CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the rationale of the study and defines the variables under study in this research. These variables are - emotions, anxiety, occupational stress, emotional intelligence, optimism, achievement motivation, academic achievement and teacher effectiveness.

1.1 Preamble to the Current Study

With global opportunities and rising aspirations of the youth and their parents, medical and engineering related studies in India attract many students. But quite often, students are not able to cope with the academic pressure due to various reasons such as enormous syllabus, difficulty of the curriculum, long studying hours, and emotional factors like staying away from home, family and financial problems, rigid, authoritative and non encouraging faculty. Social factors like alcohol use, drug addiction, lack of recreational activities, competitive environment, uncertain future, cultural and minority issues, mismatch between capability and expectation are also responsible, thus creating a lot of stress, anxiety and even depression among these students (Vaidya & Mulgaonker, 2007; Kumar, Jain & Hegde, 2012). Even those students who perform well in schools are sometimes unable to cope in college. In fact, medical and engineering students in other countries as well face similar problems (Collins, 2010; Foster & Spencer, 2003; Schneider, 2007).

In the field of medical and engineering education anxiety and depression on campus is not a new issue, but it actually constitutes a serious crisis that administrators, professors, students and parents must absolutely address as it is becoming a matter of increasing concern worldwide. According to reports available on internet (Krishnaswamy, 2011; Chi, 2011) and newspapers (Alvi, 2012; Times of India, 2013) it has been observed that in past few years, suicide and depression cases have increased considerably in private as well as government medical and engineering colleges of India. Depression is becoming highly common and according to World Health Organisation (WHO) by 2020 it would be the second-most prevalent condition worldwide (Singh, Lal & Shekhar, 2010). The findings call for increasing concern and proper interventional measures about the psychological wellbeing of the students as stress, anxiety and
depression interfere with their psychological, social and academic functioning, placing them at greater risk for problems such as substance abuse and suicidal behaviour.

Conventionally, in higher education a teacher brings two things to the classroom that are of value to the learners. One is subject expertise the other is knowledge of teaching methods i.e. a teacher’s pedagogy. But emotional intelligence is the unrecognized third component of what a teacher has to offer to learners (Mortiboys, 2005) because learning does not take place in isolation of learner’s feelings. It involves struggle, frustration, anxiety, thrill or excitement (Claxton, 1999). According to neuroscience, the neural connection between the thinking and emotional centers of the brain can either enhance or inhibit a person’s ability to learn (Cacioppo & Berntson, 2009). Studies have also shown that positive emotions can activate and stimulate the brain for better storage and recall of information whereas, stress and threat inhibits learning (Dalgleish, 2004).

1.2 Introduction to emotions

*Emotions* are complex pattern of arousal, subjective feelings and cognitive interpretations caused by the complex interplay of physiological, cognitive and situational variables (Mandal, 2004). This means that emotions can be controlled by self as well as by others (situational variables). The concept of Social Neuroscience justifies scientifically that *emotions are contagious* (Cacioppo & Berntson, 2005). Thus, if the teacher is optimistic, confident, motivated, creative, flexible, tolerant, respectful and compassionate students also will feel the same way. Emotions have so much of power that in Latin they were described as ‘motus anima’, meaning literally the spirit that moves us. Emotions have immense power to alter perception, memory and thought processes of an individual to achieve specific goals and hence prove to be a vital force for motivational systems (Goleman, 1995). Therefore, if properly used, emotions are an essential tool for successful and fulfilling life.

Different emotions produce different types of response and have different outcomes; for example, anger generates a pulse of energy strong enough for vigorous action, love generates a general state of calm and contentment facilitating cooperation, happiness promotes positive feelings and fosters an increase in available energy whereas sadness brings a drop in energy and enthusiasm (Levenson, Ekman, & Friesen, 1990). This shows that emotions can either be helpful or detrimental; therefore they need to be recognized, regulated and managed so that
they work in our favour and not against us. But to manage emotions is not easy; it needs conscious effort and good Emotional Intelligence (EI).

1.3 Introduction to Emotional Intelligence

According to Cooper and Swaf (1997) the ability of an individual to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connection and influence is called emotional intelligence. In the current study, EI has been defined as the ability of a person to recognize and understand one’s own emotions and those of others and regulate or manage those emotions so as to motivate self and others for achieving specific goals. It is important to mention here that contrary to common belief, EI does not mean being good to everyone all the time. Instead it is an ability of a person to show right emotions, at the right time, at right place, to right persons and to right degree to achieve specific goals. EI constitutes various components or skills called EI competencies like self awareness, self control, optimism, achievement drive, adaptability, empathy, conflict management and communication skills.

1.4 Anxiety, Learned Optimism and Achievement motivation

Anxiety is one of the most widely experienced emotions in learning. Anxiety can be defined as a psychological and physiological state characterized by somatic, emotional, cognitive and behavioural components (Barlow, 2002). According to Yerkes-Dodson law, an optimal level of arousal is necessary to best complete a task such as an exam, performance, or competitive event. However, when the anxiety or level of arousal exceeds that optimum, the result is a decline in performance. Negative feelings and thoughts may adversely affect self efficacy of a student ultimately resulting in reduced efforts in achieving goals. Optimism or positive thinking helps in challenging these negative thoughts and helps students to believe that they have the capability and their efforts will definitely produce good results. Scheier and Carver (1993) have defined optimism as a generalized expectancy that good as opposed to bad outcomes will generally occur when confronted with problems across important life domains. This also enhances achievement motivation, a vital EI competency for accomplishing any task. Achievement motivation is defined as the need for success or the attainment of excellence (Alderman, 1999). It helps in proper planning and persistent effort to achieve goals, which may help in managing anxiety.
1.5 Occupational Stress, Teaching Effectiveness & Emotional Intelligence

*Occupational stress* (OS) can be defined as the experience of unpleasant, negative emotions such as tension, anxiety, frustration, anger and depression resulting from aspects of work (Salami, 2010). Traditionally university teaching has been regarded as a low-stress occupation; however with the increased workloads, lack of recognition, lack of control, job insecurity, reduced resources and pressure of producing good results due to tough competition this is no longer the case (Gardner, 2005). Also, curriculum and duration wise medical and engineering courses are quite extensive and demanding as compared to other courses. Psychological stress is accompanied by negative emotions resulting in reduced work efficiency (Spector & Goh, 2001). This led to the assumption that stress among medical and engineering faculty is high and it has negative influence on their teaching performance or teacher effectiveness.

Literature on teaching effectiveness uses a variety of concepts in defining *teacher effectiveness*. It has been explained by some researchers as teacher characteristics (Strong, Tucker, & Ward, 2003) whereas, other researchers are more concerned with the teaching processes or the teaching outcomes (Perry, 1997). Teacher effectiveness in this research has been defined as having good knowledge of subject matter, teaching methodology and emotional aspects of learning. Earlier researches have indicated that EI helps in managing stress and conflicts, better decision making and increased job performance, therefore it was hypothesised that EI among faculty members will help in reducing perceived stress and enhance their teacher effectiveness. It will also help them in understanding their students better.

Teaching and learning are integrated process. Understanding the aspects of good learning is important for good teaching. The experience of teaching and learning is saturated with emotions, from moments of fear, anger, joy, frustration or grief to an enduring sense of commitment or dissatisfaction. Therefore, this research incorporated a systematic approach to study the role of EI in teaching performance for medical and technical education by firstly, assessing anxiety and exploring the relationship between anxiety, optimism, achievement motivation and academic achievement among the students; secondly, exploring the relationship between EI, OS and teacher effectiveness among faculty members teaching these students; Thirdly, after exploring the relationship between these variables, developing EI Training Programmes for students and faculty members focusing on EI awareness and skills training to enhance relevant EI competencies for better teaching and learning process.