

Chapter: 1

INTRODUCTION

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1. INTRODUCTION: -

It is a fact that knowledge and formal education are the means to survive in this word of competence and to lead a quality life. It is not only in the favor of an individual child but also for their family, community and the nation as a whole, to show their excellence in the academic field. There is a strong empirical correlation between literacy and life expectancy. An educated skilled workforce contributes to higher economic growth. In political and social terms too, schooling creates an educated population and a more knowledgeable citizenry. Education empowers people and empowerment affects larger social processes. As education provides human with the mental tools through which one is able to deal effectively with new situations, it places fewer restrictions on educated peoples' lives. They can be above the fear of difficult problems, and deals with any situation effectively. Education plays a pivotal role in shaping up a person. It caters the dual requirements of bringing up an individual as a worthy citizen of a country with diverse cultural tradition on the one hand and achieving the uniform standard of excellence for any particular profession on the other. A balanced education gives total opportunity to the learner to discover and use their potential. The secondary education is essentially general education, suggests that it ought to be concerned primarily with the development of the students' potential to become a man rather than which his potential to become a doctor, or a plumber, or philosopher.

According to NIEPA (2001) a country stands on the shoulder of its youth. It is the school particularly the secondary school that provides education for transition from adolescence to adulthood. By all psychological evidence, it is proved that adolescence is the most critical and storming period of life. Adolescence is a period characterized by strong pulls and pressures. Concern and caution that was the earlier (i.e., childhood) supportive mode evolves into expectations of restraints and responsibility by the family as well as school and community. Secondary education nurtures individuals in their most formative as well as storming period of life; it is of critical importance not only to an individual but also to the national life at large.

It is necessary in the determination of what the outcomes of secondary education should be that one takes into account three considerations: the culture, the society and the individual. Secondary schools have a responsibility for the ordering, the preservation and the transmission of the important elements of the great cultures of the world, particularly our own; they have responsibility to serve and to improve the society that created and supports them and they have a responsibility to develop the talents of the individuals they attempt to educate. The culture and social responsibilities of the secondary school may be best discharged through concentration upon the individual students. Education should assist every individual student to achieve the maximum realization of their potential.

Generally, in order to measure the effectiveness of formal education i.e., of school system, focal interest is located on academic achievement. Thus academic achievement is the measuring rod to serve the purpose of evaluation of education. Academic success is important because it is strongly linked to the positive outcomes we value for children. When the brightest students live up to their academic potential, they enhance their chances of being admitted to and graduating from selective colleges, and they increase their chances of receiving higher job performance ratings and wages (College board, 1999). Research shows that adults with high levels of education are more likely to be employed, and to earn higher salaries (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1999). Beyond work and wages, academic success is important because working adults will need higher levels of education to tackle the technologically demanding occupations of the future (Brown, 1999; National Alliance of Business, Inc., 1998). Also, students who achieve in line with their potential are more likely to have high self-esteem, increased confidence, and lower levels of anxiety in most contexts, and an increased motivation to succeed.

"Every success", says Kilpatric (1918), "means survival thus for in the struggle for existence, increases vigor of living and therefore a step forward in personality development". According to Gleen (1993) successful youth have a strong sense of being capable. They value themselves and believe they are worthwhile. They also feel they can influence circumstances in their lives. They are responsible and able to impact their environment in a positive way. Banduar (1977) found that, when

young people experiences repeated success they develop strong expectation of being competent and then they are able to handle occasional failures. Students who have been successful in the past are more likely to believe they will be successful in the future. The adage "Success breeds success". Students develop confidence in this way, and those who are confident about their skills are more likely to engage in a variety of activities (Siegel, 1995).

In the contemporary times, a common societal value is academic achievement. Many teachers and administrators have come to view academic success and failure in absolute terms, because for a student 'academic success' means acceptance and affection from the parents, the teachers and the peers. Educational or academic achievement is ego satisfying. It leads to the satisfaction of their need for understanding power and affiliation, and thereby strengthens their self-concept. Each individual has a self. This self is the inner aspect of an individual. The individual selects and behaves in relation to the ideal self. This self-concept is a determinant of level of aspiration. The level of aspiration is an individual's expectations, ambitions, goals or future achievement in a given task. The self will change if conditions are favorable. Very few students want to be failures at learning, just as few teachers want to be failure at teaching.

Research studies conducted on school children have suggested that prior academic achievement is an important influence on an adolescent's academic self-concept. For instance, Marsh & Yeung (1997) found that not only can adolescents' levels of academic self-concept affect their later performance in school; their self-concepts are also influenced by their prior academic achievement, as indicated by their grades and their test scores. Hence, the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement seems to be reciprocal in nature, with each affecting the other. A success in academic situation, satisfies basic needs of a person, strengthens his self - concept and thereby helps them to set high goals or standards. In other words, their level of aspiration is raised. On the other hand failure brings rejection and blame. Failing students are not only treated with indifference and termed as dullard, but are considered inferior to the former group. Failure is threat to the height of ones ego - level. Diller (1954) states that after failure, self-attitude become defensive and attitude towards others are disrupted and after success, self-

attitudes are enhanced and positively correlated with attitude towards other.

Higher achievement is also interpreted as “a student who does more than what is expected of him on the basis of his ability”. And failure also means failing to achieve according to their potentiality. The group of under achievers can consist of children who are not intellectually dull, but are at least of average and may even be of superior ability. The failure in such children is of great concern to a developing country like ours, which cannot remain indifferent to this loss of potential manpower within the higher ability range.

The essential educational problem is that each child is sufficiently challenged to put forth a maximum effort with the expectation of success. When one fails to make sure that he seeks these objectives as spur to further attempts rather than feeling themselves as worthless in the eyes of the adults. In a society, that seem to value people 'what they do', than 'what they are' some sort of environmental pressure for achievement is natural and inevitable. The world is becoming more and more competitive. Quality of performance has become the key factor for personal progress. A society where child performs according to their potential will be having strong foundation. These adolescents become active member of the society when turn into adults, if they are successful in school, they will lead a healthy social and professional life. Research (National Alliance of Business, Inc., 1998) also shows that people who are academically successful

- are more stable in their employment;
- are less dependent on public assistance;
- are less likely to engage in criminal activity;
- are more active as citizens and charitable volunteers; and
- are more healthy

The extraordinary success of a human being depends on one's inborn qualities and personal traits, instinct, intuition, creativity and flexibility. We have in India an education policy and system that channelises this unusual talent in the right

direction. Most of the Asian adolescents believe that the road to success in life is high academic achievement. They also have positive attitude about achievement (Chen & Stevenson, 1995).

According to the president of the 'American Council of Education'- human talent is our greatest natural resource. Its conservation and development should be therefore, a primary concern of everyone, when human talent is wasted everyone is deprived; when it is rightly developed, everyone benefits. "Human potential" is realized largely to the extent that individuals are able to use their developing intellectual powers to know, to understand and ultimately to deal with all aspects of the world in which they live, including themselves. Failure can be initially defined as the non-attainment of a prescribed standard. Non-attainment by itself is merely a source of information about the level of the individual's ability. No one can learn social responsibility, thinking or problem solving when he is failing or not able to perform according to one's expectations. Whether one is an adult or a child, failure in an examination is a nasty blow. It hits first of all one's self-esteem and there is a feeling of unworthiness. This has been a test of one's ability and intelligence and if one has not succeeded one must be inferior as commonly thought. School failure affects the school system, which sets some standards for a particular period. Failure establishes inefficiency in the child with regard to the achievement of those objectives. It can be perceived as failure to achieve the standards meant for the students in a particular class or system where they were admitted. In each grade, a standard is set which the students must satisfy before passing into the next grade, someone may succeed to achieve the standard and some one do not.

In many countries, particularly in Asian countries, students are made to memorize, cram facts and figures from the textbook in preparation for the examinations. This has become a tradition of schooling and the main problem of school today. This is also a source of anxiety, frustration and desperateness among most of the children as well as parents and for administrators and planners as well. For most children schooling are no fun, instead it is a big tension unsuitable of their age level. From psychological point of view 'failure' causes in the individual a sort of frustration, which goes a long way to affect his personality adversely. It gives a pessimistic outlook on life; both of the teacher as well as the taught. 'Academic Failures' can be psycho-diagnostically

detected as the undercurrent and the root cause of so many personality disorders. The frustrated individual is the weakest link of social chain. Failure in any walk of life, especially during school career, the most impressionable period of life brings in the gloomy and dark clouds of frustration to baulk one's way. There is ample psychological evidence to show that frustration gives birth to character disorders.

On 28 March India Today Edition reported case of Sudhanshu Pandey, a 17 years old teenager who committed suicide on 4th march 2005 (India Today, March-28, 2005, 54-62) due to the pressure and anxiety of his examination. This was not an isolated incident; many lives are lost by these impulsive acts of escapism, students crumble under the pressure of examinations in the want of counseling and attention, to name a few factors. Every year the number of reported suicides on the pretext of these pressures is rising exponentially. Psychiatrists are reporting that a large number of students were suffering from traumatic disorders related to the fear of examinations. "In the past 10 years, the pressure on students has increased by 50 per cent" according to Anjali Chhabria, a Mumbai based psychiatrist (India Today, March-28, 2005, 54-62). These pressures manifest themselves in many vivid forms and abstracts; she has witnessed case where the child had staged his own kidnapping prior to board examinations, apart from children attempting suicide and parents experiencing nervous breakdowns. She says, "There are cases where I have admitted the parents to hospital because they suffered a breakdown during the child's board exams." Elsewhere, psychiatrist says that not just schools but parents are equally responsible for the high stress levels. "The hot house parenting makes the children extremely fragile to academic pressure," says P.Malhi, consulting psychologist at PGIMER in Chandigarh (India Today, March 28, 2005, p. 54-62).

Poor school performance is known to be a strong predictor of involvement in crime. Children with lower academic performance are more likely to offend frequently, more likely to commit more serious offences and more likely to persist in crime (Maguin and Loeber, 1996).

Besides this, there is a tremendous personal and national loss of resources needless to mention the financial damage caused to every one involved. Education of the child is not a private affair rather is a moral responsibility and duty of all the

citizens to ensure its quality. Ours is a democratic nation, the government has subsidized education so as to have embarked upon a novel scheme of compulsory, mass education since years. If academic failures go unchecked then these are likely to result in huge loss; human and material. It is this generation of children today who shall lead the nation of tomorrow to make us proud if provided with the right guidance, else we shall find no one else to be blamed more than ourselves.

The population of children in between 14-18 age group (the age for secondary and senior secondary level education) has been estimated at 90.29 million, as projected by the National Sample survey organization in 2003-2004. However enrollment figures show that only 23 million children were attending secondary schools, which means that two third of the eligible population remain out of the secondary school system.

The number of secondary schools in India increased from 7416 in 1950 - 51 to 1, 16,820 in 1999-2000. The total number of students enrolled for secondary education in year 2003-2004 is 23275955 and total teachers engaged for secondary level is 17.20 lakh. The gross attendance ration in year 1995 - 96 for class IX and X classes were 44% of the enrollment in which male ratio was 56 and female 30 only. The percentage of dropouts in the year 2003 - 2004 at secondary level was 62.69%. And the financing of secondary education in IXth five year plans were Rs. 2,603.5 lakh which is 10.5% of the total expenditure made for education for all the stages of education i.e. Rs.24, 90,850 lakhs. (Five year plan, Annual plans and MHRD report, 2000)

It is not only a child who is affected through his failure and he alone is responsible for lacking to attain his potential to the maximum but it can be better understood with the help of the theory 'ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM THEORY' propagated by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1989) about the growth and development of a child.

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1989), an American psychologist has given a new approach to child development viz., Ecological System theory. It views the child as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple level of the surrounding environment. Bronfenbrenner expanded this view by envisioning

the environment as a series of nested structures that includes but extends beyond home, school, and neighborhood settings in which children spend their everyday lives. Each layer of the environment is viewed as having powerful impact on children's development.

The first layer is termed as micro-system that is the innermost level of the environment, which refers to activities and interaction patterns in the child's immediate surroundings. The second level of Bronfenbrenner's model is meso-system. It refers to connections among micro-systems, such as home, school, neighborhood, and day-care center, that foster children's development. For example, a child's academic progress depends not just on activities that take place in classrooms. It is also promoted by parental involvement in school life and the extent to which academic learning is carried over into the home (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). The third level exo-system is the layer, which refers to social settings that do not contain children but that affect their experiences in immediate settings. These can be formal organizations, such as the parents' workplace or health and welfare services in the community. Exo-system supports can be informal, such as parents' social network- friend and extended family members who provide advice, companionship and even financial assistance. The outermost level of Bronfenbrenner's model is the macro-system. It is not a specific context but instead refers to the values, laws, and customs of a particular culture. The priority that the macro-system gives to children's need affects the support they receive at lower levels of the environment.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1989), one must keep in mind that the environment is not a static force that affects children in a uniform way. Instead, it is dynamic and ever changing. Important events, such as the birth of a sibling, entering school, or moving to a new neighborhood, modify existing relationships between children and their environments, creating new conditions that affect development. In addition, the timing of environmental changes affects its impact. The arrival of a new sibling has very different consequences for a homebound toddler than for a school-age child with many satisfying relationships and activities beyond the family.

An additional point is the interplay between person and environment. Children select, modify and create some of their own settings and experiences. How they do so depends on their age, their physical, intellectual, and personality characteristics, and the environmental opportunities available to them. Therefore in ecological system theory, development is neither driven by inner forces nor controlled by environmental circumstances. Instead children are both products and producers of their environments, both of which form a network of interdependent effects. Although this model is developed in order to explain the effect of multiple levels of the surrounding environment on the child's growth and development, it can also be applied on the academic success of the child.

Education at school for is a process to change the learners' behaviour in a positive direction. Given this view we expect each program, courses and unit of education to bring about some significant changes or change in the end of a unit from what they were before it. Student who has completed a unit of lesson should be different from those who have not had it. Although it is true that some of the differences in learners between the beginning and end of secondary school are to be attributed to maturation, growth and the influences of varied experiences, we are here concerned with the changes produced by education. It is through examination we assess the students' learning.

1.1 EXAMINATION AS A MECHANISM TO ENSURE STUDENTS' LEARNING

Our education structure is framed as 10+2+3, where first ten years of schooling ends with the first boards exams held at the end of class X. This is one of the most crucial turning points in the life of each student.

Now examination has become the main focus of schooling for children because their future career development options are set by their performance in the examination. According to secondary education commission (1952-54), "Nevertheless examination and especially external examination have proper place in any scheme of education. External examination has stimulating effects both on pupils and the teachers by providing well-organized goals and objectives of education. To the pupils, the examination gives a goal towards which he should strive and stimulate, urging to attain that goal in a given time, there by demanding

steady and constant efforts.

Evaluation is an in-built component of the teaching learning process to determine the learner's progress in achieving the course objectives. Its purpose is measurement of achievement, diagnosis of weakness, motivation, etc. Without evaluation neither can teacher judge their skill in teaching nor can student know where they stand. It is a process to determine how much progress, if any students are making towards the achievement of goals set for them in a course. And how is it taught depends on examinations. One of the main purposes of evaluation should be to provide feedback for remedial teaching. It is designed to serve one or more of the following purpose.

- To measure student's achievement in terms of the course objectives.
- To motivate students to realise the course objectives.
- To motivate students for maximum learning efforts.
- To evaluate effectiveness of teaching
- To diagnose student's weakness and provide data for remedial teaching
- To serve as basis of administrative decisions like, promotion to higher class, recruitments, etc.

Taylor & Nolen (1996) also view evaluation as an appraisal of change in the student's cognitive, affective and psychomotor behavior produced by educational means. Learner's evaluation has always been considered as an integral part of the teaching-learning process. According to Bloom there are three major parts of taxonomy -the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor domain. The cognitive domain includes those objectives, which deal with the recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual abilities and skills. The second part of the taxonomy is the affective domain. It includes objectives, which describes changes in interest, attitudes and values and the development of appreciations and adequate adjustment. The third domain is the manipulative or motor - skill area.

1.2 CONCEPT OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

One of the most important functions of examination is to find out academic achievement of individual child. Achievement encompasses student abilities and performance. It is multi dimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and development; cognitive, emotional, social and physical. It reflects the whole child, it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and level, through a students' life in secondary school and into post secondary years and working life (Steinberger 1993). Merriam Webster (1993) defines achievement as "the quality and quantity on a students' work". The second definition is the one that more or less applies to this research, the former being too exhaustive. What we need here is the quality of the students' work in academic field.

Academic achievement is very broad which generally indicates the learning outcomes of the pupil. Achievement of these learning outcomes requires a series of planned and organized experiences and hence learning is called as a process. In this process of achievement of change in behavior one cannot say that all pupils will reach at the level of change during the same span of time. Desai (1979) defines academic achievements, as learning out comes and these are the changes observed in the behavior patterns of pupils as a result of learning that takes place in school through the teaching of school subjects.

The cognitive analysis of achievement means to get into the experimental study of memory storage and retrieval. From the cognitive viewpoint, achievement may be a construct that should refer to be different stages of knowledge acquisition. Educational achievement may be defined (Niemi, 1999) as the mastering of major concepts and principles, important facts and propositions, skills, strategic knowledge and integration of knowledge.

In educational or academic achievement, knowledge and understanding of a learner is revealed through their performance in certain tests designed to test their achievement. Thus, whatever knowledge, understanding and skills students get during period of instruction and training is called as their educational or academic achievement. In general sense, the level of achievement reached by the pupils in school is called as the academic achievement of pupils.

Maximizing the academic achievement, within given setup is the goal of every educationists, teachers, curriculum planners, government and nation as a whole. It is therefore essential to find out factors that influence students in maximizing their achievements. A number of studies have been conducted since long to find out the variables that influence academic achievements and failure. A critical analysis of all these studies brought forth the various influencing factors, which have been divided by the investigator into three broad headings. These three categories are: - Individual factors, Social factors and School factors. The three factors conceptualized by the investigator are presented here below in the theoretical framework.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.3.1 INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

In our everyday life we come across people with sharp differences in their physical characteristics such as weight, height, etc, in mental characteristics such as intelligence, abilities, etc, and in temperamental and personality characteristics such as emotionality, introversion, extroversion, etc.

There is a good deal of evidence of individual differences. Individual vary regarding motor capacities, like reaction time, speed or tapping and steadiness. They also differ in sensory and perceptual characteristics like keenness of vision, hearing and smell. The differences in intelligence and other intellectual processes like memory, judgment and problem solving, has been experimentally proved. Individual differ in aptitudes and talents, in interests and values, in attitudes and other personality dimensions. All these are determinants of academic achievement in some way or the other.

a. **INTELLEGENCE:** - This category of individual factor is related to those factors which are associated with child's own individuality. Among all the individual factors one of the most important factors is intelligence level of the child. The importance of intelligence as a contributing factor towards achievement is time and again researched upon. It is believed in general that more intelligent pupils obtain high position in their class compared to less intelligent pupils. As Singh (1976)

found that high intelligent students are bound to be high achievers even if they are subjected to unfavorable conditions. At the same time it is also found that presence of superior intelligence only do not ensure high achievement. Many empirical studies based on scientific investigation have shown that even pupils of superior intelligence are underachievers. Eysenck (1953) has pointed out that only a moderate degree of accuracy is to be expected out of the prediction based on intelligence scale. For a satisfactory performance it is therefore obvious, that a certain amount of intelligence is necessary. But for high achievement, a child shall have some other favorable variables such as his/her motivational level, personality, creativity, regularity in attendance, study habit, self-confidence and many others.

b. **HEALTH:** - Good health is necessary for academic success. Like adults at work, students at home and school have difficulty in being successful, if they are depressed, tired, bullied, stressed, sick, hungry or abused. Research and intuition tells us that when students are fit, healthy, success in all areas of their lives as rightly said 'sound mind in sound body'. There is growing evidence that regular physical activity enhances learning and school achievement. Physical activity fuels the brain with oxygen, enhances connections between neurons and assists in memory.

c. **NUTRITION:** - Children who tend to be under mal-nutrition can result in lost of knowledge, brainpower and productivity. The children's ability to learn in school fails because of diminished attention spans and memory due to the lack of nutrition.

d. **PROPER SLEEP:** - The lack of sleep hinders child's performance in and out the classroom. As a result of deprived sleep they cannot function to their fullest potential (Sprink, 2002). Studies have shown that sleeping after a lesson is very important. By sleeping before test allows the information to become long-term memory therefore. One can recall the next day in much better way. Adequate sleep is vital for optimal performance in learning tasks (Sprink, 2002).

e. **QUALITY TIME PROVIDED:** - If a student is able to concentrate properly on his study it is very helpful for him to grasp subject matter in less time. Time does matter, how much or little it matters, however, it depends greatly on the degree to which it is devoted to appropriate instruction. Addition to allocated education time improves achievement to an extent. A student being very intelligent may also not perform that well, because he may not be able to dedicate much time to study or work hard which in spite of high intelligence level. Many a time, less intelligent child also put hard work and is able to perform well. It doesn't confirm that dedicating hours brings success. Quality time is required when a child is able to learn or grasp the matter. The bottom of the continuum is that time when learning actually occurs. Simply because a student is engaged in instructional activities does not necessarily mean he/she is learning. Academic learning time is that precise period when an instructional activity is perfectly aligned with a student's readiness. Only then learning occurs. Further the effort of a day or week doesn't bring success. It requires continuous efforts to be made from the day one.

f. **STUDY HABIT:** - Properly planned routines, well distributed work load, minimized retro and proactive inhibitions, systematized note-taking, adequately expressed answer together with an attitude towards school, studies, etc, comprise the contents of the study habit, which are essential for being successful in class.

g. **AGE:** - Being born in the early part of a year may affect a child's success in sport, school and self-esteem according to a University of Alberta researcher named Dr. Gus Thompson (1982), from the departments of psychiatry and public health sciences. He has been studying how the "relative age" contributes to achievement. He found that the birth dates of high academic achievers generally fell in the first part of the school year compared to their younger classmates who don't often fare as well. Children who are younger than their classmates tend not to achieve as well, be classed as learning disabled and show adjustment difficulties.

h. **EMOTIONAL INTELLEGENCE:** - Success is skill based. Along with developing intelligence according to Golemen (1995), one needs to develop emotional intelligence and social skills too. It is important to remember that most social skills are dependent on a feeling of positive worth. Intellectual growth of any

given child is a resultant of varied and complex factors. The relationship between the parents and child happens to be a central factor in the social up-liftment of the individual. Parents and teachers are supposed to create a most congenial, happy, democratic, lucid and warm atmosphere where a child can blossom according to his own hidden potentialities and many also develop social and intellectual skills. The emotional Intelligence construct is based on the idea that people differ in the manner and extent to which they are able to experience and make use of information available to them. When a child has a balanced emotion he is able to perceive an event or situation in more dynamic ways and it doesn't upset their mind for longer period and they easily come up to their work. I.Q. alone is no more the measure for success; it only counts for 20% and the rest goes for emotional and social intelligence, and luck (Goleman, 1995).

Emotions can facilitate or hamper their learning and students' ultimate success in school. Social and emotional factors serve as critical element of it by assisting students in navigating the social and emotional contexts of the classroom effectively. It helps children's to enhance their ability. Those who are competent in social and emotional factors are able to recognize and manage their emotions, establish healthy relationship, set positive goals, meet personal and social needs and make responsible and ethical decisions (Payton 2000) and all these are very essential for academic achievement.

i. **SELF CONCEPT:** - The students' attitude towards him or her is a crucial factor in learning and school achievement. Attitude may be translated into other words such as self-perception, self-concept, self-image, self-esteem, self-understanding, self-worth, etc. A student views himself or herself, as a strong or weak person may be an important contributing factor in academic achievement.

Self-concept is a reality of human life; it is the individual's attitude towards itself- what kind of person is and most importantly how effective (strong or weak) one is. According to Carl Rogers, self-concept is so pervasive that it affects one's perception of the world and one's behavior or responses to the world (Haper and Fried, 1975). There are many studies on the relationship between self-concept and school achievement. William Purkey (1970) surveyed many early researches and

concluded that the students' subjective and personal evaluation of themselves (self-perception) has a dominant influence on their success in school. Maltz (1972), after his 25 years of study, came to the conclusion that all people who have a negative attitude, poor self-esteem and a poor self-concept lose their hope and will fail in their life activities. Don Hamachek (1995) summarized 25 years of investigation related to this subject. According to his survey, there is a reciprocal relationship between self-concept and school achievement. Each is mutually reinforcing, to the extent that a positive or negative change in one causes change in another one. This relationship is stronger among the middle school students than the other levels. High self-concept students tend to perform school related task more successfully.

j. CONFIDENCE: - Beliefs of personal competence also determine the outcomes one expects. Individuals who are confident anticipated successful outcome. Conversely, students who doubt their writing ability envision low marks before even they begin to write. High self-efficacy helps to create feelings of serenity in approaching difficult tasks and activities. Conversely, people who doubt their capabilities may believe that things are tougher than they really are, a belief that fosters stress, depression, and a narrow vision of how best to solve a problem. A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and well being in countless ways. Confident individual approaches difficult tasks as challenge to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided.

k. SELF-OTHERS: - We are born with potential abilities and with a will to use them. We are not born to the idle life but we find joy in achievement. Since man is both a social and an intelligent creature, he does not express these tendencies directly. Social interaction and intelligence serve as mediators. The individual's evaluation of the total situation and of his place in it determines whether or not he will follow a healthy path towards achievement and self-expression. George Herbert Mead (1934) spoke of a "self-other" process to explain the way in which an individual learns his own identity. He sees himself only through the reactions of others to him. In like manner the phenomenologists describe development of the self-concept. The individual meets himself only as he perceives the reaction of others. If he is encouraged to think positively of himself he finds more encouragement in the reaction of others. If teachers help students to appraise their

efforts as generally, though not always, successful, they view themselves as an achiever and may ever seek higher standards for themselves. And if teachers are perpetually critical, they lose faith in themselves and give up easily in the face of difficulty.

l. ANXIETY: - This result could be elucidated by saying that anxiety may be one of the obstacles blocking high academic achievement in adolescence, since anxiety plays a role in reducing some factors that help to increase academic achievement; hence psychic energy is concentrated towards releasing tension. Researchers agree that anxiety can be a multifaceted agent. At its simple or optional level it can be a motive, but at its high level it can be a hindrance. Anxiety in its earlier phase puts a person in a state of instability and imbalance. To reduce that tension, the person must remove the causes, and here anxiety may be a motive to get rid of what upsets him or her. Generally, it could be concluded that there is a positive relationship between high degrees of academic achievement and low anxiety. There is a certain degree of anxiety that increases academic achievement, but if anxiety increases beyond that degree the opposite happens. Researchers generally agree that a specific degree of anxiety may motivate the student and make him/her inclined to better academic achievement. Hence, anxiety is considered as a motive for learning and high academic achievement. However, a high anxiety score may be one of the obstacles to academic achievement. That is, the relationship between the two variables may be either linear or curvilinear.

m. GOAL/ EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION: - Children's goals and achievement values affect their self-regulation and motivation (Ablard & Lipschultz, 1998; Wigfield, 1994) because goals influences how children approach, engage in, and respond to achievement tasks (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). When students value the goals of the school, they will be more likely to engage in academics, expend more effort on their schoolwork, and become achievers (Wigfield). Attainment value is the importance that students attach to the task as it relates to their conception of self-identity and ideals. For example, students who identify themselves as athletes set goals related to their sport. These students are more motivated to attain the goals because they are associated with the students' perceptions of who they are. Providing students with role models who value

academic achievement may be one way to increase attainment value. Rimm (1995) suggested that same-sex models that resemble the student in some way are most effective. Educators must personalize the school experience by helping students to integrate academic goals into their ideals.

n. **OPTIMISM:** - Optimism and pessimism play a considerable role in the lives of individuals in the area of educational, occupational, and psychological adjustment. Scheier and Carver (1985) pointed out that optimistic people generally anticipate that good things will happen and pessimistic people generally anticipate that bad things will happen. Shepperd, Maroto, & Pbert (1996) pointed out that optimism has a positive relationship with individuals' success in many tasks they carry out, including academic achievement. Norris and Wright (2003) found that achievement, striving and situational optimism may be as important as ability variables, when used as predictors of academic performance. In the same vein, Yates (2002) found a relation between grade levels and optimism or pessimism in student achievement in mathematics. Chang (1998) concluded that optimistic students are better adjusted physically and psychologically than are pessimistic students. By the same token, optimistic people were found to be lower in mood disturbance when they respond to a wide range of stressful situations. Optimism increases a person's ability to tolerate situations and to solve problems, and it may have an effect on academic achievement. The optimistic person is inclined to have a hopeful outlook on the future. So, optimism may have a good effect on achievement.

o. **INTROVERT AND EXTROVERT:** In terms of Eysenck's theoretical formulation of personality structure, the introverts should be at advantage in school learning. Eysenck (1971) suggests that extroverts build up reactive inhibition more quickly than the introverts. This interferes with the learning process and prevents the extroverts from being able to concentrate on the learning tasks for more than short periods of time. And the introvert should reach higher standard on average than the extrovert in school work. According to Eysenck (1971) extroversion form seems to be a negative indicator for high academic achievement at early years of puberty.

p. **MOTIVATION:** - Education is a process of behavior modification. The extrinsic reinforcement is needed to motivate children for learning. It is derived from motivation perspective which states that the organism always tries to maximize pleasure and minimize pain (Skinner 1950). The children may learn to obtain high grade or may learn because they want to receive their parent's affection, the teacher's attention or the privilege of erasing the blackboard or any other of a great variety of tangible and intangible pleasure.

1.3.2 HOME ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL FACTORS

The individual is unique and must be understood and treated as such. But he cannot exist in vacuum. The individual grows in community. At one time learning might have been thought of a simple terms of individual pupils, each of them at a receiving end of a line from the teacher. Today learning is known to be a very complex process, into which enter not only the teacher-pupil relation but the entire intricate pupil -interrelations in the class and in the schools and also the further relations involving home and neighborhood. At no stage of child's education, there is any escape from the social involvement, which is full of strain and conflict.

The family environment plays an important role. The first 5-6 years of the child are spent in the family. Even when a child starts going to school, he lives a large part of the day with the family. It influences child's attitude towards education and school, development of his intellectual abilities to perform the students' role, his educational aspiration and achievements. Thus, family environment remains an important force in influencing the academic achievement.

A number of studies related to home environment have been conducted till date. A comparative study conducted by Sankar (1983) on the contribution of home factors on children's scholastic achievement revealed that the home variables such as educational environment, income, spatial environment, and social background, provision of facilities and parent child relationship showed significant difference between the high achievers and low achievers. Besides this some studies conducted by Deka (1982), Paul (1990), Mehrotra (1986), Sultan (1988), Reddy (2003)

concluded that SES, small family size, parents' education, parents' attitude, etc. are some of the influencing factors for academic success.

Parents have much to give, not only do they want to help, but their life's experience also gives them a strong background for making a significant contribution to the society and nation. Parents know their individual children, their strengths, the budding interest, the beginning inclination that mark one child off from all others. They can recite the intimate details of a child's past: his fears, illnesses, the existing experiences, the good and the bad that made the child what he is today. Child's life at home can be called as continuity of growth, the emergence of a child's today out of yesterday, here a child develops slowly to the present out of his past.

a. SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS: - The impact of family's economic and social factors on adolescence has been the subject of extensive study. It is widely accepted that wealth status and knowledge are transmitted from parents to children. From decades, educational researchers, educational practitioners and the public at large have assumed that socioeconomic status is one of the best predictors of academic achievement. As explained by Karl White (1982), the Coleman report confirmed for educators what they thought they already knew "that a strong relationship exists between all kinds of achievement variables and what has come to be known as SES". To illustrate, consider the following quote: - The family characteristics that is the most powerful predictor of school performance is Socio-Economic Status (SES) the higher the SES of the students' family, the higher their academic achievement. SES is used here as occupation of family, family income, parents' education, or some combination of these (Boocock, 1972). The social class means the degrees of social status, so higher SES individuals enjoy higher influences on individual achievement, perceptions, attitude and other characteristics. Socially advantaged individuals emphasize development of individual capacity to perform better, emphasize individual responsibility and decision-making. More income means consequently more freedom for the family members to devote their time for education and development of certain facilities. It is generally believed that children from high and middle socio economic status are better exposed to learning environment at

home because of provision and availability of extra learning facilities. In contrast, the believe holds that, children from low socio-economic status parents do not have access to extra learning facilities, hence, the opportunity to get to the top of their educational ladder may not be very easy. Evans (2004) suggested that socioeconomic differences that affected children included: physical environment challenges, including greater exposure to health risks; poor quality housing and environment; more deterioration in the neighborhood; greater crowding and noise; greater mobility and lack of stability in housing; poorer air and water quality; fewer material resources in the home; and more dangerous neighborhoods.

b. PARENTAL OCCUPATION: - Parents' occupation may have direct and important impact on child's performance. Parents' occupation can be associated with economic recourse that are available to the family and thus to the child.

c. PARENTS' EDUCATION: - Parents' education constitutes an important mechanism in the transmission of knowledge and wealth from parents to children. Educated parents many times help their children in their studies. During school stage if parents teach their children at home instead of home tutors, children's' pay more attention towards studies. Educated parents are also able to develop good communication with teachers and school.

d. NUMBER OF SIBLINGS: - The more brothers and sisters that children have, the lower their performance in school. This is the result of a nation wide study of Columbus by Donwey (1988) which includes data from 24,599 eight graders. It suggests that academic achievements drop as families grow. As family size increases parents get less time to talk to each child about school, have lower educational expectations and are not able to concentrate much on academic aspect of each child.

e. PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT: - Family involvement has been a key theme in early childhood education for more than three decades (Fantuzo, Tighe and Child, 2000). The more intensively parents are involved in their children learning, the more beneficial are the achievement effects. Parents when involve themselves in

reading with their children and help in completing home assignments or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers show particularly impressive results. Parental participation improves student learning whether the child is in preschool or in the upper grades, whether or not the family is struggling economically or is affluent, or whether the parents finished high school or graduated from college (Epstein, 1991; Henderson, & Berla, 1994; Lontos, 1992; Reynolds, 1991; Zellman, G.L., & Waterman, J.M., 1998).

f. PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP: - The degree to which the parent-child relationship is characterized by parental acceptance, nurturance, encouragement, involvement and responsiveness to the child's' need is positively associated with academic achievement for students (Clark 1983, Welberg, 1984).

g. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT: - It is well-accepted fact that accepting, warm and loving parents make a home, which provides an environment of security, belonging and psychologically rich nourishment for growth. Talent of any kind including academic talent does not flourish in a non-supportive family. Some children are able to build high self- esteem at home. Their parents or guardians reward them for positive behaviors thus fostering the development of high self-esteem. These are children who are proud of what they do and who feel good about themselves.

h. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT: - Environment is regarded as a network of forces and factors, which surround, engulf and play on the individual. This environment is viewed as composed of sub- environments of a set of social-psychological variables and processes may be related to the development of verbal ability, while another sub-environment may be related to the achievement motivation. Environment may also be referred to the amount of warmth and friendliness, praise and recognition and the degree to which the adult-youth relationship is positive and respectful, which includes parents, relatives, neighbors, etc. Student success at school is enhanced when students experience cooperative, accepting environments, non-blaming relationship between home and school, and encouragement, praise and involvement from adults.

i. **BELONGINGNESS:** - According to psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943) humans have a set of needs, which rise in importance from personal security to a sense of belonging, equality, capability and independence. Beyond the basic need for safe housing, human learning depends on our feeling that we “belong” in our respective home. Housing that is precarious or inadequate underscores how different we are from others, causing us to doubt whether we belong. In turn, students who lack a sense of belonging cannot feel equal to their classmates. This perception of inequality can stimulate feelings of hostility, anger and fear—all barriers to learning. Sub-standard housing not only imposes hardships on the children living within but it can also be a crippling force, causing them to miss important classroom time because of illness or other effects of an impoverished environment, and, ultimately, to “learn” that learning is not for them. This only extends the cycle of low academic achievement and poor living conditions.

j. **TYPE OF HOUSING:** - A positive home environment can elicit positive results. A school principal in southern California, for example, discovered that one of his school families was living in substandard housing. Because he saw potential in the children and was concerned that their housing would hurt their school performance, he helped them to obtain adequate housing for the family and better employment for the father. The family began to thrive, increasing their self-confidence and their sense of dignity. Subsequently all five of the children did well in school, and as of this writing three are attending college.

However, doctors, psychologists and educators have discovered that we cannot learn when we don't feel emotionally safe. Substandard housing threatens this sense of security and becomes a liability in the academic life of a student. Inadequate housing hinders education because it undermines a student's ability to feel safe enough to learn. In today's classrooms, thousands of children spend a major portion of their time in heightened emotional states, inwardly or outwardly protecting themselves due to stress over personal situations, including housing.

k. **PEER:** - The child lives a large part of each day in the classroom with the expectation of each at his home; this is the most influential environment in his life.

Here the child's two most important relationships are with his teacher and with his peer. If the family exercises the strongest influence on the child, their age-mates or peers exert the second strongest. The child's peer group becomes increasingly important to him as he moves away from his parents towards independence. From his peer he learns many of the things he needs to know in order to become an adult. No one can doubt the effectiveness of the teaching that goes on within the peer group. The speed with which children learn new facts, language and behavior is evidence of a remarkable educational system at work. The positive relationship between peer group members and educational aspiration is strongly suggested by research. Robert, E. Herriot (1989) tested 1498 adolescents in one public high school to determine which social factors influenced educational aspiration. He found that if the adolescent thinks his best friends expect him to have high educational aspirations, he would most likely have such aspiration. Conversely, he is likely to have low educational goals, if his best friends value such goals.

1.3.3 SCHOOL FACTORS

School factors are regarded as the most essential factors responsible for child's achievement. This category of factors include facilities and human resources of school, academic and administrative system, the characteristic of the teaching learning process adopted in the school, etc. Schooling is a primary means of stitching us into our communities, providing a social foundation for learning that supports us as we acquire skills and become contributing members where we live and work. The factors of this category are presented below.

a. **SCHOOL CULTURE:** - Achieving the goal of making the individual classroom a place that naturally motivates students to learn is much easier if students and teachers function in a school culture where academic success and the motivation to learn is expected, respected and rewarded. An atmosphere where students learn to love learning for learning's sake, is a chief characteristic of an effective school. Bloom (1976) suggests that a shift in focus from status input characteristic to process-oriented one might identify school variables, which do relate to pupils performance in a consistent manner. In this view, it is the teaching and not the teacher, the classroom-learning environment and not its physical characteristics, that are important for school learning (Crawford, 1977; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974;

Good, Biddle & Brophy, 1975; Marjoribanks, 1974 and Roseshine, 1971). Most reviews of the effective school literature point to the consensus that school culture and climate are central to academic success (Mackenzie, 1983). Purkey and Smith (1983), in their study on effective schools found a close correlation between positive school culture and academic quality. The literature indicates that a student's chance for success in learning cognitive skills is heavily influenced by the climate of the school.

b. **ATTACHMENT TO SCHOOL:** - A classroom or school that make the learning environment safer, more caring, better managed, and participatory and that enhance student's social competence can increase student attachment to school. In turn students who are more engaged and attached to school have better attendance and will do better in examination. A detailed review of the literature find that creation of supportive learning environments increases students' engagement and attachment to school, and that these variables significantly influence students' academic performance (Osterman, 2000). Attachment to school decreases the prevalence of high-risk behaviors. When students are attached to school and to pro-social teachers and peers, they are more likely to behave in pro-social way themselves and to avoid engaging in high-risk behaviors (Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992). It may increase students' intrinsic motivation to behave in pro-social way, there by decreasing deviant behavior in the school setting.

c. **SCHOOL BUILDING:** - School building design, features and components have proven to have a measurable influence upon students' learning. Among the influential features and components are those involving temperature, lighting, acoustics and age of the building. Researchers have found a negative impact upon student performance, when the buildings were on old structures and buildings with compromised amenities. Ethnographic and perception studies indicate that poor school facilities negatively impact teacher effectiveness and performance, and therefore have a negative impact on student performance. A positive school climate and safe school facilities are important for students' success. Study by Bowers, J. H., and C. W. Burkett. 1987 found that the physical environment of the school could govern the students' achievement in either ways. As adults in their work place, students perform better in facilities that are attractive, functional, safe and

secure. The social and emotional climate of the school is equally critical to students' academic success. Student must feel supported from administrators, teachers and peer to en-cash their full potential.

d. **CLASS SIZE:** - Maeroff (1998) point out that small school size is better as teachers can give more attention to each student. The clearest results with respect to correlates of achievement are that average achievement scores are higher in schools with smaller class sizes. If a class is less crowded then teachers will be able to pay attention towards each individual student.

e. **TEACHER:** - It is reasonable to expect that the teacher is a key factor in students' academic achievement. National Foundation for Educational Research (2002) made an in-depth study of 20 schools and identified few factors related to academic success of children. The factors identified were high quality teachers, school ethos and culture, monitoring, continuous evaluation and curriculum improvement. Further regular school attendance, favorable attitude of teachers, class environment, educational level of the teacher, providing feedback, etc. were also identified through correlation studies conducted by Deka, Violet, Kuppuswamy and Reddy (1985, 2001, 1986, & 2003).

f. **TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP:** - A supportive teacher-student relationship has been identified as a critical element for students' success (Brophy & Good, 1986). Many a time students' feel alienated and do not experience a sense of belongingness to the school environment. School programs that have established a positive teacher-student relationship, particularly one that supports the student and help the student feel connected have been successful in reducing the probability of dropping out. (Fine, Whelage and Rutter, 1986).

g. **PROPER COMMUNICATION:** - It is observed in research literature that a safe and caring environment enhances students' achievement. For many students, particularly those at risk of school failure, the caring relationship often must proceed with their engagement with subject matter (Vare & Miller, 2000). When schools create an atmosphere in which there are lines of open communication and interpersonal connection between students and school staff, it enhances their

emotional growth, social development and enhances their motivation to learn.

h. **TEACHERS' ATTITUDE:** - Teachers are appreciated who influence students' perception. Students are very sensitive to their teachers' opinion, feelings and attitude towards them. Davidson and Lang (1960) found that the students' perception of the teachers' feelings towards them correlated positively with their self-perception. Students are very sensitive to their teachers' attitude towards them. Another important factor is teachers' expectation, which is connected to teachers' attitude. There are researches that suggest that the teachers' high expectations for their students' success can have a direct impact on academic achievement (Ross, 1995). Students also feel that it is important to them that their teachers' push them to succeed. They expressed the importance of teachers' caring. The value of making sure that every student feels known and valued by at least one adult in the school.

i. **TEACHERS' EXPECTATION:** - Kagan (1992) found that the students' performance is higher in the classroom where teacher's expectation for what the student is to learn and what the student is to do are explicitly stated. Similarly, Anderson (1985) concluded that students perform better in classrooms where the teacher communicates the instructional goals clearly because the goals provide directions to the students (Good & Brophy, 1984).

j. **TEACHING ABILITY:** - Good teaching is clearly important in raising students' achievement. While we know that good teaching is important, it's far less clear what makes for a 'good-teacher'. The measures of teacher quality that are used by most of the school to screen candidates and determine compensation is certification, experience and education level. There is little definitive empirical evidence that these characteristics are associated with higher student achievement.

k. **TEACHERS' EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:** - Teacher's educational level according to the Violet (2001) appears to make a difference when the education is related to the subject taught, but advanced degrees do not appear to serve as a good measure of quality in general.

l. **TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE:** - Measures of teachers' academic skills, such as their verbal ability, teaching style, etc. may more accurately predict their effectiveness. Teachers must possess knowledge in order to transmit knowledge and facilitate learning. Knowledge of the facts, principles and concepts that comprise the subject matter that one is preparing to teach is a necessary, though not sufficient condition for excellence in schooling (Murray & Porter, 1996; Shulman, 1987). Darling-Hammond (2000) points out that the "effects of well prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors such as poverty, language background, and minority status". We feel that this preparation must include the knowledge, skills and dispositions required of culturally competent teachers and counselors and the development of awareness of one's own beliefs and attitudes towards different groups and an understanding of how these beliefs and attitudes impact teaching and counseling (Sue & Sue, 2001).

m. **TEACHER-PARENT COMMUNICATION:** Nothing works as well in the process of education as a common understanding between teacher and parent. Research shows that children do better in school when parents talk often with teachers and are involved in the school (Epstein, 1995). It helps parents and students to gain a shared understanding of school goals, individual student learning needs and strengths, and effective home support strategies for students' academic achievement.

n. **ACADEMIC ATMOSPHERE:** - Brophy and Evertson found that the teachers who produce the highest levels of achievement are task oriented. The major part of the class is spent on academic activities; the classroom is clearly a learning place. These teachers also have high levels of self-efficiency, take personal responsibility for what is happening in the classroom, are well organized and plan proactively (Brophy & Good, 1986).

o. **ATTENDANCE:** - According to the PhD work of Robert R and Kirk A. J., in the year 2005, attendance directly affects the academic achievement of the pupil. Attendance and participation in class are essential if a pupil is to gain the maximum benefit from their education program. The regular and punctual school attendance

of pupils is expected, encouraged and enforced as necessary. Good attendance plays a vital role in academic achievement. Whatever teacher explains is more direct and clear. If a student absorbs directly from the first hand source it provides maximum understanding and if there arises any problem that can be clarified immediately.

p. HOMEWORK: - It is certain that some students see homework as a punishment or tradition. Homework is an effective tool, which can be used to increase students' achievement; According to Roget's (2004) homework is a tool to cultivate pupils' achievement.

In 1960 opponents of homework emerged and condemned homework saying it was deterring the psychological development of student (Cooper, 2001). Since 1960's the importance and effect of homework have been under scrutiny. Professor Harris Copper, in one of his articles compiled 120 researches on homework into one database. The analysis revealed the following results.

- 1.Homework improves achievement. Comparison indicated that students who do homework had a higher achievement score than students who don't.
- 2.The subjects impacted most by studying and doing homework in social studies and science. The least effected was mathematics.
- 3.The frequency and length of the assignment affected the impact of homework on achievement.
- 4.Homework should be necessary and useful. Cooper noted that any activity could remain rewarding only for a limited time.

Homework helps students to form good study habits, enforce positive attitudes about school and encourage students to understand that learning takes place both inside and outside classroom. It also helps students to solve problem independently and encourage different outlooks. Every child should be required to do at least two hours of homework at night, or they are being cheated for the rest of their lives (Newt Gingrich, 1997).

These were few factors presented which are associated with the academic

achievement. In isolation these factors doesn't provide a comprehensive and concrete description of the reasons behind the high academic achievement. Through the help of chain diagram presented below we can come to a better understanding about the phenomenon lying behind high academic achievement.

1.4 INTERCONNECTED DIGRAM

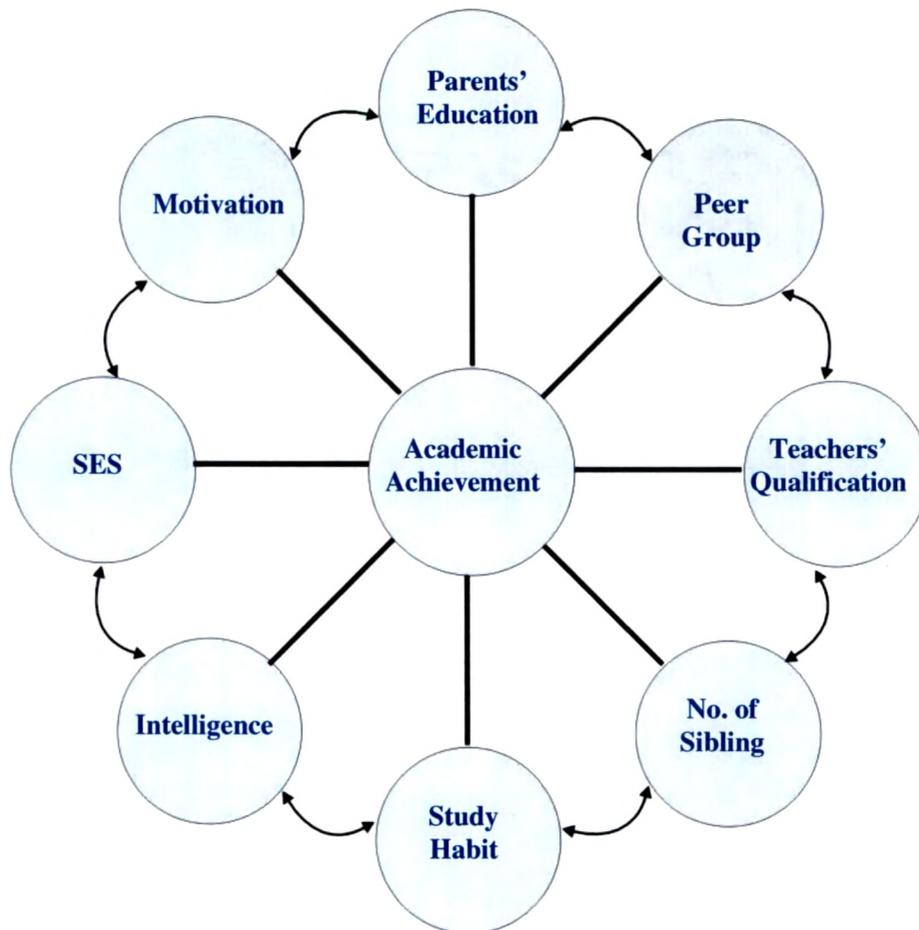


Figure No.1: Interconnected Diagram

From the theoretical framework presented above understanding regarding different variables that cater to academic achievement can be gained. The main purpose to present this diagram is that all the factors described above are not independent of each other. In one way or the other, they are interlinked and had its influence on each other. The categorization made here doesn't mean that any particular category has dominating influence and other is subordinating. There is an intention to bring forth contribution of all the factors over high academic achievement as a cluster

and not as individual segments. None of the factors can be regarded as solely responsible for a child's good performance. As for e.g. child's' intelligence alone can not make him achieve high, if the environment at home is not cognizant or there is lack of motivation for him to work hard. Researcher wants to demonstrate from this diagram that each factor has a direct bearing on child's achievement not in segregation but in holistic and integrating manner. And the study was carried forward with an intention to sum up with a holistic idea about the high achievers.

In the present study sample of high achievers were derived from a state lying in the northeaster region of India. Along with other states of northeast 'ASSAM' is a part and parcel of our nation yet there are certain unique features of this state which makes it indispensable to take an abridged glance of the state of Assam.

1.5 ASSAM AS A STATE:

1.5.1 Introduction to Assam State

The state "Assam" is a part of the country known in ancient times as "Paragjyotisha" which is situated in the northeastern part of India. Assam is the modern name, which was given under the rule of the powerful ruler, "Ahom". The state was also known as Kamrup in Medieval times. By the ancient name of "Paragjyotisha" the country was known in the great epics, the "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana".

The state Assam is a part of the northeastern states; the other north-eastern states are Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram. All these states together are known as seven sisters. These states with natural grandeur have immense agricultural and industrial resources, which are yet to be tapped. It has a most fascinating landscape. This part of the corner is also called as 'Tea basket' of India.

1.5.2. Geographical position of the state

Assam is a land of about 25 million people, which is almost isolated from other parts of the main land. The literary meaning of Assam is "uneven land" and is very appropriate description of the geography of the state. As the biggest state of the frontier province of India on the northeast, Assam has a special position of

importance that is situated in a strategic position laying in close proximity to Bhutan, Tibet, China and Burma. The boundaries of Assam lie between 24.10°n to 27°58n latitude and 89°49e to 97°26e longitudes with an area of 78,438 sq. km of which hills account for 20 percent and forest accounts for 22.21 percent of the total area of the state. Area under forest, categorized as reserved forest covers 17,581 sq. km.

The state has a rich biodiversity and has been gifted by nature with famous one horned 'Rhino'. Assam holds a unique position in respect of mineral-oil production. Coal, limestone, refractory dolomite and natural gas are the other minerals found in the state. Tea occupies an important place so far agricultural based industries are concerned.

The mighty 'Brahmaputra' river flows through the middle of the state and is the most striking feature of the state. The total length of the Brahmaputra River is 2900km (approx). The other big rivers are; Kapily, Dhansiri, Subansiri, Dikhow, Rangghali and others. Assam is divided into 23 districts with its capital at Dispur, a suburb of Guwahati. Guwahati is the most developed and advanced city of the entire northeast region.

From the map of India exact location of Assam and its surrounding can be well-observed.



Figure No.2: Map of India

Now map of Assam will provide an accurate knowledge about its different districts.

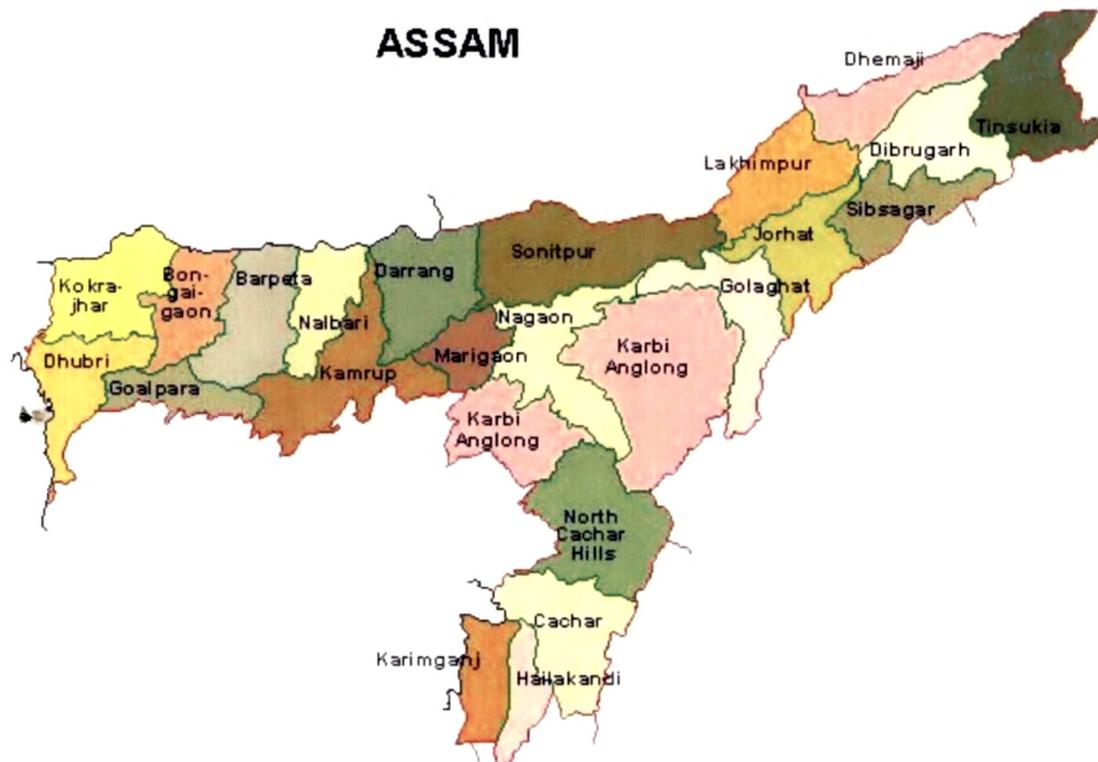


Figure No.3: Map of Assam

1.5.3 Historical and Political Background of the Assam State

Not much is known about the early history of Assam. However, the Chinese explorer Chang Kien was having trade links with Assam in 100 B.C. The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea and Ptolemy's geography also acknowledge the existence of this state before Christ. The Austroids or the pre-Dravidians were the earliest inhabitant of the state. But later on, the Mongoloids entered the land through the eastern mountain passes and overran the land long before the time of the compilation of the Hindu religious literature known as the Vedas. In the Vedic literature, the state has been mentioned as the land of Kirats with Pragjyotishpura as the capital. In the epic Mahabharata it is mentioned that the Kirats fought against the Pandavas. Huen-Tsang the greatest Chinese traveler visited this region in the 7th century. The entry of Ahom in Assam started a new beginning and many scholars opine that the state has been named after this dynasty that ruled here for sixteen centuries.

With rest of the India, Assam also played an important role in the war of independence. It was declared a state under the union of India after it achieved independence in 1947. At that time, except Manipur and Tripura the whole of the north eastern region was called as Assam. However the whole region is now organized into seven states in the Indian Territory. The current political situation of Assam is unstable with United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) fighting a low intensity but widespread Guerrilla warfare for independence from India. There has been bloodshed and terrorism spread by the ULFA in the modern India.

1.5.4 The People of Assam State

One can find trace of at least three races in Assam; Austroids who were perhaps the first to come to the land, the Mongoloids who came to the northeast in the series of migrants from the north, north east and south east and the Causasoid who came from the west by the valley formed by the Ganges and the Brahmaputra (General Knowledge Explore by Assam Kumar, 2006). Today the people of the state can be broadly classified as the non - tribal or plains peoples who generally live in the plains and the tribes who have mainly been living in hills. However, there is a substantial tribal population in the plains too. The people of today are the result of assimilation and integration of peoples of different social strata and regions who

migrated to Assam down the ages.

The people over here speak Assamese language. Basically Assamese people are very simple and well mannered. Girls over here are not restricted in the walls of house rather are allowed to be educated. In villages, they help in cultivation and in town are doing jobs. The richer sections of the state are interested to send their children out of Assam for their education else where in the country for betterment.

1.5.5 Cultural Background of the Assam State

The state Assam has a rich cultural heritage, with lot of diversities. The population of the state comprised of different tribes, religion, culture, communities like Tea tribes, Bodo, Pabha, Mishing, Khasi, Nepalese, Khamti, Chigphu, Muslim and Christians, etc.

It has a rich and varied tradition of art, folk dance, music, and coral literature. They celebrate many festivals and fairs throughout the year. The best-known non-religious festival of them is Bihu where people from all backgrounds participate. The people celebrate three festivals of “Bihus” in a year namely, the “Bohag Bihu”, “Kati Bihu” and “Magh Bihu”. The “Vaishnavites” of Assam celebrate the birth and death anniversaries of “Srimanta Sankardeva” and “Mahadeva” with great pomp and show. The Assamese villagers are simple farmers, living in close proximity to all sorts of natural phenomena. Till now their lives are full of unexplained believes and superstitions. In the state of Assam, Hinduism is the principal religion. Buddhism and Jainism did not seem to have much popularity since the ancient time. The major cults that exist in Assam are Shiva cult, Vishnu cults and that of Shakti and Surya.

1.5.6 Climate of the State – Assam

There are two distinct climates operating in Assam. While the hill enjoy sub-alpine climate, the plains of the state experience tropical climate with high humidity level in the monsoon. Assam is a region of heavy rainfall. It varies between 178⁰ to 305⁰ cm (approx). All this rainfall begins from mid-June and continues up to early October with occasional dry spells. Winter touches this state in the end of the month of October and lasts until the beginning of March. The nights are cold and

morning is foggy during this time. Springs and autumn are with moderate temperature and modest rainfall. These are the best seasons of Assam. The maximum temperature during summer and winter are 30°C and 16°C respectively.

1.5.7 Economy of the State

About 70 percentages of the state's working force is engaged in agriculture and allied activities. More than 79 percent of total cropped area is utilized for food production. Rice is the staple diet of the people and cultivation of rice is the main occupation of those engaged in agriculture. Different pulses, jute, cotton, oil seeds, tea, sugarcane and fruit are among the other agricultural crops. Assam is also an important producer of silk products to make saris and fabrics. Assam is the largest producer in the world of the golden colored "Munga Silk".

The extensive forests of Assam are a reserve of many useful products like timber, resins, bamboo, granite, cane etc. that yields substantial revenue to the State. Tea occupies an important place so far as agriculture based industries are concerned. There are about 2,472 tea gardens in the state spread over an area of 2,67,000 hectares. Assam is the largest producer of tea in India. It produces about 55% of the total tea produced in India and one-sixth of the world's entire tea production. Assam is the first state in the country where oil was struck in 1889 at Digboi. It holds the unique position in the production of crude oil. Assam is the third largest producer of petroleum and natural gas in India. The state has four oil refineries at Digboi, Noonmai, Bongaigoan and Numligarh. Still Assam lacks in its growth rate as compared to our nation. GDP of India was 6.0 percent in 1998-1999 whereas GDP of Assam in the same year was 1.8 percent only.

1.5.8 Education in the State of Assam

The National structure of Education envisages a common educational structure for all the states. The 10+2+3 structure has now been accepted in almost all the parts of the country. In Assam, ten years of the schooling is divided as first four years as primary education, three years as upper primary and the next three years of secondary education. After the ten years of schooling, child enters junior college i.e. standard XI and XII. This stage is attached with the degree college and is known as junior college.

The total number of primary and secondary schools in Assam till 2001 was 8019(approx.) and about 3915 respectively. The schools are unevenly distributed all over the state of Assam. (www.education.nic.in).

Literacy rate in Assam increased from 52.89 percent in 1991 to 64.28 percentage in 2001, an increase of 12 percent. It is marginally below the national literacy rate of 65.20 percentages. (<http://planassam.org/stateProfile/literacy.htm>). Yet there is a large gender gap in literacy rate- for male being as much as 71.93 percent and for female it is lower by more than 15 percent, at 56.03 percent (2001). Social constrain might be the reason for low literacy amongst the females but constrains are vanishing rapidly and there is a definite sign of substantial efforts by the female to become literate. Large urban- rural gap are evident as well. Urban literacy is as high as 85.76 percent and 40.92 percent for rural areas (2001). (<http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/g/Z/EI/0ZEI0401.htm>)

Dropout rates at the high school and higher secondary level continues to be high. Paradoxically, during the period of rapid expansion in enrolments, the dropout rate in Assam has been increasing. For classes' I-X, dropout rate increased from 65.09 in 1981-82 to 74.84 percent in 2003-04. This is in contrast to the trend witnessed at the all India level where the dropout rates declined from 82.33 percent to 62.69 percent during the same period. Total budget allocated for education in Assam is Rs. 42267.1 lakh yearly. The state spends a comparatively higher share of Gross State Domestic Product (GSPD) on elementary level. 24.93 percent of the total budget is allocated for secondary education in the state.

There are two boards of education in Assam. The first is Secondary Education Board of Assam, which is known as SEBA. The other one is Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) established in the year of 1984. AHSEC was established for the higher secondary level of education. Besides State board there are two other boards to look in to secondary education in Assam. They are Central Board of Secondary Education and ICSE board .All those school which fall under these two boards, are English medium. For the poor results of SEBA, many Assamese parents are shifting their wards to the school under CBSE. Further there are 5 University situated at different districts of the state offering various courses.

A list of educational institutions in Assam is presented below

(Table no: 1.1)

Types of Educational Institution in the state of Assam (2003)

Type	Nos.
University	5
IT	1
Engineering colleges	3
Medical college	3
General college	226
Higher Secondary School	540
High School	3440
Middle School	7237
Primary School	30140
Pre-Primary School	482
Industrial & Technical School	23
Polytechnic	10

Source: <http://www.aau.ac.in/assam/index.htm>

1.6 Secondary Education Board of Assam

The Board of Secondary Education in Assam is situated in the city of Guwahati. The Board is popularly known as SEBA i.e., Secondary Education Board of Assam. SEBA was established in the year 1962. The board facilitates all the districts of Assam to conduct examination and declare results of Board examinations. It offers 4 medium of instruction i.e., English, Hindi, Assamese and Bengali.

SEBA has been striving for reforming the existing system of examination in collaboration with NCERT since 1967 and has been able to achieve considerable success against heavy odds. The board is continuing in its effort to reform examination to attain maximum reliability and validity of the examination it conducts. Recently from 2003 onwards it has modified the pattern of question

paper followed since last many years. The function of the Board is to conduct examination but there are certain other functions envisaged by SEBA. Some of the important functions are listed below.

1. Development of curriculum and syllabuses and prescribing the courses of studies for different standards leading to High School Leaving Certificate.
2. Approving/preparing of textbooks on the prescribed courses of studies.
3. Organize In-service Orientation program for teachers of different subjects including pupils' evaluation.
4. Organizing program on examination reform.
5. Organizing seminar/workshops on academic matters in association with teacher organization.
6. Analysis and review of result of examinations conducted by the Board.

Beside conducting examination and analyzing results for High School Certificate Examination (HSLC), Board is also controlling Assam Higher Madrassa Examinations and all other functions related to it.

The students are declared as fail if they scored less than 33% marks in any paper and in overall, passed in third class if they obtained a percentage of mark ranging from 33 to 44.9%, passed in second class if they obtained a percentage of mark ranging from 45.0% to 59.9% and passed in first class if the obtained mark is more than 60%. A candidate has to appear in a total of 6 subjects i.e., for a total marks of 600 in the Board examination. Candidates failing in a single subject but securing the minimum aggregate pass marks are eligible to appear on the compartmental examination same year. Provision for reappearance in such exams is only for once. And if candidates fail to avail themselves of the compartmental chance then they have to offer all the subjects in the next exams as a private candidate.

An overall result of High School Leaving Certificate examination under the Board of Secondary Education Assam since 1964- 2004 is shown in table 1.2

Table-1.2
Overall Result of SEBA from 1964 to 2004

YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF PASS	PERCENTAGE OF FAILURE
1964	35.23	64.77
1984	33.82	66.18
1988	25.00	75.00
1990	26.42	73.88
1991	31.07	68.93
1997	35.50	64.50
1999	34.48	65.52
2000	40.69	59.31
2001	36.20	63.80
2002	40.87	59.13
2003	44.11	55.99
2004	49.79	50.21

Source: Published by Sri B.K.Das, the Secretary, Board of Secondary Education, Assam (2004).

Though the overall pass percentage of Assam High School is increasing gradually, yet it is not much to cheer about as half of the students appear for examination failed every year. In 2003, total number of students appeared for Secondary Board Examination is 1, 75,183. Out of this number, only 77,274 candidates (44.1%) passed. Among the passed candidates 9,596 secured first division that is only 5.48 percent of the total appeared for exam. A total of 17,786 candidates secured second division i.e., 10.15 percentage of the total candidates appeared for the examinations. A further total of 49,892 students passed in third divisions, which is 28.48 percent of the total candidates, appeared for the board examination. Whereas in the year 2004, total number of students appeared for Secondary Board Examination was, 1,84,771 out of which 92,011 (49.8%) candidates passed. Among the passed candidates, 11,843 students got first divisions that is only 6.4 percentage of the total number of candidates appeared

for examination. A total of 21,359 candidates got second division that is 11.6 percent of the total candidates appeared for the exams. And 58,809 students passed in third divisions, which is 31.8 percent of the total candidates appeared for the board exams.

Whereas the overall pass percent at the Central Board of Secondary Education in Assam (2001-2002) was 72.64%. The state's education department has around 1,70,00 employee and the department spends nearly Rs.200 crore to pay salaries every month. The heavy investment made on education shall accrue good results of secondary education. It is needed that administrators, teachers, guardians and students themselves shall also take initiative to have good results.

As evident, high achievers have lots of scope for their future career and the reversals for failures or low achievers. They face frustration and lot of problems in their adult life. It is therefore urgent that our children do well in their studies and subsequently in life.

1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Any school or system aims at all-round development of all its students. But main concern of all the educational efforts is to see that the learners achieves, though it is a crude fact that in a class all the students are not of same caliber, it is heterogeneous in nature. Another fact is that after all efforts we can never make each of them equal or top rankers because of their individual differences. What is possible is that one can try to develop maximum of the child's potentialities

Academic achievement is of paramount importance as children definitely want to work for success. This in fact reinforces performances and release further energy and generate favorable attitude towards learning. There may be some children who really want to improve but are unable to see their ways to do so. If we get a scientific explanation about the high achievers and top rankers, we might be able to guide other children from being failure in school. According to Delors report (1996) they are the cause for children committing violence and even suicide upon failure to achieve anticipated result. Grade reception and stagnation leads to the students to

dawdling and sometimes to the loss of the spirit to do something useful in their future.

A dearth of competent and trained manpower is now felt in nearly every branch of national life and is one of the biggest bottlenecks to progress (Education Commission 1964-66). Quality of performance has become key factor for personal progress as the world is becoming more and more competitive. The parents also desire that their child climb ladder of performance as high level as possible. This desire for a high level achievement puts a lot of pressure on students, teachers, and schools and in general on the educational system itself. There is a pressing need to identify the path-ways followed by the top rankers and contribution made by their family, neighbors, social support, teachers, school and other facilities. It may help in developing suitable environment, reconstructing curriculum, improving teaching method, developing study habit, create parents' attention and for providing suitable guidance services to reduce the high incidence of failure and to increase the ratio of high achievers.

It is seen that some of the students excel in secondary board examination. But is very difficult to find a proper explanation as to why few of them excel. Related researches in this area do not give sufficient explanation because the phenomenon of success is so complex to understand and explain. It is observed that few of the students who are brilliant and of high I.Q, with good parental support also fail. On the other hand students with poor background and average IQ also do well in examination. The matter of student's excelling in academic sphere is studied by numerous researches and is a topic of many committees and commissions. The study by Deka (1985) found the relation between intelligence, parental occupation, and few school factors with academic achievement of high and low achievers. Similarly Shivapada (1980) related intelligence, study habit, personality factors, and need achievement with academic success of the child. But no such study was found that deals with all the dimensions related to child's academic success. The most serious weakness in this field is that it has not provided a better understanding and explanation about the cause/s behind the high success of few students. It is therefore essential that in depth case study be conducted to gain detail understanding about the success of secondary school students in board examination.

To understand any phenomenon, it is very essential to study the extreme cases. If we undertake general cases for study it will give a very vague understanding. But the study of one extreme that is the high achievers or toppers and the other extreme that is the failures will provide us relevant understanding and explanation. Children need model rather than critics, taking this viewpoint into consideration it can be concluded that a child will be more interested and positively influenced by knowing life story of academically successful students rather by those who were unable to turn it into success. Therefore in this study, top rankers who are at one extreme are taken for in-depth case study, so that, the peculiar unexplored aspects related to them could be studied and findings deduced. The effort will help to gain an understanding as to why they were successful.

In the present study top rankers of secondary board examination were taken as the cases for study because it may help to carve out the support system available to toppers at their infancy, childhood, school days, academic environment at school and home etc. The aim of the education till secondary level is to prepare for general life and the child is prepared to be a good human being who will be able to contribute to the society. So, making all children to learn effectively is the main thrust of the education system. It is the most crucial turning point that shapes children's future career. Therefore it is essential to study top rankers at this stage, so that the incoming students can be guided to be successful in school and subsequently in their adult life.

No other method except case study will be able to supply descriptive as well as qualitative information about the high achievers. The investigator planned to have case study method as it is an ideal methodology where a holistic and in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum and Sjobug, 1991). This study is designed to bring out the details from the viewpoints of the top rankers, related persons and records by using multiple sources of data. This procedure or technique has one great advantage that it will study the child in all its aspects and environment. As case study is a systematic way, investigator will be able to look systematically all happenings/events, collecting relevant data, interpret the data and reflect on the happenings and reporting the result. The findings will be sharpening our understanding of why those few were top rankers are top rankers? What path they have followed? What support system they have enjoyed till now from family,

friend, and society? Here the case study is to provide an understanding of complex issues of high academic achievement and will also add strength to what is already known through previous researches.

Northeast is considered as an under developed region in our country. Assam occupies the central position among the northeastern states. The most important pathway for the development of these states and other is by increasing the educational awareness of people in these states. It is not merely increment of literacy rate rather to make people educated. Table 1.1 provides a clear-cut vision that performance level of student in Assam is not satisfactory. As crores of rupees are spend on the education every year, there is a great loss to the state as well as the nation because large number of failures at secondary school board examinations.

Only 5% to 6% of students are securing more than 60% marks and in that the percentage of high achievers is very low. This scenario gives birth too many assumptions like, is the problem lies with the educational system of Assam? Or there is problem of society or people over there? Or could it be that the curriculum of SEBA is not efficient? Many such other questions emerge in the mind of the researcher that why the performance levels of standard X is so low in Assam? It is not so that in a year all the students who appear for board examination are dullards and among those, few will have to be topper. Rather these are those students who have made it to achieve so high percentage of marks in the secondary board examinations. Now the question further arises is that if so is the condition, how few students still are able to achieve so high? The answer of this question will guide us to know the exceptional features related to the students and thereby the problems of low achievements and failure may be avoided in the state of Assam and other parts of the country also.

After knowing the urgency, few question aroused in front of the researcher which were unexplained and needed an explanation. These questions are stated below.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Who are the rankers at the Board Examination of Assam?
- How some students make it to the top rank?
- What is the support system enjoyed by top rankers from parents, teachers, peer groups, neighborhood, surrounding, etc.?
- What supports are derived by the top rankers from the school and teachers?

1.9 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: -

A Case Study of Top-Rankers of Secondary Education Board, Assam.

1.10 OBJECTIVES: -

To identify, understand and explain the pathways followed and the support system enjoyed by the top rankers of SEBA.

1.11 EXPLANATION OF THE TERMS: -

Top rankers: - In this study top rankers are those students who have secured high percentage of marks (in average 90%) in the exams of secondary board of Assam in the year 2003 and 2004.

1.12 SCOPE OF THE STUDY: -

The scope of the present study is limited to top-rankers of standard X of the Secondary Board Examinations of Assam held in 2003 and 2004.

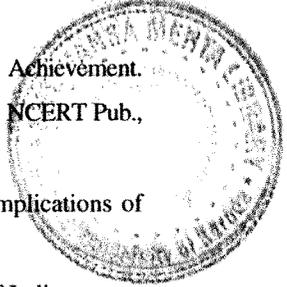
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