CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a natural instinct or function that comes with 'Parenthood'; the inherent ability to protect, feed and rear the offspring is a marvellous feature of humanity and this natural phenomenon needs little help or guidance from external forces. Yet, the rat race existence of the modern day where survival of the fittest has become the order of the day renders parent education indispensable to the present day parents. The complex nature of the problems, the changing society and environment that confront the young, baffle them to the extent of triggering negative reactions which affect their behaviour and inter-personal relationships tremendously. Thus arises the need for professional guidance and expertise to provide a helping hand to a very natural process.

1.1 PARENTS – THE PREORDAINED TEACHERS:

Parents are the professional people of the highest order. They are the world's most influential professional people. They not only produce the new life of the race but also support and nurture that life until such time as it is capable of becoming self-sustaining. Parents prepare the background against which will be lived the most impressionable years given to a human being.
Experimental facts are completely against the shift of parental responsibility to anyone else, even to the most experienced educator. Parents are in a unique position both to witness and to assist during the early years of children's learning. The kind of emotional bondage and intimacy that build up between the parent and the children gives security to the children aiding in their adjustment at home and academic achievement.

1.2 HOME—THE FIRST SCHOOL OF THE CHILD:

The warmth of a loving home, the cozy feel of a mother's hug, the gentle reprimand and advice of loved ones all contributes to initiate a child into the ways of the world. The gentle correction and training, that only a mother can provide a child prepares the child well before launching into the world of harsh realities. We can confidently stand by the claim that home is the first school of a child and mother is the first teacher. Indeed, mother provides the first learning experience for the child by giving the warmth during the developing years. The first three years of the child's life is spent in the learning environment that a home provides. Early experiences of a child form the foundations, on which the concepts of the world as perceived are constructed.

Many studies have shown that it is these early experiences and the quality of the activities that have been made available to the child in these early years significantly contribute to the shaping of the child's personality and its capacity to learn with meaning.
1.3 THE CHANGING SOCIETY:

Children need encouragement and guidance from their parents, right from childhood to early adulthood, from kindergarten through college. This vitally needed assistance during the crucial period when they are developing and solidifying the self and social attitudes largely determine the course of life. However the youths of today are a frustrated lot, as they find themselves in the midst of cut throat competitions. With the vast changes in the society due to industrialization and modernisation, the adolescents do not experience a conducive atmosphere at home. They become highly susceptible to physical and psychological problems throughout their childhood and adolescent years which leaves them helpless victims of a life filled with stress and strain.

1.4 KINDS OF PROBLEM

Children experience various emotional, social, academic and physical problems due to the vast changes taking place in the society.

1.4.1 EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS:

Due to the developmental process, children in the age group of 10 to 15 years, experience several emotional problems. The hormonal changes taking place in the body and the quick spurt of physical growth make the children disturbed emotionally. These children are generally self-conscious, sensitive and lack confidence. Apart from these physical changes, children may have several other
external factors like home environment, social background, family background, and economic background of the family causing problems.

1.4.2 SOCIAL PROBLEMS:

Children, due to their emotional vulnerability are susceptible to social changes. They are deeply affected by peer group influence and other social factors. They may be extremely shy, uncooperative, disobedient and rebellious. They may learn unhealthy habits and be quarrelsome.

1.4.3 ACADEMIC PROBLEMS:

Children in the age group under study experience academic problems caused by intellectual deficit or motivational and behavioural deficits. They may be poor achievers and be slow in learning and writing. Home environment may not be conducive for their study and they may be highly irregular in doing their homework and maintaining their notebooks and textbooks. Various factors contribute to this waywardness in children.

They are

1. Parental neglect
2. Inattentiveness in school
3. Lack of interest.
4. Lack of guidance.
5. Teacher's neglect to check students' turn out.
7. Ineffectiveness of teachers' corrective measure.

8. Illiteracy of parents.

Children also suffer from learning disabilities in developing reading and writing skills which may lead to all associated problems. Failing to cope with the stress the child may choose to play truant to school or in the extreme cases may drop out from school. Values of parents and the importance they attach to educational achievement also affect the performance of the children. Illiterate parents will be unable to help their children to prepare for school. Distractions at home caused by parental conflict, sibling rivalry, lack of facilities, lack of privacy, disturbances caused by interferences and entertainment media like radio and television also affect the performance and aggravate the problems prevailing among the children. The proximity of the school plays a vital role in, increasing or decreasing the strain of travelling and thus affecting the performance of the child. If the school is located very far from the home area, the child is exposed to unnecessary tension caused by the necessity to be punctual and lack of time for mental and physical grooming. The timing has vital focus on urban areas where children are exposed to near impossible conveyance during peak traffic hours. Undue strain is also caused by the ambitions of certain parents. Parents clamour for admission in certain schools of great reputation. Such choices made on the basis of reputation and not on any other convenience can make a child's life miserable.
1.4.4 PHYSICAL PROBLEMS:

Physical problems like sickness or disability may also cause problems to children and their academic performance may suffer consequently. They may also suffer from poor hygiene. In some cases emotional problems lead to physical symptoms like stammering, stomach disorder, epilepsy and wheezing.

1.5 OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING CHILDREN:

There are several factors, which affect the growing children and aggravate the problems faced by them. Though home, school and community form the basis on which child's development rests, none can deny the primary importance of home and the role of mother that is crucial during the formative years of a child.

1.5.1 HOME ENVIRONMENT:

Home is the logical place to begin any consideration of the educational process. Obviously it is a particularly strong influence, normally the strongest upon the children. Evidence suggests that the influence of the home and of the parent's attitude continue to affect substantially the educational performance throughout the school years. If parents could positively communicate regularly with each other and with their children and believe in the importance of education, then all the signs are set fair that their children would progress well in their studies. If, on the other hand, the child is the victim of a broken home or poverty, including cultural poverty, even the most determined efforts to compensate
these things, through education and social welfare systems, may
doom to fail.

Emotional, social and intellectual aspects are bound up
closely together. The student is a total personality and hence
emotional stability is important in relation to mental growth.
Personality for good or ill seems to depend very much on the
relationship between the parents. He or she learns to handle
feelings and strives to cope with frustration by imitating his or her
parents and by modeling his or her responses on them.

Thus, home environment plays a vital role in moulding and
shaping up a person. Consequently, when a child is a failure, once
again it is the environment of the home that is the root cause for
the problem.

1.5.2 FAMILY BACKGROUND:

Family background is an important factor affecting the child
– his emotions, sociability, academic performance and physical well
being. Bereavement in the family or divorce may leave a child
disturbed and insecure. Factors like lack of love and attention or
additional burden of responsibilities, too heavy for young
shoulders, may have adverse effects on children. In single child
families, children are left lonely, apt targets for psychological
disorders and emotional problems, which is commonly known by
the term 'single child syndrome'. On the other hand, in large
families, children have to face inadequate facilities or lack of
privacy and time, which affect their academic performance.
The problems of the children are the problems of the parents themselves. In view of these problems, the need to frame a strategy that can effectively equip the parents with knowledge, skill and training has been felt.

1.5.3 SOCIAL BACKGROUND:

The social status, position, respect and reputation of the family also have an impact on the behaviour pattern of a child. The contact and associations may shape and mould the expectations of the child. A child coming from a superior social background may lack parental attention and consequently suffer neglect at home. It may lead to attention seeking and other behavioural problems. The student may suffer from lack of guidance and help to complete his homework. Such a child may also suffer from feelings of insecurity and emotional instability. Improper behaviour caused by lack of moral teaching and values can also be evident in such children.

Lack of social status also has adverse effects on the character of the child. Lower standard of moral values and lack of drive and ambition are some of the problems faced by these children.

1.5.4 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

It is the common belief that only an educated parent can help a child to do well in school. But it is really surprising to note that children coming from parents of high educational qualification too suffer parental neglect.
The higher, the educational qualification, the wider the social interest of the parents. A study (Mirasu, 1994) under taken among the St. John’s Group of schools situated in various localities of Chennai helps to understand that parents of lesser educational qualifications spend more time for their children’s educational pursuits.

But illiteracy has its own evil in the sense, the parents will be completely unable to contribute towards their children’s studies. They may also lack understanding and the economical ability to meet the needs of their children.

1.5.5 ECONOMICAL BACKGROUND:

The economical status of the family plays a vital role in triggering the problems in the impressible youngsters. Affluence may encourage arrogance and may also lead to unwanted expensive evil habits and hobbies. Too many friends can also influence and aggravate behaviour problem and thereby affect the values. On the other hand poverty may trigger a different set of problems like inferiority complex and related problems like lack of equipment and facilities that affect the performance of the children.

1.6 NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Parenting has become challenging these days. With the onset of industrialisation and urbanization, vast changes have been witnessed in the life style of the families. Children of today
are frustrated, unable to face the onslaught of challenges posed by the competitive world. Though parents aspire that their children should excel in all fields, they are unable to provide guidance and counselling. The emotional, social, academic and physical problems faced by the children during the crucial period of 10 to 15 years of age leave the average parents helpless. Sometimes they fail to perceive the problems experienced by their children and provide the right solutions. A situation of this kind demands immediate attention and suitable remedial measures.

To meet this challenging need, Parent education aims to equip the parents with the academic and professional guidance. It is a contemporary phase that highlights the plight of the parents and children who suffer equally without proper perception, understanding and guidance.

1.7 PARENT EDUCATION:

Parent education is education designed specially for parents with the intent of improving parenting skills. It refers to organized programs rather than to informal gatherings imparting knowledge. As V.K. Rao and R.S. Reddy (1997) observe, "Parent education here refers to a systematic and conceptually based program intended to impart information, awareness or skill to the participants on aspects of parenting."
It is not mere instruction on how to parent, but endeavours to offer parents to use effective discipline methods, increase parent-child communication, encourage families to have more fun together, give parents useful information on child development and increase the scope for progress academically, emotionally, socially and physically. The ultimate aim of 'Parent Education' is to guide the parents to achieve the well being of their children. It is to this end that academicians aspire, educationists endeavour, and parents pine.

1.7.1 PARENT EDUCATION FOR THE WELL BEING OF THEIR CHILDREN:

The term 'well being' implies a state of enjoying good health or doing well psychologically, socially, academically and physically. This state of 'well being' is reflected in all areas and brings about more positive student attitude and behaviour, improved student performance, improved teacher morale, improved school climate, increased parental satisfaction and overall school improvement. 'Well being' is a relative term indicating the all round good health of a child, pertaining to academic, social, physical and psychological aspects. The researcher being a Principal for more than 19 years probes into the problems of the thrust area and with the advantage of his experience, exposure and knowledge endeavours to frame an ideal curriculum to educate the parents and arrive at the said state of well being.
1.7.1.1 EMOTIONAL WELL BEING:

Generally children brought up in healthy environment do not experience psychological or emotional disturbances. When parents lack the intuitive understanding and empathy essential to handle the emotional problems of their growing children, they need the expert’s advice and guidance to meet the emotional needs of their children.

1.7.1.2 SOCIAL WELL BEING:

Social well being implies the ability to get along well with people, peer group and other adults including teachers, neighbours and relatives. Socially well adjusted children do not suffer extreme shyness, sensitiveness or inhibitions that curb normal interpersonal relationships. They easily accept the social norms like giving, taking or sharing which form the basis of community living. They are well versed in communicative skills and the art of social co-existence.

1.7.1.3 ACADEMIC WELL BEING:

A well adjusted child brought up with proper care and attention in conducive atmosphere does reasonably well in school. The interest of the parents in the academic achievement of the child motivates the child and encourages the child to do better. Such a child exhibits regular study habits and discipline, which automatically leads to academic well being.
1.7.1.4 PHYSICAL WELL BEING:

Physical impairments or deformities and physical weakness or ill health pose little problem to children whose parents show involvement and interest in their well being and the same impairment would never be an obstruction in the path of their achievement. Parents and teachers attend to the special needs of the children and take necessary steps to improve the children's health and studies.

1.8 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The researcher probes into the various problems faced by children and strives to frame the tenets for an ideal curriculum to educate the parents and arrive at the said state of well being. The research is undertaken thus with the following objectives:

i. To study the perception of parents, teachers and general public regarding the problems faced by the children studying in standard VI to X.

ii. To diagnose the problems experienced by the children studying in standard VI to X.

iii. To classify the problems on the basis of physical, emotional, social and academic dimensions.

iv. To find out to what extent the parents themselves are the causes for the problems experienced by their children.
v To find out the problems which are common or exclusive among the children studying in standard VI to X.

vi To find out the increase or decrease, if any, of problems existing among the children studying in standard VI to X.

vii To find out the relationship, if any, between the intensity of the problems and the:

* age of the children
* sex of the children
* type of the school in which the children study.

viii To find out the relationship, if any, between the intensity of the problems and the:

* size of the family
* socio economic status of the family
* educational background of the family

ix To find out the relationship, if any, between the causes for the problems as stated by the parents and their:

* educational background
* family background
* socio-economic background
To find out the difference, if any, between parents, teachers and general public in their perceptions of problems among children studying from standard VI to X.

To find out the difference, if any, between parents, teachers and general public in their perception of the parents being the cause for the problems experienced by the children studying in standard VI to X.

To identify the thrust areas where parents need guidance.

To suggest the basic tenets for a curriculum for Parent Education Program.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN:

The study on 'Parent Education' for the well being of their children' is attempted in two stages. The first stage is to identify the various problems prevailing among the children, determine their intensity and analyse the reasons for the problems and find out how far the parents themselves are the cause of the problems. The second stage is to suggest the basic tenets for framing a curriculum for the 'Parent Education Program'.
1.9.1 SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY:

The researcher being the Principal of a school in North Chennai has deemed it fit to concentrate on the educational district of Chennai North where there are more than 201 schools of which 65 are Aided schools, 130 are Matriculation schools and 6 are Government schools catering to the needs of pupils hailing from varied economic and social backgrounds.

A sample group of 20 children comprising of boys and girls from the classes VI, VII, VIII, IX and X are selected at random from each school and approximately 2500 questionnaires are distributed to the parents through these children. About 250 questionnaires are given to the teachers of various schools in the area under study and another 250 questionnaires are given to the general public of the same area.

1.9.2 TOOLS FOR THE STUDY:

Three questionnaires are prepared following all rules and norms of tools construction. Each questionnaire comprises of two parts. The first pertains to the problems of the children and the second lists the probable causes and determines how far the parental behaviour causes the problems.
Questionnaire One: To study the perception of parents regarding the problems experienced by their children and their causes.

Questionnaire Two: To study the perception of teachers regarding the problems experienced by children in general and their causes.

Questionnaire Three: To study the perception of general public regarding the problems experienced by children in general and their causes.

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

'Parent Education' – as the term denotes is a measure to educate parents in certain areas that may prove beneficial in guiding their problematic children. Parents have to be informed and thus made aware of various methods of handling their children and dealing with the problems faced by them. They need to be guided by professionals and teachers by using certain tools, which will effectively shape their mindset in order to assess their children's problem and thereby render the correct measures to help their children overcome these problems.

The need for such education is tremendously significant in today's educational and social setup. Multifarious problems affect the student body of the present day society. This is because of the tremendous pressure exerted on the child from various dimensions
such as parents, teachers, peer group and the socio-cultural trend of the day. The child in an attempt to be a success and with a view to do justice to all expectations imposes on itself various constraints and faces problematic situations constantly, which gives rise to the 'unhappy child' or the 'problem child'. Hence arises the question as to why parents need to be educated?

The fact that every child undergoes problematic phases some time or the other in life is not unknown. Suitable help rendered by parents at that stage is found to prove beneficial and the results are bound to be positive. Moreover there are parents who although aware of the problems, may not necessarily know the means of solving those problems. There are parents who may not even be aware of the problems faced by the child. There is yet another group of parents who are the causes for the problems and who may not ever be sensitive to this fact. In all these cases parents stand helpless and ill suited to treat the issues at hand. This then, calls for education, awareness and a suitable guidance that will first put the parents on the right track and thereby bring their children to firm grounds enabling them to overcome certain problems or to cope with their pressures. When parents are well instructed and educated of the situation and the problems, they will realise their responsibilities in their children's life. They will be more suited to handle the present or prevailing problems and also be in a state of alertness to avert such problems in future and help strengthen the child emotionally and physically to withstand further problems.
Parents need to be educated in such a manner that they could act as "shock absorbers" for their children. Every time the child faces a problem, it should be able to fall back on its parent and the effect should be in such a way that complimentary pulse would help both the child and the parent. It should enable the child to bounce back with less bruises and regain strength to counter attack the problem at hand. Every time this is achieved, the parent - child bonding is renewed and strengthened further. This also calls for a sound rapport and effective communication. These two can be contributed by education alone. If the parent is educated to say the right things at the right moments, it will help to cultivate a good communication bridge between the parent and the child. It is found that in most of the cases studied, lack of communication between parent and child as well as negative communication between parent and child, become the root cause for many problems. The correct method of delivering effective communication in these situations can be achieved through educating parents.

The need for educating parents is further emphasized due to the diverse nature of the problems faced by children of today. Moreover the children of age group between 6 and 10 may have entirely different kinds of problem as compared to that of children in the age group of 11 and 15.
It cannot be said that influence of parents on children is always on the positive side: we are aware of many cases where parent's correction of child's behaviour itself becomes a cause for negative response. This is because of wrong treatment of the issue at hand. If relevant education is imparted, parents will find themselves better equipped to handle the various problems faced by children. The aim of the research therefore is to frame a suitable, effective and commonly applicable curriculum, to benefit the parents and to guide and counsel them in their upbringing of the children. A suitable change in the entire student community is desired, especially of boys and girls of standard VI to standard X. This phase is considered the most problematic phase in life. The right guidance and proper channeling of the children's potentials at this stage will lead to successful development of total personality and thus ensure successful careers too. Keeping in mind this long time benefit, the researcher has undertaken the attempt to help parent's in order to help their children and thus lead to a positive change in the society. The focus here is on the age group between 11 and 15. The children in this age group with all their problems throw a challenge to many psychologists. However it can also be firmly said that these children have all the potentials of enriching a society. It is with this in mind, and with a sense of duty to help unfold the potentials in order to render a positive change in the society, the researcher has conceived this aim of educating
parents. If the goals of this study are aptly met, the benefits achieved will be three fold.

* Parents will be well prepared and soundly equipped to handle their tremendous responsibility positively, thereby adding to their sense of significance and satisfaction.

* Students will be able to overcome their burdens and enter into a new world which promises them success and security.

* The society will be enriched by the thoughts and services of the young citizens.

1.11 ANALYSIS:

The data obtained through the questionnaires are analysed using descriptive, comparative and correlative statistical methods.

1.12 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS:

Chapter I introduces the concept of 'Parent Education' for the welfare of their children and highlights the need for 'Parent Education'.

Chapter II outlines review of pertinent literature, the research on various 'Parent Education programs'.
Chapter III outlines the design of the study, sample collection process, construction of the questionnaires, description and administration of the questionnaires to the sample.

Chapter IV describes the study conducted among the parents, teachers and general public and analyses the results derived from the sample scores.

Chapter V contains the summary, conclusion and recommendations. The findings of the research are reviewed and the basic tenets are framed for suitable parent education curriculum. These lead naturally to pointers for further study arising from the gaps revealed in the research.

Appendices contain the questionnaires distributed and other information relevant to the chapters.
Chapter II