CHAPTER VI
Over the years, much has been written on higher education, which lately appears to have become the subject of criticism because of its failure to reach or attain the desired goal. The major criticisms levelled against higher education is its high input but a low output, as well as being less useful, less meaningful and less purposeful to those who enter the higher education system as well as the society.

Dropout at college levels had drawn considerable attention and the need to study the problem from dropout's point of view, has also been emphasised. Despite all these criticisms, suggestions and remedies put forward very little efforts have been put in to study this phenomenon.

Although the phenomenon had been studied in other countries at length, in our country very few researches in this area have been attempted so far.

Though education at every level should be accorded importance, it is imperative to check the wastage at all levels of education. This is all the more so at higher education level in India, because while on the one hand
nearly 65 per cent of the population in India is illiterate, on the other there is also a high scarcity of resources; within the available resources, when attempts are being made to educate large number of masses, it is not possible for the country to afford a high percent of wastage, but convert and channelise it to other areas of education, so that the wastage becomes an asset rather than a liability.

To accomplish this it was necessary to study the problem of dropout / wastage in depth. This could be done by first identifying the dropouts, and then the factors which contribute to dropouts in higher education and suggest suitable remedial measures for the improvement of the system of higher education.

The present study is an attempt in this direction, in that its major aim is to find out the extent of dropouts in the field of higher education and to investigate the various factors which contribute to the dropout phenomenon.

It has also attempted to study the differences between dropouts and non dropouts on various dimensions so as to acquire an adequate picture of the phenomenon.

To be more specific the present study set out with the main objectives as follows:

1. To ascertain the percentage of dropouts to their initial enrolment in the higher education level.

2. To ascertain the causative factors of dropping out of the higher education.
3. To determine the correlates of dropouts.

4. To ascertain if the dropouts and non dropouts differed in terms of socio-demographic, and personality variables.

5. To ascertain if the dropouts and non dropouts differed in their attitude towards higher education, in the achievement motivation, and their future plans.

The study was conducted in two phases. In Phase-I, an attempt was made to determine the extent of dropout.

In Phase-II, an attempt was made to identify the correlates of dropouts and the typical nature and characteristic features related to dropouts.

For this purpose, 20 affiliated colleges of Delhi University were taken up as a sample. Tools used in the present study for the data collection were as follows:

1. A proforma specially devised to collect information on enrolment, number of students appearing in the final year examination, withdrawal and dropouts from the respective colleges.

2. An open ended questionnaire to ascertain the reasons for dropping out (devised specially for the purpose).

3. An attitude measurement scale (constructed specially for the purpose of study).
4. A questionnaire covering socio-demographic factors devised specially for the purpose.

5. Sentence completion test for achievement motivation (Shanthaman, and Hafeez 1968).

6. Personality adjustment Inventory for college students. (Sinha and Singh 1972).

The statistical methods used for analysing the data included chi-square test, Mean, Standard deviation, t-test, inter correlation matrix, and Multiple step wise regression analysis.

The results obtained were as follows:

1. At higher education level only 60 percent of the total enrolled students appeared in the final year examination in the first instance; and thus nearly 40 percent were found to be the wastage at college level.

2. Out of the 40 percent wastage, nearly 22 percent were in attrition in the sense that these students had withdrawn from the college in the beginning itself.

3. Nearly 18 percent of the total enrolled students appeared as probable dropouts. Of these, (N = 2304 ) nearly 69 percent of students had somehow completed their graduation else where and thus only about 31 percent of the probable dropouts turned out to be actual dropouts in higher education.
4. The ratio of dropouts amongst males was far higher (2.79 percent) than amongst females (1.55 percent).

5. The ratio of dropout in the co-educational colleges were significantly higher than that of women's college.

6. The ratio of dropout in the rural colleges were significantly more than in the urban colleges.

7. The correlates of dropouts; the factors that contributed to dropouts were age, sex, marital status, belonging to SC/ST category and socio-economic status.

8. Dropouts and non dropouts differed significantly in terms of age factor i.e. dropouts were significantly older in age than the non dropouts.

9. Significantly more students were found to be married amongst the dropouts group than amongst the non-dropouts indicating that marriage is a factor contributing to dropout phenomenon.

10. Size of the family also appeared to influence the dropout phenomenon, in the sense that significantly more number of dropouts came from joint families as compared to non dropouts who mainly came from nuclear families.

11. The occupation of the fathers also appeared to influence the dropout phenomenon. That is, there were relatively lesser number of parents in occupations
of prestige or of a professional nature such as doctor, engineer, teacher, executive etc., from amongst dropouts as against the non dropouts.

12. Majority of dropouts came from relatively lower socio-economic strata as compared to non dropouts.

13. Significantly more non dropout students had parents who were relatively more educated than those of dropout students.

14. There was a significant difference between dropouts and non-dropouts in terms of the type of school they had attended earlier to joining the college, while more non dropouts were from public schools, more dropouts were from State Government run schools.

15. The educational record at school leaving level of the non dropout students were significantly of a higher achievement than that of dropout students. In other words, there were more first divisioners and merit rank holders amongst non dropouts as compared to the dropout students.

16. There was no significant difference between dropouts and non dropouts in terms of their attitude towards higher education. All of them had neutral attitude but tending-towards-favourable for higher education.
17. There was a significant difference between dropouts and non dropouts in their achievement motivation. The non dropouts were significantly more achievement-oriented than dropout students.

18. The non dropouts were significantly better adjusted than the dropouts and this was particularly noted in the area of social and educational adjustments.

19. There was a significant difference between dropouts and non dropouts regarding their plans for their future career; while the non dropouts had clearly fixed and more ambitious goals, the dropouts had none.

20. Significantly more number of non dropouts were dissatisfied with their present examination system than the dropouts. They explained a wish for non biased evaluation system.

21. The dropouts and non dropouts both agreed that higher education should be linked with a job.

The above results were examined and discussed in the light of various researches related to the dropout and wastage phenomenon. Though empirical researches in the field of dropout are negligible, yet within the available studies, one finds considerable similarity between the findings of this research and those of others. The exclusive contribution of
the present research vis a vis the others is the delineating of the correlates of dropouts indicating the typical factors contributing to this phenomenon.

LIMITATIONS

While the objectives set for this study have been realised, there have been certain limitations which need to be taken cognizance of. It is well known that however much one may attempt a perfect research design, certain limitations are unavoidable, particularly in the field of education where one deals with human subjects and that too with the dropout students. Despite this basic limitation an attempt has been made to ensure as adequate a research design as possible by controlling as many extraneous variances as possible by either building them into the research design or by taking matched subjects and by taking a big sample wherever possible.

In addition to the above, certain important limitations have been entered into the study which are being presented below:

First, one should consider the limitation in regard to the availability of the information regarding dropouts from the respective colleges. As mentioned elsewhere, only twenty, out of thirty seven college in Delhi could
provide the required information and that too with great difficulty. The records maintained by the colleges were such that they failed to provide information about a student's whereabouts. For example, if a student got transferred to another college, he must have taken a migration certificate from that college, which can be easily maintained. But this was not the case. In most cases, other information such as withdrawals etc., were not maintained by the colleges, with the result that all these students were taken as potential dropouts to make a further investigation. The colleges could provide only some of the withdrawal cases, which also was not able to provide the reason for such withdrawals.

The second limitation refers to the poor response by these potential dropouts. For instance, in this study a total of 2304 potential dropouts were sent a reply post card asking their actual reasons for leaving the college. Out of 2304 post cards 155 were returned because the persons at given addresses were not available. Only 804 post cards were received duly filled in; and the remaining 1345 students did not respond. As such the findings of the study cannot be generalised.

It would have been ideal to have taken a few colleges from certain other states, especially some from highly
advanced states and some from backward states and then compare them with the Central University colleges. An attempt was also made to study Aligarh Muslim University, Banaras Hindu University and its affiliated colleges. But the non-availability of the desired information and inadequate record-keeping limited this study to Delhi University colleges.

The third limitation was in regard to making contact with the actual dropouts. Out of 804 responses, only 250 turned out to be the real dropouts. Ideally, all these 250 should have been interviewed.

However this was again not possible due to the following reasons:

i. Change of residence of the dropouts;
ii. Inability to interview those who had left Delhi and gone elsewhere after marriage.
iii. Non-availability of a number of dropouts at home inspite of arranging an appointment. They were either busy with their jobs or their business.

Thus, with great difficulty only 115 dropouts could be personally contacted and interviewed, which is a very small sample and cannot be considered representative enough for generalization.
The next limitation, though mentioned earlier, is the selection of one University. If some more Universities could have been taken and the colleges outside Delhi could have been included the findings could have been more generalizable. But it could not be done because of the complexities involved in it and the lack of uniformity in maintaining the records.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Arising from the limitations mentioned above, one may put forward the following suggestions for future research in this field:

1. This study, both phase-I and phase-II; has to be replicated so as to ascertain if the findings of this study are relevant in the Indian context as a whole.

2. The future research in this field may include some more universities, or the colleges taken should be representative of various Universities of Delhi.

3. To make the problem more understandable, the parents and guardians of the dropouts as well as non-dropouts should also be included.
4. Future research in this field may take up the view of the college principles and the teachers concerned.

5. Subject differences in wastage, stagnation, attrition and dropout etc., have been brought out clearly by many earlier researchers in other countries. In India too, one may explore this aspect in more detail, as in this study the variation in terms of subject factor have not been dealt with adequately.

While the above limitations have been listed out and suggestions for overcoming the limitations as well as the direction for future researches have been presented, it is important to reiterate that despite the above limitations, the findings of this study have been able to throw light on a very difficult and somewhat loosely explored area in the field of higher education, namely, the dropout phenomenon.

As mentioned earlier, other researches in this field had not dealt with the problem of dropout in the manner in which this study has done, that is, differentiating the dropouts clearly from wastage, stagnation and probable dropouts as well as delineating the correlates of dropouts. To this extent, the present study is rather unique. Hence, one may consider this study as having made a significant and unique contribution to the field of higher education and in turn to the field of educational Psychology.