SYNOPSIS

Reading, in its sociological, psychological and pedagogical aspects, has for over a century been the most persistently investigated phenomenon in the field of education. Attempts have been made by various researchers to compare the Reading Ability in terms of intelligence (Gray, 1960; Shah, 1981), home variables (Goodacre, 1967; Rao and Subramanyam, 1982), school (Mosenthal, 1983), personality variables (Noville, 1967; Hughes, 1975) and academic performance (Feshbach et al., 1977; Butler et al., 1982). While a few researchers have also pointed out to the need for an efficient and accurate means of predicting failure in reading at an early age (Jorm, 1983; Sheppard and Sheppard, 1983), no study has been able to consider Reading Ability on a comprehensive level. In almost all the studies, the researchers have considered Reading Ability in terms of vocabulary or comprehension or Reading speed or vocabulary and comprehension. No one has so far considered the Reading Ability comprehensively be in terms of students' Reading speed, comprehension, vocabulary, spelling and handwriting. Thus the present study has taken up Reading Ability as a sum total of the above five factors. The main objectives of the present research were to study the correlates of Reading Ability and its relation to academic performance.

To be more specific, the present study set out with the main objectives of (1) ascertaining the correlates of Reading Ability, (2) ascertaining the relationship between Reading Ability and academic
(ii)

performance, (3) ascertaining the relationship between Reading Ability and personality traits, personal attributes and home background of students, (4) ascertaining whether Reading Ability differs in terms of different types of school and (5) ascertaining whether improvement in Reading Ability will lead to improvement in the academic performance of students.

The whole study was conducted in two phases. In Phase I, the correlates of Reading Ability were delineated and in Phase II an attempt was made to ascertain if improvement in Reading Ability led to improvement in the academic performance of students.

For the Phase I of this study, a sample of 360 students were taken from three different classes (viz. Class II, III and IV) of four different types of school (viz. Public school, Missionary school, Navayug school and Central school). They were administered the Reading Ability test (devised by Researcher), intelligence test (A.N. Misra, 1971), phonic ability test (J.M. Hughes, 1975), home background instrument (devised by Researcher), and personality traits (devised by Researcher). Students' academic performance (marks) of the previous examination were noted from the school's Report Card. For Phase II, 45 students of class III studying in Navayug school were taken with 15 students each (7 with good Reading Ability and 8 with poor Reading Ability) for Experimental group, Control Group I and Control Group II respectively.
The research design used for the Phase I study was intercorrelation matrix and the Phase II, ex-post facto experimental design. The statistical method used were inter correlational matrix, stepwise regression analysis, t-test and trend analysis.

The results obtained were (1) Reading Ability was constituted of a number of factors such as personality traits, intelligence, phonetic ability, reading habit of students, reading interest of students, health of students, availability of reading materials at home, parents' education, parents' occupation and reading habit of parents. (2) Reading Ability was positively and significantly correlated with academic performance, (3) Reading Ability was a function of types of school; specifically, Missionary school students had the highest Reading Ability scores, followed by students of Public School, Navayug school and Central school in that order, (4) Reading Ability varied in terms of differential personality traits amongst students, (5) Reading Ability of students differed significantly in terms of their personal attributes, (6) Reading Ability was positively and significantly correlated with home background, (7) Reading Ability did not differ as a function of sex factor, except in the case of class II, Missionary school students wherein girls had significantly higher Reading Ability scores than boys, (8) Improvement in Reading Ability led to better academic performance amongst students.

These results have been discussed in the light of the various theoretical models existing in the field of Reading Ability as well as in the light of various research studies conducted in the field
by educationists, psychologists and educational psychologists. The findings of this study has been able to categorically demonstrate that Reading Ability is constituted of a large number of factors, and any study on Reading Ability will be incomplete and inadequate if it does not take into consideration all the ten correlates of Reading Ability delineated by this study. Furthermore, the Research has also been able to show clearly through an empirical investigation that improvement in Reading Ability amongst students of primary class, will lead to improvement in their academic performance.

The present research has been thus able to throw light on a difficult and somewhat loosely explored area, viz. Reading Ability, in the field of education. Towards this end, the present study may be considered as having made an unique contribution to the field of education.