CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

1.01. Introduction :

The period between puberty and adulthood which is *universally* known as a critical period in human development is adolescence. It is at this stage that the individual experiences tremendous changes in all aspects of development – physical, mental, social, emotional et al. These changes bring about far-reaching effects on an adolescents’ attitude and behaviour. It is a stage when society entrusts certain tasks on the individual as he is considered to be mature enough. Caught in an overlapping role between that of an adult and that of a child the adolescent experiences emotional tensions, anxiety, moodiness, hysteria etc. It is also a stage when adolescent students are usually faced with a dilemma in making a career choice in their lives. Most often, choosing the appropriate career, keeping in view their own potentialities and limitations can make the difference between enjoying and detesting the career in future. Each individual undergoing this process of making a career choice is influenced by various factors of the environment such as the influence of peers, teachers, parents, media and others. Among all these environmental factors it has been found that parents play a very significant role in their children’s career choice and development. Parents are constant sources of influence on their children and they too aspire for their child’s career. As such influence of parental aspirations for their children’s career choice is noteworthy.

1.02. Adolescence

The stage of adolescence is a very important period of human development. It is often referred to as the spring of human life. The word adolescence comes from a Greek word “adolescere” which means “to grow to maturity”. It is a transitional phase of physical and mental human
development generally occurring between puberty and legal adulthood but largely characterised by as beginning and end with the teenage stage.

The name of G. Stanley Hall (1904) is of great significance in studies related to adolescence as he was the first psychologist who devoted much of his time in collecting data on adolescence. He wrote two volumes in 1904 on psychology of adolescence which contributed significantly to the study of adolescents. His pioneering work on adolescence was ground breaking laying the foundation for subsequent studies on child behaviour. His views on adolescence as “a period of storm and stress” aptly sums up this stage in an individual’s life as the individual enters a new and powerful phase in his life causing upheavals and turmoils in all aspects of development be it physical, mental, social and emotional.

Jean Piaget (1969), an acknowledged international authority in the field of child psychology and cognitive development expresses his views on adolescence when he said:

“Psychologically adolescence is the age when the individual becomes integrated into the society of adults, the age when the child no longer feels that he is below the level of his elders but equal, at least in rights … This integration into adult society has many affective aspects, more or less linked with puberty …. It also includes very profound intellectual changes … These intellectual transformations typical of the adolescents’ thinking enable him not only to achieve his integration into the social relationships of adults, which is in fact, the most general characteristic of this period of development.”

A number of definitions on adolescence have been put forward by various psychologists from time to time. According to A.T. Jersild (1978), “Adolescence is that span of years during which boys and girls move from childhood to adulthood, mentally, emotionally, socially and physically.”
Dorothy Rogers defines adolescence as, “a process rather than a period, a process of achieving the attitudes and beliefs needed for effective participation in the society.”

The World Health Organisation (W.H.O.) identifies adolescence as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood from ages 10-19. It represents one of the critical transitions in the life span and is characterised by a tremendous pace in growth and change that is second only to that of infancy.

Thus, from an overview of the views expressed by various psychologists on adolescence it is evident that this stage is indeed an important stage in an individual’s life. This calls for more careful studies not only with respect to the adolescent but also with respect to relationship of the adolescents with other members of the society as family, peers, the school so that appropriate and timely interventions may be given in order to help the individual have a smooth transition into adulthood.

1.03. Stages of Adolescence:

The stage of adolescence is usually divided into two parts:

- Early Adolescence (10-14 years) and
- Late Adolescence (15-19 years).

1.03.1. Early Adolescence (10-14 years):

Early adolescence encompassing the ages 10-14 is characterised by the beginning of physical changes and development of the secondary sexual characteristics in an individual. These physical changes which takes place during this period in girls as well as in boys may be at the same time a source of excitement and pride as well as a source of anxiety and self consciousness, bringing about moodiness, irritability and emotional tensions.
One significant aspect of this stage is that the brain undergoes rapid physiological development. Awareness of their gender also begins at this stage and adolescent boys and girls make adjustments to their behaviour and appearance in order to fit in with perceived norms. At this stage, therefore, parents, the school and the community should introduce the youngster to mature experiences and to his larger environment with their full support, love and encouragement.

**Late Adolescence (15-19 years):**

This stage includes the latter part of the teenage years broadly between 15-19. Both the body and the brain continue to develop during this stage and mental abilities seem to be increasing during this stage. Although peer group still continues to play an important role in an adolescents’ life, their hold diminishes as the individual now becomes more confident of his own identity and opinions. Risk-taking, as adolescents experiment with adult behaviours declines during late adolescence. It is in these years that adolescents make their way into the world of work or further education, settle on their own identity and world view and start to engage actively in shaping the world around them.

**1.04. Developmental Tasks during Adolescence:**

The concept of “developmental task” given by Havighurst (1952) is a significant aspect of development. According to this concept, there are social expectations for every stage of development and every culture expects its members to acquire certain skills, and patterns of behaviour appropriate to that particular age during the life span. Some tasks arises mainly as the individual matures physically such as learning to read and also out of personal values and aspirations of the individual such as choosing and preparing for a vocation. The age of adolescence is no exception and some developmental tasks during this stage as outlined by Havighurst are as follows:
Achieving new and more mature relations with age-mates of both sexes.

Accepting one’s physique and using one’s body effectively.

Desiring, accepting and achieving socially responsible behaviour.

Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults.

Preparing for an economic career.

Preparing for marriage and family life.

Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behaviour and developing an ideology.

Thus, it is clear that preparing for a career is an important developmental task during adolescence which may have far reaching implications on an individual’s future life as a member of the society.

1.05. Demographic Trends for Adolescents:

- In 2009, there were 1-2 billion adolescents aged 10-19 in the world forming 18 percent of the world population. Adolescent numbers have more than doubled since 1950.

- The vast majority of adolescents – 88 percent live in developing countries. The least developed countries are home to roughly 1 in every 6 adolescents.

- More than half of the world’s adolescents live either in South Asia or the East Asia and Pacific region, each of which contains roughly 330 million adolescents.

- India has the largest national population of adolescents (243 million) followed by China (207 million), United States (44 million), Indonesia and Pakistan (both 41 million).

- Adolescents account for more than 1 in every 5 inhabitants of sub-
saharan African, South Asia and the least developed countries.

- At the global level, adolescents share of the total population peaked in the 1980’s at just over 20 percent.


1.05.1. Adolescent population in Assam:

According to Census of India, 2011, Assam ranks 13\textsuperscript{th} among the states and Union Territories of India in respect of Adolescent population. The total Adolescent population in 2011 was 65,60,308 which accounts for 2.59 percent of the total adolescent population of India.

[Source : A Profile of Adolescents and Youth in India; United Nations Population Fund and Census of India, 2011].

1.06. Career Choice and Development and its importance:

Career choice and development is an important dimension of human development. It is a well known fact that human development is not development in a single direction but multi faceted. Development of an individual means development in all dimensions such as physical, cognitive, social, emotional, vocational and moral dimensions. Growth on these dimensions is not mutually exclusive, they are interdependent. For instance, an individual who possess appropriate social skills and better adaptation qualities may be an asset to certain careers which require a lot of interaction with people. Career development permeate various dimensions in so far as it gets influenced by a healthy growth of individuals in such areas such as physical fitness, emotional maturity, communication skills, work skills and competencies. Hence, it can be said that career choice and development is an important aspect of human development.
1.07. Theories of Career Choice and Development:

A variety of psychological and social dynamics of human behaviour come into play when the process of making career choices takes place in an individual. Many theories offer comprehensive explanations about what and why individuals select various careers. A brief overview of the theories related to career choice and development is given below:

The Trait-Factory theory is a classical approach and was pioneered by Frank Parsons (1909) according to whom vocational choice is an outcome of matching an individual’s vocational assets, liabilities and interests, with requirements of the world of work. The closer the match between personal traits or characteristics and job requirements, the greater the likelihood of success.

In contrast, an alternative viewpoint looks at entry into career as a development process. Ginzberg et al’s Theory of Career Choice (1951) emphasizes that career development is a longitudinal process that inspires over a prolonged period and is not a one-time choice.
Roe’s Personality Theory of Career Choice (1957) states how psycho-social experiences in early childhood determine the development of personality orientations that in turn get reflected in one’s choice of career.

Another ‘matching approach’ that is close to the Trait Factor approach has been done in Holland’s Typological Theory of Vocational Choice (1973, 1983) where matching is done on the basis of six major types of personality and not on specific traits.

Super’s Developmental Theory (1990) depicts career entry as a growth phenomenon that is in line with the principles of human development in general. He makes an effort to put together various concepts into ‘Rainbow’ and ‘Segmental Model’.

Krumboltz (1979, 1990) gave his theory of ‘Career Decision Making’ using concepts from the ‘Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977). Bandura’s theory explains human behaviour in terms of continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences. It is believed that thoughts and actions are interdependent and they are generally influenced by environmental factors such as role models, parents, peer pressure, educational forces etc. The focus of Krumboltz’s theory is on identifying such personal and environmental conditions and events that shape an individual’s all round learning experiences educational and occupational preferences and career-decision-making skills.

Helen S. Farmer (1985) has emphasized the role of various factors that influence the career aspirations of an individual. Farmer’s model of Career and Achievement Motivation is based on Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and includes three sets of factors influencing career and educational aspiration of an individual. There are Background, Personal and Environmental factors. The background factor is comprised of demographic attributes such as gender, Socio-Economic Status (SES), age /grade and family structure (i.e. single parent versus two parent family). The personal factor is psychological in nature and is composed of an individual’s personal
attributes, self-perception of competence and attitude towards education, school and work. Lastly the environmental factors are the societal or other interpersonal factors (i.e. parental involvement, support, teacher support etc.) affecting the individual. The influence of these factors on educational and career aspirations have been well documented (Wilson and Wilson, 1992; Ford, 1993, Conger, Ge, Edler, Lorenz and Simons, 1994; Smit and Crist, 1995; Chung, Loeb and Genzo, 1996; Minj, 1997; Plucker, 1998; Shumow, Vandell and Posner, 1998, Trusty, 1998).

Among all the environmental variables the role of parents in career development of an adolescent is noteworthy which has been substantiated by several research studies. Small and Mcclean (2002) reported on the very strong influence parents can have by providing an example. The influence of school teachers on career choice is far less than that of parents. Findings of Knivetton (2004) supports Wintre etal (1988), who reported, that in things like career choice parents still had a role to play.

In this particular study, the two theoretical perspectives that are helpful in understanding parent-adolescent relationship so far as an adolescent’s career choice is concerned are Krumboltz’s Theory of Career Decision making and Helen S. Farmer’s model of Career and achievement motivation.

Both throw light on the influence of environmental factor of which parents are an important component in an adolescent’s career decision making process.

1.08. Concept of Aspirations:

The general meaning of aspirations is a strong desire to achieve something high or great in life. The notion of aspirations can mean something vague like dreams and fantasies to something concrete such as definite goals and ambitions. Aspirations address both present and future perspectives. In this sense, aspirations can be defined as an individual’s
ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work towards these goals.” (Quaglia and Cobb, 1996).

The nature of aspirations may be identified as follows:

1.08.1. **The multidimensional Nature of Aspirations**:

Although the term aspiration has generally been focused on career and educational ambitions of young people, beyond education and occupational goals, aspirations are multidimensional encompassing a range of future desires from personal needs to collective duties. Hence, it can be said that the nature of aspirations is multidimensional.

1.08.2. **The Contextual nature of Aspirations**:

Aspirations do not exist within a vacuum, but rather occur within a social context. The meaning of aspirations therefore, vary according to the context in which people live as well as their own individual characteristics and development. Hence, the concept of low versus high aspirations is relative. High aspirations for an individual living in a particular life circumstance may be considered as low aspiration for another individual living in a different set of circumstances.

1.08.3. **The Developmental Nature of Aspirations**:

Aspirations are developmental in nature in that they are influenced by changes and life transitions as one matures. The aspiration of an individual either educational or occupational are likely to change over time as a result of various factors such as constraints of financial situations, availability of opportunities or other perceived barriers.

1.09. **Parental Aspirations**:

There is no denying the fact that parents are the greatest influence on their children. Parental figures usually provide for a child’s physical needs, protect them from harm and impart them skills and cultural values until they reach legal adulthood usually after adolescence. Most parents have aspirations so far as their children’s educational and career choices are
concerned. As such parental aspirations can have a significant influence on an adolescents’ career choice.

A number of factors can influence aspirations that parents hold for their children. These are Parent Characteristics and Parental Cognitions / Behaviours. Parental characteristics includes family background variables such as parental education, parental income, social class and minority status. Parent’s cognitions about their own parenting abilities as well as their children’s abilities also influence the shaping of their aspirations. Studies have also pointed out associations between parental involvement and parental aspirations.

Parental aspirations for their children’s career are usually evident in their beliefs and resultant behaviours. Regarding parental beliefs, parents may want, wish, hope and desire for their child to follow a certain career. They are of the belief that what they aspire for their child is important for their child’s future and they would be disappointed if the child did not choose the career which they aspire for their child. Parental aspirations were also evident through parental behaviours. Through certain modes of behaviour, parents conveyed their aspirations to their children. Parental behaviours are action-oriented and are reflected in such behaviours as communication with the child, using technology to facilitate conversation, promoting active exploration of career opportunities, relating school grades to future career opportunities, emphasizing the benefits of a career and talking about options that a career provides.

Thus, through their beliefs and behaviours parental aspirations may be assessed. Parental aspiration may be of different levels. Some parents may be highly aspiring, some may have moderate aspirations while some may have very low aspirations for their children.

1.10. Career Choice of Adolescents and Parental Influence:

It has been observed that the end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood varies by country and by function and even within a single state or
culture there can be different ages at which an individual experiences and is considered to be (chronologically and legally) mature enough to be entrusted by society with certain tasks. It is during this stage that the individual experiences many anxieties as he is caught in an overlapping role of a child and that of an adult. During this stage, moodiness and irritability coupled with emotional tension seems to be the order of the day. In addition, it recent years it has been found that problems of vocational choice and related educational plans rank high in the enumeration of worries and problems of adolescents.

According to Alberts et al (2003) choice of career is one of the major areas of concern for young people nearing the end of schooling. Not surprisingly research in the areas of career development is often focused on the adolescent years as it is a crucial time for career decisions to be made.

Although adolescents actively begin demonstrating their independence from their parents in their high school years, they are still very much dependent on their parents for their career growth. Even though it was assumed that an adolescent would make career decisions independently with limited influence from others, it was not often so. In fact, an adolescent’s family was still likely to have a strong influence upon them on two significant life events – marriage and their career (Larson, 1995).

The importance of parental influence upon their children’s career choice is consistently important. Although schools, peers and the student community all have an impact on the young adult’s self identity and career choice, parents have been found to play the key roles in shaping career choices (Ferry, 2006). Parents are constant sources of influence on children with offsprings depending more on their parents than on peers, teachers or other models when forming career goals. (Peterson, Stivers and Peters, 1986). As such parental behavior, parenting style, parental involvement, belief, goals and aspirations for their children can have a significant effect on children’s educational and career choice. The parent-adolescent relationship
content has been noted as a primary influence on career goals. (Kerpelman and Schvaneveldth, 1999; Otto, 2000; Paa and Mcwhirter, 2000, Hargrove, Creagh and Burgers, 2002; Creamer and Laughlin, 2005). It has been found that parents tend to create the strongest influence on their adolescents vocational choice more than any other group including counselors, teachers, friends, or even people working in the identified occupations of desire. (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Wilko, 2004). Young et al (2001) illustrated the influence of parents on adolescents career aspirations in their novel study of career development as a family project.

Thus, the effect of parental influence in an adolescent’s life remains evident. During parent-adolescent interactions, parents often communicate their views of and aspirations for their children which in turn influence their adolescents choices.

1.11. Significance of the study:

Adolescence is said to be the most important period of human life. It is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood when the individual experiences many anxieties, choice of career being one among many. Choosing the right career is a very important aspect of the development in adolescents. This may be a crucial time of their lives when they must decide as to what choices to make keeping in view their options and limitations. The choice of future career by an adolescent significantly affects his future social relationships in the society and indirectly the progress of the country.

It has been found that adolescents are influenced in their career choice by various socio-demographic factors which include the family, the school and the peer group. However, among all the factors which influence an adolescent’s choice, the role of parents is noteworthy and it has been substantiated by various research studies that parents have a key role to play in the career goal development of their children. Parents are influential figures in an adolescents’ life with whom they become exposed to various career opportunities and implied parental aspirations. Although peers exert a
very strong influence on certain areas of an adolescent’s behaviour relevant to their lifestyle, yet on matters relevant to their future goals parents play a much more important role than peers.

Parental aspirations refer to the hopes, dreams and wishes they have for their children. Consciously or unconsciously most parents aspire for their children to choose a particular career in life. Their aspirations are reflected in their beliefs as they want their child to choose a particular career which they aspire and this belief in turn gets reflected in their resultant behaviour concerning their child’s career. All adolescents are influenced by their parental aspirations though in varying degrees while deciding upon their career. Some may be highly influenced, others to a moderate degree and some may be less influenced by their aspiring parents while making their career choice. It must be mentioned that the degree of influence of an adolescent by his or her parental aspiration may have both a positive aspect and a negative aspect. On the positive side, an adolescent who perceives his parents to have aspirations for his career and who is being conveyed this aspiration for his career may be influenced in his career decision making positively. The various traits of parental behaviours such as communication, involvement and providing the necessary materials and resources and the like may encourage the adolescent to set high aspirations for himself and have prosperous and fulfilling careers. On the other hand, a child may be influenced by his parental aspirations in a negative way by selecting a particular career so as not to disappoint his parents, in the process pushing his own aspirations, likes and dislikes and happiness to the background. Some children on the other hand may chose careers without being definite about the influence of their parents aspirations.

In this particular study, an attempt is being made to find out the parental aspirations for their adolescents’ career and whether an adolescent is highly influenced, moderately influenced or less influenced by their parental aspirations while making their career choice. It was seen that studies in this
important aspect of parental influence on an adolescent’s career choice are very few in the North East part of India particularly in Assam and hence an attempt has been made to throw some light on this area.

In view of the above, the present study of Influence of Parental Aspirations in the career choice of adolescents of Kamrup (M) District of Assam becomes significant.

1.12. Statement of the Problem:

The present investigation aims at studying the influence of parental aspirations in the career choice of adolescents. The study has been formulated under the following title – *A Study On The Influence Of Parental Aspirations In The Career Choice Of Adolescents.*

1.13. Operational Definitions:

Parental aspiration:

Parental aspiration here refers to the ambitions of parents for their children. Aspirations refers to ideal goals or ambitions, not necessarily reflecting attainable goals. Aspirations differ from expectations which reflect not only hope but may be thought of as realistic and attainable goals.

Career Choice:

Career choice in this study indicates an adolescents course or progress throughout his life (or a distinct portion of life). It is usually considered to pertain to remunerative work.

Adolescents:

Adolescents in this study refers to school going individuals (boys and girls) between the ages 15-18.

Influence:

Influence here refers to the effect parental aspirations have on the career choice of adolescents.

1.14. Objectives of the study:

The present study is undertaken with the following objectives in mind.
1. To find out the career choice of adolescent boys and girls.
2. To find out the career choice of urban and rural adolescents.
3. To find out the parental aspirations for adolescent boys and girls.
4. To find out the parental aspirations for urban and rural adolescents.
5. To find out the whether differences exist in the parental aspirations between boys and girls.
6. To find out the whether differences exist in the parental aspirations between urban and rural adolescents.
7. To study the influence of parental aspirations in the career choice of adolescent boys and girls.
8. To study the influence of parental aspirations in the career choice of rural and urban adolescents.
9. To find out whether differences exist in the influence of parental aspirations in the career choice between adolescent boys and girls.
10. To find out whether differences exist in the influence of parental aspirations in the career choice between urban and rural adolescents.
11. To find out whether relationship exists between parental aspirations and its influence on an adolescents career choice.

1.15. **Hypotheses**:

In the light of the above objectives the following null hypotheses have been formulated for the study:

- **H₀ 1.** There is no significant difference in the parental aspirations between adolescent boys and girls.
- **H₀ 2.** There is no significant difference in the parental aspirations between urban and rural adolescents.
- **H₀ 3.** There is no significant difference in the influence of parental aspirations in the career choice between adolescent boys and girls.
- **H₀ 4.** There is no significant difference in the influence of parental aspirations in the career choice between urban and rural adolescents.
adolescents.

Ho 5. There is no significant relationship between parental aspirations and its influence on adolescent career choice.

1.16. Delimitations of the study:

The present study is delimited to the following:

1. This study is limited to Kamrup (Metro) district of Assam only.
2. It includes only the school going adolescents (boys and girls) between 15-18 years of age.
3. Only Assamese medium schools are taken as sample schools for this particular study.
4. Only those schools which follow SEBA and AHSEC courses are included in the study.
5. This study includes only those schools which are either government or provincialised schools. Private schools have not been included in the study.
6. Both father and mother of the adolescents together fall under the category of parents.
7. Only biological parents are included in this study.