CHAPTER-1
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 HIGHER EDUCATION

‘Higher education’ as a term came into prevalent usage around second half of the twentieth century. The term ‘higher’ in higher education can be defined as a specific quality of cognitive rigour, a stage where students learn to question the prevailing set of rules and regulations and also understand theories, methods and essence of “academic” knowledge. Thus, it accentuates a general biographic phase of learning: after ten to fourteen years of schooling and upon completion of primary & secondary education, students might enrol in a third stage of education prior to embarking on regular employment (Teichler, 2004). All India Survey on Higher Education (2015-16) defines higher education “as education, which is obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration of at least 3 years”. The education may be of the nature of “General, Vocational, Professional or Technical Education.”

In India a robust institutional framework for imparting higher education exists. As per MHRD (2016), institutions imparting higher education include Universities- central, state, public, private, deemed universities etc.; Institutions of National Importance- central open university, state open university, state private open university; Institutions under State Legislature Act- colleges both government aided & unaided and stand alone institutions, Technical Institutes- institutes for PGDM, diploma level nursing training, diploma level teachers training and Institutions under Ministries, etc. Presently there are 760 universities, 38498 colleges and 12276 stand alone institutes in India.

1.1.1 Evolution of Higher Education in India

Dissemination of higher education in India dates back to time immemorial. Universities of repute like Taxila and Nalanda were established way back in 3rd and
5th century BC. But at that time higher education was the privilege of only a few. During the British rule, imparting education to Indian masses was not on the priority list of the government. Over the decades this led to a cumulative lag for Indian students in comparison to other countries of the world in the field of education, particularly higher education. Post independence, one of the foremost challenges before our country was to provide compulsory elementary education. The Directive Principles of State Policy too enjoined upon the Government to ensure that free and compulsory education is provided to all children up to the age of 14 years. So during the initial years after independence, providing basic education was of fundamental importance and most of the resources ear-marked for education sector were diverted towards this sector. In spite of the resource crunch and multiple developmental needs and demands on the nation after independence, efforts were made to provide financial support to higher education in consonance with the objectives of economic development and self reliance. University Grants Commission, a statutory organization was established by an Act of Parliament in 1956 for promotion and coordination of university education and for determining benchmarks of teaching, examination, research and extension in universities and the maintenance of standards. Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was also set up in 1969 by the Government of India with the primary objective to promote research in social sciences and to facilitate its utilization by concerned stakeholders. ‘Private’ higher education institutes began to surface in 1970’s, but were largely based on grant-in-aids from the government. Post globalization has seen a steady growth in the number of higher education institutions especially in the private sector.

1.1.2 Growth of Higher Education

Indian higher education has seen a steady, continuous growth. There has been an extensive increase in the number of institutions imparting ‘higher education’, and growth in enrolment of students in higher education. The number of universities has grown by 28 times from merely 27 universities in 1950-51 to 760 universities in 2014-15. With the increase in population and availability of higher education, enrolment in universities has increased from 4 lakh in 1950-51 to 33 lakh in 1970-71. It further showed an increase to 86 lakh in 2000-01 and touched 143 lakh in 2005-06.
The latest figures (2014-15) show that 324 lakh students are enrolled in higher education. The student enrollment in higher education has thus grown 81 times in the last 65 years. Another important indicator of growth of higher education is Gross Enrolment Ratio (Tertiary). India’s GER has increased from 11.6% in 2005-06 to 24.3% in 2014-15 i.e. growth of more than 1% per annum (MHRD, 2016).

As per another source, in less than 20 years, India has created additional capacity for a massive 40 million students (FICCI, 2013). The major growth in the area of higher education is initiated and sustained by universities. Every year, millions of students from within the country and abroad, enroll mainly for their graduate and post-graduate studies while millions complete their degrees and exit for employment purposes (MHRD, 2011). With time, India has remarkably adapted itself as per its higher education requirements. It has created widespread access to low-cost university education for students at all levels. With well-planned expansion and a student-centric learner-driven model of education, India has not only bettered its enrolment numbers but has dramatically enhanced its learning outcomes.

Today, the median age of India’s 1.21 billion strong population is 32 years which is approximately ten years lower in comparison to the other nations in the world. Due to its demographic advantage “India has emerged as the world’s third largest economy –a prospect that would not have translated into reality if not for the country’s pioneering reforms in university education over the past 20 years” (FICCI, 2013).

1.1.3 Importance of Higher Education

Higher education is an instrument for augmenting efficiency and technical expertise of human resources so as to bring them at par with international standards in terms of intellectual and professional potential in order to meet the challenge of competitiveness and globalization.

All India Survey on Higher Education, 2011 by Ministry of Human Resource and Development stated that higher education is crucial for India, as it is a powerful tool through which knowledge-based society of the twenty-first century can be built.
Educational Statistics at a Glance (2016) observed that education is the single most significant factor that can ensure gender equality and empowerment. In our country gender based inequality starts from the date of conception of a girl child, continues with high infant mortality rate amongst female children, lower wages for female workers, low elected representation, etc. Providing equal opportunities in higher education to women can ensure gender equality and empowerment of women. In higher education out of total enrolment of 324 lakh in 2014-15 males comprised 185 lakh whereas females were lagging behind with 157 lakh students, thus showing glaring gender inequalities. Higher education has shown to ensure economic independence and better job opportunities. So through government initiatives and policies the gender gap can be narrowed which would pave way for female empowerment.

The decade of 1990s is known as an era of economic reforms and integration of the Indian economy with the global economies. One of the parameters of globalization was permitting free flow of technology. Thus to keep pace with the technological improvement and to flourish in the global competitive environment there was a need for providing technical manpower and professionals which was achieved through providing higher technical education to the Indian youth.

1.1.4 World Wide Higher Education Trends

Digressing a little bit, it would be better to have a bird’s eye-view of ‘higher education’ scenario worldwide. A study by British Council titled “Managing large systems: A comparative analysis - challenges and opportunities for large Higher Education Systems” observed that spread of knowledge and skills in the world are changing very fast. Education and research are no longer a monopoly of the English speaking people or developed countries like Japan or western world or North American people The high participation in the field of higher education has either been achieved or is emerging, in every nation of the world. It further observed that “the pace of change is truly amazing”. In the year 1972 USA was world’s leading country in terms of “GTER” at 48% followed by Soviet Union which was at 44%. World over only 19 nations showed “GTER” above 15%. Most of the nations flitted...
Theoretical Framework

around 10% due to low participation of students. India (6%) and China (3%) were among the countries with lowest “GTER”. Four decades later in 2012, driven by major growth of enrollment in India, China, Brazil, Indonesia and Nigeria, the worldwide “GTER” stood at 32%. Today roughly one young person in every three joins higher education i.e. attends a course for two full terms or more. By the year 2012, a total of 19 countries have been able to achieve a “GTER” of 75%, in 50 countries it exceeded 50% and in 106 countries it was over 15%. Globally, “GTER” is increasing at an unprecedented rate of 1% per year. As per the statistics released by MHRD in its publication ‘Statistics at a Glance-2016’ Gross Enrolment Ratio (tertiary) was 23% in India, 39.4% in China, 65.5 % in Germany, 78.7% in Russia, 56.5% in UK, 86.7% in USA and 10.4% in Pakistan.

In spite of this pace of progress, India’s institutions for higher education have not reached the world excellence standards. Less that 25 Indian universities find a mention in the list of 200 top world universities (FICCI, 2013). Additionally, despite the fact that during the last decade education sector has been given priority during the national planning and a number of new national education programs and reforms have been initiated by both the central and state governments, the higher education sector is still underperforming. So while capacity has been greatly enhanced, the quality still lags behind.

Various studies have shown that the nature of instruction and learning being delivered by institutions of higher education in India is not up to the mark. The rapid expansion of higher education since the mid-1990s , have put a strain on the meager reserves of the institutions and have led to a number of problems, like a fall in educational spending per student, a decline in the overall teaching conditions and an absence of consistency in the quality of education being disseminated across the universities. This has brought about a detectable decrease in quality as a whole, and various stakeholders have shown concerns with respect to the nature of teaching in higher education in the last few decades (Liu, 2014). Within this context, higher education in India needs to shift its priority from the expansion of quantity to the enhancement of quality.
1.1.5 Quality in Indian Higher Education

Higher education is a process in which students come to handle concepts and ideas, and participate in tasks and activities, that are ‘essential’ to them. This is the real essence of higher education. This ‘essence’ is dependent on the quality that is put in education. Quality of education depends upon research work in the field, conducive academic environment at the educational institutions, knowledgeable and expert faculty, well equipped and modern physical infrastructure at the universities or educational institutions, availability of adequate sports and recreation facilities and receptive and engaged students. In a globalised world, the education system in the country need to be integrated with the world’s best education system which encompasses exchange of knowledge, research projects in collaboration with other countries following the best education system, interactive net working, sharing of knowledge through international conferences, etc. but in tune with cultural values of the country.

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. Its statistical patterns and demographic trends demonstrate that it will surpass China with respect to population. It is also expected that its middle class’s requirement for higher education will swell to more than 500 million individuals in the next ten years. In that scenario, India’s higher education framework which was formulated to serve the elite will have to provide educational facilities to general population also. This will require a shift of perspective towards innovation, change and a drive towards excellence (Heslop, 2014). The concept of ‘excellence’ can be defined in many ways. “It has to do with ‘eminence’ but it is again linked to quality assurance and quality control, to benchmarking of educational institutions or educational systems, to gaining efficiency in education and in learning” (Eunec, 2012).

Over the past ten years there has been a growing awareness worldwide in quality “assurance” in “higher education” Quality simply means ‘fitness for purpose at minimum cost to society’. For India today, quality in higher education is a key priority (NAAC, 2006). The concept is getting due attention of Indian parliament as in
the 172nd report of “Parliamentary Standing Committee” the committee recommended that the quality of “higher education” should have been accorded due importance in the country. It further mentioned that quality and excellence are the watch-words in today’s liberalized environment. The President of India Sh. Pranab Mukherjee in one of his convocation address to the university students in Kolkata lamented the lack of quality in higher education and stated that the standards of higher education in India today need improvement. He observed that India needs universities to provide quality education that meet international benchmarks (The Times of India, 2014).

Quality in higher education has also become top most priority throughout the world and the main beliefs and practices of quality assurance have become rooted in higher education. This has given rise to procedural questions about evaluating quality and a need for developing new understandings regarding quality assurance. There is a requirement for taking adequate feedback from the quality assurance system itself (Coates, 2006). Despite the fact that universities regularly gather a considerable and often an ever-growing quantity of data to ensure quality assurance, it is still true that most of the discussions related to the quality of higher education demonstrate very less explicit concern about the interaction of students with their universities and with the systems and practices that are most likely to lead to productive learning. There is a need for emphasis to shift on what students are actually doing (Ramsden, 1992) so that a real improvement in total quality management of higher education can be achieved.

Nowadays students in higher education are bored, unmotivated, and uninvolved. In other words, they are disengaged from the academic and social aspects of academic life. Student engagement has therefore become an important consideration for educationists. Student engagement has thus become a significant consideration for educators both as a means of understanding student behavior and performance and for addressing student needs – individually and through system-wide efforts (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). The present study is an attempt to examine student engagement levels in higher education and analyzing the factors that determine student engagement.
1.2 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

“Student engagement is a current buzzword applied to higher education that has been increasingly researched and debated, with growing evidence indicating its significant effects on students’ learning achievements and personal development” (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2014). Results from experimental studies have repetitively revealed that students’ engagement in purposeful educational activities is related positively to their critical thinking skills, grades and persistence with studies that they showed between the first two years of college. The studies have further shown that low ability students benefitted more from engagement than their classmates (Carini, Kuh & Klein, 2006)

The first indirect mention of student engagement can be found in the 1940's when Tyler (1949) showed that the time spent on the task positively affects students’ learning. According to him, “Learning takes place through the active behaviour of the student; it is what he does that he learns, not what the teacher does” (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

Active research on student engagement has happened essentially in the last 33 years, advancing with an article by Mosher and McGowan (1985) in which they deplored that “no investigation has directly conceptualized or measured Student Engagement. ‘Engagement’ per se was rarely ever mentioned. Rather it was supposed to be be inferred elliptically from other investigations of students who disengage, dropout, or are alienated”. They concluded that a well-developed method of assessing engagement did not exist and that “engagement” had no real theory.’ To overcome that gap they gave a conceptual framework of engagement for the very first time in which they defined engagement as:

- “Engagement is the attitude leading to and participation in school programs
- Engagement has multiple interactive determinants
- Engagement will have an impact on many student and school outcomes including achievement, academic knowledge and social behaviour
- Students’ engagement can be a complex state of perception or a way of acting
Many of its antecedents are deeply rooted in the larger society, the family and, in the school and classroom.”

Since then the concept of student engagement has grown over the years relying at times on various theories and models.

One of the earliest theories of engagement is based on the participation-identification model (Finn, 1993). It is a seminal theory addressing significant variables of a student. According to this theory Student Engagement has both a behavioural component, termed participation, and an emotional component, termed identification (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). According to this theory, dropout and completion are conceptualized, respectively as ongoing processes of participation→success→identification (completion) or of non-participation→poor performance→emotional withdrawal (disengagement). In this view, engagement is comprised of behaviour (participation) and effect, in the form of belonging and valuing education. Further this theory highlighted the importance of student development prior to entry in education by stressing that there are differences in students’ skills, attitudes and behaviors at the time of the commencement of formal education that affect the likelihood of successful participation, success and identification with the educational process.

Another influential model on student engagement was developed by Connell and his colleagues (Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This model is based on the self-determination theory. According to this theory, student engagement is influenced by the degree to which students perceive the educational context as meeting their psychological needs. They distinguish between two ends of a continuum: engagement and disaffected patterns of action. “Engaged students show behavioural involvement in learning and a positive emotional tone; they persevere in the face of challenges” (Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991). In contrast, “disengaged or disaffected students are passive, do not try hard, are bored, give up easily, and display negative emotions, such as anger, blame, and denial” (Skinner & Belmont, 1993).
Theoretical Framework

Expectancy-value theory is another theory that touches upon the concept of student engagement. John William Atkinson built up this theory in 1950s and through 1960s with an end goal to comprehend the achievement motivation of individuals. During the 1980s; Jacquelynne Eccles extended this examination into the field of education. It holds that expectations about success or failure combined with the value an individual places on a task determine motivation and engagement.

1.2.1 Student Engagement- Definitions

The concept of student engagement has been a part of educational research for a very long time, with a continually developing definition and meaning. Engagement as a term has its roots in the management and corporate studies where the concepts of productivity and engagement were linked and discussed at length. It has been defined in the past as the behavioural intensity and emotional quality of a person's active involvement during a task.

As per the most commonly employed conception, engagement refers to “the manifest behaviour of students and is reflected in their active participation in educationally purposeful activities, both inside and outside the classroom” (Kuh & Gonyea, 2003). The most widely used definition of student engagement is one that was coined by Kuh (2001). According to him “Student engagement represents both the time and energy students invest in educationally purposeful activities and the effort institutions devote to using effective educational practices” (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup & Kinzie, 2008).

The yearly conducted National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in the United States depends totally on this concept. Expounding this Trowler (2010) says that “student engagement is concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students as well as the performance and reputation of the institution”. This definition focuses principally on the outwardly manifested activities of the students without considering the cognitive or affective aspects of the states of mind of students that underlie their conduct.
The alternative conceptualization views student engagement solely in terms of the attitude of students towards their learning experiences. For instance, Mann (2005) considers engagement as the antonym of alienation, Maslach and Leiter (1997) think of it as the exact opposite of burnout. Both alienation and burnout are attitudinal phenomena reflecting cognitive and emotional experiences of a person. Llorens et al. (2002) have defined student engagement more explicitly “as a positive, fulfilling, and affective motivational state”. Mosenthal (1999) too has argued that “student engagement construct is grounded in the cognitive and affective systems of the learners”.

Combining the two conceptions summarized above, Marks (2000) has defined student engagement more comprehensively as “a psychological process, specifically, the attention, interest, investment and effort students expend in the work of learning.” According to Skinner et al. (1990), “student engagement refers to students’ initiation of action, effort and persistence on their work as well as ambient emotional states during learning activities”. Cleary & Skaines (2005) too define student engagement as “the active involvement, commitment and a sense of belonging that dictates the time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities.”

Student engagement also refers to a "student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process promoting higher level thinking for enduring understanding”(CUREE, 2012).

Coates (2006) one of the major proponents of student engagement explains engagement as “a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain non-academic aspects of the student experience”, and it comprises the following:

- Active and collaborative learning;
- Participation in challenging academic activities;
- Formative communication with academic staff;
- Involvement in enriching educational experiences;
- Feeling legitimated and supported by university learning communities (Trowler, 2010).
Theoretical Framework

“Engagement is more than involvement or participation – it requires feelings and sense making as well as activity. Acting without feeling engaged is just involvement or even compliance; feeling engaged without acting is dissociation” (Harper & Quaye, 2008).

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE, 2013), defines student engagement as “students’ involvement with activities and conditions likely to generate high-quality learning”.

Another way to understand engagement is through the understanding of its antonym which is not disengagement but disaffection. “Disaffected children are passive, do not try hard, and give up easily in the face of challenges. They can be bored, depressed, anxious, or even angry about their presence in the classroom; they can be withdrawn from learning opportunities or even rebellious towards teachers and classmates” (Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

A prevailing myth is that student engagement is the same as integration in college/university life. Harper and Quaye (2008) contend that it is entirely possible to be involved (Astin, 1993) but not engaged in optimally beneficial ways. It is also possible to be behaviorally engaged in college without truly being integrated in the educational process.

From the above discussion a trend can be observed in the development of the concept of Student Engagement. Early investigations of student engagement frequently centered on observable behaviors e.g., behaviors directly related to academic effort and achievement (Johnson, Crosnoe & Elder, 2001). Later on the definitions also included the affective component e.g. engagement in education was defined as “…having both a behavioural component, termed participation, and an emotional component, termed identification” (Jimerson, Campos & Greif, 2003). And more recently student engagement has been used to “depict students' willingness to participate in routine educational activities, such as attending classes, submitting required work, and following teachers' directions in class, participation in education-related activities, achievement of high grades, and amount of time spent on homework, and also the rate of homework completion. In addition to the behaviors
listed above, some researchers include measurements of delinquency, truancy, or misbehavior in their investigation of engagement” (Bullis & Yovanoff, 2002).

‘Student engagement’ is a current catchphrase that has been applied to higher education. It is a concept which is being researched and debated at an increasing rate. It is for this reason that it has been studied from different viewpoints and approaches. One of the prevailing approaches to understand this concept is through an understanding of its dimensions.

1.2.2 Dimensions of Student Engagement

“Student engagement is a multi-dimensional, multifaceted construct that includes affective, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions” (Fredricks et al. 2011). The affective dimension refers to the students’ emotional response/s to their teachers, peers, academics and educational institutions. The behavioural dimension covers students’ performance or actions that can be observed; e.g. participation in co-curricular activities, scores on achievement tests, quality and timely submission of assignments as well as their grades in class. The cognitive dimension relates to students mental investment, comprises students’ perceptions and beliefs related to self, teachers, and peers. It incorporates thoughtfulness and a willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills (Jimerson, Campos & Greif, 2003). In this regard, it can be concluded that student engagement is like an over-arching meta-construct which integrates different and diverse lines of research to explain student success.

These different dimensions have been developed by researchers and educationists for the sake of convenience of understanding and of handling this multidimensional concept which otherwise defies one definition and conception. But in reality there are no water tight compartments in the study of student engagement.

1.2.3 Indicators of Student Engagement

Student engagement has two indicators- the externally observable indicators which include academic and behavioural components and the internal indicators which comprise cognitive and affective components. This can be explained with the help of the diagram as given in Figure:
Cognitive, behavioural, and affective indicators of student engagement is reflected well by Skinner and Belmont (1993) who believe that “students who are engaged show sustained behavioural involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest”.

From a different perspective, Pintrich and De Groot (1990) associated “engagement levels with students' use of cognitive, meta-cognitive and self-regulatory strategies to monitor and guide their learning processes. In this regard, student engagement is viewed as motivated behaviour apparent from the kind of cognitive strategies students choose to use e.g., simple or surface processing strategies such as rehearsal versus deeper processing strategies such as elaboration, and by their willingness to persist with difficult tasks by regulating their own learning behavior”.
From a psychological perspective engagement and motivation are closely related. While the former includes personal, unobservable and psychological factors, the latter includes behaviour that can be publicly observed (Veiga et al., 2014). Thus, although there could be a difference in opinion about the grouping of factors with respect to motivation or engagement, there seems, by all accounts, to be a consensus that motivation is the foundation for ensuing engagement (Martin & Dowson, 2009). Inspiration influences learning and conduct by centering attention towards a specific objective, thus, leading to an increased energy and effort, an increased initiation of activities and a greater persistence in carrying out those activities. Schunk and Mullen (2012) describe “motivation as the process of energising, directing and sustaining activity whereas engagement is the outward and observable outcome of this energy”. This concept can be additionally elucidated with the assistance of the engagement and motivation wheel (Martin & Dowson, 2009) which has two dimensions. It includes four higher order factors and eleven first-order factors. It comprises “(a) Adaptive motivation, reflecting students’ orientation and positive attitudes towards learning. This further includes valuing, mastery orientation and self-efficacy; (b) Adaptive Engagement, reflecting students’ positive engagement and behaviour during learning. This further includes students’ planning, persistence and task management; (c) Maladaptive motivation, reflecting those factors, orientations and attitudes that hamper students’ academic learning. This further includes uncertain control, failure avoidance and anxiety; and (d) Maladaptive engagement reflecting students’ problematical learning behaviour. It further includes self-sabotage and disengagement” (Martin & Dowson, 2009).
From the above discussion it can be observed that as a construct student engagement has its origin in the desire to enhance student learning. For over two decades, the idea of student engagement has developed from plain attention in classroom to a construct which comprises of cognitive, affective and behavioral components that embodies and further builds up the motivation for learning (Christenson, Amy & Wylie, 2012). Student engagement and its importance remains undisputed by educationists and policy makers. It can be seen that engagement has become a significant consideration for educators both as a means of understanding student behaviors as well as performance. It also helps to address student needs individually as well as collectively through system-wide efforts. Various definitions of Student Engagement are an attempt made by the educationists in the evolution of the concept. Moreover even though the literature demonstrates a pattern in the way student engagement is conceptualized, due to its multifaceted nature there is still scope for experimenting with what exactly comprises this term. Any one definition cannot do justice to all its dimensions. In addition to the disparity in definitions of
student engagement, there are also differences in the way student engagement has been measured. A review of empirical studies suggests that there are many variations in the types of items used to measure student engagement, the sources from which information is generated (e.g., students, teachers, school records), and the format of assessments (e.g., survey, questionnaire) (Jimerson, Campos & Greif, 2003). Furthermore, engagement is not conceptualized as an attribute of the student, but rather a state of being that is highly influenced by contextual factors, such as policies and practices of the institute and family or peer interactions.

Accordingly the present accepts student engagement as a multidimensional and a multifaceted construct that includes cognitive, behavioural and affective dimensions and studies it in light of its demographic, personal and institutional determinants.

1.2.4 Relevance of Student Engagement in Higher Education

The variables connected with higher education are changing rapidly. Besides infusing knowledge, higher education aims at skill development and its practical application. Mass education as an important component at tertiary level was earlier prominent in North America and the other English-speaking world but is now spreading to other nations also. Besides, the milestone of high participation in higher education has already been achieved in most of the developed countries.

Education is a two way traffic involving teachers and the taught. Quality of education and competence of a teacher alone cannot produce good students until and unless they are motivated and involved in their study. In other words the prime requirement for any good education system to work is for students who have a genuine craving for knowledge. Thus there is a strong requirement for students to be involved in the educational process. Student engagement assumes to be the greatest challenge for the educators. The need to understand the individual needs of the students, their behavior and performance becomes pertinent.

In recent years, the quality of teaching and learning has been under close scrutiny from students and the authorities alike because of the growing influence of higher education on political, social and economic variables (Byrne & Flood, 2003).
Student learning is the basic objective of the universities and there is a requirement for the quality of student learning to be positioned as the basic goal within system and institutional-level governance arrangements (Jones, 2013). In order to make sure that excellence in the teaching learning process is demonstrated in higher education institutions, a growing number of surveys aimed at understanding student engagement have been organized in countries such as the USA, the UK, Australia and China (Shi et al., 2014).

In the USA, “the Indiana University Centre for Postsecondary Research annually administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)” (Kuh, 2009). More than 1500 four-year colleges and universities in Canada and the USA have taken part in NSSE since it was launched in the year 2000 with 586 institutions from USA and 27 from Canada participated in 2013 (NSSE, 2013). In the same way, the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) has been administered on the students from New Zealand and Australian Universities since the year 2007 for collecting information from the students related to their interaction with the universities and to know those practices that are most likely to generate productive learning (Coates 2010). In the year 2009, the Chinese version of the NSSE was also administered nationwide by a research team at Tsinghua University (Shi et al., 2011). After years of adaptation, the updated China College Student Survey (CCSS) was initiated in 2013 to reveal university teaching and learning activities and illustrate the learning behaviour of Chinese university students (Shi et al., 2014).

In India MHRD has been conducting survey on higher education regularly since 2010-11. Recently the report of All India Survey on Higher Education 2015-16 which was the sixth round of this annual survey was placed on its website. This kind of survey creates a data base to facilitate central and state government to take informed decisions and for formulation of future polices. Scope of these surveys need to be broadened to study the engagement level of students, understand various factors that influence student engagement and suggest interventional measures for improving student engagement levels.
1.3 DETERMINANTS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student engagement being a multi-faceted construct is affected and determined by numerous variables. The present study is confined to under-mentioned demographic, personal and institutional variables that determine student engagement:

1.3.1 Demographic Determinants

The demographic determinants include such information as gender, social class, economic status dependent on family income and location.

1.3.2 Personal Variables

Personal variable refers to a variable that relates or belongs to a single or particular person rather than to a group or an organization. Variable is something that is liable to change. So a personal variable is a unique characteristic that varies from one individual to another.

There is a need to study personal variables comprehensively for a better understanding of student engagement.

1.3.2.1 Previous Academic Experiences

Previous Academic Experiences is an important factor that influences “students’ ability and commitment to persist in their engagement. Previous academic experiences refer to the human, social and cultural capital students bring to higher education (Astin, 1993). “They are typically beyond the direct control of the student or the college or university. Rather, they are the products of many years of complex interactions of the students with their family of origin; and cultural, social, political, and educational environments. Thus, some students are better prepared academically and have greater confidence in their ability to succeed than others” (Martinez & Klopott, 2003). These factors give a full gamut of experiences experienced inside as well as outside the educational institute which have a direct effect on academic performance and achievement. Previous academic experiences affect habits and expectations as well as presence/ lack of preparation that students bring to higher education (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006).

A study of previous academic experiences is the “cumulative, longitudinal view of what matters to student success, recognizing that students do not come to
postsecondary education *tabula rasa*. The quality of the academic experiences and intensity of the high school curriculum affect almost every dimension of success in postsecondary education. Indeed, those students who are high performers and engaged in high school are best positioned to do well in college, regardless of their family condition, parents financial position, or their future plans” (Florida Department of Education, 2005).

Previous academic experiences typically include the type of pervious institutes attended (Private/ Government), the locality in which the students were born and studied (urban/rural/slums), personal factors such as the relationships (with teachers, parents, siblings, friends and significant others), bonding, sense of belongingness and opinions about teaching and learning and perceptions about the relevance of curriculum. The quality of relationships with teachers and peers also form an important part of the previous academic experiences. Previous academic experiences give a complete list of educational experiences that have been experienced by a student till a point of time in life. Who students are, what they do prior to starting their education- primary, secondary or higher secondary, and where and with what mindset they begin higher education can all make a difference in their involvement with education and on their achievement motivation as well.

### 1.3.2.2 Achievement Motivation

“Achievement motivation is a widely researched topic in both the fields of psychology and education. Achievement motivation can best be understood by examining the meanings of *achievement* and *motivation* separately. Achievement typically stresses the importance of accomplishment and attainment with effort involved” (Mandel & Marcus, 1988) “Motivation relates to an individual’s reason for engaging in an activity, the degree to which an individual pursues the activity, and the persistence of the individual” (Graham & Weiner, 1996).

Achievement motivation is an urge to master challenges and reach a high standard of excellence.

Harter and Connell (1984) defined achievement motivations as “the *level* of one’s motivation to engage in achievement behaviors, based on the interaction of such
parameters as need for achievement, expectancy of success, and the incentive value of success. Our construct of motivational orientation refers to the type of motivational stance which the child adopts toward classroom learning. Thus, one may engage in schoolwork for intrinsic reasons, because work is challenging, enjoyable, and piques one’s curiosity, or alternatively, one may engage in schoolwork for extrinsic reasons, either to obtain external approval or because the educational system requires it”. Sunita Sharma (1998) while elucidating the definition of achievement motivation said that it refers to “the tendency to strive for success or the attainment of a desired end”. Heckhausen (1967) pointed out that achievement motivation can be defined as “the striving to increase or to keep as high as possible, one’s own capabilities in all activities in which a standard of excellence is thought to apply and where the execution of such activities can, therefore either succeed or fail”.

Thus it can be said that achievement motivation is based on achieving success and attaining the aspirations in life. Achievement goals can affect the performance of the task by a person. It represents a need to show case proficiency and skill (Harackiewicz, Barron, Carter, Lehto & Elliot, 1997). McClelland (1976), a renowned psychologist in his path breaking book ‘The Achievement Motive’ states “the characteristics and attitudes that achievement motivated people have in common

- The capacity to set high personal but obtainable goals
- The concern for personal achievement rather than rewards of success, and
- The desire for job relevant feedback rather than for attitudinal feedback”

The presence of high achievement motivation in students is positively related to their performance as well as real involvement with the educational process. It is an “important issue for psychologists and individuals in the field of education because it has been correlated with academic self-concept (Marsh & Ayotte, 2003), academic self-efficacy (Bong &Skaalvik, 2003), personality traits (Mandel & Marcus, 1988), developmental level (Guay, Marsh & Boivin, 2003), and gender differences (Mandel & Marcus, 1988). Achievement motivation is considered a prerequisite for success, not only in academics, but also in sports- and job related situations. In academic settings, the interest in motivation is partly inspired by the notion that students'
motivation, operationalized as their competency beliefs and value beliefs, could be more malleable than their cognitive ability, and as such could prove to be a potential lead for the educational system for improving learning and achievement processes in students” (Spinath, Spinath, Harlaar & Plomin, 2006).

1.3.2.3 Lifestyle

“The term ‘lifestyle’ was originally used by Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler. It refers to a combination of determining tangible or intangible factors. Tangible factors relate specifically to demographic variables, i.e. an individual’s demographic profile, whereas intangible factors concern the psychological aspects of an individual such as personal values, preferences, and outlooks” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2014).

A lifestyle typically reflects an individual's attitudes, values or world view. Therefore, a lifestyle is a means of “forging a sense of self by creating cultural symbols that resonate with personal identity. Not all aspects of a lifestyle are voluntary. Surrounding social and technical systems can constrain the lifestyle choices available to the individual and the symbols she/he is able to project to others and the self” (Wikipedia, 2014).

“Lifestyle can also be defined as a way of living of individuals, families (households), and societies, which they manifest in coping with their physical, psychological, social, and economic environments on a day-to-day basis. Lifestyle is expressed in work and leisure behavior patterns and activities, attitudes, interests, opinions, values, and allocation of income. It also reflects people's self image or self concept; the way they see themselves and believe they are seen by others. It is a composite of motivations, needs, and wants and is influenced by factors such as culture, family, reference groups and social class” (BusinessDictionary, 2014).

“A good performance and a high student engagement may be a testimony and a record of students’ good lifestyle. There is a consensus among various studies that the way of life, conduct of life and academic behaviour- that are formed at a young age- play a significant role in the development of favourable or unfavourable life
trends in students. Better understanding of the areas of certain lifestyle elements along with family characteristics (such as age, education level, habits of the parents, family atmosphere, family structure) and exploration of relationships between lifestyle and family parameters (especially in the area of leisure and exercise, but in the same time observing other lifestyle elements) can help in improving the lifestyle characteristics with a direct effect on student engagement”.

1.3.2.4 Perceived Relevance of the Curriculum

Perceived relevance of the curriculum refers to the perceptions about the “curricular contents and related opportunities that provide real-world learning opportunities that are interesting and relevant to future aspirations” of the students. Positive perceptions about the relevance of the curriculum contribute to feelings of belongingness in the academic sphere and in turn promote student engagement.

Factors that affect perceived relevance of the curriculum include providing “guidance and support with assessment, useful feedback, a dedicated physical space, opt-out co-curricular activities and staff-organised social events, curriculum design and content, assessment, structure of teaching and delivery, and interaction with academics (Thomas, 2012)”.

1.3.3 Institutional Variables

1.3.3.1 Type of Institute

The type of institute in higher education refers to colleges, polytechnic, universities (Public/ Private, Government/ Non-government, Aided/ Self-financed, Urban/ Rural, Local/ International, etc.) and specialized schools or institutes (Art Schools, Design Schools, Vocational Schools etc.). Present study is confined to higher education in public and private universities.

1.3.3.2 Infrastructural Support

Infrastructural support refers to the availability of updated and good quality infrastructure to provide the physical structures that are required for an institute to function. Quality of facilities is not only related to age of the building but also to its
Theoretical Framework

condition, with good facility management being able to extend the life cycle of a building (Ministry of Science and Technology, 2010).

An effective infrastructural support “is responsive to the changing programs of educational delivery, and at a minimum should provide a physical environment that is comfortable, safe, secure, accessible, well illuminated, well ventilated, and aesthetically pleasing. The infrastructure consists of not only the physical structure and the variety of building systems, such as mechanical, plumbing, electrical and power, telecommunications, security, and fire suppression system but also furnishings, materials and supplies, equipment and information technology, as well as various aspects of the building grounds, namely, athletic fields, playgrounds, areas for outdoor learning, and vehicular access and parking” (Educational Encyclopedia, 2014).

“Creating an infrastructure for learning is a far-reaching project that requires the participation and collaboration of individuals from all disciplines and types of institutions across the entire spectrum of education. It also requires education, business, and government as partners. And it takes leadership and a commitment to a shared understanding of its importance to transforming education. An infrastructure for learning unleashes new ways of capturing and sharing knowledge based on multimedia that integrate text, still and moving images, audio, and applications that run on a variety of devices. It enables seamless integration of in-school and out-of-school learning” (US Department of Education, 2014).

“The influence of the physical, *built* environment is often subtle, sustained, and quiet difficult to measure with precision. Infrastructure facilities are only a piece of the education reform puzzle, but they may be a more important piece than what has been understood in the past” (10th Five Year Plan). This is because “buildings, settings, and environments are accorded symbolic value by those who use them as well as by those who do not. Physical entities come to symbolize certain qualities, values, aspirations, and experiences for individuals. A school may symbolize opportunity, hope, stability, and a safe haven in a world of insecurity and transience or, to someone else, the school structure may symbolize failure and oppressive
authority. The physical environment, however, rarely has direct unmediated impacts upon human health, emotions, motivation and well-being. It is the interaction of individual characteristics with physical features of the environment that must be examined to understand how environment affect behaviour and engagement of students”.

1.3.3.3 Organisational Culture and Ambience

“Organizational culture is postulated to be one of the greatest theoretical levers required for understanding organizations” (Delobbe et al., 2002). Culture can be measured from a values or a norms perspective.

“An organization's culture has several levels. At the most superficial and easiest to observe level it refers to people's attitudes and opinions and their typical behaviors (norms). These things are, like the weather, relatively changeable and might better be thought of as the "climate" of the organization. At the next level come people’s behaviors and opinions that reflect their underlying values and beliefs. Observing this level is more difficult as one must build logical and research-based connections between values or beliefs, which are often hidden, and the views and actions that accurately reflect those values and beliefs. The deepest level of culture is extremely hard to assess, consisting of assumptions about the nature of people, work, and the organization” (Sashkin, 1984).

There are three important aspects to culture. “First, culture concerns to critical assumptions determining how group members perceive, think about, and feel about things, and it does not include overt behaviour patterns. Second, culture belongs to a group; and, third, culture is learned (Muijen, 1998)”.

Thus, “organizational culture is the behavior of humans within an organization and the meaning that people attach to those behaviors. Culture includes the organization's vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits. Organizational culture represents the collective values, beliefs and principles of organizational members and is a product of such factors as history, product, market, technology, and strategy, type of employees, management style, and national culture” (Needle, 2004). Ambience is another word for atmosphere in the
sense of the mood a place or setting it has. It refers to the environment and all that adds to the sensory experiences e.g. lighting, smell, comfort level, etc. (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

1.3.3.4 Modes of Curriculum Transactions

Curriculum transactions are the effective and desired implementation of the curriculum contents on the basis of set aims and objectives. Curriculum transactions incorporate effectual planning for providing learning experiences and the modes in which the curriculum is transacted. Hence, it includes design, transaction and evaluation. “It incorporates effective planning for providing learning experiences to its learners, organization of planning, administration/implementation of the organized planning and evaluation of the implementations by the implementer and the experts in the relevant field” (Swamy, 2013).

Modes of curriculum transactions pertain to the channels adopted for providing learning experiences to trainees. These act as the real 'links' between the expectations placed on a teacher education programme on the one hand, and on the other, the process of enabling teacher trainees to absorb the essentials and actualize these expectations. To put it differently, the modes of curriculum transactions represent an operationalization of the various components of teacher education programmes (NCTE, 2014).

Today’s curriculum is disjointed in its total functions. A curriculum transaction scaffold indicates the direction in which the educational system has to direct the various dimensions of curriculum namely instructive goals, learning outcomes, pedagogical strategies, learning environment and evaluation mechanisms in order to achieve the wholesome enrichment of an individual.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

We are living in the times of a converging world and profound global changes. For the first time we are preparing students for a future we cannot clearly describe. In the era of globalization things are changing very fast and so is the education system. Research and mass education is no longer monopoly of the developed world.
Education system is one of the parameter for measurement of “Human Development Index”. So every country developed, emerging and developing economies are pursuing their expansionary educational policies and striving hard to extend outreach of education to the masses. Thus on the one hand higher participation in “higher education” is taking place the competitive world is putting up new challenges to the countries exhorting them to bring about qualitative changes

Policy makers of education system in the developing countries like India are required to reconcile the dichotomy of expanding education system catering to the needs of ever increasing number of students due to increased enrolment and within resource constraints. But it is no longer sufficient to measure the standards of education simply through the number of student enrolments and the availability of infrastructural and education resources. There has been a growth of interest in the quality of university education which has led to the implantation of principles and practices of “quality assurance” in higher education. The Twelfth Five Year Plan repeatedly emphasizes on a need for qualitative and productive improvement of education standards.

The moot question is whether the high participation in higher education and qualitative improvement has generated interest or involvement of the students. Mere physical and tangible improvements in quality of higher education such as improving the infrastructure, processes, curriculum, instruction, interaction and practice etc. cannot produce efficient and technically expert human resources who are capable of meeting international standards in terms of intellect and professionalism. The actual requirement is for the students to be internally motivated and involved in their study. In other words, it is important that the students are engaged in their study with a mind craving for knowledge. There lies the rationale of the present study.

Engagement with learning is a pre-requisite, as it is engagement that ensures continual interaction and practice. This premise is deceptively simple, perhaps self-evident. It is so intrinsic to the process of education that its presence often goes unnoticed. It is in its absence that it is observed the most. Student engagement is for
Theoretical Framework

the most part viewed as among the better indicators of learning and self-development. The more learners spend time in studying or practicing a subject, the more they will in general learn. “Likewise, the more students practice and get feedback on their work, the more adept they become” (Kuh, 2001). “The very act of being engaged also adds to the foundation of skills and dispositions that are essential to live a productive and satisfying life after college. That is, students who are involved in educationally productive activities in college are developing habits of the mind and heart that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development” (Carini, Kuh & Klein, 2006).

“Higher education is linked to long-term cognitive, social and economic benefits to individuals, benefits that are passed on to future generations, enhancing the quality of life of the families of college-educated persons, the communities in which they live, and the larger society” (Kuh et al., 2008). The universities and other higher education institutes are thus faced with the challenge of creating opportunities for success and to provide necessary support to meet these new goals. Traditionally, the higher education institutes assumed that quality could be determined by their internal resources, viz., faculty with an impressive set of degrees and experience detailed at the end of the institute’s admission brochure, number of books and journals in the library, an ultra-modern campus, and size of the endowment, etc., or by its definable and assessable outputs, viz., efficient use of resources, producing uniquely educated, highly satisfied and employable graduates. But this has not happened. “Critical appraisals undertaken by the government committees and independent academicians have highlighted the crisis confronting the system: ‘increasing educated unemployment; weakening of student motivation; increasing unrest and indiscipline on the campuses; frequent collapse of administration; deterioration of standards; and above all, the demoralizing effect of the irrelevance and purposelessness of most of what is being done” (Singh, 2009). In addition, though India can boast of over 700 universities, it has failed to produce world class universities like Harvard and Cambridge. According to the London Times Higher Education - Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University rankings (2014), no Indian university features among the first 100. Ex-Prime Minister of India, Mr. Manmohan Singh in his address at the 150th Anniversary function of
Theoretical Framework

University of Mumbai, said “Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair. In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 per cent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters...” (Kapur & Mehta, 2007). UGC and other regulatory authorities have been trying very hard to extirpate the menace of certain universities which are running courses without any affiliation or recognition and which are not able to engage the students in accordance with the global standards mentioned above. There is thus a need for the shift of emphasis from mere quantitative targets to qualitative initiatives as well, to solve the maladies affecting the higher education system.

The quality assurance determinations according to the present quality measuring standards need to take account of how and to what extent students engage with activities that are likely to lead to productive learning (Coates, 2006). It is for this reason that student engagement has become an integral part of the conversation on quality improvement in higher education. Number of international researches have investigated how best to incorporate student-level process factors into quality evaluations (Pascarella, 2006) through the study of student engagement. Student engagement has been widely researched internationally. In the United States, research on student engagement relates to the American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which focuses on four-year colleges and universities, and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) which focuses on two-year institutions. (Hu & Kuh, 2002). The Australian equivalent of the NSSE is the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE, Australian Council for Educational Research, 2008), which again has similar foresight and spread. In United Kingdom, the National Student Survey has done extensive research and undertaken various activities on student engagement. (Hockings, Cooke & Bowl, 2008; Hockings, Cooke, Yamashita, McGinty & Bowl, 2008) (Wilson, 2010).

Almost all the internationally acclaimed educational institutions like Harvard, Cambridge, and Princeton etc. have included student engagement data and scores on their websites. Student engagement, its aims, initiatives within faculties, departments and colleges find a mention in their curriculum. India’s most esteemed institutes like the IIMS, AIIMS, and IITs etc. also employ various student
engagement initiatives to involve students in education. Their efforts at updating of their curriculum in accordance with the changing needs, credit accruals on the basis of projects, compulsory trainings and community connect programs etc. are the reflections of student engagement programme. But student engagement as a formal program has not been introduced even in the best of Indian institutes. The empirical evidence available so far on the present state of Indian higher education has put the spotlight on the need for more qualitative improvements in education system to improve student learning and outcomes. There is a requirement to focus on how students in higher education are interacting with their universities with a spotlight on the practices that are most likely to generate productive learning. For this, there is a dire need to conduct empirical studies to assess the present higher education system with regards to its compliance with the various quality indicators with a focus on student engagement. Though the international research literature on higher education has been discussing student engagement, Indian educational research has been relatively untouched by this concept. The present study will try to fill in this gap through the study of student engagement and its demographic, personal and institutional determinants and to identify in its small way, the issues which require immediate attention for improvement in education. The effort might help in suggesting an improvement model for raising learning outcomes in higher education and to make ‘education more engaging for the students.’

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: DEMOGRAPHIC, PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINANTS

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- **Higher Education**: In this study, definition of higher education has been adopted from “All India Survey on Higher Education 2015-16” as “education which is obtained after completing 12 years of schooling or equivalent and is of duration of at least nine months (full time) or after completing 10 years of schooling and is of the duration of at least 3 years. The education may be of the nature of General, Vocational, Professional or Technical Education”.
Theoretical Framework

- **Student Engagement**: In the current study student engagement refers the student’s cognitive, behavioural and affective involvement with education. Student’s cognitive involvement was measured through a study of his intellectual engagement in class activities, study management, learning strategies, efforts & learning focus, taking academic challenge, future aspirations and goals. The affective engagement includes the emotional engagement/disengagement, belongingness and valuing of the course, relationship with teachers, peer and other concerned staff, self-belief, failure avoidance and anxiety. The behavioural engagement will include observable actions such as attendance and punctuality, participation in academically challenging activities, time spent in library, type of reference material and resources used for studying as well as preparing assignments or other projects, time spent on assignments, initiating action, behaviour in class as well as at campus, participation in co-curricular activities and achievement in terms of grades.

**Demographic Determinants**

The demographic determinants include gender, social class, economic status (family income) and location of residence (urban/rural).

- **Gender**: In this study gender refers to male and females.
- **Locale**: Locale includes the rural and urban background of the students. For the purpose of study urban area is defined as all places with municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee and other places with minimum population of 5000. Areas other than urban area are treated as rural areas. The respondents input of locale was taken as final for the purpose of this study.
- **Economic Status**: The term economic status in the current study refers to status of the students on the basis of family income. In this study, family income of the students is divided into four sub groups, less than 2 lacs; 2-6 lacs, 6-10 lacs and 10 lacs and above. Students whose annual family income was less than 2 lacs were classified as **poor**; whose family income was
between 2-6 lacs as low income group, with income of 6-10 lacs, students were categorized into middle income group and those having more than 10 lacs were grouped in high income group.

- **Social Status**: Social status in this study refers to the caste based division that is followed in Indian society. The four main divisions - General, Schedule Tribe (ST), Scheduled Caste (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) as defined in the relevant provisions of Indian Constitution were taken.

**Personal Variables**

Personal variable refers to a variable that relates or belongs to a single or particular person rather than to a group or an organization. So a personal variable is a unique characteristic that varies from one individual to another. Four personal variables were included in the present study.

- **Previous Academic Experiences**: In this study, previous academic experiences refer to the educational experiences of the students in their previous institutes i.e. school and/or college before enrolment in universities and educational institutions imparting higher education.

- **Achievement Motivation**: Achievement motivation is a drive which can be aroused by inducing a situation of ‘ego involvement’ or achievement orientation. It is a desire to attain a high standard of excellence and accomplish unique objectives. High achievement motive includes a self-imposed desire for excellence, a need for accomplishing something worthwhile and unique.

- **Lifestyle**: Lifestyle includes patterns of social relations, consumption preferences, entertainment preferences, dressing style, etc. It reflects a person’s views, habits, and etiquettes and the way of life which has direct influence on the type of services that person gives or requires.

- **Perceived Relevance of the Curriculum**: Perceived relevance of the curriculum refers to the student’s perceptions about the curricular contents and related opportunities that provide real-world learning opportunities to
Theoretical Framework

them and are interesting and relevant to their future aspirations. It includes the overall satisfaction of the student with the curriculum.

Institutional Variables

Institutional variables refer to factors which are exogenous in nature from the viewpoint of students and are within the ambient of the universities or educational institutions.

- **Education Stream**: Educational stream will include science/social science and professional/basic courses.

- **Infrastructural Support**: Infrastructural support in universities includes (i) physical infrastructure viz. comfortable, safe, secure, accessible, well illuminated, well ventilated class rooms, conference rooms, sports complex/grounds; canteen and recreation facilities; restroom facilities with amenities like clean water, clean toilets; parking facility, etc. (ii) well equipped department library and subject specific library, (iii) availability of technological support such as Wi-Fi access, computers, on-line learning support etc.; (iv) availability of other facilities like parking and; first-aid and health facilities, etc.

- **Organisational Culture and Ambience**: In the present study organisational culture and ambience include physical environment comprising clean and pleasant campus and well equipped and maintained class rooms; healthy academic environment based on warm teacher taught relations, mutual respect between the teachers and student, encouragement to innovative ideas and thinking; conducive emotional environment where students are supportive of each other, mutual understanding between the teachers and students, and absence of any bias and discrimination towards students; cooperative working environment based on the principle of accountability and responsibility and involvement of students in policy formulation.

- **Modes of Curriculum Transactions**: Modes of curriculum transactions in this study refer to the various channels adopted for imparting education and transmitting learning experiences to the students. This includes methods of
Theoretical Framework

teaching, autonomy and freedom of expression to students, academic challenges for students, seminars/conferences, emphasis on practical work, classroom environment, teacher-taught relationship, quality of assignments and evaluation techniques, etc.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was delimited to the Universities located in Punjab and Chandigarh. Two public and two private universities were selected.

1.8 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify students in higher education with high, average and low level of student engagement.

2. To examine student engagement in relation to demographic variables, such as gender, locale and social and economic class.

3. To find out the difference in student engagement in public and private universities.

4. To find difference in student engagement in science and social science courses.

5. To compare students in professional and non-professional courses for their student engagement.

6. To ascertain the student engagement in relation to institutional variables namely infrastructural support, organisational culture and ambience and modes of curriculum transactions.

7. To study the student engagement in relation to personal variables, namely, previous academic experiences, achievement motivation, life styles and perceived relevance of the curriculum.

8. To see the difference in predictive efficiency of personal and institutional variables towards student engagement.

1.9 HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

I. There exists no significant difference in student engagement with regards to demographic variables i.e.
Theoretical Framework

i. Gender (Male/Female)
ii. Locale (Urban/Rural)
iii. Economic class (High, Middle and Low economic group)
iv. Social class (General, ST/ST, OBC)

II. There exists no significant difference in student engagement between students of public and private universities.

III. No significant differences exist in the engagement of students of science and social science streams.

IV. Students in professional courses do not differ significantly from students in non-professional courses for their engagement in higher education.

V. No significant relationship exists between student engagement and institutional variables, namely,
i. Modes of curriculum transaction.
ii. Organisational culture and ambience
iii. Infrastructural support in the universities

VI. There exists no significant relationship between student engagement and personal variables of students, namely,
i. Previous academic experiences at school or college
ii. Achievement Motivation
iii. Lifestyle
iv. Perceived relevance of the curriculum

VII. Both the institutional and personal variables contribute equally in predicting student engagement in higher education.

1.10 CHAPTERIZATION

In all, there are 5 chapters in this thesis. Chapter I includes the conceptual framework, rationale of the study, statement of the problem, operational definitions of the variables, objectives, hypothesis and delimitations of the study,

Chapter II has been divided into six sections to present the review of literature. The studies related to the need and importance of student engagement have been presented in the first section. The second and third section includes
studies related to demographic and personal variables. Studies covering institutional variables form part of the fourth section while studies related to reports on quality education conducted by Indian government are included in fifth section of chapter II. In the end of each section, the trends of the result have been explained.

Chapter III highlights the methods and procedure adopted for the purpose of conducting this study. This chapter includes the design of the study, sample, procedure for data collection, tool construction and standardization and norm setting. In addition, the chapter includes data interpretation techniques used in the study.

Chapter IV presents analysis and interpretation of the data along with the findings and discussion of results.

Chapter V presents the summary of the first four chapters as mentioned above. Along with this, it concludes the study by providing the implications and suggestions for further research.