CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM

As stated in the previous chapter, the problem of this investigation is to prepare a test for assessing the social intelligence of individuals. The test will be a standardized test which will measure quantitatively social intelligence of pupils. It will also be useful to assess the social ability of adults and people belonging to various professional groups. Incidentally, the test will lead to such studies as the effect of environmental factors as grades, occupational status etc. on social intelligence.

It is necessary to clarify the concept of social intelligence as it is understood in this work.

Social Intelligence:

Educators all over the world are familiar with the word 'intelligence' which is taken to mean the general intelligence or the general mental ability as measured by many of the tests. E. L. Thorndike is generally given

the credit for positing the existence of a social intelligence. He suggested that what goes on under the name of general intelligence is really not a single ability. He suggested his frequently quoted division of intelligence into three different categories viz. (i) abstract intelligence, (ii) concrete intelligence and (iii) social intelligence. By abstract intelligence, Thorndike meant the ability to understand and deal with verbal and mathematical symbols. All the tests of intelligence usually measure this type of intelligence. By concrete intelligence, he meant the ability of an individual to deal with concrete objects or the ability of an individual to deal with his physical environment. He also termed this as, "Mechanical intelligence". Most of the tests of mechanical aptitude measure this variety viz. the concrete or the mechanical intelligence according to Thorndike. By social intelligence he meant the ability to deal with people and to understand them. It was in the year 1920 that Thorndike put forward this concept of social intelligence. Since then many definitions of this concept have been given by different workers in the field. These definitions may be roughly divided into three groups:
(i) those giving a different meaning to the word 'social';

(ii) those bracketing this concept with interest and attitude;

(iii) those delimiting its scope to social information only.

In the first group of definitions, the word 'social' is used in the sense of 'pertaining to society'. The term "social intelligence" is defined as the socially desirable reaction of an individual to the more or less institutionalized phases of society.1

In the second group of definitions, social intelligence is equated to social interest, attitude and adjustment. According to this concept, social intelligence is only another term for "sociability". The main exponents of this definition are Washburn, Gilliland, Burke, Stattler and Hunting.2

In the third group, social intelligence is considered as synonymous to social information, social etiquette, knowledge of social usage etc.

James Drever3 defines 'social intelligence' as

2 R. L. Thorndike & S. Stein, Ibid., Page 277
"the type of intelligence involved in an individual's dealings with other people and with social relationships; high social intelligence is almost synonymous with tact". H. N. Cisney\(^1\) defines the term as "ability to understand and manage people and to act wisely in human relations".

The problem is to give a proper meaning to the concept of social intelligence. Is social intelligence to be confused with social adjustment? Is social intelligence to be narrowed down to merely social interests or social attitudes? Is social intelligence to be narrowly limited to knowledge of social usage? To the investigator, it seems that social intelligence should not be narrowed down to mere social adjustment or social interests or social usage. Social intelligence should have a very broad and comprehensive meaning.

Thorndike's definition and Cisney's definition are more or less broad definitions and encompass all that is required to be included in the concept of 'social intelligence'. When one talks of the ability to deal with people, to understand people and to manage people, one is supposed to have the ability to adjust, to have a proper social attitude and to have a knowledge of social usage.

\(^1\) H. N. Cisney, "Classification of Occupations," Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
usage. The investigator agrees with Cisney's definition having the above broad meaning. James Drever also agrees to this definition.

Need:

It has been a common experience of many teachers and principals that some of their pupils who had a very bright school or college record, failed miserably in the world of work. Again it is also the experience of teachers that mediocre pupils of their school, secured a phenomenal success in their jobs. Some people are liked by many whereas there are others who are usually shunned. How well does a man handle his personal relationships and in what way does he handle them? Does he like people? Do people like him? How many of them? Do they admire him because he is strong? Or because he flatters them? Do they admire him because he is friendly but objective and co-operative though non-interfering? Is he a leader or a follower? Does he talk most of the time or does he listen? These and many more questions raise themselves when we are concerned with individual differences in the way people deal with other people. The way in which they manage these relationships with others is one of the vital indices of potential success; failure or mediocrity in school and college and on the job. The tool to assess social intelligence is required to measure these differences.
That some social skill of a special type is required of individuals for success in certain kinds of jobs has been recognised by all. How important the level of social ability may be is indicated by the fact that many studies of why people have been dismissed from jobs show that the large percentage have been discharged, not for technical incompetence, but because of difficulties to deal and manage with people. This has meant failure in interpersonal relationships with bosses, fellow workers and subordinates. The Minnesota Occupational Rating Scales have presented a statement of the useful levels of social intelligence in some occupations. The top level in this is represented as being characterised by face to face situations in which the person possessing and demonstrating an unusual social skill shapes the behaviour of others in desired directions by persuasion. This is true with an insurance agent. An average ability is needed in many occupations such as salesmen, telephone operators etc. Many occupations do not require any special social skill, e.g. a research worker. This is sufficient evidence to show the need for adequate social skill in the world of work. A tool to measure this skill will be useful in recruiting proper persons for jobs demanding social intelligence.
In secondary schools, such a test will prove useful for guidance purposes. At present, the cumulative record cards in secondary schools are not properly maintained in absence of proper tests needed to collect data about the pupils. Some of the tests which can be used and which are available in Gujarat are a 'Test of General Intelligence', a few standardised achievement tests and some unstandardised interest questionnaires and a couple of aptitude tests. No tests of professional aptitudes are available at present. There is a need to explore new areas in test construction. The guidance bureaux in India in general and Gujarat in particular acutely feel the lack of such standardized tests. The few tests that are available are not sufficient. A mere estimate of the general intelligence does not provide adequate data to a guidance worker. Experience in studying the bases for success of high school or college students and the bases for success in various vocations has emphasized the need for an ability over and above the general mental ability. This ability is the ability to deal with and understand people. Man is after all a social animal. His attitudes, his reactions to society and its various phases, his social interactions, his social sensitivity, his ability to decide correctly in
intriguing situations - all these are contributory factors to his success in those walks of life where he has to deal with people and not with abstract symbols or concrete things. This points to the need of preparing a reliable tool to assess 'social intelligence'.

Scope for the present investigation:

The present work when completed will be the first of its type in India. It will be the only tool to measure the social intelligence of pupils, adults and professional groups. As the test is being prepared in Gujarati, it will have the same limitations that language barrier brings to all tests in regional languages. As far as the present work is concerned, the test will have a limited utility, being useful to Gujarati knowing population of the present bilingual Bombay State. Yet there will be one difference so far as this test is concerned. With minor modifications, this test can be adapted in any language and norms for the population of the region can be determined.

Selected References


