SUMMARY

Classroom learning is often discussed in terms of cognition and the various cognitive process which are basic to learning in academic settings. Most of the models and research on academic cognition did not address issues of motivation, emotion and other non-cognitive factors that may facilitate or constrain learning (Pintrich, 2003). But, now researchers appear to be focusing their attention on gaining information about the role of non-cognitive factors in learning and academic achievement. On the cognitive side, current theoretical accounts of learning view students as active seekers and processors of information (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2003). On the non-cognitive front, attempts are being made to explore factors such as motivation, emotions, classroom environment, effects of family environment and so on. The non-cognitive factors are particularly crucial to academic achievement as research has been demonstrating that these factors tend to serve as a significant source of variance in the drop-out rate (Alfassi, 2003). Thus, intelligence by itself cannot be considered to be the sole determinant of academic achievement. That is why high motivation and involvement in learning are being consistently linked to reduced dropout rates and increased levels of student success (Kushman, Sieber, & Harold, 2000). Wentzel (2003) has stated that being successful at school requires children to acquire a range of academic as well as social competencies. In addition to mastering the subject matter, students are supposed to develop effective learning strategies, perform well on tests, maintain and establish interpersonal relationships, strive to develop social identities and a sense of belongingness.

Thus, academic achievement does not exclusively depend on the intellectual ability; it rather depends on a host of psychological, sociological and environmental factors which tend to interact with the learning process of
the student. The increased awareness of the role of above factors has resulted in a gradual shift of emphasis from intellectual to non-intellectual factors as determiners of academic success.

Furthermore, it is being now realised that many seemingly ordinary people, i.e. those who are at the average level of intellectual ability, can also build successful career and lead the life happily.

Hence it was thought worthwhile to differentiate the high and low achievers on the basis of non-intellectual factors like perception, motivation and attitudes. Specifically, it would be desirable to find out whether the high and low achievers could be differentiated in terms of their home and classroom environments as perceived by them as well as their attitude toward learning and self-concept.

In many instances the roots of low academic achievement appear to be lying in unfavourable home conditions involving poor family relationships, inadequate support and help, and lack of encouragement from the family members. Such type of home environment creates adverse effect on the child’s tendency to realise his potentials. On the other hand, if the child gets intellectual and moral support from the family, a positive approach toward his studies and academic achievement is likely to be developed on his part. It is then reasonable to expect that a home environment which is favourable may lead to better academic achievement than the environment which is unfavourable. This in turn is likely to get reflected in the perceptions of high and low achievers of their home environment. The former may turn out to be having more favourable perception of home environment than the latter.

Classroom environment, another non-intellectual factor, can also exert its influence on the academic success of students. The classroom, for
example, where students find support and encouragement from their teachers coupled with less rigid control tend to be disposed more favourably toward learning. This in turn can create a positive impact on their academic performance. Classrooms with poor rule clarity and unduly harsh discipline, on the other hand, can create adverse effect on students’ attitude toward learning. Negative learning attitude in turn can lower motivation to learn and lead to lower academic performance. In view of the effects of favourable and unfavourable classroom environment on the academic performance of students, it is likely that high achievers and low achievers may differ in their perception of classroom environment with the former tending to have more favourable perception of their classroom environment than the latter.

Self-concept is another important predictor of academic achievement of students. Students’ self-esteem is influenced by many factors. Every individual has a self-concept. It reflects his perception of himself in terms of what kind of person he thinks or believes he is. Parents, teachers, friends, fellow classmates, and other aspects of environment constantly keep on influencing the child’s self-esteem. Thus, when he realizes that he is praised or appreciated by others, he also starts perceiving himself as good or competent. It has been observed that having a high self-esteem has many positive effects and benefits, especially among students. Students who feel positive about themselves have fewer sleepless nights, succumb less easily to pressures of conformity by peers, are more persistent at difficult tasks, are happier and more sociable, and tend to perform better academically. On the other hand, students with a low self-esteem tend to be unhappy, less sociable, more likely to use drugs and alcohol, and are more vulnerable to depression.

The present study considers yet another non-intellectual factor which influences academic achievement of students. Attitude toward learning is, in
the ultimate analysis, linked with motivation which basically involves willingness to learn. If the students believe that the resultant change or modification of their behaviour, which forms the core of learning, is in their interest such as personal growth, academic success or other benefits, they will respond positively to participation in learning activities carried out at the school. A favourable attitude toward learning may increase their motivation to learn, and increased motivation in turn would lead to efficient learning, improvement in academic performance and modification of behaviour. It is, then, likely that the high and low achievers could be differentiated in terms of the extent to which they are favourably disposed toward learning.

The main objective of the present study is to find out whether high and low achievers differ in perceptions of family and classroom environments, self-concept and attitude toward learning. In addition, it also aims at finding out whether Marathi and English medium students as well as male and female students, regardless of the level of their academic achievement, differ in the foresaid perceptions, self-concept and attitude toward learning.

Accordingly, this study has been undertaken to find out empirically based answers to the following questions:

1) Do the school students of grade nine, who are identified as high achievers, perceive their home environment to be more favourable than do those identified as low achievers?

2) Do the school students of grade nine, who are identified as high achievers, perceive the environment of their classrooms to be more favourable than do those identified as low achievers?
3) Do the school students of grade nine, who are identified as high
achievers, tend to be higher in their perception of self-worth than
those identified as low achievers?

4) Are the school students of grade nine, identified as high achievers,
more favourably disposed toward learning than those identified as
low achievers?

5) Do English and Marathi medium students of grade nine, regardless of
weather they are high or low achievers, differ in perceptions of their
family and classroom environments, self-concept and attitude toward
learning?

6) Do male and female students of grade nine, regardless of whether
they are high or low achievers, differ in perceptions of their family
and classroom environments, self-concept, and attitude toward
learning?

The following hypotheses have been formulated for this study
in order to provide answers to the aforesaid questions:

1) School students of grade nine, who are identified as high achievers,
tend to perceive their home environment more favourably than those
identified as low achievers.

2) English and Marathi medium students of grade nine, do not differ in
the perceived favourableness of their home environment.

3) School students of grade nine, who are identified as high achievers,
tend to perceive the environment of their classrooms more favourably
than those who are low achievers.
4) English and Marathi medium school students of grade nine, do not differ in the perceived favourableness of their classroom environment.

5) School students of grade nine, identified as high achievers, tend to be higher in their self-esteem than those identified as low achievers.

6) English and Marathi medium school students of grade nine, do not differ in their self-esteem.

7) School students of grade nine, identified as high achievers, tend to be more favourably disposed toward learning than those identified as low achievers.

8) English and Marathi medium students of grade nine, do not differ in their attitude toward learning.

9) Male and female school students of grade nine, do not differ in the perceived favourableness of their home environment.

10) Male and female school students of grade nine, do not differ in the perceived favourableness of their classroom environment.

11) Male and female school students of grade nine, do not differ in the level of their self-esteem.

12) Male and female school students of grade nine, do not differ in their attitude toward learning.

The sample of this study consists of 400 students (200 boys and 200 girls) of IX grade belonging to 5 English and 5 Marathi medium schools located in Pune. The sample drawn from ten schools could be described as purposive, and it contains two subgroups, viz. high and low achievers. The criterion for selecting low and high achievers has been the percentage of
marks obtained by the students in their last two, namely, VII and VIII grade annual examinations. Those who had obtained marks in the range of 35% to 48%, were regarded as low achievers, while those whose obtained marks were 65% and above were considered as high achievers. The break up of the sample is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English Medium (N=200)</th>
<th>Marathi Medium (N=200)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys (N= 100)</td>
<td>Girls (N=100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Achievers</td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>N=50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=200)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Achievers</td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>N=50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=200)</td>
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The following measures have been used for collecting data:

1) Attitude Toward Learning Scale
2) Family Environment Scale
3) Classroom Environment Scale
4) Self-esteem Inventory by Coopersmith, (1986 School form).

In addition, class teachers of the participants were provided with seven-point rating scales for the purpose of assessing them along four trait dimensions- willingness to learn, ability to comprehend, clarity in expression, and curiosity to learn.

Since Hypotheses 1 and 2 involve predictions concerning differences in perceived family environment between high and low achievers as well as English medium and Marathi medium students, a 2x2 factorial design was employed for their verification. The level of academic achievement and English v/s Marathi medium were granted the status of independent variables, while perceived home environment was treated as the dependent variable. Hypotheses 3 and 4 have been verified by using another 2x2 factorial design in which the two independent variables are again the level of academic achievement and medium of instruction opted, while perceived
classroom environment as the dependent variable. For the verification of hypotheses 5 to 8, which involve predictions concerning difference in the level of self-esteem and attitude toward learning, a 2x2 factorial design has been repeated. The independent variables here are level of academic achievement and medium of instruction opted, while the dependent variables are level of self-esteem (for hypotheses 5 and 6) and attitude toward learning (for hypotheses 7 and 8).

Hypotheses 9 to 12 involve predictions concerning differences in perceived home and classroom environments as well as self-esteem and attitude toward learning between male and female students. While verifying these hypotheses the variable ‘sex difference’ was explored along with the variable ‘level of academic achievement’ with a view to find out how far the former exerted its effect on the dependent variables, both independently and in interaction with the level of academic achievement. As such, for the verification of aforesaid hypotheses also a 2x2 factorial design was employed with sex difference and level of academic achievement as the independent variables.

Apart from the verification of twelve hypotheses, it was also decided to compare the high and low achievers along four relevant characteristics mentioned earlier. The purpose was to find out how favourably the low and high achievers were rated in respect of each characteristic. It was also decided to find out how did the males and females as well as English and Marathi medium students compare with each other in the ratings received by them from their classroom teachers. The best way to do this was to employ a 2x2x2 factorial design with the level of academic achievement, Marathi v/s English medium and sex difference as the independent variables, and ratings received from teachers as the dependent variables.
As for statistical treatment, the ‘F’ test was employed to see whether the criterion groups differed significantly in the predicted direction in the concerned aspects of behaviour such as perception of family and classroom environment and perception of self worth as well as attitude toward learning.

The findings of the present study have revealed the following trends:

1) High achievers tend to perceive greater cohesion and lesser conflict among their family members. They also perceive greater achievement as well as intellectual and cultural orientations in their families. The indication is that high achievers perceive their family environment more favourably than low achievers.

2) High achievers tend to perceive their classroom environment more favourably along the dimensions of teacher support and order and organization. They perceive their teachers to be exercising less rigid control. In comparison low achievers tend to be significantly different from high achievers in the opposite direction along these dimensions. The two groups have, however, not differed significantly in the dimension of innovation.

3) High achievers have turned out to be higher in their overall self-esteem than low achievers. The former also tend to evaluate themselves more favourably than the latter along three dimensions, viz. home, school and general. The two groups have, however, not differed significantly in social self-esteem.

4) High achievers tend to be more favourably disposed toward learning than low achievers.

5) English medium and Marathi medium students of grade nine do not differ in their perceptions of home environment along the dimensions
of cohesion, conflict and intellectual and cultural orientation. However, Marathi medium students tend to perceive greater achievement orientation in their homes than do English medium students.

6) Marathi medium students tend to perceive greater teacher support, better order and organization, less rigid teacher control, and greater innovation in their classroom settings than do English medium students.

7) While English medium students have evaluated their 'self' more favourably in social and home settings, Marathi medium students have turned out to be higher in their evaluation of self in general and within the domain of school life. Not only this, but Marathi medium students' overall self-esteem has also proved to be higher than that of English medium students.

8) Marathi medium students are more favourably disposed toward learning than are English medium students.

9) Although boys and girls do not differ in their perceptions of home environment along the dimensions of cohesion, conflict and achievement orientation, the former see their families to be higher in intellectual and cultural orientation than do the latter.

10) Boys and girls have not differed in their perceptions of teacher support and innovation in classroom learning and teaching. However, boys see greater order and organization coupled with more rigid teacher control in classrooms than do girls.
11) Boys tend to be higher in their overall self-esteem than girls. Boys tend to be higher in the evaluation of general self than girls. However, the two groups do not differ in their self-evaluation in the domains of home and school life.

12) Boys and girls do not differ in their attitude toward learning.

13) High achievers have received higher ratings from their class teachers on certain relevant characteristics namely, willingness to learn, ability to comprehend, clarity in expression, and curiosity to learn than low achievers.

**Limitations and Applicability of the findings:**

Since the findings of this study are based on a sample of students restricted to only one city, it is not proper to treat them as generalizations.

This study certainly has some limitations. One of them is, as mentioned above, that the sample covered in it consists of English and Marathi Medium students belonging to ten schools located in Pune City. Secondly, only certain presumably more relevant dimensions of family and classroom environments have been taken into consideration for the purpose of measuring participants' perceptions of these environments.

In spite of these limitations, the findings pertaining to differences in perceptions of family and classroom environments can be fruitfully utilized for planning interventions for the purpose of bringing improvement in the academic performance of low achievers. Also, certain unfounded beliefs concerning differences in perceptions, attitudes and some relevant traits among boys and girls as well as English and Marathi medium students, can be removed by taking clues from the findings of this study. Finally, the findings have given a clear verdict that classroom learning need not be discussed exclusively in terms of intelligence and other cognitive capabilities.