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**THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES
IN STUDYING PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA
AFFECTING SCHOOL READINESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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Abstract. Since the 2008/2009 academic year Mongolia has transitioned to a 12-year general education system, enrolling six-year-old children in school. Consequently, there is a requirement for six-year-old children to be physically, mentally, and socially prepared for school. At this stage, a child's primary activity becomes learning. The fundamental prerequisite for successful learning is being physically and mentally ready. If a child is not ready to learn, it can negatively impact their academic performance and hinder their transition to subsequent developmental stages. Therefore, there is a need to study the psychological phenomena that influence the school readiness of six-year-old children in early childhood. Psychology and educational theories emphasize the importance of developmental stages. Developmental psychology, a major branch of psychology, asserts that human cognitive,

intellectual, and social development varies by age, leading to differing needs and stress factors at each stage. Prominent psychologists have developed various theories on human development, highlighting childhood as a crucial phase in shaping an individual's personality and overall development. Scholars such as Russian psychologists L. S. Vygotsky and D. B. Elkonin, The characteristics, needs and factors of crisis influencing the development of a child have been studied from various angles by such outstanding scientists as D. B. Elkonin, Z. Freud (Austrian psychoanalyst), E. Erickson and A. Maslow (American psychologists), as well as the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget.

Keywords: socialization; cognitive psychology; early childhood development; social learning; cognitive abilities; early learning processes.

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A lot of research worldwide highlights the crucial role of early childhood development, as scientists continually expand their understanding of the developmental pathways and potential inherent in young children. Research consistently demonstrates that the brain matures rapidly and exhibits significant plasticity during these early years. The quality of the educational environment, along with strong social connections, significantly influences children's development and the formation of their personalities. Furthermore, ensuring a smooth and seamless transition between educational stages, for example, from preschool to primary school, positively impacts a child's educational trajectory and lays a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

In Mongolia, the introduction of a 12-year education system in 2008–2009 led to children being accepted into school at the age of 6. This policy necessitates adequate preparation in physical, psychological, and social aspects. Learning becomes the child's primary activity at this stage. The first condition for successful learning is being physically and mentally prepared. A lack of readiness may hinder academic progress and transition to subsequent developmental stages. Therefore, investigating the psychological phenomena influencing school readiness in six-year-olds is crucial.

Literature Review. Psychologists have explained the characteristics of six-year-old children from different theoretical perspectives. Russian psychologist D. B. Elkonin divided children's psychological development into six stages, emphasizing the importance of dominant activities at each stage. L. S. Vygotsky linked children's psychological development to the educational process. Jean Piaget categorized cognitive development into four stages, explaining it through biological evolution.

In Mongolia, psychologist D. Sanjzav conducted extensive research on Mongolian children's psychological traits [1], characteristics, development patterns, and educational growth. There are other notable works [10, 11, 15].

Theoretical Perspectives on the Psychology of Early School-Age Children. Psychology and educational theories place significant emphasis on the stages of human development. Developmental psychology, a major branch of psychology, considers that psychological, cognitive, and social development varies across different age stages. As a result, needs and crisis factors also differ depending on the distinct characteristics of each developmental stage [2]. Prominent psychologists have argued that childhood plays a crucial role in shaping an individual from birth and have proposed various theoretical perspectives on human development.

Some of the most influential scholars in psychology and educational studies include the Russian psychologist L. S. Vygotsky, D. B. Elkonin, Austrian psychologist Z. Freud, American psychologists E. Erikson and A. Maslow, and Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. These scholars have provided different perspectives on how psychological traits, needs, and crisis factors influence human development. Their major theories include L. S. Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development and D. B. Elkonin's Theory of Child Development.

Vygotsky emphasized that child development follows specific stages and rhythms, which vary at each stage of life. For example, the development of infants is significantly different from that of school-aged children. Each component of a child's psychological development has its own optimal developmental period and does not progress uniformly [8].

According to Vygotsky, higher mental functions initially emerge through social interaction. In other words, social behavior is the foundation of cognitive functions in children. Language plays a key role in facilitating social behavior. Initially, language serves as a communication tool between individuals, but as development progresses, it becomes internalized and supports cognitive functions. The cognitive development of children varies by age:

- In infancy, sensory perception dominates cognitive processes.
- In preschool years, memory becomes more prominent.
- In school-age children, logical thinking and reasoning skills become the focus.

Vygotsky also emphasized that the ability to generalize and synthesize information is closely related to language development. In other words, strong language skills directly contribute to cognitive abilities.

Elkonin's theory highlights the importance of children's interactions with objects and social relationships as two primary aspects of development. He suggested that at each developmental stage, a dominant activity prevails, which then gives way to another activity in the next stage [13]. He explained this phenomenon by analyzing the dominant psychological activities that emerge at different moments in a child's life:

- In infancy, emotional communication with caregivers plays a critical role.
- In preschool years, pretend play helps develop motivation and social needs.
- In early school years, learning activities become the main focus, allowing children to acquire skills and behavioral patterns.

Based on this theory, children's psychological development follows a structured progression:

- They first acquire social norms through expanding their range of motivations and needs.

- Then, cognitive processes develop as they interact with objects.
- Finally, they gain social experience through interactions with their environment.

Among other theories, the following stands out Z. Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, E. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory A. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and others.

The primary idea of Maslow's theory is self-actualization, which is defined as the realization of one's complete potential and abilities. Nevertheless, even if an individual attains the top tier of the hierarchy, they may revert to addressing lower-level needs if those fundamental needs are not satisfied anymore. Maslow represented human needs in the form of a pyramid.

Jean Piaget believed that human intelligence develops as a result of biological adaptation, similar to other biological processes. He argued that intelligence should be explained from the perspective of evolutionary biological development.

When analyzing the theories of scholars regarding the psychological development of 6-year-old children, they can be classified based on developmental domains.

When comparing Development theories, it becomes evident that **D. B. Elkonin, Sigmund Freud, and Erik Erikson** primarily focused on **psychological development**, while **Lev Vygotsky and Abraham Maslow** emphasized **social development**, and **Jean Piaget** concentrated on **cognitive development**. From this, we can see that **50% of these scholars focused more on children's psychological development**.

Table 1

General Similarities and Differences Between Jean Piaget's «Theory of Cognitive Development» and Erik Erikson's «Theory of Personality Development»

Difference	Similarity
Jean Piaget highlighted that a child's growth is shaped by their experiences and gaining of new knowledge via interaction with their surroundings.	Both Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory and Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory emphasize that a child's environment plays a crucial role in their development . While Piaget focuses on how children construct knowledge through interactions with their surroundings, Erikson highlights how social relationships and experiences shape personality growth.
Erik Erikson, on the other hand, focused more on the role of social and emotional conflicts that arise at different stages of development and how successfully resolving these conflicts shapes personality.	
Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory emphasizes that each stage of life is marked by a psychological crisis that must be resolved for healthy development. On the contrary, Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory focuses on the progression of thinking and learning without emphasizing crises at each stage.	
Jean Piaget explained children's development from the perspective of cognitive development,	

while Erik Erikson focused on psychological development. Children perceive and understand things differently depending on their environment. Therefore, it is evident that the environment plays a crucial role in a child's development.	
The First Stage of Jean Piaget's and Erik Erikson's Theories	
Focused on children's motor and physical development.	Considered the surrounding environment as an important factor in children's development at this stage.
Focused on the development of children's self-confidence and trust in society. At the initial stage of development, Jean Piaget believed that children's motor and physical development takes place, whereas Erikson emphasized the formation of self-confidence and trust in society.	
The Second Stage of Development in Piaget's and Erikson's Theories	
Jean Piaget: Focuses on children's cognitive development, particularly the transition from sensory-motor experiences to symbolic thought and language use.	Both theorists agree that the surrounding environment plays a significant role in children's development during this stage.
Erik Erikson: Emphasizes the development of autonomy, independence, and self-control, as well as the potential for feelings of doubt or shame if children are overly restricted.	They both recognize that children's interactions with their surroundings shape their growth and learning experiences.
The Third Stage of Development in Piaget's and Erikson's Theories	
Jean Piaget posits that children in this developmental period acquire the cognitive capacity to classify and categorize objects, distinguishing them according to shared attributes and divergent characteristics.	Both scientists acknowledge that progress in a child's development is inextricably linked to the child's successful completion of earlier stages of development.
Erik Erikson believes that children undergo a struggle between initiative and guilt, in which they either gain confidence in their skills or experience guilt for their behaviors.	
The Four Stages of Development in Piaget's and Erikson's Theories	
The ability to think abstractly improves, and cognitive skills are enhanced.	Both cognitive and social development of the child are most advanced at this stage.
Interaction with peers improves, and the interest in exploring the environment increases, leading to progress in social development.	
Erik Erikson's theory is divided into 8 stages. The last 4 stages are as follows: Youth (12–13 to 19–20 years), Early Adulthood (20–25 years), Adulthood (26–64 years), and Old Age (65 and above).	

Child development has been viewed from the perspectives of cognitive development and social development, with the relationship and attitude of the environment and close individuals being crucial at every stage of development. The most important aspect at this stage is the emergence of independence in the child, and the parents' relationship and attitude play a significant role. Supporting the child's independence also enhances their ability to self-regulate.

When comparing **Erik Erikson's «Theory of Psychosocial Development»** with five other theories, it becomes evident that, for preschool-aged children, **interaction with close individuals** plays a central role in their development. According to Erikson's theory, the progression of autonomy in the preschool stage is significantly affected by these relationships. When children perceive love and care from their immediate family members, they start to cultivate independence. On the contrary, if they lack affection or attention, they might confront feelings of guilt or self-blame, as Erikson outlined in the initiative vs. guilt stage.

In relation to learning, children usually imitate the behavior of those they admire the most, often their parents, particularly their mothers and fathers. This **role-modeling behavior** drives their motivation to learn new tasks and skills, as they seek to gain approval and guidance from those they admire. This aligns with Erikson's concept of **social learning** during the preschool years, where the influence of close caregivers is crucial to the development of a child's identity and confidence.

L. S. Vygotsky and **Jean Piaget** both explored children's cognitive development, but their theories differ in how they perceive the role of personal experience and the development of symbolic thinking in preschool-aged children (3–6 years old).

Vygotsky highlighted the importance of social interaction and cultural factors in the development of children. In Vygotsky's view, children's individual experiences are essential for their cognitive advancement. He asserted that children acquire knowledge through interactions with more informed individuals (such as parents, teachers, or peers) within their surroundings. Vygotsky proposed that children develop cognitively through **scaffolding**, where more experienced individuals support children's learning by guiding their actions and gradually withdrawing support as the child becomes more capable. This process helps children internalize skills and knowledge, making social interaction and experience the central element in development.

The primary divergence is that Vygotsky stresses the role of social and cultural environments in fostering cognitive growth, while Piaget posits that cognitive development is largely a product of independent investigation and cognitive structures. However, both recognize that children develop critical cognitive skills in the preschool years, but Vygotsky focuses more on how **social experiences** influence this growth, whereas Piaget highlights the role of **symbolic thinking** and **mental creativity**.

Sigmund Freud and **Jean Piaget** both explored child development, but they focused on different aspects of development during the **phallic stage** (3–6 years), which is a critical period in early childhood [5].

Freud's Phallic Stage (3-6 years): Freud believed that during this stage, children develop a strong identification with the same-sex parent, a process known as **identification**. Children start to internalize the behaviors, values, and norms of their parents, particularly the father, and this helps them resolve the **Oedipus complex**.

The **difference** between Freud and Piaget in this stage is significant: **Freud** focused on the **psychosexual** aspects of development, such as how children's desires and identification with parents influence their personality, whereas **Piaget** emphasized **cognitive development**, focusing on how children's thinking becomes more sophisticated and begins to involve symbolic representation and more complex concepts.

In summary, **Freud** viewed the phallic stage as crucial for the development of gender identity and the regulation of desires through identification with the same-sex parent, while **Piaget** emphasized the development of symbolic thinking and egocentric reasoning during the preoperational stage.

The development of preschool children (aged 3–6) can be understood through the lenses of Abraham Maslow's «Hierarchy of Needs Theory» and Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, two distinct approaches. When children first reach this developmental stage, their ideas can be very set and unchanging. However, as they interact with their caregivers (particularly their parents), they begin to accept and model behaviors from these significant figures. This modeling creates a more flexible approach to relationships, as children begin to incorporate the values and behaviors of those they admire [17].

When comparing this stage with other theories, several things stand out:

1. **Erikson's Psychosocial Theory** emphasizes the importance of initiative vs. guilt during this stage. Children begin to assert themselves more and develop social relationships, much like Piaget's focus on the development of symbolic play and imagination.

2. **Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory** would emphasize how children's play is influenced by social interactions, suggesting that their cognitive development is shaped by social experiences with more knowledgeable others, such as parents and peers.

3. **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs** suggests that children's basic emotional needs, such as love and affection, must be met before they can fully engage in higher cognitive and social development. This is related to Piaget's idea that personal experiences and interactions with caregivers shape the child's ability to think symbolically.

4. **Freud's Psychosexual Development Theory** suggests that this stage is crucial for the development of gender identity and the resolution of the Oedipus complex, where the child identifies with the same-sex parent and begins to internalize societal norms.

We compare the main developmental theories of prominent psychologists and their views on early childhood (preschool years, 3-6 years). The theories being compared may include **Jean Piaget**, **Lev Vygotsky**, **Erik Erikson**, **D.B. Elkonin**, and **Abraham Maslow**.

Table 2

Theoretical Comparison

Theorist	Main Focus	Key Concept	Developmental Process	Role of Social Interaction	Role of Needs
Jean Piaget	Cognitive Development	Stages of Cognitive Development (Sensorimotor, Preoperational, Concrete Operational, Formal Operational)	Development occurs through interaction with the environment and maturation of cognitive structures.	Minimal, focused on individual cognitive development.	Cognitive growth is based on child's active exploration and adaptation.
Lev Vygotsky	Sociocultural Development	Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding	Development occurs through social interactions and cultural tools, guided by more knowledgeable others.	Strong emphasis on social learning and cultural tools.	Learning and cognitive development are shaped by social experiences.
Sigmund Freud	Psychosexual Development	Psychosexual Stages (Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency, Genital)	Development is driven by unconscious desires and conflicts.	Less emphasis on social interaction, more on family dynamics.	Internal conflicts and sexual desires shape development.
Abraham Maslow	Human Motivation and Needs	Hierarchy of Needs (Physiological, Safety, Love/Belonging, Esteem, Self-Actualization)	Development progresses through the fulfillment of hierarchical needs.	Social interactions influence the fulfillment of needs.	Basic needs must be met before higher-level needs can be pursued.
D.B. Elkonin	Play and Cognitive Development	The role of play in development and imitation of real-life activities.	Cognitive and social development through play and imitation.	Play with peers helps in developing cognitive and social skills.	Development occurs through engagement in meaningful, imitative activities.
Erik Erikson	Psychosocial Development	Psychosocial Stages (Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame, etc.)	Development occurs through resolving psychosocial conflicts at each stage.	Social relationships (with caregivers, peers, and society) are crucial.	Each stage is marked by specific needs that must be fulfilled to progress.

The summary of the key ideas emphasized by each theorist followed by a brief look at commonalities among the theories concerning the cognitive and psychological development of preschool-aged children:

Conclusion. In the course of this research, theories from six prominent scholars – Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, D. B. Elkonin, Lev Vygotsky, Abraham Maslow, and Jean Piaget – were compared and analyzed. Based on the findings of this research, when considering the psychological and cognitive development of 6-year-old children in terms of their readiness for school, the following features emerge: children at this age tend to imitate objects and handle things with a positive emotional approach. The foundation of their cognitive development lies in active engagement and participation.

Key Findings of our Research:

1. Readiness for formal schooling in six-year-old children is multifaceted, encompassing social, psychological, cognitive, and physical domains. Within this age cohort, cognitive development emerges as a particularly salient predictor of school success.

2. The advancement of cognitive skills in six-year-olds is strongly mediated by the quality of their relationships with parents and primary caregivers. These interactions serve as catalysts for language acquisition and the development of reasoning abilities.

3. Meeting a child's basic physical needs is essential for his or her positive social and emotional development.

A central theoretical construct in understanding this developmental epoch lies in the dialectical relationship between the impulse for initiative and the emergence of guilt. The inhibition or discouragement of children's attempts to exercise their agency can result in the development of internalized feelings of guilt and self-reproach. This presents a significant developmental obstacle during the preschool years, where the provision of sensitive and supportive parenting is essential for successful navigation.

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ТЕОРЕТИКО-МЕТОДОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ВОПРОСЫ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ
ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ЯВЛЕНИЙ, ВЛИЯЮЩИХ НА ГОТОВНОСТЬ
К ШКОЛЕ В РАННЕМ ВОЗРАСТЕ

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Аннотация. С 2008/09 учебного года Монголия перешла на 12-летнюю систему общего образования, принимая в школу детей с шестилетнего возраста. Следовательно, шестилетние дети должны быть физически, умственно и социально готовы к обучению. На этом этапе основным занятием ребенка становится учеба. Фундаментальным условием успешного обучения является физическая и умственная готовность. Неготовность ребенка к учебе может негативно сказаться на его успеваемости и затруднить переход к последующим этапам развития, поэтому необходимо изучать психологические феномены, влияющие на готовность шестилетних детей к обучению в раннем детстве.

Психология и педагогические теории подчеркивают важность стадий развития. В психологии развития когнитивное, интеллектуальное и социальное развитие человека различаются в зависимости от возраста, что приводит к разным потребностям и факторам стресса на каждом этапе. Известные психологи разработали различные теории развития человека, подчеркивая, что детство является важнейшим этапом в формировании личности человека и его общем развитии. Особенности, потребности и факторы кризиса, влияющие на развитие ребенка, изучали с разных сторон выдающиеся ученые Д. Б. Эльконин, З. Фрейд, Э. Эриксон и А. Маслоу, а также швейцарский психолог Жан Пиаже.

Ключевые слова: социализация, когнитивная психология, раннее детское развитие, социальное обучение, когнитивные способности, процессы раннего обучения.

Для цитирования

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