CHAPTER VII
AN OVERVIEW AND IMPLICATIONS

OVERVIEW

The preceding discussion has brought to light certain important aspects about the academic performance of the deprived and the non-deprived school going children.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986; Waters et al., 1986) has emphasized the functions of caregiver-child relationships in relation to concurrent felt security and later adaptation and coping. Once internalized, these attachment relationships are carried forward by the individual into subsequent interpersonal situations. The mere fact that a child is placed in an orphanage implies that the child's relationship with his parents has been severed. However, a well provided institution can compensate in many adequate ways for the loss that the child has suffered as has been highlighted by the foregoing discussion.

Intelligence, locus of control, and achievement motivation are strong correlates of achievement and can be influenced by home and school conditions. Both these institutions, in fact, have a paramount role to play in the "whole" development of a child.
The results of the present investigation revealed that the verbal IQ, performance IQ, full scale IQ, and academic achievement scores were rather low for all the three groups taken in the study. The means on the intelligence scales fall marginally in the "average" category and for some groups it is rather in the "dull normal" category. This perhaps is due to the fact that the sample was taken from the Government schools because the selection of the non-deprived sample had to be done from the schools attended by the orphans and the deprived children. Selection of the non-deprived sample from public or private schools would have been at variance to the need of the study.

It is unfortunate to mention that the state of affairs are rather deplorable in the Government schools. The environment is least stimulating, and hardly do the teachers take personal interest in the development of cognitive skills in children. The non-deprived sample in the study consisted mainly of the lower-middle class and only those parents who are either apathetic or unaware would send their children to the Government schools. Though these schools are not meant to cater only to the lower-class, yet these schools are usually associated with children from the impoverished homes. Despite the fact that the overall scores were very low of the sample,
significant differences were evident among and within the three groups.

In the Indian context, membership to a low class/caste and low income family does predispose children to an impoverished, substandard environment and such deprivation may have grave consequences upon the child which are cumulative over time. The type of intellectual environment in the home will definitely have an impact on the school achievement of the child. The intellectual environment is in turn determined by the intellectual and educational level of the parents, socio-economic status, size of the family, provision of a stimulating environment, availability of resources, etc. An inadequacy of these factors has an adverse effect on intelligence as has been ascertained by the findings of the present study for the home-reared deprived group and particularly the impact is greater on the home-reared deprived girls. By the time a child reaches adolescence, differential factors of interest, relative ability, specialization of training, motivation, success and failure experience and cultural expectation operate selectively to develop certain potential abilities and to leave others relatively undeveloped.

The investigator tends to agree with Ginsburg (1972) who stressed that the lower-class children are not
fundamentally less skilled or less competent but perform significantly less well as a group on a set of tasks demanding their solutions requiring a particular array of mental skills which are largely verbal and are affected by the environment. An institutional upbringing renders every child to community activities and the comparatively higher verbal IQ (compared with the home-reared deprived group) demonstrated by them may be accounted for by the 'organized family activities' of the orphanages. The relatively greater performance IQ of the non-deprived group may be attributed to their ability to resist distractions, greater familiarity with tasks, more self-confidence, and greater responsiveness to time pressure. A lack of these factors may be predisposing the home-reared deprived group, especially the girls, to work more slowly and less skillfully on these tasks.

The very fact that the orphans are on their own, breeds feelings of insecurity on the negative side, and leads them to acquire qualities of independence, self-reliance, and mastery over their environment on the positive side. The higher achievement motivation (AR) and locus of control scores (total I, I+, I-) demonstrated by them then, come as no surprise. Conversely, the lower achievement motivation and locus of control scores evidenced by the home-reared deprived group may be
qualified by the fact that inaccessibility to resources available within the environment and the impoverished conditions of life with meagre opportunities lead to motivational inadequacies. The same factors also place the deprived in positions of less power to manipulate the environment and control events that influence their lives which leads to the development of an external orientation.

Schooling has direct effects on children’s educational achievement and their acquisition of knowledge. These basic skills provide the foundation for later subjects such as science, social studies, foreign language, etc. Such indirect effects of school are more elusive because they are mediated by children’s motivation to learn or avoid learning, their conceptions of themselves as pupils, and the attributions they create for explaining their successes and failures.

The deprived children mostly study in schools that have poor facilities, inadequate curriculum and staff as most deprived parents lack foresight regarding benefits from qualitative education. As a result, the child’s interest in school is not sustained and he determines to drop out of school. Since the orphans, home-reared deprived, and the non-deprived children attended same/similar schools, the differences shown by them may be on account of the over riding influence of their home
conditions.

Unlike the disadvantaged parents, the advantaged parents take active interest in the scholastic performance of their child, encourage and watch him at every step, and provide him with all the necessary facilities. Also in an orphanage, the child's performance is appraised by the institution authorities. The orphans are encouraged to work hard both at school and at their place of residence. In some institutions, provision of coaching facilities is also made.

The investigator observed that the prime motivation of the deprived parents in sending their children to school was the financial benefit that would come their way at the end of every school year. With regard to the deprived girls, education was limited to only the extent of her learning to write a letter. Particularly, the family-related factors associated with poor school performance and ultimately their decisions to drop out (which was often noticed by the investigator) were poor economic conditions of their homes, illiteracy or primary education of parents, poor parental occupation, absence of learning material and opportunities in the home, and parents' limited awareness of the quality of good education.

Pande & Tripathi (1982) postulate that an unsupportive educational climate may result from forces
operating in the home and educational environment of the child is likely to influence academic motivation of the child negatively. Poor academic motivation will inhibit the acquisition and development of various cognitive skills which are necessary for effective school performance. Also because of poor motivation, the cognitive skills that have been already acquired are not likely to find full utilization in school. Poor academic performance is likely to influence academic motivation negatively. With a negative self-concept, fear of failure increases, and persistence drops. Poor performance of the child will also reinforce the negative evaluations of his teachers, peers, and parents, and thus, result in an increasingly unsupportive climate for him, and this is likely to increase with passing of time. As the pressures and demands of the school begin to take its toll, he is likely to drop out of school or accept some lowly placed job. On the other hand, the superior achievement motivation (AR) score of the orphans, especially the orphan girls, may be viewed as an expression of their expanding expectations in life (to better their life situation) which is also demonstrated by the orphan group’s relatively better academic performance in most subject areas.

The data on the orphan group further suggested
that an orphan's belief in the responsibility for his/her own academic failures (I-) had a greater reinforcing value on his/her academic effort than a similar orientation with respect to his/her successes. Since his/her performance at school is appraised by the school and orphanage authorities, and is particularly rebuked when he/she does poorly, a concern for avoiding poor marks in studies would then come to be a greater motivational influence than the positive anticipation of obtaining good grades.

Contrary to the hypothesis of superior academic performance in all subject areas of the non-deprived group in comparison with the orphans and the home reared deprived group, the academic performance of the home-reared deprived group alone was significantly lower than that of the non-deprived group in all the subject areas except English where no group differences were evident, while the academic performance of the orphans was quite comparable and in certain subjects (mathematics, science, and social studies) superior to that of the non-deprived group. Only in Hindi/regional language did the non-deprived achieve higher than the orphans.

It may be reiterated that the sample attended Hindi/regional language medium schools and the superior scores of the non-deprived group on language may be attributed to the more active verbal exchanges between parents and children, availability of reading materials to
improve vocabulary, application of corrective measures by parents for the errors committed by the child, which is absent in the homes of the deprived. With regard to the deprived children, it may be asserted that "many young children do not have the opportunity to develop at home the more complex forms of language which school education demands of them". This is said because "the context in which they use language and the nature of exchange at home does not call for the higher degree of complexity... what is needed is to create the context and conditions in which the ability can develop" (Bullock Report, 1975).

Some of the reasons that may account for the better performance of the orphans even in relation to the non-deprived in certain subjects may be the greater attention and encouragement that they receive at the institution and at school where their academic performance is appraised by one and all. Since the orphans study in the same school, there is greater interaction between the children in the orphanages with regard to academic studies and the younger sibling often seeks help from the older sibling. Most importantly, the orphans are well aware of the fact that they have to strive hard to become self sufficient since they lack financial support and backing of parents. Voluntary donations of mathematical toys and games and the vocational training imparted to the orphan
boys may be leading to more out-of-school learning. Most institutions were also materially well provided for.

Although the teachers bring to bear equal pressure on all the students to work hard, this may get attenuated in the case of the deprived, since the pressure does not carry over from the school situation to the home situation.

Correlational analysis revealed that by and large intelligence scores (VIQ, FIQ) correlated significantly with achievement in mathematics, English, Hindi/regional language, science, social studies, and total academic achievement for the three groups. However, locus of control measures (I+ and I-) and achievement motivation measures (AR, AVAI, and UR) tended to be differentially associated with achievement in specific subject matter areas.

The acquisition of the academic achievement skills is influenced by verbal ability which forms the basis of all school subjects. The verbal subscale of intelligence test is largely dependent upon language development and schooling, and performance on the verbal scale is a reflection of the acquisition of academic material at home and at school. Ahmed (1982) studied the interactional impact of home and school on the general mental ability in comparison to creative thinking abilities of students belonging to enriched and deprived
home environments. He found that verbal IQ and verbal creativity were greatly affected by the enriched school environment and concluded that verbal abilities can develop more in a highly enriched but formal environment.

In the present findings, verbal IQ emerged as the largest and in certain subjects (mathematics and English), the sole predictor of academic achievement.

Among the deprived, the mere assimilation of concrete academic skills may be retarded within the school which results in an attenuation of the rate at which higher order cognitive abilities are formed. Lower class children demonstrate poor verbal accomplishments, particularly with respect to the abstract dimensions of verbal functioning (Ausubel & Sullivan, 1970; cf. Rath, et al., 1979).

Despite the fact that VIQ emerged as the most significant contributor to academic achievement, it's contribution largely varied in all the three groups, being the largest for the non-deprived group and making relatively smaller contribution towards achievement in the two deprived groups.

A child's perception of internal/external control beliefs are influenced by the grades he receives at school and the congruence of student and teacher attitudes towards classroom learning experiences. Locus of
control measures (total I and I+) made small significant contributions towards achievement in Hindi/regional language, science, social studies and total academic achievement, especially notable for the total sample and to some extent in the three groups also (Table 19).

Since high academic achievement is largely emphasized upon in our society, a child with poor grades is more likely to blame external factors for his setbacks thereby defensively accounting for their failures in certain subjects like mathematics and languages. This is particularly true of the deprived who have a history of negative reinforcements, non-availability of models, negative self-image, poor home background, due to their aversive life situations. The more successful is a child at school, and the more positive reinforcements that he receives, the more likely he is to claim responsibility for positive outcomes. For the non-deprived subjects, internal locus of control may be associated with an inner-directedness that yields high scholastic achievement.

Knowledge of one’s performance in the academic areas appears to determine how one expresses one’s achievement motivation. For successful students, achievement motivation is a reflection of the students’ motive or drive, but for unsuccessful students’, where the achievement expectations of the class are not confirmed, the child becomes aware of his poor progress. Some of
them, who are motivated, may strive to improve their performance by working hard and bettering their grades.

Unlike the more advantaged middle-class child, a lower class child enters school less equipped for formal education. DeCecco (1968) maintains that he comes from a pre-school environment which fails to develop the necessary skills to begin his formal education. In the school he encounters a middle-class culture which makes adjustment difficult. He is further confronted with an indifferent environment that results in his lack of motivation. With low motivation, teaching and learning situations become dull and children find it increasingly difficult to cope with the demands of the school. Ginsburg (1972) too is of the view that the poor children's skills are sometimes unsuited to the typical school, and poor children fail to develop skills which the schools stress. Probably, in many middle-class families, there are books around and parents often read to the children, and activities of this sort are less common in a lower-class family (pp.188 - 189).

The significant correlations between UR and achievement in some school subjects (total academic achievement, achievement in Hindi/regional language, science, and social studies) indicates some kind of avoidance motive or achievement anxiety which may have
grown out of feelings of insecurity regarding their future. UR made a significant contribution towards achievement in social studies for only the orphanage-reared group, as was demonstrated by the findings of this study.

It thus appears that the disadvantaged children need more individual attention and time at school, and more specialized programs to provide the experiences necessary for adequate development of their abilities.

IMPLICATIONS

The present discussion has highlighted the academic failures and intellectual deficits in general of all the three groups but in particular of the home-reared deprived group. An effective and appropriate teaching strategy for the deprived child must therefore emphasize three considerations: (a) improving the nature of the schools, (b) selection of curriculum that is best geared to the learner's state of readiness, (c) mastery and consolidation of all on-going learning tasks before new tasks are introduced, so as to provide the necessary foundation for successful learning of future tasks.

The learning environment of the deprived child is both generally inferior and specifically inappropriate. Being consistently exposed to a continuing deficient learning environment is not only intellectually least
stimulating but also leads to the child's indifference and alienation from the school. If cognitive deficits and academic failures have to be combated, better-than-average strategies of teaching are necessary in terms of both general effectiveness and specific appropriateness for his particular learning situation which may entail a trained devoted staff that understands the needs of every child and empathizes with him. Perhaps the schools will be unable to accomplish anything without considerable help from other public and private agencies, e.g., continuing with the same line of thought, institutions that provide facilities for training such a staff. They may also be provided with a stimulating environment brought about by special enrichment programs, which will enhance their scores on intelligence and academic tests.

Much of the western education when applied to deprived students (lower-middle or lower-lower class), has adopted the stance that the students are always to be blamed for their academic failures rather than the education system itself may have shortcomings.

However, academic levels judged by western standards and tools reflect the inability of the educational system to have provided appropriate preparation. It is incumbent upon the educational system to become more sensitive to the academic needs and experiential backgrounds of the deprived. A curriculum
must take the readiness of the deprived child into account which may involve his existing knowledge in the various subject-areas and intellectual skills. Those subject matter that he cannot assimilate, e.g., algebra, foreign language etc., should be taught in small groups where individual attention be given to him. The investigator's findings also brought to light the fact that with the exception to the other school subjects, the performance of all the three groups was particularly poor in mathematics where the average scores of all the groups would be rated almost in the 'failure' category. That mathematics is ability-dependent is not denied, but it appears that most of the students' are subjected to theorems when they cannot even perform simple arithmetic computations. The same is also true for English language. They come from backgrounds where the exposure to English language is virtually absent. Nothing more educationally futile or better calculated to destroy educational morale can be imagined! Since the curriculum is overly demanding of him, frustration, demoralization, resentment and impaired self-confidence sets in which takes the child away from studies. On the other hand, if the curricula is adjusted to every child's needs and ability, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for academic achievement, and decreased alienation from the school to
the point where he understands the purpose of education - benefits to be accrued from learning - may be realized.

Lastly, parents' participation may be of great value and this may be brought about by frequent parent-teacher meetings, where they too are made to realize the benefits of education, e.g., upward mobility, etc. However, this task may not be very easy keeping our country in perspective, but the mass educational programs for the illiterate which have already been put forth by the Government may be an answer.

It may be reiterated that the aforementioned approaches do not involve "soft-peddling" the deprived or surrendering to their current intellectual level, but is merely a necessary step in the direction of preparing him to cope with more advanced subject areas and hence in eventually bridging the gap between the various social classes.