on nations varies according to the needs and traditions of the individual country.

## 2. THE SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

### 2.1 Events Leading to Industrialization to Singapore in the 60s

After World War II, the population in Singapore grew rapidly by 48,100 each year between 1960 and 1965 (Ong, 1977). This means that a total of between 36,000 and 40,000 jobs have to be found by 1980 when these post-war babies reached 20 years of age. Jobs were not the only consideration. Schools, housing, hospitals, vocational training institutes and places in tertiary institutions needed to be provided to make life meaningful.

To provide these needed jobs, Singapore has to face the following difficulties:

- i) a small domestic market
- ii) the need to export
- iii) the lack of natural resources
- iv) the lack of skills and technology
- v) the lack of capital
- vi) sabotage by the anti-national left
- vii) the British pull-out.

A United Nations Industrial Survey Mission invited

to Singapore to study our problem in 1960 and 1961 estimated that at least 214,000 new jobs had to be created in 1970 and the British withdrawal impounded the further need to create 40,000 new jobs.

Up to the early 1960's, entrepot trade had been the life blood of Singapore. But entrepot trade could not be relied upon entirely to provide the additional jobs as it could not grow fast enough. It was therefore necessary to develop

- i) Industries
- ii) Tourism
- iii) Banking, Insurance and the Finance Sector.

## 2.2 The New Environment and the Young Singaporeans

In a way, Singapore has been propelled by a combination of adverse factors to industrialize. But the far-sighted, calculated risk has brought about economic success for Singapore besides providing the needed jobs. Besides providing work for its citizens and permanent residents, Singapore is also importing labour from neighbouring countries. The 1990 Population Census showed that a total of 3,002,800 persons were living in Singapore on Census Day 30th June 1990. Of this total population, Singapore residents comprised 89.6%. The foreign population, which numbered 312,700, included foreigners working, studying or living in Singapore. Of the total population of 15 years and above in 1990, 65% are economically active. Over the last ten years, the labour force has expanded by an average rate of 3.1%.

The overall increase in the labour force participation is due to more females entering the labour market. The female participation rate improved from 44% in 1980 to 50% in 1990. The progress made by women in academic pursuit enables them to have greater access to a variety of jobs.

In the course of industrialization and modernization, Singapore has made every effort to introduce technology and to stimulate industrialization. To keep up the competitive edge, not only does the Government invite foreign investment in Singapore, it also encourages its citizens to be adventurous and to venture overseas to invest or to work. Concomitantly, new values, social norms and behaviour patterns have been adopted by the people.

The young Singaporeans have experienced little hardship and have seen nothing more serious than the economic recession of 1985. Even then, the day was saved by the quick decisions and actions taken by the present government. The founding generation faced serious problems and yet they

were able to pool their collective strengths to build the present Singapore which many young ones now take for granted (Zainul Abidin and Manizlinan, 1990).

Today's young Singaporeans live in a different environment from the one experienced by people in their forties and sixties. The years between 1940s and 1960s were turbulent and crisis-prone. Young Singaporeans are the product of a rapidly modernizing and westernizing environment. Having lived in a period of sustained economic growth has generated some undesirable influence on the young Singaporeans (Ho, 1989).

"Increasingly, acquisitiveness has become the very soul of society, penetrating almost every aspect of social life and thought. Everything has a price attached to it, so much so that Singaporeans, especially during the 1970s when the economy grew by leaps and bounds, appeared to be fast developing a system of values according to which the worth or significance of any person, object or activity was calculated exclusively in terms of his or its potential or actual pecuniary value. It was the market value (an expression which was used with increasing frequency) of any person, his services or his goods in terms of dollars and cents which mattered most; and anything which was not reducible to such quantitative terms (for example love, courage, honour, sacrifice, integrity, selflessness, each with its irreducible qualitative wholeness) was largely ignored or at best regarded with mild contempt".

(Ho, 1989, P 678)

Our Prime Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong, is worried about the value-transformation of Singaporeans as a result of their daily exposure to external influences. He noted that "there has been a clear shift in our values" from "communitarianism" to "individualism" especially among the young Singaporeans. George C. Lodge has contrasted "individualism" and "communitarianism" in the following manner:

"Individualism suggests an atomistic conception of society, one in which the individual is the ultimate source of value and meaning. The interests of the community are defined and achieved by self-interested competition among many, preferably small, proprietors. Communitarianism, however, takes a more organic view, regarding the community as more than the sum of its individuals and requiring explicit definition of its needs and priorities".

(Lodge, 1987, pp 9 - 10)

The young in Singapore face a real dilemma. Their Asian roots and reason remind them that the family is a cornerstone of the society and should be preserved. However, they want to pursue a free and unfettered lifestyle, without the demands of caring for elderly

parents. They cannot help but contrast their traditional lifestyle with that of the West. They feel that living in an extended family and to have many children involves tremendous sacrifice of their personal well-being. Placing societal interests before self-interest seems foolish and not pragmatic. To them, as long as self interest is legitimate, it should be encouraged. Too much social engineering and central control would curb personal freedom and stifle both initiative and creativity. Such attitudes stem from the "individualistic" approach as distinct from the "communitarianism" approach to society. Many western developed societies have pursued the "individualism" route and their success has certainly impressed our Singapore young.

### 2.3 Changing Patterns of Community Life

Industrialization has accelerated the process of urbanization in Singapore. This in turn has brought about changes in the social and physical environments. During the past 30 years, the housing of Singaporeans has undergone enormous changes. More and more people are moving into high-rise apartments, both public and private owned. By 1980, about 70% of the Singapore's population were residing in flats built by the Housing and Development Board (HDB). When a family moves into a high-rise apartment, it may mean an uprooting and severance of most social relationships with the community where there was greater interdependence, mutual assistance and sharing among the neighbours. Hence the family may experience a greater degree of independence but people also encounter alienation and segregation. In such an environment there is a narrower physical distance between the flat dwellers but there is also wider social distance. There is generally a lack of a strong sense of community identity and of mutual assistance among neighbours. Mutual assistance, community solidarity and collective behaviour patterns are basic social norms and cultural values which have prevailed in China and Japan for over two thousand years. For most Chinese and Japanese migrant communities, it was the paternalistic ideology and the clan and mutual welfare organizations which held them together. Unfortunately their traditional practices are not too popular with the young "yuppies" and "chuppies". The Government is trying hard to encourage the Clan Associations to consolidate their act in preserving their cultural heritage and practices.

### 2.4 Family System and Family Relations

The rapid economic development in the 60's and 70's has led to labour shortage and created attractive job opportunities for the females. Female participation in the work force in Singapore is among one of the highest in the world (50% in 1990).

The steep rise in the female labour force rates has direct effects on the family system. Working mothers have to rely on domestic servants, relatives, child care centres or foster day-care nannies to look after their children. As more women delay their marriage to establish their career, their child-bearing years are also reduced. Hence the family size has become smaller. The average number of children born to ever-married females has slid from 3.4 in 1980 to 2.9 in 1990. The number of childless couples increased from 9 percent in 1980 to 11 percent in 1990 (Census of Population 1990). A 1990 survey found that one out of every four female graduates remained single. As more women become financially independent, and the nation more affluent, the divorce rate has also accelerated. In 1983, there were 1,602 divorces and the number went up to 2,662 in 1990. This increase affects all ethnic groups. Divorce appeared to peak in the 28-39 age group for both males and females. Desertion and adultery were most commonly cited as reason for the divorces in Singapore. Divorces also result in single parent families.

Urbanization has also put an end to the traditional extended family system where several generations lived together as a household. In its place is the modern nuclear family. In Singapore, the process of disintegration of the extended family system is accelerated by the large-scale public high-rise housing programme. Large-scale high-rise housing programmes were launched in 1960 to solve the acute housing problem. The socio-psychological implications of this structural change in the family system are multifarious.

Through the individual experiences more freedom and greater independence, the change has also imposed greater stress, emotional tensions and frustration generated by the insecurities on the individual.

To keep up with the high standard of living, many families are two-salaried families. This means that both parents have to leave their home for the greater part of the day. Their roles in the education and development of children are hence diminished and relegated to other substitute care-givers. Because of a busy working life and social activities, parents are spending less time with their children. The situation is even more difficult for parents, usually the father, who venture overseas to invest or to work. The generation gap between the parents and their children is therefore widening. A recent Straits Times Survey shows that 60% of Singapore youth complained that their parents are too busy with work to spend time together with the family (Straits Times, 31 Dec 1992, pp 22). Fifty-four percent of the respondents admitted that they themselves are too busy with their studies and tuition to be with the family. (Table 1)

Young couples who set up their own homes become

independent of their parents who are sometimes left without anyone to care for them in their old age. In recent months, some old folks who lived alone were found dead in their apartments only when the corpses started to decompose and cause a stench. In most western societies, it is not unusual for parents and their grow-up children to meet only a few times a year.

As the nuclear family gets smaller and lives away from the network of relatives, the socialization of the children has also undergone changes. The Asian cultural values of filial piety and respect for the elders are usually practised in the extended family system. With the absence of grandparents in a nuclear family, it is much more difficult for young children to observe and practice filial piety and respect. This is especially difficult for a modern family who subscribes strongly to individual interests and hedonistic pursuits.

## 2.5 Cross-Cultural Communication and Popular Culture

Singapore is a multi-racial and multi-religious country. To ensure equity among the three dominant races in Singapore, we have four official languages, namely English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. As English is the common language for trade and technology, it is unofficially the lingua franca of Singapore. The medium of instruction in schools and institutions at all levels is English. All schooling Singapore children have to take a second language, preferably their own racial language. The better pupils are encouraged to take up a third language. This would allow the young of all races to interact comfortably with each other without losing touch with their own culture.

The ease of travel and communication also helps in the importation of some undesirable literature, fads, values and practices. Pre-marital sex, abortion, hippyism, drug addiction and soft pornography are some of the less attractive features of modernization. The influence of mass media on the unguided and impressionable young is tremendous. Unfortunately for many of these youngsters, they may not be able to discriminate between real life facts and pulp or screen fiction. This often leads to their unrealistic aspiration, dissatisfaction with their stations in life and disappointment with life.

## 3. MODERNIZATION AND CHILD/ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

How have the economic, social and environment changes brought on by industrialization and modernization affected the different aspects of child and adolescent development? So far, we have seen more of the undesirable effects of industrialization.

### 3.1 Physical Development.

With modernization, the Singapore health care is progressive and well regarded. We have a vigorous preventive health care programme. In line with the strong emphasis on preventive health, there is a childhood immunization programme against serious diseases like tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, mumps, rubella and Hepatitis B. As a result, poliomyelitis and diphtheria are eradicated in Singapore. There is a comprehensive programme for mothers-to-be, including regular pre-natal check-up, advice on diet and childcare. The School Health Service ensures that all school children are medically examined at regular intervals. Children found to have abnormalities are treated at School Health Clinics or referred to hospitals.

The comprehensive health care programme has resulted in a low maternal mortality rate in Singapore. It has a proud record of 0.1 per 1,000 live births and still births for the last three years.

While malnutrition through deprivations is a problem with some countries in the Third World, Singapore children and adolescents are faced with two different problems.

The importation of Western eating habits sees the mushrooming of fast food joints in Singapore. Pizza, burgers, fries and fried chicken are easily available and fast-food companies offer attractive gifts and perks to entice the young children. With fewer children in a family, parents tend to be more indulgent and are willing to spend more money on satisfying their children's cravings. Unfortunately fast-food is not the most nutritious food for young children. Too much fast-food has led to obesity in young children and adolescents. The Ministry is keeping a close watch on fat children and many schools have cut down the sale of fat-laden fried food and sweets in their canteens. In addition, fat children and adolescents are made to attend special exercise programmes. Some overweight children here have been found to have mild high-blood pressure. Heart diseases are more likely to develop in fat adults. Heart diseases and cancer are the top killers in Singapore.

At the other extreme, some young teenage girls are sold on the model image of a thin and lissom figure. A few of the school girls have taken up part-time work as models and are earning well. Over-dieting has often led to anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Unfortunately, these girls are ignorant of the dire consequences of unsupervised dieting. To encourage the development of young and rugged Singaporeans, the College of Physical Education was set up in 1984 to train physical education teachers. This reflects the high premium placed on the physical education programme

in schools even through it is a non-examinable subject in the school curriculum.

National service for the boys is a good way to firm them up. The vigorous training keeps them trim and healthy, but there is no such scheme for the girls.

### 3.2 Intellectual Development

For a country to get industrialized, it needs both skilled workers and entrepreneurs who are achievement-oriented, far-sighted and flexible to changes (Inkeles, 1969, 1977). For Singapore which can boast of manpower as its only resource, it has to rely on its educational programmes to groom its human resources for its nation-building task.

Singapore recognizes that the key to its success and development is EDUCATION. As human resource is such a precious commodity to a small country like Singapore, a certain amount of quality control is essential. It is not done without careful study of the practices in long established and successful industrialized countries. We have teams of educationists visiting Taiwan, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, France and the Scandinavian countries, hoping that we can adapt some of the successful practices in our educational system. Singapore has undergone a series of educational policy changes to achieve that.

To most people, the Singapore education system is examination-centred and achievement oriented. The focus is on languages, mathematics, science and technology. To parents and children alike, success in Singapore is equated to academic excellence. But keeping in perspectives the changes in Singapore in the past forty years, do we have much choices?

The Government's aim is to nurture talent and develop individual potential to the fullest. In achieving this aim, the education system is geared towards providing at list ten years of general education for all children. This consists of six years of primary school education and four years of secondary education. (Fig. I) In addition to the ten years of general education, children can undergo kindergarten education before primary school, and technical-vocational, pre-university and tertiary courses after secondary school. To provide flexibility for the variable rates of development among children with different strengths and abilities, streaming is introduced at Primary 4, Primary 6 and Secondary 2 levels. Despite education is not compulsory in Singapore, most parents, irrespective of their own educational level and occupation, recognize the importance of a good education in Singapore. To ensure that there are enough places in school, there is continuous school-building and school upgrading. There is also expansion and

upgrading both at the pre-school level and post-secondary level. To keep up with the technological age, computer lessons are introduced into the kindergarten classes. At the upper end, we have two universities and four polytechnics. A third university, the Open University, will be ready for its first intake in 1994. It will be managed by the Singapore Institute of Management.

In 1984, the Gifted Education was launched, this programme hopes to cater to the needs of the brighter students. This is in keeping with the objective of developing every child to his/her fullest potential. To counter the criticism that our pupils are rote learners and not trained to think creatively, De Bono's lateral thinking programme, CoRT, was introduced, to both the primary and secondary schools in 1987. For those who are artistically or musically inclined, the Music and Art Elective programmes are made available in some established schools.

Asian parents in general have high expectation of their children in a competitive and examination-oriented society. Some parents' pursuit of their children's academic success has reached a pathological level. Private tuition has become a lucrative trade in Singapore. It was found in a recent survey that at least 33 percent of school children have private tuition, mainly in English, Chinese, Mathematics and Science (Straits Times, 4 April 1992, pp 28). Tutors are often engaged not to help weak pupils who require additional explanation but to assist good pupils in scoring extra A's. Some kindergarten children are known to receive tuition too.

Languages are important for international trade and communication. The bilingual policy which requires every child to do a second language, preferably his mother tongue is aimed at intra-community communication and to ensure awareness of one's own cultural heritage. However, a number of children have found difficulties in coping with the mastering of two languages. Some parents even cited the bilingual policy as their reason for immigrating to western countries as their children could not cope with the second language. In Singapore, a student is required to pass English at credit level, mathematics and second language to be admitted into the pre-university. Hence families who are monolingual are pessimistic in their aspiration of their children getting a tertiary education.

The Straits Times carried out a recent survey on 503 Singapore youth and the results indicate that parents (32%), streaming system (26%), teachers (23%) and fellow students (14%) are the sources of pressure (Straits Times, 1 January 1993, pp 30). Twenty-two percent of the sample admitted that they feel a great deal of pressure from school work. Another 66 percent feel some pressure. Unfortunately, all these are related to education and academic success.

In a country where well-paid jobs are found in the professional and technological fields, many parents would insist that their children major in scientific or technological studies, ignoring their interests and strengths. This has caused tension in parental-child relations and can harm these children's self-concept. Many youths who fail to get a tertiary education feel that they are failures.

The Ministry has asked schools to give fewer tests and two primary schools have actually done away with examinations in the lower primary classes. This hopefully would help parents to relax their academic press on their off-spring. In turn the children will enjoy learning better and not find schooling a painful experience.

Parent education talks on child and adolescent development are organized in the four official languages by the Ministry of Community Development. Church groups and community self-help groups like Mendaki, AMP (Malay), Sinda (Indian) and CDAC (Chinese) are also active in providing assistance to parents whose children are having learning problems. This self-help groups also provide low-cost tuition classes in key subjects for their respective racial or religious groups.

Another problem which emerges in countries which undergo modernization is the inability of parents to keep pace with the technological knowledge explosion. This is specially true in countries where literacy of the older generation is low. One solution is to provide opportunities for low cost adult education. In Singapore the Wise (Worker Improvement through Secondary Education) programme provides working adults who have no secondary education to bridge this deficiency. The Fast Forward programme is popular with adults who need to improve their Mathematics. Besides improving the literacy of the older generation, adults education also helps to narrow the gap in skills and knowledge between parents and their children. In turn parents are nmore confident in helping and guiding their children in their studies.

Parents are the first educators of their children. They can be instrumental in arousing their children's interest in learning or turning them against learning if they focus too much on performance and grades. Learning is a life-long process and not just a means to getting a certificate. Encouragement and patient understanding from parents usually bring about long-term and better performance from their secure and confident children. Threats and monetary rewards may only secure temporary efforts from children but hold little promise in sustaining their effort and interest.

### 3.3 EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

A great deal has been written on the negative social and emotional effects brought on by the erosion of the traditional family system and the increasing neglect by working parents of their own children. Recent findings from The Straits Times survey further reinforce the observation that there is a communication gap between Singapore youth and their parents. Ninety-two percent of the respondents live with both parents but most of them turn to their friends for advice on problems related to emotion (74%), sex (47%) and studies (77%). Mothers are closer to their children than fathers as they are the next-preferred consultants to their children on emotional problems (44%), sex-related problems (21%) and studies (33%). Even siblings are a notch up on fathers. As expected, parents were voted the best advisors on financial problems. Teachers are only popular when the problems are studies-related (64%) (Table 2, Straits Times, 1 January 93, pp 30).

Emotional deprivation, frequent change of care-givers, isolation, over-indulgence by parents, affluence, pressure from competition and academic excellence, over-whelming seduction of a free and unfettered lifestyle can interact to create insecurity, hedonistic tendencies, selfishness, suspicion, complacency and hostility in both children and adolescent alike. Working parents, especially career mothers, often feel harrassed and torn between the demands of their dual roles as employees and parents. Burn out has also created tension in family relationships.

The Singapore government is aware of the adverse effects of the breakdown of the traditional family system. Steps have been taken to slow down the process and retain some features of the traditional family system. For instance, income tax relief aims to encourage people to have their parents to stay with them. Priorities are given to related families to be assigned apartments in the same housing blocks or within the same housing estate. This would create an urban "kampong" where hopefully both social and physical distances would be shortened and assistance can be rendered to each other within the extended family system.

A National Family Institute is being proposed to help people cope with family problems like child abuse and family breakups. It will serve as a research centre for family issues, training centre for parent education and counselling, and a library (Straits Times, 31 December 92 pp 19).

Children and adolescents need routine and discipline within a caring democratic family system to develop security and effective time-management, devise far-sighted future-plans and make wise, autonomous decisions. All these characteristics are essential traits of a modern man living in a country undergoing constant changes (Inkeles, 1969, 1977, Chang, 1983) Young children are guided in their development of modern attitudes by their parents' child-

rearing practices, while adolescents' attitudes are influenced more by their school ethos and practices (Chang, 1983). Giving children absolute licence to do as they please is not respecting individual rights. It is irresponsibility on the part of the parents and a convenient excuse to absolve themselves from the disasters of their children's unguided and impulsive decisions. The experience of a wise adult will be useful in guiding the young away from making the same unnecessary mistakes. Pain and disappointments are great teachers but may also leave indelible scars.

Asian parents are usually very protective of their children, from the cradle through their marriage to the grand children. This may have a drawback as this may prevent them from making autonomous decisions based on reasons and facts and not relationships. The practice of nepotism and the buddy system have no place in countries which wish to forge ahead to become economic giants. These bad Asian practices breed corruption and cause divisiveness in plural societies.

Singapore is a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious country. One of the first tasks which Singapore as a new nation has given importance to is the creation of racial harmony and the forging of a common group identity. Survey after survey has reviewed happily that majority of Singapore citizens see themselves as Singaporeans first and only secondary as members of their racial groups. This state of affairs does not come easily and effortlessly. It is the result of:

- "a, the government's policy of suppressing racial chauvinism and religious extremism;
- b, the government's policy of encouraging mixing among races in public;
- c, the use of English as the lingua franca of Singapore;
- d, the bonding experience of national service;
- e, a policy of emphasising our commonalities and de-emphasising our differences; and
- f, contribution of various grassroot organizations in galvanising the population to support these policies."

(Prof. Tommy T.B Koh, 1991, pp 4)

This conscious effort of Singapore to create racial tolerance and harmony is not only essential for its own internal stability but it also creates a sense of security and welcome for foreign investors. No investors will consider a country which practises "give me jobs and your money but be prepared to be second class citizens". Generally, Singaporeans are at ease with foreigners.

In 1990, the search began for Singapore's national values and after much discussions and debates, the following Five Shared Values are adopted:

1. Nation before community and society above self;
2. Family as the basic of unit of society;
3. Regard and community support for the individual;
4. Consensus instead of contention
5. Racial and religious harmony.

These Five Shared values will bind Singaporeans from different racial background together and help Singaporeans to keep their Asian bearings as they progress into the 31st century (Straits Times, 6 January 91, pp 17).

#### CONCLUSION.

Singapore is among one of the first Southeast Asian countries to industrialize. It began as a quest for survival in the midst of combined adversities. Through far-sighted and careful planning and quick adaptation, we manage to survive the crises but there are prices to be paid for affluence and for being an open society. Modernization and urbanization brought on by industrialization have changed the physical and social environments of Singapore. In turn, people have to develop new attitudes and change their life style to accomodate these changes. Unfortunately, not all the changes have positive effects on the family and human development.

Many of the good Asian values which have helped to pull Singapore through during its crises are being threatened and in danger of being eroded. They should be retained at all costs. What are these values? The good Asian values are

- "a, the work ethic;
- b, thrift;
- c, strong families, including concern and support for members of one's extended family who are in need of help;
- d, modesty and humility, two values which have largely disappeared from Singapore;
- e, respect for one's education;
- f, respect for one's elders, teachers and righteous rulers; and
- g, communitarian values"

(Prof Tommy T.B Koh, 1991,pp 5)

Government policies and social measures have attempted to ameliorate the adverse effects on family life and good Asian values. Formal and community education would hopefully create awareness in the people who would consciously resist the attemption to subscribe to undesirable values. It is our aim to produce a citizens who are tolerent and are equipped to live and work effectively in Asia as well as western societies.

The problem and challenges faced by the newly

industrialization countries are real and worrying. The possible pollution problems threaten the physical environment and the general health of the people. New eating habits imported from the West can generate a chain of new health problems such as obesity, high blood pressure, cardiac diseases and cancer.

While improved health care has prolonged the life-span of the population, the creation of nuclear families by rapid urbanization has left a problem of neglected senior citizens. Expansion of the work force has also taken parents away from their traditional roles as educators, socializing agents and value models to their children. The frequent absence of parents together with the wide exposure to foreign cultures can cause an identity crisis in the impressionable young. Will the new generations value their culture and feel committed to their country of birth? Prolonged separation between a couple inevitably may cause a marriage to disintegrate. There is a plethora of literature on the emotional harm to children from broken families.

Equipping children with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and norms for survival in an industrialized society is no easy task. They need the skills and knowledge in order to be financially viable in their working years. How are they going to acquire these skills and knowledge? Who is going to provide the training? One needs to be resilient and adaptable to changes and yet be risk-taking and discerning. Who can inculcate these attitudes in them? There is often tension between the ideals of nationalism and the pragmatic needs of economic development. How can a balance be maintained between such key issues? How can one ensure that the young citizens are imbued with the values of their indigenous culture and yet feel comfortable interacting with people from different cultures in an increasingly international society?

Other Asian and South-Asian countries which are more homogeneous in their racial composition and are more blessed with greater land mass and resources, probably would encounter less traumatic experiences in their transition from pre-industrialization to industrialization and modernization. Nevertheless, the experiences of Singapore, being a fore-runner in the industrialization race, may help to provide useful hindsight to others who have their foot in the door way to industrialization.

Table 1

BARRIERS TO FAMILY TOGETHERNESS

	Applies to family	Affects family
Parents busy with work	60 %	30 %
Children busy with studies/schoolwork/tuition	54 %	16 %
Different interest	48 %	16 %
Children busy with other activities	47 %	9 %
Children busy with ECA	43 %	7 %
Parents busy with housework/child care	26 %	4 %
Parents busy with social commitments	17 %	3 %
Family members do not get along	14 %	7 %

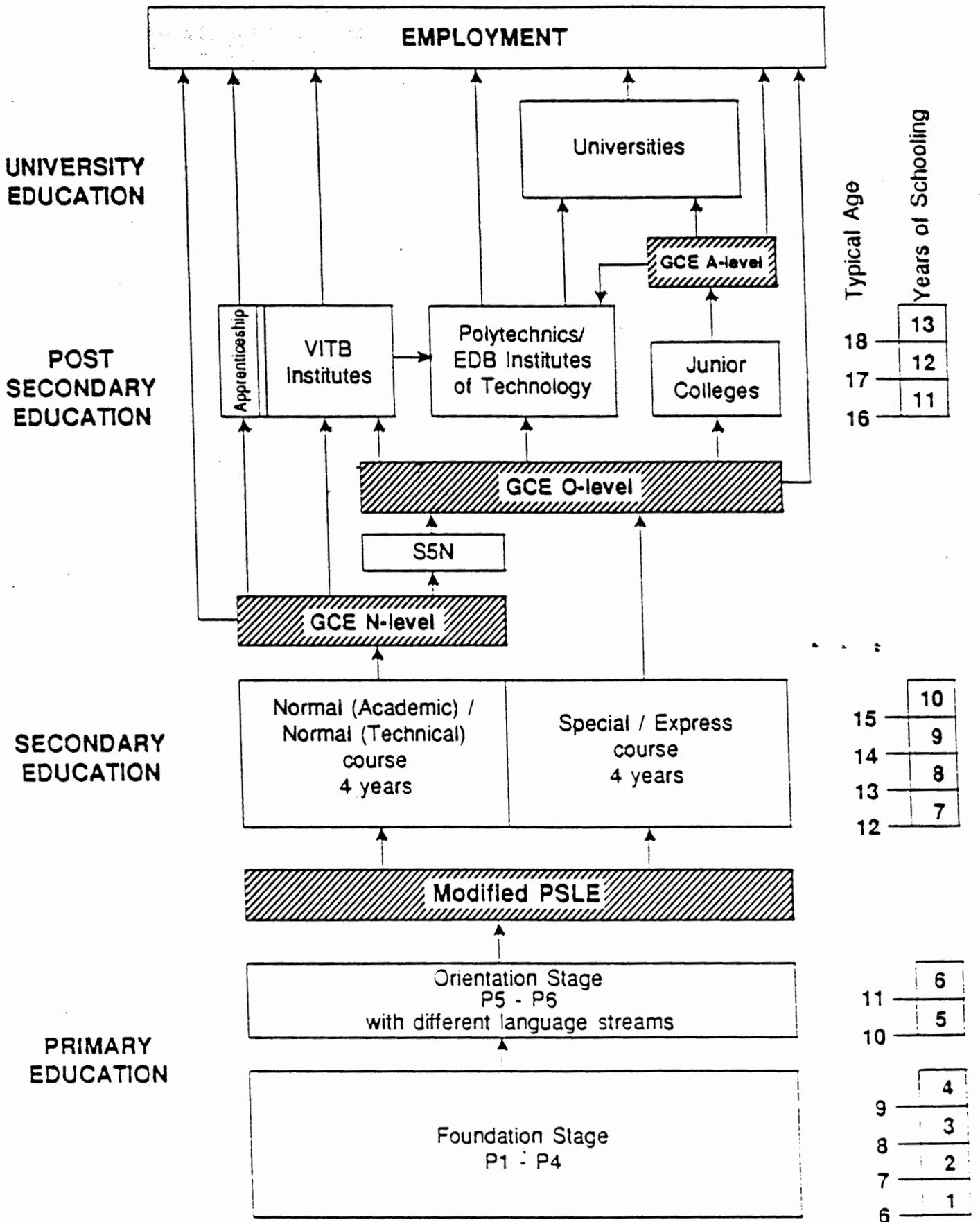
Table 2

WHO SINGAPORE YOUTH SEEK ADVICE FROM FOR PROBLEMS

	Emotional	Sex-related	Money	Studies
Friend	74 %	47 %	26 %	77 %
Mother	44 %	21 %	77 %	33 %
Sibling	29 %	14 %	25 %	35 %
Father	22 %	8 %	70 %	31 %
Teacher	9 %	5 %	2 %	64 %
Relative	7 %	2 %	6 %	12 %
Others	1 %	-	-	1 %
No One	9 %	29 %	7 %	6%

FIG. 1

# IMPROVED EDUCATION SYSTEM



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