CHAPTER- I

INTRODUCTION

The terms over and under achievement are relative to some standard of achievement predicted or expected (Narayana Rao, 1967). The core of the problem in defining these terms lies in the manner the “standard” is defined. The discrepancy between tested ability and subsequent scholastic achievement is called over-achievement when it is in favor of the latter. It is under-achievement when the discrepancy between the predicted and the actual performance is negative.

The terms derive their significance from the academic promise or potential a student shows at a particular point and fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the promise in terms of academic performance over a period of time. The criterion of over-or under achievement is invariably based on some statistical method. It may be a simple comparison of status on an ability test and on the academic achievement scale. It may be the performance at a particular level vis-a-vis achievement predicted. It may be on the basis of mean discrepancy score of the group on two specific measures of achievement.

The problem of poor academic performance at the school, college or universities level has been a matter of anxious concern to educationalists, psychologists, psychiatrists and other research workers
during the past several decades in most of the attempts to understand the phenomenon of poor attainment, the starting point has been the study of the incidence of failure in attaining the degree, and the various cause leading to it. Some research workers have attempted to study the reasons of high and low academic achievement.

The last link in this line of investigation is the study of the phenomenon of under achievement, which simply, is the non-fulfillment of the intellectual promise in terms of scholastic performance. The consensus among all such workers has been that the failure or low achievement or under-achievement is not only frustrating to the student, but also is a waste that any community can not afford in terms of the financial cost involved and the misspent time and efforts of both teachers and students.

1.2 Factors influencing academic performance:

The academic performance of a student is considered to be influenced by a set of intellectual, non-intellectual and environmental factors working in dynamic interaction. Among the intellectual factors are scholastic ability and aptitude, academic attainment and the like. The non-intellectual factors cover a broad range of personality traits, motivation: study habits, vocational goals, etc. The environmental factors include selection
procedures, standard of teaching, library and laboratory facilities, examination system and so on. The relative importance of these sets of factors may be typical in each case of academic achievement.

Analyzing the phenomenon of why some promising students fail and some less promising ones succeed in their university study, Schonell et al. (1962) have stated that “If we examine systematically the performance of each individual student, we find in every case a complex interaction of forces intellectual, emotional and environmental, a unique combination of habits, attitudes, techniques and motives underlying achievement. In each case there may be one or more major causes, but other factors are often inextricably bound up with them.” It has further been argued that the same condition-intellectual, emotional or environmental – which appears to be a major factors in academic failure in one case may seem to have little influence or be minor factor in another case students who appeared lack the requisite intellectual ability or aptitude or deficient in application to work or in emotional stability, do not necessarily perform poorly in their examination albeit odds are some what against any student who is deficient in all of these factors. The argument has also been aptly worded by Sinha (1970) that “.....in any investigation of success and failure .....it is essential to understand both the characteristics of the individual factors as well as the situational
forces that surround him and his functioning. It requires viewing the total personality as functioning in a particular subculture.”

Research, theory and opinion about wastage and academic productivity have mostly centered on student factors and on the allied aspect of selection. The variables that have attracted most thought and research have been the following:

(a) age, home location, happiness at home.
(b) social class.
(c) selection criteria
(d) academic adjustment
(e) study skills
(f) extra curricular interests
(g) study difficulties, financial difficulty.
(h) personality traits, anxiety; and
(i) motivation

Age:

A number of studies have reported differences in academic performance according to age. The successful students have been found to be in lower age groups by some workers (Sinha, 1970; Wig and Negpal, 1970; Kapoor, 1969;
Kamat, 1963; Pierson, 1948; Bear, 1928) Dwyer (1939) reported a negative relationship between age and scholarship up to the age of 21 and positive trend beyond other workers (Astin, 1964), Hopkins et al, (1958), Himmel Weit and Summerfield, (1951) observed only marginal relationship.

It seems that age, as a specific factor, is not crucial in success or failure. The higher age of the poor achievers could be due to their past failure or break in study or due to their past failure or break in study or due to their starting late, owing to socio-economic reasons or family traditions. It is likely that parents with better education and professional occupations send their children to school at an early age. The findings of Dwyer (1939) indicate that relatively higher age is not necessarily a handicap and may be an advantage in terms of a specific king or intensity of achievement motivation or maturity. It is also likely that any superior academic performance of younger students is not so much a function of age as of intelligence. Student who enter university earlier than their peers are more likely to be of superior ability.

There has been no consensus on the relevance of age but it is generally agreed that students who enter college at the normal age or a year younger, tended to do better work and are usually of superior intellectual endowment.
1.3 Home Location:

In some studies, it has been found that home location of students has some association with academic performance Sinha (1970) found low achievers to be significantly more in the “rural categories” than the high achievers. Summers Kill (1962) reviewed research upto 1961 and found that attributions was often higher among rural students than among these from cities and towns, but this was not always confirmed.

It appears that it is not the location of home per se that matters, but what it implies students from rural area may find problems of social adjustment with their urban colleagues at the university. Their families may fail to see the relevance of university study and thus, may not provide wholehearted financial and moral support. There is considerable obscurity about the importance of home location. However, it is felt that it has less effect on a student academic performance than is usually expected.

1.4 Happiness at home:

Sinha (1970), Wig and Nagpal (1970), Kapoor (1960) studied whether the successful and unsuccessful students differed on their feelings about home happiness. No differences were borne out in their results. Merrill (1964) found that the ‘persister’ group had a history of
harmonious and stable family relations. By contrast, the ‘non-persisted’ group experiences less stable and more dissident family relations.

It has been generally observed by workers that achieving scholars tend to come from families where there is freedom of thought and in which parents are harmonious, interested and stable rather than dissident or contentious and where parents in the academic careers of their children. These are considered as hypotheses and seem to require a more intensive probing than what the student reveals to a set of questions of the investigator.

1.5 Social Class:

The literature on social class vis-a-vis academic attainment in the western countries is immense. In India studies on social class as a composite variable has seldom been taken. This may be due to the fact that unlike western countries there is no national register of socio-economics class on the basis of which such a classification can be made. However, since the social class demarcation is based on education, occupation and income of the family, its size and standard of living, such indices have generally been taken as unitary variables by Indian workers.

There has been a controversy among researchers on the precise impact of social class of the student on academic achievement. It has been observed that in every stage of education, the middle class students
are generally over Represented among the high achievers. Malleson (1959), found that social class grouping had very little influence on failure rate. Schonell (1963) found that working class students performed relatively poorer than those whose parents were in professional, semi-professional and administrative occupations. Sinha (1970) found only small differences between high achievers and low achievers on the variables of parental occupation and no differences on parental income and education level. Wig and Nagpal (1970) observed significant differences on mother’s and father’s education and father’s occupation, but not on father’s income.

In both these Indian studies the low achievers were more represented in the occupational category of agriculture or business.

1.6 Ability:

Intellectual ability is obviously an important variable in academic pursuits and progress at the level of higher education. A positive relationship has been reported by almost all workers between I.Q. score and success at the university. Schonell et al. (1962) found that 59.5 per cent of students in the highest I.Q. range made normal progress and the proportion diminished with each range so that only 17.8 per cent of 105-114 I.Q. groups made normal progress. Similarly, Sinha (1970) found a
statistically significant difference between the I.Q.’s of the high and low achievers.

1.7 Academic Adjustment:

Several investigators have held that adjustment of a student to the academic situation is an important factor in his academic achievement. Narayana Rao (1967) found that academic achievement was positively related to adjustment to the academic situation, as measured by a sentence completion test. Students reporting more adjustment problems were observed to achieve relatively lower grades even when the effect of mental ability was partially out. Popham and Moore (1960) used Borow’s inventory of academic adjustment and found poor academic adjustment of low achievers Wig and Nagpal (1972a, 1972b) found the failure group to have poor adjustment at school and college, but not at the university. The common finding of these two Indian studies is that the pattern of poor academic in a student can make him a high academic risk.

The students are known to face problems of adjustment at the university since it involves a transition from an imposed school discipline in the university self-discipline and greater responsibility that accompanies freedom. The new university student has to make various adjustments of intellectual, emotional or social nature. Inability to adjust is a contributory cause of poor performance particularly in the first year.
1.8 Study Skill:

The importance of study habits, methods and attitudes in their relation to academic achievement has stimulated several habits. Time spent on study, studying alone or in company early morning or late at night participation in informal small groups are some of the aspect’s that have attracted attention of investigators. Their findings have generally been inconsistent. Sinha (1970) observed that high achievers were relatively systematic and regular in their study habits. They preferred to study alone. They commenced serious work for the examinations earlier in the year. No differences were observed on time of study or on the reported impediments to it. Jain (1967) found a correlation of 0.59 between working habits and attainment on a study habit inventory. Jamuar (1958), similarly observed a positive significant correlation of 0.51 Wig and Nagpal (1970) did not find the high and low achievers to be different in the time spent on studies, studying alone or in company. In other countries too, the investigators have observed some difference in study habits of high and low achievers. Pond (1964) observed that high achievers followed regular study programmers revised lectures on the same day and attended to pressing tasks more readily while the low-achievers were more random in their study methods and habits.
1.9 Personality traits:

The relevance of several personality traits to academic achievement has been examined by educational psychologists and clinical psychologists.

Getzells and Jackson (1962) reported the importance of creativity and achievement. The authors compared two groups of children. One group had a high mean I.Q. but low score on Guilford’s creativity tests. The second group had a low mean I.Q., but higher creativity. Scores results showed that the low I.Q., high creativity group was superior in formal school achievement. It was inferred that creativity is a cognitive style that is not sampled by ordinary I.Q. tests. This cognitive style may include an intensive interest in learning for its own sake and an ability to make effective associations between problems and wider range of possible solutions. It has been suggested that creativity is related to the concept of over achieving, which is normally taken as high performance than ability tests predict. Sinha (1966): studies the salient features of personality of the high and low achievers and found the following main characteristics.

1.10 High Achievers:

Background sibling rivalry, attitude of respect and warm admiration for father; parent perceived generally as helpful, considerate,
and understanding, both the parents reposed considerable confidence and trust in them, entertained high hopes of the subject thinking and perception superior intelligence interest in the abstract and the theoretical, desire for creative and novel expression.

**Motivational Variables:**

Strong drive and motivation greater persistence, goals clearly defined, desire for status & recognition as means of acceptance by others.

**Emotional Variables:**

Minimal anxiety, compartmentalization of anxiety was not hampering in adjustment.

**Self Image:**

Tends to understatement their positive qualities, more self-critical.

**1.11 Low Achievers:**

Background harmonious sibling adjustment, distant and ambivalent relationship with father frequently perceived as overbearing, dominant and fearful.

**Thinking and Perception:**

Average intelligence, conventional and common approach, interests tended to be more fantasy oriented.
**Emotional Thinking.**

Frequency of specific anxiety and insecurity commonly overwhelmed by anxiety, inadequate defense, passivity and dependency or other repression and avoidance as common measurement to handle anxiety.

**Motivational Variables:**

Weak & Segmental motivation, fantasy and unrealistic aspiration, desire for approval & acceptance by others through good conduct instead of systematic achievement.