

**GROWING-UP AS ADOLESCENTS AMIDST ACADEMIC
PRESSURES: A SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY**

**Dissertation submitted to the Centre for Study of Social Systems, School of Social
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled **GROWING-UP AS ADOLESCENTS AMIDST ACADEMIC PRESSURES: A SOCIOLOGICAL INQUIRY** is submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M. Phil.)** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this university or any other university and is my original work.

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We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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TO

THE STUDENT'S WHO ARE UNDER ACADEMIC PRESSURES

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about adolescents and their process of growing up but this research project has a specific focus it seeks to examine the meaning of growing up as adolescents, particularly at a time when there is terrible academic pressure and heavily loaded school education, with its inherent principle of exams, hierarchy and ranking. In other words here is a sociological work that seeks to situate adolescents in the prevalent context of school culture. It goes without saying that in modern time's school education occupies a significant aspect of the life-practice of adolescents. The way they think and look at the world, the anxiety and dilemmas they experience, their hopes and aspirations are often been shaped by the academic culture. As a matter of fact, it is the study in the domain of sociology of education that seeks to evolve a critique of the prevalent educational practice through the eyes of adolescents. In order to give an empirical and concrete dimension of the present work we have two schools in Tamil Nadu.

One can ask why two different schools, one private and one Government. Early 1990's has witnessed drastic change in the sphere of education especially in the 'private' sectors which also has entered in the field of education. 'It has to be noted that in post independence India higher education was entirely state sponsored while school education was not. However, since the 1990's even higher education has been opened to private sector, especially the professional education in engineering, medical, management, computers and Information Technology etc. This accentuates the stratification of knowledge by heightening the boundaries between institutions and discipline, which have created narrow spaces and artificial divides in the knowledge systems'¹. Science stream became popular, medicine, and engineering are seen as respectable jobs.

Since then, private institutions whether a school, or a college/university or any institution has received wide popular acclaim for its services. Rao in his study on 'different types of secondary schools has examined the academic performance of students in different types of schools, namely those run by missionary agencies,

¹Karuna Chanana [ed.], *Transformative links between Higher and Basic education - Mapping the field*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p. 20.

corporation of Madras, Government of Tamilnadu and separate schools for boys and girls. He found that private management schools and girl's schools showed higher academic performance'.² Though its 'service' charges are high, public is ready to give more as they fill their demands like infrastructure, interpersonal relationships with the school, has syllabus which fulfill the recent trends, has its own style of teaching, and especially has English mediums, had more competent students than the Government schools etc. these were some of the 'pull' factors in private schools, the people from middle and upper middle class are more attracted today. But the Government schools are not very popular because of lack of infrastructures, the coaching is not good, could not give better results than private schools etc. Moreover there is opinion that students from lower rung only study in Government schools. These are some of the 'push' factors in Government schools. Government schools always have lower regard in the society. As the study intends to focus on growing up of adolescents amidst academic pressures, the study tried to check the presence of difference in pressure received by adolescents studying in two different schools.

India as a developing society, it is attempting to become a modern industrial society. Its members are moving from authoritarian hierarchical social relationships to a comparatively free social interactions, more social mobility, democratic and equalitarian social relationships. All these have accelerated the competitive nature of social living in India in all its spheres including education. When a society is highly competitive it places great value on the achievement of power, wealth and prestige. The new value orientations, motivations, attitudes and system of beliefs are developing alongside the growth of western technology which made men more and more achievement oriented rather than ascription oriented.

The destiny of India is now being shaped in the classroom. Pupil's education has been assessed in terms of success in exams. In order to prove their performance teachers are engaging in 'spoon-feeding' rather than encouraging the habits of independent study. The purpose behind all these is the engineering and the medicine courses. Those who make it through to the haloed professional colleges, fall out of line, they are promoted and 'settled'. Common Entrance Test (CET) is a pre-requisite for ensuring admissions to

² R.Y, Rao, A Study of Academic Performance of Different Types of Secondary Schools, *Journal of the Institute of Educational Research*, 1978, 2(3), pp. 30-6.

professional colleges, institutes of management and even for recruitment to public employment. The admission into educational institutes/courses thereby the secured future of an individual that depends on the marks of the qualifying course. Another malignant academic exercise developed by the stereotype CET is that they encourage the parents and managements of coaching centers to prepare examinees.

Changing Child Care Attitudes and Practices

With the break-up of joint family system, women going for job etc., the definition of parenting have been modified from exclusivist to inter-changeability in the parenting roles, especially among the modernized families where now fathers are also involved in child care. Child centredness and indulgence of parents has taken new forms today. Parents in the middle and upper social classes are investing increasing amounts of time, energy and money in their children's educational and occupational options.

The attitude towards education and career/success are also changing. Pavan K. Varma aptly remarks that the 'middle class has had to bear the brunt of a rapidly changing society in which restraining traditions have been offloaded in a single minded pursuit of plenty. The pressures begin to mount on a youngster even as a toddler. The child is under tremendous pressure to do well in school for he knows that unless he does so, entry to a preferred college for a professional course will be very difficult'.³ Adolescents are the most vulnerable amidst these changes. G. Stanley Hall reported that 'adolescence is a period of extremes in behaviour marked by emotional storm and stress'.⁴ Young people develop self-identity, self-esteem, enter into relationships, develop attitudes towards life, future career, sexuality etc. Higher education, the area an individual decides to graduate/ post-graduate, is perhaps one of the most important selections a person makes during his lifetime. It determines the course of one of the largest investments in terms of irrecoverable time, money and commitment a person will ever make. Higher education choices affect the lives of all individuals at the stage when they are in a confused state about themselves. Ironically in our society, this phase

³ P.K. Varma, *The great Indian middle class*, Viking publishers, Delhi, 1998, p. 53.

⁴ Elizabeth, B. Hurlock, *Development Psychology*, 3rd edition, Tata McGraw Hill publishing company Limited, NewDelhi, 1953, p. 393.

of life is often pathetically dealt with both by parents, other adults of the family and teachers.

We are aware that at the M.Phil stage there is not even much time for an exhaustive ethnography or field work. This work does not therefore claim that the two schools have been covered exhaustively what we have however done is some kind of field sensitization endeavour or a broad sociological familiarity of the culture of the two schools that has helped us to elaborate and substantiate our conceptual and theoretical propositions.

Methodology

In order to collect the data, following methods have been used. The two schools were selected on the basis of its popularity for its coaching and results. It has been kept in mind that the schools selected should be of co-education and should follow the same syllabus.⁵ As there is no government schools were found to have similarity of the criteria instead of it, a government-aided school and a private school have been selected. 40 students each from those two schools were selected randomly since their parents were also interviewed; as the parents play a major role in socialization of the children their involvement in the educational pursuits is important.

Interview method

An unstructured interview method was used for collecting data. The interview was conducted in an informal way so as to make the respondents to feel comfortable as the focus of the study cover sensitive and complicated issues. The sessions were conducted depending upon the convenience and availability of the students and parents. Apart from the interview groups of students were engaged in group discussion and debates about their life, ambitions, struggles and various other issues. However, the interview with the parents was held within a structured manner. The students played as catalyst while interviewing their parents as well. Here participant observation was used frequently to assist the students to 'come out' freely.

⁵ Both the schools selected are following the Tamil Nadu State syllabus.

Observation

The non-participant observation was done to find the relationship of students with their teachers, parents and fellow students. Moreover, questions pertaining students culture, their behaviour pattern, peer group influence etc., had also been examined.

Secondary sources

Apart from the primary data, sources like books, Government reports, magazines, journals and newspaper articles were referred. With the help of these tools both the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed sociologically.

During the interview sessions the researcher faced some disturbing as well as interesting incidences. The researcher had to face apprehensions from the parents as well as from the students. For example a student asked 'what is the use of co-operating with you, what I will get out of it'. This is one example of initial hindrances. Interestingly there was a significant difference between how the students behaved under the authority of the school, especially the space and time between school and home found among some students.

However the study is not without limitations. For example, in the area of sexuality the researcher could not get sufficient insights mainly due to the socio-cultural constraints, as the issue is sensitive and complicated in nature.

Before writing about the nature of the present work or the way it evolved and progressed it would be important to have fair degree of conceptual clarity we should therefore begin with the notion of adolescence. The specificity of this stage is one's life cycle and the need for a careful study on adolescents and the process of growing up.

As we are situating the process of growing up of adolescents amidst academic pressure it would be desirable to conceptualize what we mean by academic pressure. In this context couple of points has to be made first, as Durkhiem correctly said 'education is a social fact that requires a consensus endeavour, a partnership between adult and the child or the teacher or the taught. In other words education is like a process of metamorphosis which according to Durkhiem 'transforms the egoistic along with

bundles of desires and instincts into a social being, would begin to speak the language of the collective'.⁶ In this sense, that education can be said to be a process where John Dewey also argued 'transmission and communication of social heritage'.⁷

Education would therefore require some kind of active preparation on the part of the learner. In that sense some kind of pressure is always involved in the process of education that is not surprising. Any learning activity for growth and development would always demand time, physical and mental energy at hard level. When we are speaking of academic pressure we are not talking about this critical minimum for the necessary and desirable effort on the part of the learner to grow up by a academic pressure we mean something qualitative reference we mean a culture of learning that is not in tune with the learners natural and organic growth that is heavily burdened with information to which the learner cannot relate and that is purely exam-centric, marks-oriented and hierarchical in other words, academic pressure means a culture that devalues creativity and spontaneity in learning and compels one to equate knowledge with marks and intelligence with exam results. It is the burden of schooling so when we talk about academic pressure we are by no means suggesting that a learner are from all responsibilities possibly every learner keep encouraged meaningfully, is eager to take challenges and do hard work but when as Aurobindo said the 'learner's mind is not consulted on its own growth'⁸ or education as alleged by Paulo Freire, becomes 'anti-dialogic'⁹, the learner finds no encouragement to work it is like working not because of joy and creativity but because of fear of punishment, fear of failure and stigma. In other words; academic pressure means getting increasingly alienated from the domain of learning.

The questions that we are raising in this dissertation are the following:

⁶ For details see, Emile Durheim, *Moral Education: A study in the theory and application of the sociology of education* translated by Everett K Wilson and Herman Schnurer, Edited by Everett K Wilson, New York, Free Press, 1961.

⁷ For detail see, John Dewey, *Democracy and education: An Introduction to the philosophy of Education*, New York, Free Press, 1976.

⁸ For details see, Aurobindo, *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education*, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, first edition : 1956; reprint : 1997.

⁹ For details see, Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergan Ramos, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973.

1. If academic pressure is what adolescent experience perpetually then how does it affects the process of growing up, the way they think, articulate their consciousness and define the world.
2. How do they cope with this pressure? Do they get active support from their parents at this crucial state of the life cycle? Do they break down, become submissive and confront resistance or is there a possibility for a new culture to emerge.
3. In the three substantial chapters, chapter-I tries to understand – from the sociology of education perspective – the prevalent state of education in India, its crisis and its increasing departure from an egalitarian, human and integral practice of learning. This helps us in comprehending adequately the social roots of academic pressure. After this sociological understanding, in chapter-II we attempted to understand two important agencies affecting the lives of adolescents, that is school and family. With our own empirical findings we have studied the culture of the two schools in terms of discipline, punishment, home assignments, exam and ranking and we have also studied the role of the parents, how they look at their children while growing up, what they expect from them, or the way they define success and failure in life. In other words, the purpose of the chapter is to grasp the gravity of the problem, the adolescent's experience. It is also to examine whether parents in the family-setting further re-inforce academic pressure or where they seek to create environment conducive to a modern relaxed milieu. And the third substantial chapter deals with the crucial question of what does it mean to be an adolescent and its pressure and what are the challenges in their life.

Chapter – I

Academic Pressure: Roots of the Crisis

In this dissertation there has been an attempt to understand the impact of academic pressure on adolescence. It is therefore important to ask a sociological question – why is it that school education in our times is far from being liberating, begins to put excessive mental and social pressures on adolescents? This would require a socio-pedagogic understanding of the prevalent practice of school education. In fact, the chapter begins with the sociological understanding of the existing culture of the education. And then we have made an attempt to see the specificities of the two schools in Tamilnadu that we have considered for our sociological inquiry. This would finally enable us to comprehend social implications of academic pressure on adolescents. In other words, we would be able to situate our present work in the context of the larger sociological issue.

Crisis in education

Sociology of education, we know is a distinctive field of inquiry that emerged in a specific historical context. In a way it was a time of modernity, nation-state and complex specialized knowledge's. It was felt that family-kinship socialization would no longer be adequate to prepare the new generation for future adult roles. It was also felt that school as a modern institution ought to play a key role in inculcating new knowledge's and new values which one would need to live in a complex modern society. It was therefore not surprising that Emile Durkhiem, one of the classical sociologists of the modern age, wrote extensively on school education, curriculum, morality, discipline and punishment. Durkhiem was trying to see school as a 'primary socializing agency'¹⁰ in the modern age. As societies developed contradictions became more and more sharp. Sociologists of education also began to look at the political implications of school socialization, text and curriculum. It was asked whether schools could transform society or retain the prevalent status quo. As a result from the functionalist theory of education as followed by Durkhiem and Talcot Parsons we reached the stage of critical sociology of education characterized by the writings of a

¹⁰ Emile Durkheim, *opcit.*

wide spectrum of thinkers like Illich, Friere, Apple, Bourdieu and Bernstein. In other word sociology of education made us equipped with certain sociological skills needed to understand the contents of school culture and the larger implications.

In this work, our sociology of education, the insights would help us to understand the crisis in education, particularly with reference to contemporary Indian society. It is obvious that it is a macro issue and hence we would begin with some broader sociological and educational questions. It would not be wrong to say that the crisis in education emanates from the fact that it is becoming increasingly fragmented and isolated on the learner's life experiences. The crisis is the crisis of irrelevance, one dimensionality and negation of organic living with all the faculties of learning. In order to understand the gravity of the crisis in this dissertation we have made an effort to examine how the notion of integral education as put forward by Indian thinkers exists nowhere in the prevalent practice of education.

Understanding integral education

To put it briefly, integral education is an attempt to enable the learner to make sense of the world, to joy and creativity. It is to learn to do things through practice and through an organic link with natural surrounding. It is to overcome the separation between body and mind, thinking and feeling, physical and spiritual and manual and mental. Sociologically what is interesting to note is that in colonial India we saw the emergence of educationists like Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindo who wrote extensively on integral education. Their writings have to be understood within the context of the pursuit to cope with colonialism and associated cultural and educational symbols. We know that with colonialism emerged a kind of educational culture, as put forwarded by Thomas Babington Macaulay that privileged English education and undermined the cultural and civilizational rhythm of our society. There was also a counter tendency which in the name of critiquing colonial education began to regress and became terribly orthodox and old fashioned. Sociologically speaking, the significance of Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindo lies in the fact that they succeeded in seeing beyond Macaulay's colonial education as well as they received a warmth response to it. They were looking for a new age that would enable ordinary Indians to relate to their own surrounding, local histories and cultural memories and at the same time more towards freedom and

happiness. Not only that even though the road at a juncture of history, their insights do have tremendous implications even for our times. Gandhi's emphasis on basic education, Tagore on 'aesthetic learning' and Aurobindo on the 'unity of physical, the vital, the mental and the spiritual', all these pedagogic principles have radical implications. In order to make sense of integral education we have briefly referred to their contributions. We would also refer to J. Krishnamurthi – a spiritual leader – who through his speeches on 'enlightenment' put forward a radical notion of education which did influence many educationists in India.

Sri Aurobindo

Aurobindo says that education is a process for the human being's spiritual ascent and integral development. He is one among the thinkers who has given the world a guidance from which a new system of education could be developed. His new approach is regarded as integral as it looks at the human beings holistically. It includes the physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual-dimensions of human personality. He says that the 'first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master; he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupils mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him; he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface.

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is barbaric and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature.

The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far. The basis of a man's nature is almost always influenced by his hereditary, surroundings, nationality, country, soil from which he draws sustenance, the air which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed. They mould him not the less powerfully because insensibly and from there we must begin. But one thing has to be kept in mind that if

anything has to be brought in from outside, it must be offered, not forced on to the mind. 'A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development'.¹¹

Aurobindo insists that 'three things have to be taken into account in a true and living education – the man, the individual in his commonness and in his uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity'.¹² It alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life. At the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs.

J.Krishnamurthi

J.Krishnamurthi was one among the eminent educationist and philosopher. He regards education as a prime significance in the communication of that which is central to the transformation of the human mind and the creation of new culture. He says that 'conventional education makes independent thinking extremely difficult, conformity leads to complexity. To be different from the group or to resist environment is not easy and is often risky as long as we worship success'.¹³

'JK sternly says ignorant man is not the unlearned, but he who does not know himself and the learned man is stupid when he relies on books, on knowledge and on authority to give him understanding. Understanding comes only through self-knowledge, which is awareness of one's total psychological process. Thus, education in the true sense is the understanding of oneself, for it is within each one of us that the whole of existence is gathered'.¹⁴

'We are afraid of the unknown and so we establish ourselves on psychological zones of safety in the form of systems, techniques and beliefs. As long as we are seeking inward security the total process of life cannot be understood. The urge to be successful, which is the pursuit of reward, the desire for comfort all this smothers discontent, puts an end

¹¹ Aurobindo, *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education*, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, first edition : 1956; reprint : 1997, p. 20.

¹² Ibid, pp.13.

¹³ J. Krishnamurti, *Education and The Signifnce of Life*, Krishnamurthi FoundatiIndia, 2000, p. 9.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 17

to spontaneity and breeds fear; and fear blocks intelligent understanding of life. This fear can be removed purely through the understanding of life. By living with this fear we fail to live in that moment. When there is no fear it gives way to individual freedom. Freedom comes with self-realization, when the mind goes above and beyond the hindrances it has created for itself through craving its own security.

‘Without an integrated understanding of life or individual the collective problems will only deepen and extend. The purpose of education is not to produce mere scholars, technicians and job hunters, but integrated men and women who are free of fear. For only between such human beings can there be enduring peace’¹⁵.

He insists on development of mind that is self-knowledge through the awareness of one’s own thought and feeling. A right kind of education will cultivate an integrated outlook on life, and then there is a higher and wider significance to life. ‘Education is not merely a matter of training the mind. Training makes for efficiency, but it does not bring about completeness’.¹⁶ To attain completeness one has to understand the meaning of life as a whole for that there must be consistent thinking which should be direct and truthful.

Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore’s educational policy is dynamic and has reality. ‘He was an ardent lover of nature. He thought that environment played a greater part in education of the pupils. He advocated harmony with all things, as harmony is the law of life and all pervading universal spirit as its basis. He believed that the extraordinary sensitiveness of children’s mind makes easy their introduction to the great world of reality’.¹⁷ When there is complete giving on the part of the teachers, complete taking on the part of pupils is possible there. He also believed that ‘education is reformatory and expansive process which seeks to unfold all that is good and noble to individual’.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁷ Gaiind, D.N., and R.P.Sharma, *Educational Theories and Modern trends*, Ramprasad and sons, Agra, 1965, p. 11.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

True knowledge enlightens and brings self-realization. "We have got into the habits of covering the windows of our minds with the pages of books and plasters of books phrases have stuck into our mental skin, making it impervious to all direct touches of truth". Tagore's aim of education was to bring about the perfection of man by dispelling of ignorance and ushering in of the light of knowledge.

According to him role of the teacher is very vital in shaping a child. He said that 'education is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. This can be realised when there is complete understanding and identification between the child and the teacher. The teacher must have instinctive sympathy with his pupils, their aspirations, their desires and what they wanted to achieve'.¹⁹ The child should be given maximum freedom unless his personality is likely to be stunted. He also said that one of the greatest aims of education was that of giving man the unity of truth. He deplores teachers to devote their whole attention in giving children information which results in learning mass of unassimilated facts. In fact, this accentuates a break between the intellectual, physical and the spiritual life. There should be no anti-thesis between the intellect, the physical and spiritual aspects of man.

According to Tagore education could not be universalized unless the medium of instruction is in mother tongue and not through the medium of English. He was also against the examination oriented bookish education, which encourages rote learning. But he was not against English, he was all in favour of teaching English as a subject, even right from the beginning, but he also advised for introducing it after a child became somewhat proficient in mother tongue. Tagore wanted to learn from the West the knowledge of modern science and technology while enriching the West with the spiritual wisdom and sacrificial attitudes of the East what he disapproved is the Western consumerism.

Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi's focus was on the rural areas, on the existing knowledge systems and their integration into the classroom curriculum. His educational ideals are implicit in his

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 97

concept of swaraj. According to him swaraj cannot be attained in an exploitative society. For him, a national programme of education for masses was a must for attaining *swaraj* for the masses. He also means 'national education that is education of the masses. It means an awakening of national consciousness among the masses'.²⁰ For e.g., when he suggested that weaving should become a part of the schools curriculum he started with the understanding that everyone needs and uses clothes that weaving is widely known craft in rural areas. He had a very broad-based framework because he wanted that modern scientific principles related to cotton growth, spinning and weaving should be integrated into the curriculum of the schools, thereby making the school knowledge relevant for the children from the villages. In this process he hoped the children in the urban schools will also become aware of the contribution of knowledge systems of the rural areas. This was the idea of socially useful productive work as it was described later on by Adiseshiah Committee in 1978. It was believed that if children participate in socially useful productive work, it will break down the barriers of prejudice between classes and will help the development of a sense of dignity of labour. 'He wanted labour-intensive in indigenous technology rather than capital intensive modern technology. He also wanted that the academics in the universities to come out of their armchair theorizing and become acquainted with our learning and knowledge systems and incorporate them in the classrooms. He envisaged a dialectical and symbiotic relationship between higher and basic education through society'.²¹

Gandhi like Tagore's, was against the prevailing examination oriented bookish education and condemned the cramming and rote learning. He was quite aware of the error of regarding the process of development as an evolutionary continuum. He could anticipate the inadequacy and tyranny of modernization process followed in Europe and America. He was also perhaps the only leader who could think of an alternative instead of copying blindly the process followed in those countries.

He insists on reducing the emphasis on degrees and really interacts with society in a deep way to create a meaningful education. He thought that the earliest school for a child, where proper attitudes could be created and the foundation laid the strength for

²⁰ Poromesh Acharya, Educational Ideals of Tagore and Gandhi – A Comparative Study, *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 22, 1997, p. 603.

²¹ M.K. Gandhi, collected Works, , Navajiban Trust, 1966, pp. 39-40.

character was the home. He believed that character building was the essence of education. While knowledge of various subjects was good and necessary, the rock bottom need for every person was to evolve a good character. With character, knowledge was an embellishment and a distinction, but without character knowledge counted for nothing except to make persons selfish.

All these four thinkers had only one dream that is integral education. An educational process should make a person knowledgeable, self-contained, and self-reliant. Eventhough both Tagore and Gandhi have fundamental difference in their attitude, they visualized education as having organic links with life and work. Similarly, Aurobindo and JK, infuses spirituality with education so that the life attains its completeness.

Contemporary India and negation of integral education

At this juncture we must ask a sociological question why is it that educational visions of Gandhi, Tagore, Aurobindo and J. Krishnamurthi could not become the mainstream stone in the contemporary educational practice. It is true that there are discrete and isolated efforts made by select educationists to build schools and other educational institutions based on the ideal of integral education. But then we all know that these experimental sites, be it Pondichery Aurobindo Society, Rishi Valley Krishnamurthi school or Tagore's *Shantiniketan* in Bengal, were mere islands which could not influence the dominant trend. If we wish to make sense of the state of contemporary education we need to evolve a sociological understanding. To begin with it is important to understand the agenda of modernity and nation making that the past colonial Indian state addicted. It was the Nehruvian arch to create modern Indian society based on the centrality of the Indian state, ethos of massive techno-industrial progress and the spirit of scientific learning and widespread rationalization. It was also a vision that witnessed the interests of the ascending class – scientists, technocrats, industrialists and urban professionals. In other words aspirations of the post colonial Indian state led it to adapt a more rational and instrumental orientation to education. It was always true that there were distinctive memories and nostalgia and also some kind of emotional attachment to the educational conclusions made by people like Gandhi and Tagore, these were never seen as the mainstream policies. These ambiguities could be reflected in many educational commission reports which came after independence we would remember

with nostalgia the contributions of those who talked about integral education but at the same time we would entertain deep rooted belief that in a modern competitive age, if we want our children to succeed, we need a aggressively professional, success oriented, techno-friendly education. As a result with the passage of time in the independent India we saw the proliferation of coaching centers, private tuitions exam centric notebook cultures, ruthless examination patterns and schools that advertise themselves and advertise their achievements through the success stories of their products in examinations. As opposed to integral education we find another devastating practice whose salient feature can be identified as follows.

Education as mere cognitive development

In the words of Sri Aurobindo, in civilized countries a general desire for knowledge as a motive for education does exist but it is largely accompanied with the earthier feeling that knowledge is necessary to upgrade one's position in society or to succeed in certain lucrative or respectable pursuits or profession. We in India have become so barbarous that we send our children to school with the grossest utilitarian motive.²² 'To most of us, the meaning of life as a whole is not of primary importance and our education emphasizes secondary values merely making us proficient in some branch of knowledge'.²³ Knowledge and efficiency are necessary which is inspired by love which goes far beyond and is much greater than the efficiency of ambition, brings an integrated understanding of life.

Due to modernization a complex, comprehensive, dynamic transformation has occurred. It has affected the present day education; it emphasizes cognitive activities (intellectualism) and the various ways to develop the cognitive capacities like thinking, reasoning, memory, imagining, etc. So it has paved way for the intrusion of techniques in the learning process and it overemphasizes the capacity and efficiency of learning techniques. We send our children to school to learn some technique by which they can eventually earn a livelihood. We want to make the child first and foremost a specialist, hoping thus to give him a secure economic position. But it is a question mark does the

²² Aurobindo, opcit, pp. 55-6.

²³ J. Krishnamurti, Opcit, p. 13.

cultivation of a technique enable us to understand ourselves, our life. Life, it is a mixture of everything--pain, joy, beauty, ugliness, love, hatred etc., only when we understand it as a whole at every level and stage, we learn the art of living. Technique can never help us in anyway to taste the essence of life²⁴. The focus is on memory instead of understanding and their capability.

Nothing turns out right when there is no harmony between body, mind and soul. Education is a means of fullness, it is a pointer to one's intrinsic worth as well as extrinsic of oneself in relation to others. If one fails to educate for the cause of others, one cease to be a human being. At the same time, if others in and around one do not care for the education of one who is an inseparable part of them as a member of one great family of man, whatever education is introduced becomes futile and meaningless.

'The present system of education in India from the pre-school stage to higher education has been imported from the West in bits and pieces over the last 200 years. The overall cultural contexts of Indian society and the cultural specialties of its varied segments have been ignored by this system, with the result that it has never been fully accepted by the people. It hardly needs to be pointed out that the ecological inheritance, ethos and cultural commitment of Western societies have been quite different from those of oriental societies. The climate, natural environment, types of settlements their historical evolution and the resultant goals and occupations and the life-vies of these societies have always been poles apart. This is the main cause of the continuing discord between education and society in India'.²⁵

Education as information

What we now call education is a matter of accumulating information and knowledge from books. Practicality is not given importance these days, only theories. Man's mind has become closed with four walls. He is not allowed to think in a free mind. That is why evolution is happening in science and technology but not in human nature. It has got arrested when man began to think selfishly. Education should help us to discover

²⁴ Baidyanath Sarawati (ed.), *The cultural Dimensions of Education*, UNESCO Chair in the field of cultural development, IGNC, 1998, p.39.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 39-40.

lasting values so that we do not merely cling to formulas or repeat slogans. But the present system of education is making us subservient mechanical and deeply thoughtless, though it awakens intellectually, inwardly it leaves us incomplete, confused and uncreative.

‘It seems that schooling is impossible to imagine without its notion of legitimate knowledge. What one learns in one’s school through its texts and curriculum is regarded as true/legitimate knowledge. The success of schooled consciousness lies in one’s ability to internalize this rationale. Children are the concrete thinkers. Concrete thought is limited to considering specific things, objects and situations, as they exist. Concrete thinkers lack the ability to extract knowledge from one experience and apply it to a wholly new experience. Children are perpetually advised to concentrate on what is really worth-doing. So schooling tends to cultivate one and only one ambition, to have complete mastery over legitimate knowledge’.²⁶

Interaction forms the basis of social intercourse of human society. ‘Educational process has become monologue session. The student’s role is only to listen. They cannot participate or are allowed to participate or there is no time for dialogic session. Dialogue activates the student, it is like realizing that learning is not passive consumption it is active involvement. It provides space for multiple interpretations and contestations’.²⁷ A French philosopher Simone Weil was saying that ‘The most important part of teaching is to teach what it is to know’.²⁸ But the method of teaching emphasizes the self activity of the child, in which the teacher participates and stimulates rather than teaches as understood generally. The main idea that a teacher should bear in mind is that whatever is done in class should be rooted in the child’s environment, whatever is artificial should be avoided. In other words there should be harmony between life at home and in school. It is a fundamental and deplorable error by which we have confused education with the acquisition of knowledge and interpreted knowledge itself in a singularly narrow and illiberal sense. Education has

²⁶ Avijit Pathak, Manufacturing Consent-Schooling and its hidden agenda; *Mainstream*, Annual, 1996. pp. 71-2.

²⁷ Ibid, pp.72-3

²⁸ For details see, Hutchinson Encyclopedia, 1998.

meant to give knowledge to the students through second hand ideas and – ‘neglects to build the necessary faculties like the power of knowledge, the power of reasoning, the power of expression and the power of comparison of differentiation’.²⁹

From the time they are toddlers, children are taught to read and write, learn while you play vice versa is absent. Knowledge is seen as something fixed, codified given, not a process of mutual discovery and growth. The child feels that his own experiences, his own realization are not important in the process of learning. The teacher too has been trained to believe that nothing exists beyond legitimate knowledge. Between him and his students lies the authority of the texts. The consequence of the absence of dialogue is disastrous. Schooling becomes an experience of alienation, it becomes a burden. ‘The child has been taught how to think not what to think’.³⁰

Education as elimination and selection

As a matter of fact, education necessitates very sound and effective psychological and dynamic parameter where individual differences are judiciously negotiated with view to accelerating immense possibilities of manifestation of creative and critical consciousness. The students of 12th standard have been studying the same lessons for more than a year and have also written a minimum of 3 revision exams before the board exams as they are already thorough with the lessons, it is just a matter of recollection of thoughts with respect to the topic in question.

‘Assessment and examinations of any kind put a person under pressure and emotional strain. The academic examinations and performance in them have become the indices of one’s economic and social capabilities of adult life’.³¹ Examination along with teaching and learning, in fact, constitute the trinity of functions in the educational process. Examination over years has become a rather mechanical process of acquiring skills and teaching has been largely a process of coaching for examinations.

²⁹ Aurobindo, *opcit.*, p. 57.

³⁰ J. Krishnamurti, *opcit.*, p. 10.

³¹ Sushila Singhal, *Stress in education*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2004. p. 117.

In the university and the colleges of the middle ages the system of competition was completely unknown. In those days, there were no rewards to recompense merit and induce effort. Examinations were organized in such a way that for conscientious pupils, they were little more than a formality. 'Weber identified one of the characteristics of the modern bureaucracy in the rationalization of culture and education and emphasized the importance of the links between bureaucracies, examinations and academic preparation. According to him, the continuous development of the rational and professional examination system was sparked by the process of bureaucratization that emerged in the modern age'.³² Evaluating examinees on the basis of rote learning and memorizing their annual periodicity creates an environment in which students tend to be sluggish and waste their time for most part of the year and gear themselves to work for at least 3 or 4 months. This gives rise to building up of unbearable pressures at the end of the year.

Education and success anxieties

A person's education was measured by years of classroom exposure and by the type and level of educational credentials earned. A developing society always attempts to bring about changes in old positions and creates a wide variety of new ones which require educated and trained personnel to man them efficiently. It requires more and more persons qualified in knowledge and specialized skills. Consequently, it attempts a rapid expansion of its education and upgrading of the educational level of its population. India is not an exception to it. An increasing emphasis is placed on education in India today. It has become the most important factor in shaping the life-style and occupational status of individuals. All social strata of Indian society have become aware of the importance of education in the lives of people. This has led to two significant results:

1. 'There is increasing pressure from society to acquire educational achievement on the younger generation belonging to all social strata of society. The intensity of pressure depends on the socio-economic status of student's family; higher the status of the family, greater will be the pressure.

³² Ikuo Amano, *Education in modern Japan*, translated by William K. Cummings & Fumiko Cummings, University of Tokyo Press, 1983, p. 9.

2. The aspirations for advancement have gone up in all strata and in order that higher occupational positions may come to them, competition between students to achieve highest level of success in education has become very intense'.³³

The problem is more apparent with the middle classes than the lower and those who are very higher in economic strata. The main goal of students is to get entry into the competition and to make all possible efforts to succeed in it and in much better way than others. This competitive intensity can be observed in the secondary school certificate examination conducted at the end of the 10th standard and in the higher secondary school certificate examination conducted at the end of the 12th standard as well as in the efforts made afterwards by students and parents to secure admissions in different colleges.

'In seeking comfort, we generally find a quiet corner in life where there is a minimum of conflict and then we are afraid to step out of that seclusion. This fear of life, this fear of struggle and of new experience kills in us the spirit of adventure, our whole upbringing and education have made us afraid to be different from our neighbour, afraid to think contrary to the established pattern of society, falsely respectful of authority and tradition'.³⁴ The desire to conform has made education a big business and explains the cropping up of a huge number of B-schools and engineering colleges all across the country.

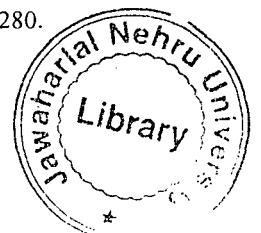
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Education is a quest unending and exciting, fascinating and thrilling. It is a quest that promises growth and development in a systematic, harmonious and disciplined manner. Beset with countless problems and predicaments, education in the 21st century is poised with the non-essentials penetrating gravely into the heartland of humanity. Education of late has been undergoing unwarranted constraints in being bogged down as a commodity. Undeniably, the consequences are alarming for the uncompromising wishes and aspirations of a competition crazy humanity.

Values in life today have been severely affected by reasons due to our aggravating aspirations and sky kissing life style is undeniable. The socio-aesthetic excellence that

³³, B.V.Shah & K.B.Shah, *Sociology of Education*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 1998. p. 280.

³⁴ J. Krishnamurti, *opcit*, p. 10.



We want to receive through education for values has been at continual crossroads with our increasing love for newer things and commodities without which we equate education with meaninglessness and bereft of any worth. In this connection, one recalls *Fromm's* priceless evaluation of man:

'Man today is fascinated by the possibility of buying more, better and especially, new things. He is consumption-hungry. The act of buying and consuming has become a compulsive, irrational aim, because it is an end in itself with little relation to the use of or pleasure in the things bought or consumed. To buy the latest gadget the latest model of anything i.e., on the market is the dream of everybody in comparison to which the real pleasure in use is quite secondary. Modern if he dared to be articulate about his concept of heaven would describe a vision which would look like the biggest department store in the world, sowing new things and gadgets and himself having plenty of money with which to buy them. He would wander around open mouthed in the heaven of gadgets and commodities provided only that there were even more and newer things to but and perhaps his neighbor were just little less privileged than he.'

- Erich Fromm: 'The sane society', Holt Rinehart, Winston, 1955 p.135'.³⁵

II

Academic pressures, Adolescents and social implications

As we understand the crisis in contemporary education, we also experience with discountenance. Infact, adolescents are young learners experience this discountenance rather sharply. It can also be said that those who are successful –achievers and toppers– survive the system and hence everything is normal. But the fact is that beneath every success story lies thousands of failures. And even when the system continues with a terrible competitiveness and exam culture, there are deep anxieties depressions and pathologies that need to be understood. Sociology of education, in India must address to these issues. There are of course a lot of writings in Indian popular crisis in fact, it is now a matter or routine that every year after the exam results newspaper editorials write editorials on exam pressures and associated problems and T.V. channels panel

³⁵ Mohit Chakravrti, *Education in the 21st century*, kalpaz publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 138-9.

discussions by involving educationists, psychologists and counselors. In big cities in India we are seeing the steady growth of Non Governmental Organisation's [NGO's] which are primarily addressing to the needs of the adolescents. We see parents taking their children to counselors and we also see lot of therapeutic advises made by Central Board Secondary Examination [CBSE] personnel during the examinations. All these definitely indicate that academic pressure has its impact and the vulnerability of adolescent and we believe that sociologists of education must study this emerging problem. As we have already suggested we would substantiate our arguments through a reading of two select schools in Tamilnadu. But at this juncture, before we come to the specificities it would be desirable to identify some of the sociological implications of terrible academic pressure on adolescents.

There is a strong relationship between proper educational endeavour and the overall development of adolescents. Emotionally the adolescents are a delicate individuality to be carefully handled with. 'The process of growing up and the consequent development among adolescents highlight the need to build up the self-image in the light of physiological changes, redesigning the behaviour patters with parents, peer groups, educators and members of opposite sex, examining the prevailing values and norms of establishing individual identity one places in the society. The myths and misconceptions widespread among adolescents also compound their problems'.³⁶ Some of its explicit and implicit consequences of academic pressures are like increase in single child family, breaking up of joint family system, migration to urban areas, increasing suicidal rates, mushrooming of private schools, coaching institutions etc. But the gap between the wants of the parents and the needs of the adolescents has created disastrous implicit consequences like physical abuse of the child, emotional abuse in the form of rejection, withdrawal of affection etc. This leads to frustration and depression of the child, development of deviance behaviour in child, incidents of suicides, fleeing from home etc. Bhargava and Aurora found the 'highly deprived adolescents to be more reserved, emotionally unstable, depressive, conservative and frustrated'.³⁷

³⁶ Dean X.Parmelee (ed.), *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, Mosby, Missouri, 1996, p. 15.

³⁷ For details see, Bhargava and Aurora, *Personality traits as a function of prolonged deprivation*, Indian journal of clinical psychology, 8(2), 1981, p. 167-71.

In a study conducted by Wu and Lan, 'the impact of daily stress or hassles on the physical and psychological health of adolescents in HongKong were investigated. They designed a secondary school student Hassles Scale to measure daily stress. Analysis of the data using a principal components analysis revealed four main factors: management of time and work, traffic and environment relationship problems and examinations and tests. These life domains tended to produce maximum hassle for adolescents in HongKong'.³⁸

Anxiety disorder [school phobia]

Man is free to make choices and that freedom is the source of his anxiety. 'Anxiety was intrinsic to the human condition; a fundamental tenet of existentialism. Generalized anxiety disorder is a condition that usually begins in late adolescence or early adulthood and is manifested by persistent feeling of tension, jitteriness, being on edge – as if something terrible may happen at any minute'.³⁹ This anxiety disorder is an exaggerated fear of attending school, usually related to anxiety about leaving home. It occurs in children of all ages, peaking around 11 or 12. It is said, for example, that children with school phobia commonly over value themselves and their achievements. This will really affect their self-image and personality, which has been found by Hassan as he said that the 'self-image of the high anxiety students was found low, negative and rejecting'.⁴⁰ 'In numerous academic situations test anxiety is known to have negative effects on student's cognitive functioning, psychological well-being and performance'.⁴¹

'When school phobia first develops in adolescence, the likelihood is more that school phobia is not the only explanation but that schizophrenia, depression or criminality will

³⁸ Henry S.R. Kao, Durganand Sinha, *Asian perspectives on Psychology of Education*, Vol.19, Sage publications, New Delhi, p. 270.

³⁹ Donald W. Goodwin. *Anxiety*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1986, p. 101.

⁴⁰ Hassan, A study of anxiety and level of aspiration in relation to certain social factors, *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 5, 1978, p. 49-54.

⁴¹ Sushila Singhal, *opcit*, p. 117.

ultimately be the outcome'.⁴² 'Deepa (16), daughter of a postman committed suicide after she, along with a group of students, was punished by her teacher for copying in the exams. When pleading with the teacher did not help, Deepa fearing her father hanged herself from a tree by the riverside'.⁴³ This is an incident reported in paper in 2002 which happened in Tirunelveli, a southern district of Tamilnadu. This instance suggests deeper motivating factors starting from humiliation and fear of parental discipline, inability to face up to extreme physical and mental torture.

Stress

Student's life coincides along with adolescence and stress can manifest in children as a reaction to changes in life in addition to academic pressures. Students become more self-aware and self-conscious and their thinking becomes more critical and complex. Over demand and under-value of their efforts become actual cause of the stress. According to a study by Ansari et.al, it revealed that persons with stress disorder had a high level of stress and anxiety as well as stronger achievement motives than controls'.⁴⁴ 'For adolescents, problems with family relationship, peer relations and school achievement are the common cause of stress, grade transitions, pubertal changes, pressure to conform and heightened temptations to indulge with friends in risky behaviour may be potentially stressful for the changing adolescent'.⁴⁵

According to Compass, 'adolescents experienced three types of stresses, namely; major life changes, chronically stressed life conditions and day to day hassles. In a study the majority of adolescents in real life are found affected most by daily hassles. The three notable daily hassles included the problems in family relationships, school achievement and peer relations. In a study of 484 students in 9th-12th grades, Phelps and Jarvis noted that adolescent stressors emanate mainly from parental and peer conflicts, grades, academic concerns and extra-curricular activities. In another study, 458 adolescents in

⁴² Ibid., p. 156.

⁴³ *Death By choice*, The Hindu, Sunday, March 31, 2002, p. 4.

⁴⁴ For details see, Ansari, et.al., Trait of Anxiety in Relation to Achievement Motive in Certain Stress Disorders, *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 6, 1979.

⁴⁵ Sushila Singhal, op.cit., p. 9.

Taiwan, Liu noted that as peer support increases, the positive relationship between dysfunctional attitudes and depression weakens. The emotional experience or emotional distress can have negative consequences for children's development, such as low competence estimation found by Pomerantz and Rudolph'.⁴⁶

Frustration

Frustration is experienced whenever an individual's motives are thwarted either by obstacles that block or impede his progress towards the desired goal or by the absence of an appropriate goal. A wide range of obstacles, both environmental and internal, can lead to frustration. Frustration resulting from personal limitation and mistakes are likely to be particularly stressful since they lead to devaluation.

Adolescents in schools are found risk-prone particularly under examination pressures, because of the corresponding age and transition related changes in their life. They are very emotional about issues touching them and get provoked easily to indulge into irrational activities and impulsive behaviours, ignoring the consequences of such acts for themselves or the family.

Suicide

There is a link between exam and pressures and high adolescent suicide rate has been widely observed. The suicide rates have more to do with exam season as Durkhiem have noted that 'suicides start to rise in January and begin to decline after the onset of summer in the Northern Hemisphere'.⁴⁷ Jon Woronoff writes about Japan, 'It is not hard to imagine what happened to the children who were brought up in this rat race. And the grind of 'examination hell' only intensified with the years, requiring ever greater efforts to get into the top schools. Pools showed that students thought of this in terms of 'exertion', 'mental anguish' and 'uncertainty'... meanwhile, suicide took a depressing toll among youngsters year after year.'⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁷ Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*, New York, Free Press, 1951, p. 107.

⁴⁸ Jon Woronoff, *Japan As-Anything But-Number One*, M.E.Sharpe, New York 1991, p. 119.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) report on mental health, one suicide happened in every six minutes. One in every three in the year 1997 was in the 15-29 year age group. Of India's four major cities, Chennai's rate at 17.23 percentage is the highest'.⁴⁹ Children of even lower age also commits suicide which reflects the parental expectations, rising levels of competition, pressure during examination time and a breakdown of traditional family structures are factors that accelerate this alarming trend.

According to National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], in its 'Accidental deaths and Suicide in India', the rate of suicides is 10.8/1,00,000 people in India. Total number of suicides is 1,08,593 and in Tamil Nadu there was 10,976. Students constitute 4.9% of the total, and the students who committed suicide for Failure in exams are 2320(Male - 1271 and Female - 1049). Upto 14 years totally 1371 persons in that male - 684, female - 687 and 15 - 29 years totally 3722 persons committed suicide in that male - 2129 and female - 1593. Also drug abuse and addiction 1397 cases were reported.⁵⁰

According to Vigyan Prasar, 'the highest suicide rate in the world has been reported among young women in south India according to a study by Paediatrician Anuradha Bose, who led the study at the Christian Medical College [CMC], Vellore'.⁵¹ The research is of major importance, according to the WHO, as it brings to light Asia's suicide problem. 'Higher stress and lower self-esteem had been reported among older boys than girls from middle-class families in India in other researches'.⁵²

Depressive disorders

The inability to cope with change causes great stress that translates into depression. Everybody want s their children to become Bill Gates or Albert Einstein. 'Those in science stream and taking competitive examination preparation and experience frequent negative emotions and depression'.⁵³ 'Leading causes of Years of Life lived with

⁴⁹ Death By choice, opcit, p. 4.

⁵⁰ NCRB, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2001

⁵¹ <http://VigyanPrasar.com/news/snews>

⁵² Sushila Singhal, op.cit., p. 66.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 129.

Disability [YLDs], in all-ages and in 15-44 year old by sex estimate for 2000. Depressive disorders – both the sexes 16.4% of the total. Depressive disorders is characterized by sadness, loss of interest in activities and decreased energy, other symptoms include loss of confidence and self-esteem, appropriate guilt, thoughts of death and suicide, diminished concentration and disturbance of sleep and appetite. It is after experiencing set backs in life'.⁵⁴

Academic pressures are deteriorating the adolescent's health and development. Academic failure does appear to trigger suicidal behaviour but the actual cause of the behaviour is generally considered to be loss of self-esteem and failure to live up to parental expectations, rather than the failure itself. Few remain untouched and most of them conform to the norm rather than do their own thing.

⁵⁴ Mental Health : New Understanding, The World Health Report 2001, p. 28.

Chapter – II

Adolescents: Caught Between School and Parents

In this study earlier discussion about the crisis in education, its progression, how it leads to an academic culture that deprives the experience of learning of joy and innovation putting excessive pressure on adolescents. This is like experiencing education not as something enlightening but as a heavy burden leading to all sorts of disorders, ranging from drop out to suicide.

In order to give a concrete focus to our work this study chosen to situate the state of prevalent academic culture in two schools, we also concentrate on the role of the parents, their engagement with the adolescents, their hopes, aspirations and anxieties and pressure they put on their children for academic achievement and success in life. As a matter of fact this chapter aims at locating the adolescents in a concrete empirical setting consisting of school as well as parental pressure. Only when we understand this reality it would be easier for us to comprehend how adolescents themselves cope with these pressures and redefine themselves.

I

Culture of learning in two schools

Documentation of academic culture of two schools

The field study was conducted at Tiruchirappalli city, TamilNadu. Totally there are 57 higher secondary schools in Tiruchirappalli Corporation itself. Among these, 4 schools are run by the State, 26 are Government-aided and 27 are unaided/private schools. Only two schools one private and one Government-aided school were selected on the basic similarities of syllabus, co-education, medium of instruction and moreover the two schools have quite a good reputation for its coaching.

K.A.P.Viswanathan Higher Secondary School_– [Government-aided]

This is an aided school with good reputation of producing top scorers in Secondary School Leaving Certificate [SSLC] and Higher Secondary Certificate [HSC]. It is situated at an important place in Trichy. It is a co-education school with classes from Lower Kinder Grade [L.K.G.] to 12th standard and follows the State Board syllabus. The school comprises students from diverse social backgrounds especially middle and lower middle class. One reason for the diverse background is because the fee is not very high. School timings is 8.30 a.m.–3.30 p.m. Daily routine of the school starts with prayer. There are two sessions - morning and afternoon, four classes each in the morning and afternoon sessions with 35 minutes lunch break and two recessions once in both the sessions. The principal, very ambitious, has facilitated the researcher during the visit and the teachers are good and efficient. The school has a computer lab, chemistry and physics labs, it also has a playground. The school environment particularly relationship with teachers and peer groups is friendly.

The school offers teaching both english and vernacular medium from 6th standard onwards. At the higher secondary level, there are commerce, science and computer science groups. It has a rigorous academic schedule. The class for 12 standard students begins at 8 a.m. with half an hour coaching class, then with usual four classes in the morning session. After the afternoon session the students are given coaching class – most of the time they are given tests, or special classes for unfinished portions of the syllabus etc. Twice in a week students have physical training periods but students' especially 12th standard are not allowed to spend time on it. At the end of every month there are monthly tests; weak students [based on the assessment of the tests] are made to stay after school until 8 p.m. in the evening. Every Saturday there is special class for the good scoring students. The school also encourages the students in co-curricular activities like organizing science exhibition, preparing students for the quiz programmes, debates, elocution etc.

St.James Matriculation Higher Secondary School [private]

This is a privately run school, which is well known, reputed like the former. It also gives 100% result every year. This school is also a co-education starting from L.K.G to 12th

standard. It is an English medium school. The school comprises students mostly from the salaried section of the society especially from middle and upper middle class and also business sections of the society. The facilities of the school consist of school bus, computer lab, audio-visual room, basic facilities like drinking water, toilet facilities etc. The school has provided good ambience for the students, teacher student relationship is good.

The school follows the matriculation syllabus up to 10th standard and State syllabus in 11th to 12th standard. The school working hours is 8.30 a.m. – 3.30 p.m. with four classes each in the morning session and afternoon session. Everyday the students are given coaching in the evening after school for nearly 1 hour. The coaching is in the form of slip tests, group study etc. once in a year the students are taken for study tour or excursion. At the end of every month the school conducts tests after every major exam the parent's-teacher meeting are called to evaluate the performance of the students. The institution has made it compulsory that at least one parent should meet the teachers and collect the exam papers. The school starts the 12th standard portions in the mid year of 11th standard itself. Extra-curricular activities are given importance and the students are trained according to their interests. Co-curricular activities too are given equal importance. At the end of every year, the school reports the behaviour and performance appraisal to the parent's. Special coaching and rigorous tests are given for the top five rank holders and they were rigorously given tests.

After studying these two schools it is now possible to make some interesting sociological observations every student of sociology knew that school in our times has often been seen as a socializing agency that seeks to restore order and discipline the young one. 'In Emile Durkheim's writing on moral education we have seen how he attached great importance to the role of the school teacher as a moral guardian representing a larger society, for him discipline in the classroom preparedness for a larger civic life. And hence he attached great importance to punishment – not corporal punishment, but socially meaningful punishment aiming at giving a clear message to the child that school resembles the larger society and hence its moral authority is sacred'.⁵⁵ Durkheim was a functionalist but in contemporary times Michel Foucault's writings have reflected

⁵⁵ Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education*, Opcit.

on discipline. Foucault however gave an altogether importance to the discipline, for Durkhiem the aim of discipline is to 'enable the child to unfold themselves'.⁵⁶ For Foucault however the aim of discipline is to create a docile body. 'For Foucault the aim of discipline is to create a docile body. Foucault wrote extensively on the nature of modern society which we often regarded as one best on surveillance – a society in which experts, specialists and knowledge producers are perpetually engaged in an exercise of power'. Knowledge, and power, for Foucault, cannot be separated and for him school or hospital or prison is a site wherein the production of knowledge is related to the exercise of power'.⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, in these two schools we also see a continual effort to discipline the young learner. One could interpret in the Durkhiemian sense or one could see it as a manifestation of Foucauldian notion of power. But the fact remains that disciplinary devices – like time tables, special distribution of students in classes and assemblies, parent meetings, frequent tests – put excessive pressure on adolescents. These are the pressures to conform, to perform, and to satisfy the authorities and the pressure to become normal like a good disciplined student.

Both schools as we have seen give excessive importance to examination from weekly tests to annual examination. It is not surprising education as we have noted in the earlier chapter has become terribly exam centric in which the specificity and uniqueness of the learner is completely denied. Every student is quantified, ranked and graded on the basis of a uniform scale that the exams are supposed to evolve. It would not be wrong to say that exams have become an integral component of school culture. Examinations, Foucault once argued are ceremonies of power. Exams mean the authority is perpetually disciplining, observing and heirachising the learner. It would not be wrong to say the exams for all practical purpose have become the substance of contemporary learning. The resultant pressure to do well in exam has caused tremendous worry and anxiety. It is the fear of failure, the fear of getting stigmatized. Another thing which has been observed from the culture of two schools is the principle of hierarchy. This hierarchisation means grading and ranking students and generating a sense of inequality on the basis of performance and intelligence. Special care is given to

⁵⁶ Ibid..

'performance and rank holders'. Resultantly a significant section of the students' community is being told to accept and internalized the effort. It is like preparing oneself for living in a world that is hierarchical. In other words, in the prevalent educational culture, because of this all pervasive principle hierarchisation the joy of togetherness, the joy of learning as the collective or as group or the joy of sharing is ruthlessly sacrificed for individual success and achievement. This causes hidden tension, envy, jealousy and utter alienation. With the negation of togetherness failure becomes a terrible burden and adolescents as they grow up find the world terribly indifferent to their agencies.

II

Parents and Adolescents: Sociology of an Engagement

It is true that schools play an important role in a child's life. But at the same time families play an equally important role. The reason is that children come back to their families, live a significant amount of their life in families. In addition, everyday practices of the family have tremendous impact on the process of growing up. As a matter of fact the culture of the larger society is often being reproduced in families. The influence of parents on adolescent as they grow up has immense significance in a terribly hard world, when vulnerable adolescents seek guidance and moral support, the role of parents is crucial. Do the parents understand the young minds or do they unnecessarily become judgmental and impose their own rights and ambitions on their children? Are parents like friends and catalysts to their children? These questions often become important and the sociology of this engagement needs to be written in order to make sense of the process of growing up of young minds.

To begin with, we would study the social composition of the parents their education and professional profiles and the nature of the families they belong to will be undertaken. This social composition would help us in understanding more meaningfully, the nature of parental engagement.

Educational status of parents in two schools

A look at the educational status of the parents whose children studying in government school shows that most of the parents have diploma/HSC on the other hand the parents whose children studying in private school have bachelor degree as majority. This reflects the importance given on education by middle class Indians. It has been widely accepted that when the parents are educated they are to bring up the children very well. 'The literacy rates in India climbed from 18 percent in 1951 to 65 per cent in 2001 (GOI 2001) is the evident of it'.⁵⁸

Table no.1.1
Educational Status of parents in two Schools
Govt. aided

Educational status	Father	Educational status	mother
professional	4	masters	5
masters	7	bachelor	10
bachelor	7	HSC/Diploma	25
HSC/Diploma	22	-----	-----

Private

Table no.1.2

Educational status	father	Educational status	mother
professional	3	professional	2
masters	9	masters	17
bachelor	17	bachelor	21
HSC/Diploma	11	----	-----

Occupational status and Total monthly income [TMI] of the families

Occupation status of the parents influences the most in the area of education. These days money provides everything. Money gives power of consumption and can avail

⁵⁸ Government of India 2000, *Education for all: The Year 2000*, Assessment Final Country Report of India, New Delhi.

anything under the sun. The table no.1.3 shows that similar proportion of student's father's are in service sectors and in business. In the table 1.4 shows there is not much difference in father's occupational status. Moreover more than 50 percent of mothers are housewives. The table no.1.5 it shows a majority of 42.5 percent of families belong to lower middle class whose children are studying in Government school and it also shows higher 30 percent of families belong to upper middle class whose children studying in private school. In the words of Bourdieu, [the only criterion being the ability to pay the fee] 'schools are very important especially for upper class families. The reason behind that they convert a child's family advantages into cultural symbols and scholastic credentials, which are a legitimate basis for high social position, whereas today, 'birth' is not'.⁵⁹ The middle class families value education as a form of social identity. The children's of middle class families are oriented towards individual economic and professional achievement, which is considered to be the most important source of economic security.

Table No. 1.3

Occupational Status of Parents [Private]

Father		Mother	
occupation	private	occupation	private
professional	3	service	6
business	15	teaching	5
service	18	housewife	29
technical	4	----	----

⁵⁹ For details see., Bourdieu, P and J.C. Passeron. 1977. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.

Table No.1.4
Occupational Status of Parents [Government-aided]

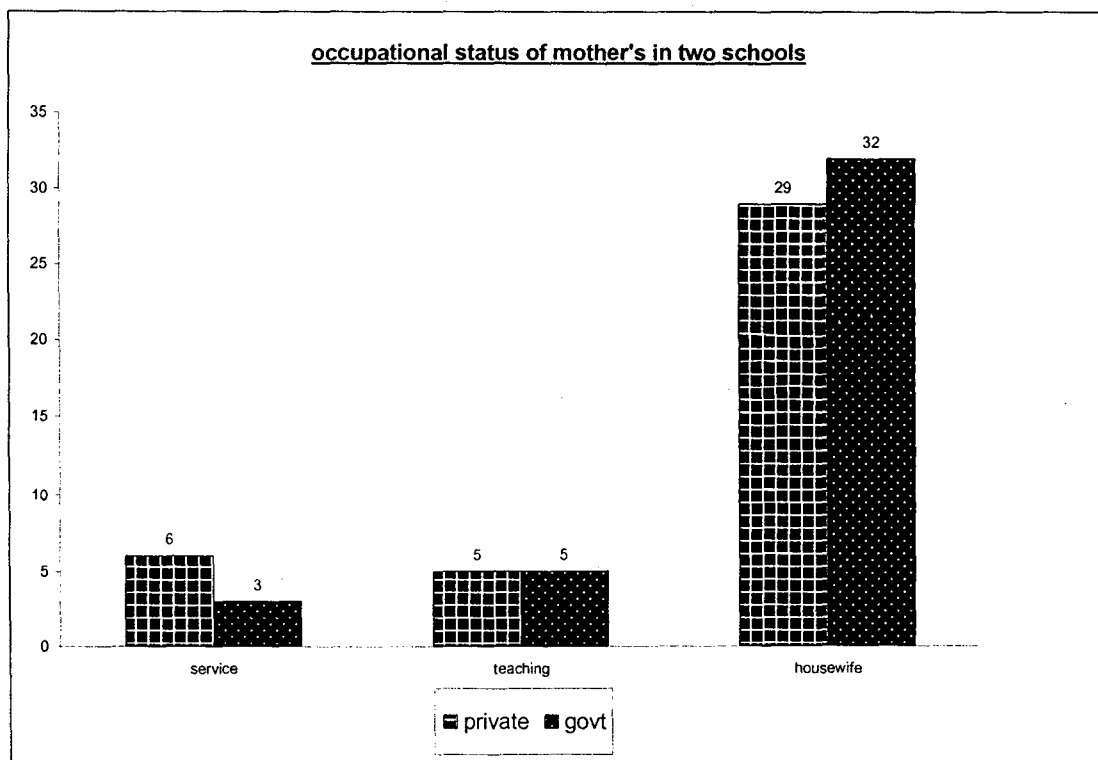
Occupation	Father		Mother	
	Govt.-aided	occupation	Govt.-aided	occupation
professional	4	service	3	
business	16	teaching	5	
service	11	housewife	32	
Technical	9	----	----	

Table No. 1.5
Total Monthly income of parents in two schools

TMI	Govt	Percentage	private	Percentage
5,000-10,000	17	42.5	7	17.5
10,000-15,000	9	22.5	11	27.5
15,000-20,000	3	7.5	10	25
above 20,000	11	27.5	12	30
Total	40	100	40	100

Occupational status of mother

Fig. 1.1



Mothers, particularly housewives, play an active and important role in the education of their children. A good proportion of the mothers have completed HSC. In the words of a tamil poet *Bharathidasan*, if you want to educate a family, educate the woman. An educated housewife can give undivided attention than the working mother [mother has left her job to look after her only daughter]. Some working mothers said that they will take a break from the job for a month during exams [SSLC, HSC]. Irrespective of their occupational status, mothers try to fulfill their duties for their children, spend time with them, and take care of their health. They make sure that children take food on time, visit school frequently. In some families mothers are the decision makers regarding the studies of their children. The chart-1 shows that nearly 80% of the respondent's mothers are housewives.

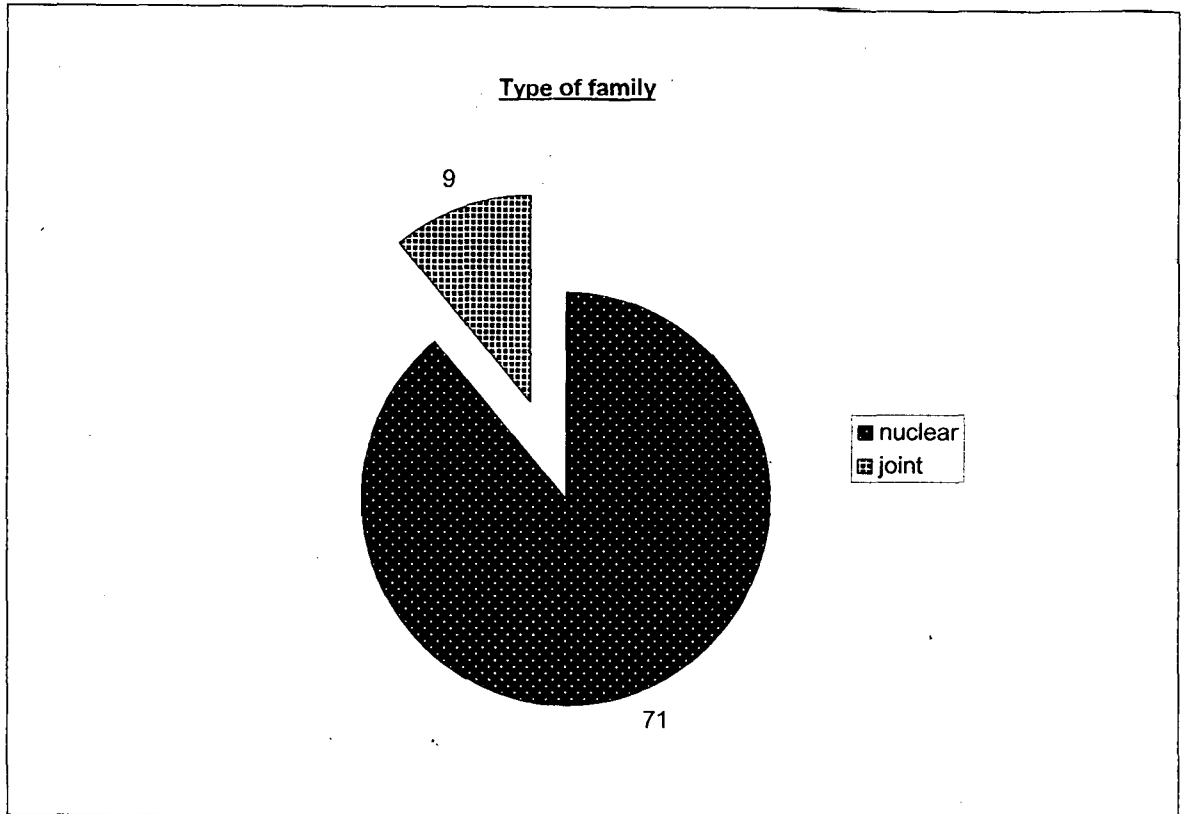
Type and size for the family

The data shows that most of the students are from modern (nuclear) families. The rise of nuclear family is an inevitable result of industrialization as the size of the family becoming an essential for a good family life.

'The family as MacIver says, 'changed from a production to consumption unit'.⁶⁰ The nuclear family seems was inappropriate and unstable. The problem he emphasized was the loss of family function. Modern society stripped the family of its productive and education responsibilities. The family became an emotional and developmental centre, rather than an economic entity. As the structure and functions of the family have changed it doesn't mean that the modern family has given up the functions which were performed by the traditional family. These have been tried to fulfill by parents themselves and through by other institutions. Parents have realized that a child in these days needs more expensive and better care; this could be one of the reason for the deliberate control over the size of the family [66% and 77.5% families in the two schools are two child family].

⁶⁰ Vidya Bhushan and D.R. Sachdeva, *An Introduction to Sociology*, Kitab Manal, New Delhi, 1997, p. 303.

Fig. 1.2



Size of the family

Table No.1.6

Total no. of siblings	Govt.-aided	Percentage	private	Percentage
only child	5	12.5	3	7.5
1	26	65	31	77.5
2	6	15	5	12.5
3	3	7.5	1	2.5

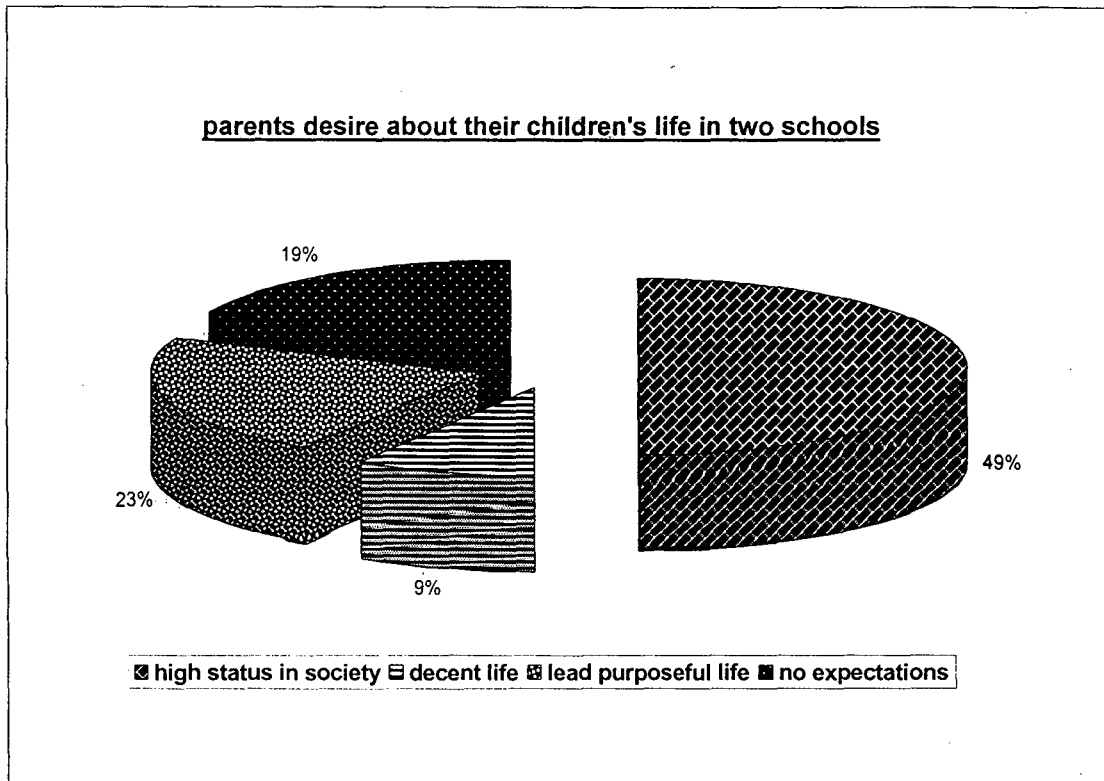
As we have now understood the social composition of the parents in the two schools. It would be now easier for us to comprehend how they engage with their children as they face the educational reality, bear its burden and grow up with all sorts of hopes and anxieties.

Parental involvement in education

Education is nothing but the reflection of group (society) values. Young people are being brought up, often quite unashamedly, in the interests of the adult world. Parental involvement is one of the pressures for the students. Parents become more involved in helping their children to improve their school work by providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, monitoring homework and actively tutoring them at home. The flip side of the disturbing matter is that the students face tremendous pressure from the parents themselves.

Parental involvement includes several different forms of participation in education and schools. It is no wonder that parent involvement with their children's studies increases in this competitive world. Parental involvement has become a major issue in the 1980's. This is an era of increasing concern about the quality of education in this country. Middle class and working class families value education. However, they have differential access to various forms of cultural, social and economic capital and resources, which differentially frames the educational choices that different families can or will make. The following pages will give the extent of parental involvement in the education of their children and its impact and differences on the students of two schools. Middle class parents can pass on material advantages that privilege or enable their children to succeed within the education. These days the admittance of a child in pre-K.G/L.K.G. is based on the interview according to the educational status of its parents. It is clear that the parental involvement begins at the pre-school level itself. Schools accept that the parent involvement is effective in fostering achievement and affective gains at all levels. Therefore it encourages the school to engage and maintain this involvement throughout the middle school and secondary years.

Fig. 1.3



Once a 10th standard qualification was adequate to become a clerk, but now even with an M.A. degree such positions are difficult to obtain. In the chart no. 1.3 the desires of parents about their children's life has been portrayed. 49 per cent of the parents want their children to reach a high status in future. 'Whatever field he chooses he has to shine' – a parent says. Next to that 23 per cent of parents want their children to lead a purposeful life. According to them 'one does not take the status with them after they die its better to do something useful to the society'.

Parent's way of encouraging children towards reaching their goal

In the pre-industrial societies there was an extensive network of social relationship between a large numbers of kin to provide practical and psychological support for the individual. This support is reinforced by the closely-knit texture of relationships in the small scale community as a whole.

Table No.1.7

Parent's way of encouraging children towards reaching their goal

Areas of encouragement by parents	Govt.-aided	private
help academically	8	6
Extra-curricular activities	12	18
care about health	11	10
Be disciplined	9	6

By comparison, in modern industrial society, the nuclear family is largely isolated from kin and the wider community. Edmund Leach says, 'in the past kinsfolk and neighbours gave continuous moral support to the individual throughout his life. Today the domestic household is isolated. The family looks inward upon itself; in their isolation, family members expect and demand too much from each other'.⁶¹

Parent's involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement, the data in table no.1.7 shows that parents strongly believe when they are more intensively involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial are the achievement effects. Some parents show their involvement directly by being strict with their studies, demanding discipline in all the aspects. Some parents exercise it indirectly, like getting them whatever they want, providing all facilities [computer, separate room two-wheeler, etc.,] and emphasizing on their health issues, they reason out that if any health problem arises the attendance gets affected, tends to miss the class either in school or in tuition/coaching classes.

⁶¹ M. Haralambos and R.M. Heald., *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*,. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p .335.

Total monthly income and parents career options for their children

Table No.1.8

	Govt.-aided	Percentage	Private	Percentage
as they wish	13	32.5	12	30
professional	15	37.5	16	40
recent trends	6	15	6	15
research	6	15	6	15

Only 13 and 12 parents of both the schools want their son's/daughter's to study as they wish, 15 and 16 parents want their children to go for professional courses but other parents have some or the other aspiration for them. But the career interest of the students show the difference, 20 students of government school and 35 students of private school want to go for professional courses. 7 students from Government school want to go for management courses. Ironically no one from private school want to go for this. It shows that some of the students have alternative options eventhough they don't get through the professional courses. 7 students in government school and 3 students in private school like to opt for professions of teaching, chartered accountancy, fashion deigning, acting, cinematography, painting artist, etc. The anomaly found in the study is that even the parents who have business backgrounds want their children go into job markets. 'Nothing is certain in this field' – as reasoned by a father.

Table No.1.9

Career interest of the students in the two schools

Career interest of students in two schools	Govt.-aided	private
professional	20	35
applied science/research	8	2
management	5	0
others	7	3

Studying professional course has become a social identity; practically the doctors and engineers have better status among the people from other streams. According to David Cooper, the family operates 'as an ideological conditioning divide in an exploitative society'. The behaviour patterns and controls laid down within the family produce the 'well conditioned, endlessly obedient citizen, who is easily manipulated by ruling classes. As a result of the social controls implanted into the child by family socialization 'the child is in fact primarily taught not how to survive in society but how to submit to it'.⁶² The reason behind for bringing of the table no. 1.8 and 1.9 is that the income of a family will have influence on the children's career aspirations; moreover the inspiration for career interest for the students in the chart no.1.4 proves that the students get the inspiration from parents and siblings.

Inspiration for Career Interest for the Students

To prove the same, the pie chart no.1.4 shows that 72 per cent of the students get their inspiration from either parents or from siblings. A family might have a history of engineers which would influence the students, or the siblings who are either studying or successful professionals. Social class operates as a selective factor in case of student's admission to qualitatively different types of educational institutions, determine to an extent the choice of their subjects, the amount of education they will take and influences their choice of occupation after completion of education. Some foreign as well as Indian studies evidence a close correlation between educational and occupational aspirations of students and their family's socio-economic status.

In an American study by Sewell, 'a positive correlation between students' socio-economic status and their educational and occupational aspirations have been very clearly established. The higher the socioeconomic status of the students family, the higher are their educational and occupational aspirations. This positive correlation persists even when the student's intelligence level and their sex are held constant. Another study of the Wisconsin High School senior students by the same author shows positive level of educational aspirations even when sex, intelligence and parental

⁶² Ibid., p. 338.

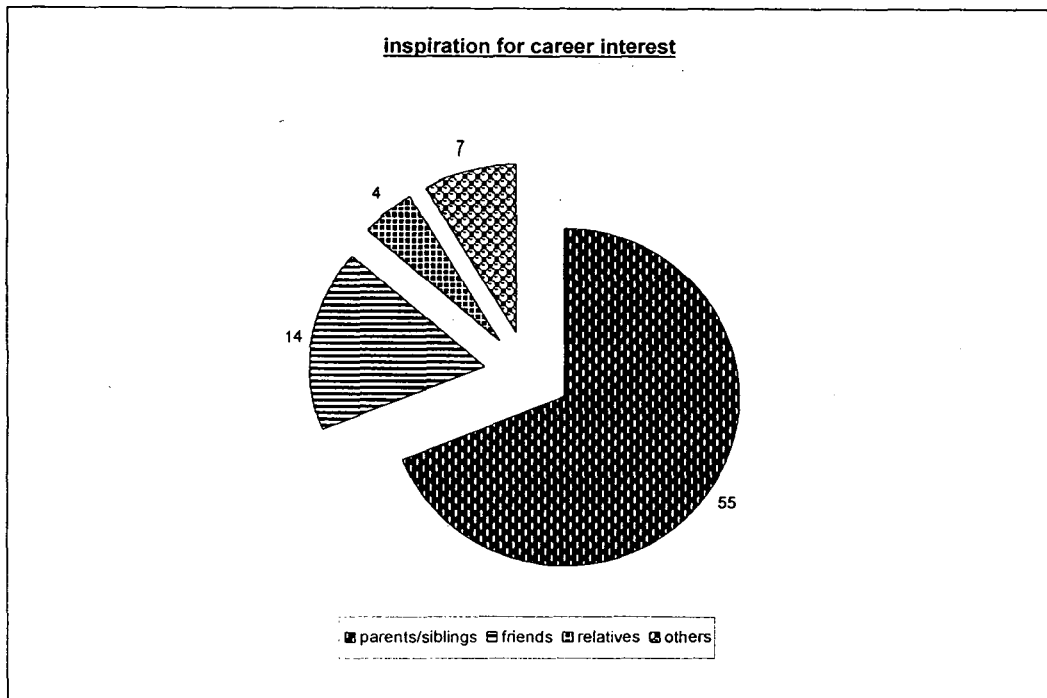
encouragement are held constant'.⁶³ As adolescents encompass a phase of heightened activity for most, this is an ambiguous juggling act, which easily become a prey for influences.

Table no. 1.8, 1.9 and pie chart 1.4 have vicious connection generally educational aspirations of students, their school experience their educational achievement, etc, depend upon their own interest in education, their intellectual ability and their own efforts in school. However this does not happen always and many a time's external social factors influence more. The level and quality of educational facilities available in the community and the region in which a person live, their accessibility, acceptability and affordability all these plays an important role in his education. Overall the degree of willingness of their parents to bear their educational expenses, their family's socio-economic status of the student's family plays an important role in his education. The different socio-economic strata from which students come vary greatly and consequently influence several aspects of student's education differently.

A parent was telling that, as the elder child was un able to get the seat in government quota because of low marks, she could not go for professional courses (as everyone know about the payment seats in private colleges) but studying applied sciences. That is why she wants her elder daughter to become a professional. The student also told that their mother and sister always remained often about scoring high marks and the sister used to help her out with her studies.

⁶³ Sewell, W.H., Archibald O.Haller and Murray A. Straus(1957): *Social Status and Educational and Occupational Aspirations*, , American sociological review, February. 22, 1957, pp. 67-73.

Fig. 1.4



The second proportion of influence is made by friends. The role of friends in everyone's life plays an important role in shaping one's future. They form the major pressure group in the early adolescent period and this continues until one settles in a job, for some it persists life long. It is true, of course, that the boundaries of our interest group may be quite tightly, drawn. Pre-adolescent children, for example, commonly seem to go through a stage of gang loyalty where the interests of a small number of peers override the interests of others. But the logic impels towards an ever-widening reference group, and one necessarily learns first about those closest to one before relating to others.

Criteria for selection of school

Planning about the future of the child by his/her parents begins when the child is in the womb. Schools are into the competitive market, in some best schools like 'Doon school [fee is 150,000 per annum]⁶⁴, international schools and in other boarding schools are

⁶⁴ *Class struggle in schoolville*, Sunday Express, September 19, 2004, p. 14.

affordable only by the upper classes. The lower middle, middle and upper classes are left with central schools, state run schools and private schools. Generally parents want their children to study in best schools, they have different yard sticks. When we look at the given data it shows that mostly the schools were selected on the basis of its coaching (80% private & 65% govt.). Yash pal said that 'there are parents who feel that the schools which do not make the students work more and which do not prescribe a large number of books are not doing their job efficiently'.⁶⁵

Criteria for the selection of the school

Table No.1.10

	Private	Percentage	Govt.-aided	Percentage
good coaching	32	80	26	65
discipline & personality development	4	10	1	2.5
syllabus	3	7.5	9	22.5
less fee	1	2.5	4	10

Results and Syllabus is Important

During the casual interview with parents most of them told that they chose the school for its yearly results. both the schools had created a reputation for generating high scorers they come to know about it through neighbors and friends A father told that when was transferred unexpectedly to Trichy he had one week analysis of the schools to admit his son in 8th standard. Even though the role of syllabus is underplayed (15%) in the government school, a whole section of students are from matriculation and CBSE boards, the reason of transfer being that a student can score high marks in 12th standard who studies in matriculation and CBSE boards until secondary class. The principal is very proud about that particular section; he said they are the one who gives

⁶⁵ For details see, The Hindu Speaks on Education.

'results'. From talking to the students in that particular section it is true that they have very good rapport with the teachers and the principal.

Parent's treatment of their children when they score above and below average

Worried about the future mobility of their children in this uncertain economic world, parents want them to score as high as possible. The entire life of the students depends on how well they do in the 12th standard. Parents are not coercing their children directly but indirectly, some follows carrot-stick approach; some parents are very empathetic in their approach. Less than half i.e., 31 parents of both the schools give incentives when their children scores good marks and 32 parents said it is their duty to study and score. All the parents claim that they are providing all the facilities and comforts for their children's studies, so it is their duty to study well. A word of praise or appreciation would have made a difference, but here only 17 parents practice that.

Table No.1.11

Treatment of parents of their children when they score above average

Above average	Private	Percentage	Govt.-aided	Percentage
always gives incentives	16	40	15	37.5
it is their duty	13	32.5	19	47.5
praise them	11	27.5	6	15

When the question about their reaction when their children score below average/lower marks [most of the parents want them to score at least 90% in all subjects in the quarterly/half-yearly/revision exams] a majority of 38 parents try to find the reason behind it [problem at school, friends, siblings, or with one of the parent]. They felt it important because this is the known environment where the student belongs to. The parents are very particular about the peace of mind, at this stage. 14 parents of private school and only 4 parents of government school help them academically. One of the reasons why more number of parents of private school help their children academically could be, in the previous table it is shown that most of the parents have at least bachelor's degree which is less in Government school. The also shows that more

students in government schools gets scolding for getting lower marks than their counterparts in private school.

Table No.1.12

Treatment of Students when Score Below Average

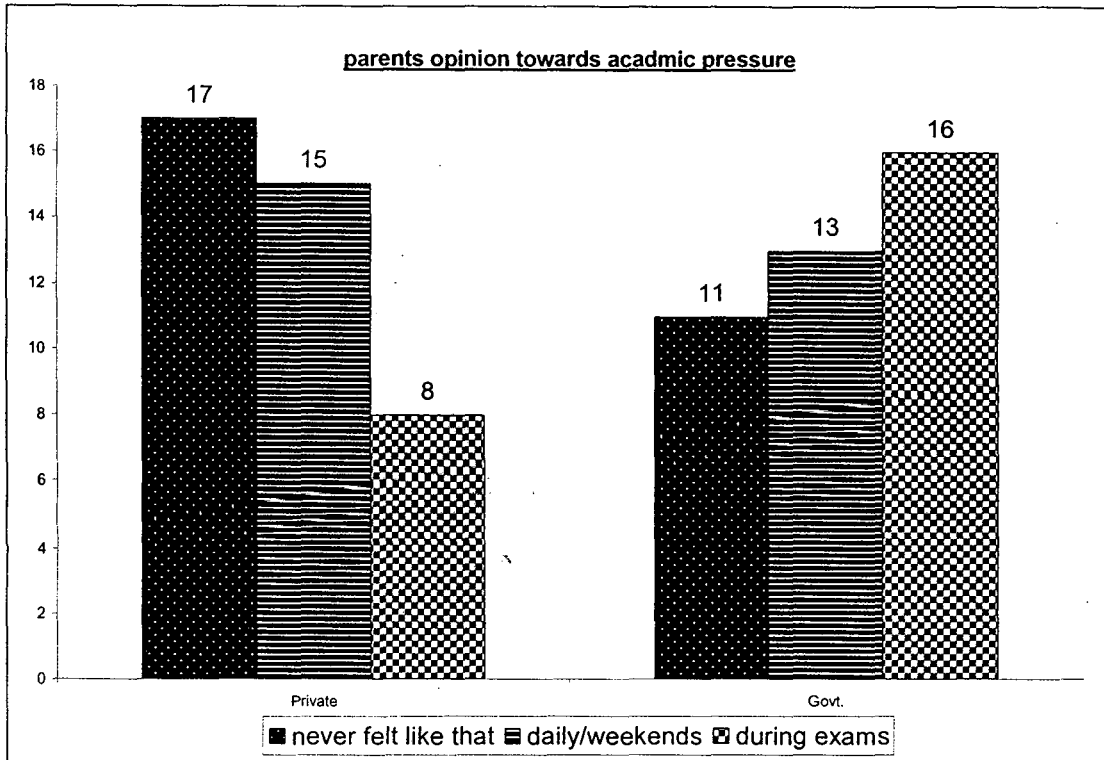
Below average	Private	Percentage	Govt.-aided	Percentage
find the reason	18	45	20	50
help academically	14	35	4	10
used to scold at times	8	20	16	40

An interesting note made by a parent is that if they are praised for their performance they will become over-confident, lethargic and waste their time in T.V., sports and with friends, thus increasing one's chances of performing better in next exam.

Parent's opinion towards academic pressure

Less than half of the parents (28) never felt that there is an academic pressure. They are saying, I bought whatever materials they wanted like computer, guides books, keys for all the subjects, even bought two-wheeler to shuttle between school-home-tuitions/coaching classes. So there is no point of academic pressure. But some parents felt the pressure of learning when they found their children don't find time to rest even in weekends. Because everyday they have one or the other tuitions in math's, physics, chemistry, botany, zoology and coaching classes are on Sundays. 24 parents felt the pressure during exams when they really work hard. Some parents complained about last minute preparation, lack of plan etc.

Fig. 5



Parent's opinion about establishing rapport with the concerned teachers

The table no. 1.13 shows the parental involvement in children's learning seems like positively related to achievement. Parent's support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations in the form of parent teacher conferences. Parent-teacher relationship helps them to know pulse of their children. Here 33 private school parents build rapport by attending 'Parent Teacher association [PTA]'⁶⁶ meetings. In this school after every exam the parent has to come to the school to receive the exam paper. This is the chance for the teachers to share their appraisal about the student and to point out the areas to be given attention. In contradictory there is no PTA in the government school and 15 of the parents felt PTA is not necessary as the students are scoring well. 25 of the parents of government school visits school informally to meet the concerned teachers.

⁶⁶ PTA is a group attached to a school consisting of parents and teachers who support the school by fund-raising and other activities.

Table No.1.13

Parent's opinion about the Rapport with the School

Rapport through	Private	Govt.-aided
through PTA meetings	33	0
PTA is not necessary	3	15
used to visit school now and then	4	25

Parent's opinion about English medium

India has inherited a part of the heritage of the educational system introduced by the British rulers in India. The public schools then were organized by them to cater to the special educational needs of the children of the bureaucrats in the higher positions of the government and the rich upper class. These elite educational institutions exist in India with some minor modifications and perform more or less the same function even today. English as a medium of instruction exist in India is another bit of inheritance which India has not been able to discard. Still it has craze among people because of attractive white-collar jobs are available who are very fluent in English. The table no. 1.14 shows 43 parents felt that English medium is necessary, as it helps a person to groom himself, builds vocabulary, builds confidence to converse in the class and with people and moreover it has prestige in the society. The other table 1.15 shows the opinion of the students towards English medium, more or less the students have the same opinion as their parents. The language of communication-English-as a progression towards an improvement in human understanding and it is also a link language which connects us globally. Still English plays as powerful language as our people are worshipping it.

Table No.1.14

Parent's opinion about English medium

Parents opinion	Private	Govt.-aided
higher education	8	10
etiquette/vocabulary	21	22
widen knowledge	10	5
not necessary	1	2

TableNo.1.15

Student's opinion about English medium

Students opinion	Private	Govt.-aided
higher education	2	1
etiquette	25	30
widen knowledge	13	8
Not necessary	0	1

Parent's opinion towards sports

Due to rigorous academic schedule the students of 12th standard are restricted from participating any extra-curricular activities. 37.5 percent of parents are for and 62.5 parents are against sports and extra-curricular activities. It is true that academics are important but it is not the only way to prove one's capacity, personality can not be moulded in the absence of sports or extra-curricular activities. Sports, hobbies and other related activities recharge a person; help to stay focused and to develop their personality. It help them to develop their skills in team work, leadership qualities, knowledge about other domains of people etc., a parent said this, who is a teacher.

Sport's activities are of no use, it is waste of time as it has no scope, moreover it affects the physical health. These were the reasons told by the parents who were against extra-curricular activities. When we narrow it down, it shows that parent's feel that extra

curricular activities affect the studies as well as it has no future. Instead of spending time for extra-curricular activities, if the students concentrate on studies they will score few more marks.

Table No.1.16

Parent's opinion towards sports

Parent support for sport activities	Private	Govt.-aided
Yes	12	18
No	28	22

Table No.1.17

For	Private	Govt.-aided
Recharges a person	4	8
Focused	5	4
Personality development	3	6

Table No.1.18

Against	Private	Govt.-aided
waste of time/distraction	15	17
affects physical health	4	1
no scope	9	4

The flexible accumulation, economic insecurity and the commercialization of social life does not stand alone. Impoverishment, shrinking job opportunities, lack of job security and benefits trickle down to the salaried and middle class families. There is a concomitant rise in longings for economic stability. It should not be surprising that schools and the curricula become prime areas of attack. Parents themselves get

subjected to day-to-day traumatic episodes at home and at offices that inevitably turn the blame and pressurize the young to score well in exams.

III

Education and family socialization: deeper consequences

Parental engagement in their children's educational pursuits usually found at the pre-school level and gradually decreases. As their children grow older, schools are bigger and farther from home, the curriculum become more sophisticated, each student has several teachers and students begins to establish some sense of separation and independence from their parents. Moreover, it has to be admitted that parents who have not received adequate formal education will have to depend on schools entirely. This has drastically changed in the last 15 years.

This study shows that there is an increasing awareness of the importance of education for parenthood today, as the tremendous importance of the parent-child relationship is being more and more recognized. Some of the findings are:-

- Parents are very clear that achievements [acquirements] define a man.
- Regardless of factors such as parent's income, educational level and whether or not parents employed parent's involvement in their children's studies is immense.
- Parents value what the child does with regard to education and they repeatedly highlighting the importance of scoring high marks.
- It has been understood that parents are not exercising their authorities directly but in a different way like being strict in giving whatever they want unless they study well.
- Parents are trying to maintain a sense of closeness with their children.
- Some parents are giving enough freedom on the basis of 'let is go now' for future benefits [high marks].
- Parents mainly playing a major role in student's success than the teachers.

- The attitudes of parents towards school particularly on syllabus, school atmosphere, and its activities are changing.
- Although parents play a major role in motivating the students, the benefits are shared by the school and its management. School principals and teachers are forcing the parent's involvement through their presence during PTA meetings or any school functions, sending feed back about the personality and behaviour of the students to their home etc. This ultimately intensified the parent's engagement in the educational credential of their children.
- Parents are settings performance goals most of the parents perceive that the family performances are at stake in the examination performance of their children and pressurize them further.
- Parents exercise a stable system of reward and punishment and most of the students are aware as well, the authority is used craftily.
- 70% of the parents are against the sports or extra curricular activities/hobbies is a waste of time as it yields nothing.
- 28 parents out of 80 told that they never felt that their children have a pressure to perform, it is their duty, 'only if they struggle now they can lead to happy life in future' quoted by a parent.
- Most of the parents failed to realize that individual differs in their innate endowments, so giving same pressure all children shows that parents need to have a better understanding of the psychology of the children.

It is sad to see that most of the parents feel that it is better and easier in going along with prevailing conventions rather than think through what their children want to do in life. We now know the nature of parental engagement and this invariably takes us to the dynamics of family socialization. It is often said that we live in a democratic society and to make it a success, democracy has to be practiced everywhere either it is in the family or classroom. The question that arises is do we see parents evolving a reasonably democratic and egalitarian relationship with their young children or is it that this relationship is still being characterized by asymmetry and inequality? There are certain implication for this engagement has Bourdieu has demonstrated 'parents with cultural capital has often help children for doing well in schools

whereas the parents who do not have cultural capital find themselves helpless'.⁶⁷ For the most implication of parental engagement is whether the parents understand the high degree of empathy, the specificity of their children and their everyday struggles. If they can give company and guide them through a relationship filled with faith and trust it becomes easier for the children to grow up and face the world with confidence and maturity.

⁶⁷ For details see, Pierre Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London: Sage, 1997.

Chapter – III

Troubled times: Meaning of Being an Adolescent

This dissertation is about adolescents and the way they find themselves amidst tremendous academic pressure which characterizes the prevalent educational scenario. It has been discussed about the social roots of the problem, the crisis in contemporary education and high degree of social pressure often manifests itself though parental engagement. These factors have posed immense difficulties and challenges before adolescents as they grow up and see the world. At this juncture it is important to comprehend the implication of this pressure on adolescents and on the life this adolescents lead. To begin with we have tried to examine how they themselves look at the prevalent academic culture and cope with the pressure coming from school or the parents or the larger society. This self-perception would enable us to understand more deeply meaningfully their own world or their sub-culture in other world this chapter intended to throw light on what it meant to be an adolescent in our times.

I

Living with pressure: seeing through the experiential domain of the young ones

As we have already observed that the academic pressure is immense and the culture of learning is devoid of joy and creativity. It is therefore not surprising that many students tend to feel that they are in a concentration camp at schools and they seems to be more scare from tuition to coaching centers, is it possible to have another world without exams, slip tests and home assignments they often wonder. Their anguish openly manifests itself when they see that nothing is satisfying their parents as a respondent put is sharply, ‘my other wants me to sit with the books even though I don’t study, I don’t like mother sitting with me always when I study, she does not allow even a small distraction’.

Exams are everywhere

Most of the respondents therefore tend to feel that life is nothing except one exam leading to another, ‘it seems that I am destined to appear for the exams, it is like a

pressure cooker situation whenever I have to write an exam, even class tests'. As a matter of fact the following tables show how they manage time and almost every fragment of it is used for exams.

The table no. 2.1 shows that most of the students [55 of 80] spend between 3 and 5 hours of study. 'It is very tiring to study after the whole day at school'. Some students attend tuitions, 'at times I could not able to concentrate and it is boring to study the same subject in the tuition classes. 12 students spend around 5 and 7 hours of study, which shows that they are studying beyond the reasonable time - 'I am happy only when I am sleeping and eating' - this is by a student who spend more time for studying. They said that they study their daily portions, prepare for next day test and does record work. Only 13 students spend less than 3 hours for study. It may be because they don't believe in straining oneself. There is not much difference in this aspect among the students of two schools.

Table No.2.1
Time Spend by Students for Studying

Study hours	Govt.-aided	Percentage	private	Percentage
< 3 hours	8	20.0	5	12.5
3-5 hours	26	65.0	29	72.5
5-7 hours	6	15.0	6	15.0
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

Table no. 2.2 shows that how much time each student spend for sleeping everyday. 33 students spend 6-7 hours of sleep, which is necessary for a person to stay active for the next day. Especially for the students, who will leave home at six in the morning bleary eyed for tuitions, then again they will come back for the breakfast, and rush to the school, after school special class, tests, some have tuitions in the evening also. Finally, they will come home around 6 or 7 depends on the timings of the tuitions. This is the plight of the 12th standard students.

Table No.2.2
Time Spend by Students for Sleeping

Sleeping hours	Govt.-aided	Percentage	private	Percentage
5 hours	3	7.5	4	10.0
5-6 hours	13	32.5	14	35.0
6-7 hours	16	40.0	17	42.5
7-8 hours	8	20.0	5	12.5
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

This is the daily work schedule of almost all the students. ‘This is on the normal days, but during exam time I don’t (can’t) sleep only’, my exam fear starts the moment the exam time table announcement is made—an expression by a student. Some 9% of the students are spending just 5 hours a day. It is really dangerous, because if a person does not have enough sleep persistently it will affect their thought process in the longer run.

Table No.2.3
Time Spend by Students for Recreation

recreation	Govt.-aided	Percentage	private	Percentage
no time at all	13	32.5	9	22.5
1 hour	15	37.5	22	55.0
1-2 hours	6	15.0	5	12.5
> 2 hours	6	15.0	4	10.0
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

When a person has been a long term student in a school, the authorities will regard and nurture him/her for many talents like interpersonal skills to performance skills. But now-a-days in schools the students were not allowed to waste time on recreation; even after school (if they find time) they were shoed away. Table no. 2.3 says that a majority of 37 students could able to find only 1 hour to recreate, even that is during having dinner. 12 students were telling that there is no recreation at all both in school

and in home. There is no recreation at school ‘We have only half an hour during lunch time, many times we were doing records work or studying salts or theories’. All the waking hours the students were engaged in studies, which is drudgerous.

Exams are threatening

Exams are everywhere and it is by no means pleasant. In fact ‘test anxiety and distress constitute the near universal experience in the modern educational system found by Humphrey’.⁶⁸ It has been argued by educationists that this terrible text anxiety has devastating consequences in one’s life. The need for high performance and achievement in the examinations has displaced the need to assimilate knowledge and learn with understanding. The system has become inhumanly rigid, within which the achievement of learning oriented goals remains a distant reality as put forwarded by Bernard. In numerous academic situations test anxiety is known to have negative effects on students cognitive functioning, psychological well-being and performance.⁶⁹ The following table 2.4 shows how respondents are oriented to the culture of the exam. It is really not easy to remain cool as we see must of them are terribly scared, exams threaten them. Schools and the larger society convey a message that one is nothing if one fails in the exam, one’s promises, potentials and possibilities are being equated with the percentage of marks on scores in the exams. Exams, Foucault was not wrong in arguing are ceremonies of power.

Table No.2.4

Attitude of the students during exams

Attitude of the students during exam	Govt.-aided	Private
very cool	13	4
scared/afraid about marks	25	26
Take it as challenge	2	10
Total	40	40

Ability is being tested through examination. Although continuous assessment plays a part its drawback seem to be the demand on the students to remain competent

⁶⁸ Sushila Singhal, Opcit, p. 117.

⁶⁹ Ibid.,P.113.

throughout the teaching year. While a good percent are able to withstand the anxiety and distress of examinations. Students experience difficulty in comprehension and analysis of the material they go through and are likely to make the most unusual and unexpected kind of mistakes. They are often nervous finding it difficult to retain in their memory what they read.

‘Examinations create psychological pressure, tension, fear and ambivalence about expected success not only in the minds of students but among parents and teachers as well, who turn the pressure on students. Parents try to adjust their daily life schedules around their ward’s preferences and demands. Teachers adjust their teaching to examination needs, and students adjust their learning to the need of getting through the examinations, frustrating the very core of mastery learning and repeatedly proving the centrality of examination to all academic work.’⁷⁰

Under these circumstances it is obvious that there is not much freedom to explore the world in one’s own way or to realize the possibility of the life in a domain which is beyond the culture of tests, exams, marks and ranking. In fact, this exam centric learning has also led to routinized and standardized expectations from the younger generations. It is like telling them perpetually that one ought to be successful and success means stabilizing oneself in select professions like medicines and engineering which require an efficient exam skill. Not to have that skill is to get stigmatized as a failure. In other words these standardized goals which are being continuously reproduced through family and neighborhood pressure deny freedom, the freedom to do something else. ‘Our lives have been scrutinized under a magnifier round the clock’ said a respondent.

The following table no. 2.5 suggests what we are referring to. This means that what preoccupies their mind is their exam centric anxiety under these circumstances it becomes extremely difficult to cultivate an interest in other ventures of life. In chapter-I, we have said that the major crisis confronting contemporary education is that it is not integral and holistic, it is one dimensional. We are indeed witnessing the

⁷⁰ Sushila singhal, opcit, p. 117-118.

manifestation of this crisis. When the system deprives these adolescents of the necessary space to enter into the creative domain of life be it music, poetry, photography, sports, social activism of whatever.

Table No.2.5
Students interest areas of discussion while they meet

Student's interest areas of discussion	Private	Govt.-aided
Music, films etc.,	10	7
General things	5	5
Future/exams/subjects	25	28
Total	40	40

Biographies

In order to have a comprehensive insight, we have chosen five biographical narratives. This will give us a clear picture of the views, opinions, dreams and aspirations and the challenges they face in everyday life.

1. Fatima

She is private school students, is doing bio-math's group. She is quite good in studies. She is interested in Tamil literatures; she found it interesting and sweetest language. She is equally good in painting and sketching which according to 'reflects ones thought'. She is very happy about that she has been praised and motivated by the principal and many other teachers.

Regarding socializing, she is from an orthodox Muslim family 'she was never allowed to chill out', only occasionally, but with lot of conditions, but never tried to break it, because 'my conscience will prick me'.

She don't like the Indian style of school atmosphere, she likes the Japanese style they teach practically because 'life is practical know', here we are trained to 'mug -up'.

Moreover she found physics and bio a bit tough to understand. She wants some changes in the school especially the uniform, she is very uncomfortable with pin-o-form, as it is very awkward to go in the public with that, she wants it replaced by 'churidhar.'

Her aspiration is to become a fashion designer, anyhow 'my parents definitely would not send me for a job', and she does not bother about those things, and studies her subject regularly. She is interested to do engineering it is because all her friends are interested in it but she is not particularly preparing for any professional courses. Moreover she is not taking any tuition or coaching if she gets the seat she will study, otherwise she will study any 3 year course. She said she will be getting married after three years, so that her parents allowed her to study whatever she wants but it should be in Trichy itself. So her parents would not send to outside of Trichy for studies.

Regarding relationship with her family she seems to have close bonding with her mother, who takes care of the family while her father is working in the middle-east. Her mother encourages her in her studies, but she said 'I don't like others suffer for my sake, let me alone'. She has no pressures from the parents to study or to score high marks.

She has a mixed feeling towards friends and friendships, this quarterly she score lesser than her friend, when she found that her friends is vary happy about her low marks, she felt very hurt. She is not talkative, 'some of my friends take advantage of it and make fun of me always', I will let them enjoy at my cost. She does not like the way her friends talk they talk about movies, gossip about unnecessary things especially boys. If she happens to be with at that time she pretends as a good listener, actually lost in her own world.

Her friendship circle is very small; she has very few friends in school [only girls]. She is very shy to talk to boys, she never initiated to talk to boys, 'I am personally not interested in it'. The only person whom she communicate all her feelings is her mother. But she also behaves indifferently sometimes if the talk moves towards male members of the family or boys. 'I don't know why she is growing tensed'.

She is very religious, and does 'namas' everyday, she also fasts during Ramjan and other religious festivals.

2. Bala

Balaji is a boy of many desires and aspirations. He has been brought up in a nuclear family where both his parents are government servants. He is studying computer science. He wants to explore the world, for that he wants to become an aeronautical engineer. He says he is always fascinated by aircrafts and jets, his ultimate aim is to fly in a space ship moreover his family has lots of engineers. He talks a great deal about the world. He has a great sense of humour, he justified it by 'I don't like to be dull worrying about something or the other.

Regarding studies he is an above average student, 'my parents will admit me in an engineering college through management quota' eventhough his scores are not good. According to him education should not be a stressful work - less books, less assignments, less tests etc., the students should allowed to learn by themselves, want his teacher to be more friendly, with whom he can confide his educational problems. He likes to widen his knowledge, he advices and encourages his friends that 'one should study beyond the subject book' but he retorted 'actually we don't find time'. Whenever he found time he likes to read by his great craze over other entertainment pulls him towards it.

Regarding the school, he like it so much, as he is studying since his L.K.G. he has lots of friends too. He remembered that he had great tension when he was in 10th standard as his parents plan to change the school, he said I made it a point that 'if you transfer me to other school I won't study at all'. He is very active in school activities, he was once praised in front of the class as well as in the prayer session, he is so proud of it. He said 'I am happy that I have a high regard from the eyes of my classmates, teachers and other friends, I feel like I am a strong man, that I can bring the best when I am assigned a task. He is the school pupil leader.

For socializing, he and his friends used to hang around the famous complexes near bus stand, very rarely goes to cinema as the chances of getting caught is very high. But they play cricket a great deal, whenever they find time especially when there is no special class they will go to a nearby school ground to play cricket, otherwise they will play

during weekends [if only parents permitted]. He is so proud he has lots of friends as girls whom he gets acquainted in coaching and tuition centres. He is a great fan of movie stars Rajinikanth and Vijay. He confided he possessed some of their posters which he has hidden in a secret place. Whenever their movie releases he used to distribute chocolates to his friends. One of his hobbies is playing video games, he used to have fight with his brother regarding this always. He gets all new games from his friends and other acquaintances. His free time activity is to watch comedy tracks, songs and dance.

Weekly he gets 250 as pocket money more than half of it spent for the petrol, he always has arguments regarding his 'hike' in the pocket money, but in vain. He felt so bad that he is regarded as responsible at school, but why his parents don't assign him any important tasks like going to bank, during purchases they ask his opinion or consent. His ultimate aim is to prove that eventhough he is playful he can also be responsible. He expects his parents to understand him better. He is very close to his relatives, and attends all the family function he likes the feeling of being amidst relatives, it is like larger than life to him.

3. Magesh

Mangeshkar is quite a brilliant boy with soft nature, he is the class topper. He is doing computer science; his ambition is to become an aeronautical engineer. His father who himself an engineer helps him in a great deal in shaping him. Basically he is a Telugu he came to Trichy only two years back. His parents found this [private] school as good and suit their expectations.

He is happy with the school as he is a good student principal and teacher are fond of him shows more interest and encourage him to become a state topper. In the beginning he has communication problem with his classmates as his mother tongue is Telugu, he feel it as a hurdle to express or convey his emotions ideas to his classmates 'when I talk in English my classmates made fun of me', now he learnt some of the Tamil language. Even his classmates didn't take any advancement to talk to him; they saw him as 'alien', he was also very afraid to talk to them, in the longer run everything went well. Now he has lots of friends by helping them in their studies. His parents are very cordial and understanding according to him. He treats girls [classmates] equal as other friends

he doesn't have any particular interest in them to 'show off'; he personally felt that studies are very important 'as my parents believe in me'.

He doesn't like Trichy as there is no interesting place to go, except temples where he visits with his parents very often. His mother is particular about getting up early to say morning prayers, which he feels irritating at times, but he used to do what they say, 'I don't want to hurt their feelings'. His favourite god is lord Ayyappa, he found the temple very peaceful, he goes on Friday's to meditate, he also learnt yoga to keep himself fit mentally and physically.

His hobbies are philately and playing key board. His interest on stamp collection comes from his father who gave him his collection of stamps. He has a great collection of stamps and well as coins, which he showed it to the researcher during the home visit. He is very much interested in instrumental music, as he got good marks in 10th standard, his father gifted him the key board, he adore it very much. He also browse internet for fun and e-mails. His only restriction at home is he was not allowed to bring friends home, 'my parents never trust my words when I tell well about my friends', I hate this behaviour of my parents.

One of his daily problem is riding in the traffic daily to reach the school, 'our chief minister should do something about the morning traffic, cannot reach on time sometimes, they should change the school timings'. He is much worried about other school students that 'As a boy I also so afraid at times, what would be the plight of the other students and girls of lower age'.

4. Vaishali

She is an easy-going personality with strong ambitions in her mind. She is the eldest daughter, who lost her father in her childhood days. Vaishali wants to retire her mother from the job as she is really working hard for the family especially for food and education. She has all the likes and longings like an ordinary girl, 'I used to control it as we don't have money for those things', she said. She did not take any tuitions or coaching class, as she could not afford it. She felt that 'if am given any extra coaching definitely I will enter into 'NIT', that is my dream institution for engineering'. She really likes to go to college, there will be lots of freedom, will have the chance to meet

people and enjoy life and responsibilities too. She said 'I got my life together and I have a clear idea of what I want to be' one day definitely my dream comes true.

She does not like her school, she studied in Anglo-Indian school until 8th standard, but due to financial reasons she has to shift to this school, where the fees are reasonable. 'I don't like teachers, they used to scold us in front of our classmates, and moreover they used to simply bad comment on those boys and girls who found talking to each other'. We classmates felt bad at times because of this. Even she don't find boys to be friendly with, 'they are always competitive, deliberately make fuss over small things, they are not co operative in many things, we always have either heated exchanges or arguments'.

Her hobbies are singing and shuttlecock. Whenever there is no special class she and her friend stays in school and play until eight in the evening.

5. Hussain

Hussain is a boy with pleasant nature. He is a very cordial boy, he has his own imagination about the life and the world. He said his mind wanders off the lessons and get lost in imagination. He is the only child of his family. Both his parents are government servants, who want him to become a doctor. Hussain also wants to become a doctor to reach a status. He wants to bring several changes in the society especially in the educational system. 'I want to scrap the examination system', it is really disgusting as it making us machines'. There is no break between exams; there is no difference between coaching centers and school.

He wants to do service the society, 'I don't like to accumulate materials goods to the next generation' he felt it as useless and make them lazy and dependent. His parents also want him to do service to the society, 'my parents want more from me, but I don't know how I give it to them', he didn't feel it as a pressure, but as responsibility.

He is interested in reading more to find unknown regions of knowledge, for that 'I set standard for myself and I strive to achieve them'. He believes in work rather than any other entertainment. His teacher felt that him as a sincere and hard working. He believes that his life will be a success in his present stream of study. He also said, 'I

will feel frustrated, if I don't get a chance to compete in the field of choice'. His parents are very supportive and advised him to take life easier. They made it a point that all in the family should have dinner together'. He like the dinner time so much as they discuss about the problems, exchange their views etc., finally he goes to bed with a clear mind.

Hussain wants to be friendly with everyone, but he doesn't take any particular effort to become friends with girls. His friend's circle is very ambitious, and he is very selective. 'I will become closer to people if I felt the basic respect about me', other wise how far very intelligent he used to cut off the relationship. He also expects good behaviour and manners from the friends. His dream is to take his parents around the world, 'As a boy it is my duty to work hard, settle in life and take care of my parents if I didn't, what the society will think about me, even leave the society, my conscience will kill me.

The above biographies reflect the culture of adolescents and sexuality too. Among the five biographies one can see how the mental make-up of these students is being influenced in many ways. Each student are from different background, their attitudes and aspirations shows the recent trends in Indian education. There is a desire to conform to the behaviour and opinions of others, is a fundamental human trait. Eventhough their life is divided into series of activities but they are trying to get different things from different bits.

Regarding sexuality all human beings basically are sexual and have develop their sexuality from a variety of influences including social, cultural, biological, economic and educational factors. Sexuality is a part of human life. Sexuality shapes people's identity, personality and relationships; it is a sensitive issue to be addressed. Society exerts wrong controls on sexuality especially women. Their interests about their sexuality are part of larger construction of their identity, about which their ideas are often provisional and still in the course of development. All the above students narrative biographies reflect that there is pressure but they found to be coping on their own ways.

III

Difficulties and challenges

Life has to be lived and adolescents do know that despite the pressure all around they have to adjust and evolve survival strategies and cope with the world. For example in order to adjust to the prevalent system they tend to believe that they have to develop study habits and they have to prove their worth as good students. This means being successful in their exam oriented system as a reality that has to be faced. The following table shows table no.2.6 their ways of coping with the pressure and orienting themselves to the culture of the exams.

Table No.2.6

Method of preparation for exams by Students

Method of preparation for exam	Govt.-aided	Private
systematic preparation	23	17
burning mid-night oil	8	17
day to day portions	9	6

It is obvious that adolescence is a crucial stage of one's life-cycle, one has just began to encounter the larger world, its wonder, mysteries and contradictions. It requires deep understanding on the part of the adults, primarily teachers and parents. It is like living with them, listening to them understanding the specific needs of the age and guiding them without being coercive and authoritarian. It is a stage when lot of physical and emotional changes begin to take place one insists to be a child and one is beginning to grow physically, mentally and emotionally, for example, it is a stage when sexuality begins to manifests itself, one has to began to understand what is means to be a man or what it means to be a woman. It arouses tremendous interest in the dynamics of man-woman relationships. It is also clear when questions of identity become sharper one begin to work oneself, am I a man the way others are men performing masculine role or am I a woman like others performing the feminine role. It is also clear when the larger world appears as one with all its excitement and aspiration it is therefore not

surprising that they are devoid of iconisation. Adolescents begin to find the role models in sports personalities, in film stars and musicians and in socio-political figures. It is a stage when peer group becomes the most important site for articulating this new world new testing, music, sports, literature and sexuality are being shared with the peer group. It is therefore a stage when adolescents rediscovers themselves and are no longer children. They begin to look at their parents with their critical eye. Are they really doing what they talk about, are they sincere or Hippocrates or they imposing or communicative even if they cannot express their opinions freely before the parents. They internalize it deeply, under lack of communication between them and the parental intensifies the problem.

Growing up as adolescents is therefore an immensely interesting and challenging endeavour and requires communicative rationality, not distorted or broken relations. It requires the company of sensitive parents and teachers. It is not the question about indulgence, it is a question of communication and understanding. It is not a question of unconditional freedom, it is about mature and discipline with grace and care. It is to create a situation that enables one to understand the world meaningfully. Censorship, puritanism, excessive restraint from freedom would by no means sell them to face the world, for example, at this stage, one ought to know about love and sexuality not through distorted means but through a careful communication with the parents through exposure to life-affirming and aesthetically reach cultural creations life novels, films and paintings. As far as the role model concerned they ought to be told in a more relaxed manner about diverse personalities. In other words talking about film on sexuality, watching television, collecting photograph of sports personalities and pop stars sharing music cassettes and albums with friends should not be seen as something bad. Parents need to understand the requirements of this important stage of this adolescent life and schools need to see beyond exams ranking and grading and understand the vulnerability of the young minds.

Reflections on the findings

- The Indian education system today is still one of rigidity and control. This system is not just schools, colleges, syllabi and students. It is also trends, popular opinion and considerations for decision making which students employ, that ultimately pushes a whole generation in a certain way. So it is clear that education is seen as marketable and measurable resource.
- The adolescents learn the lesson either through direct message in the form of punishment, reprimand etc., or through indirect message in the form of uncertainty about the future or from others experience.
- Engineering and medicine are today, the two holy rivers of the Indian educational culture. Although the situation is changing in the bigger cities for most of small town India the choice remains between the two. The two rivers into which all meandering streams must meet, the only salvation for the majority of students.
- Adolescents have been told that to get into good school or college you need to get good marks. Good schools or college is the only way of learning, then we are really stuck, because life not a college.
- Students are tutored to believe that if they fail to get a rank that is the end. In such an atmosphere, which sensitive student would not think of ending it all.
- Indian parents are pushing a child to achieve beyond a certain level.
- The exams essentially test an individual's prowess at learning by rote rather than applying what one has learnt.
- Parents force their own aspirations on children irrespective of the abilities. Right from childhood, the fear of failure is instilled among them through comparisons with other children. They are never satisfied with 90 percent and 100 is the benchmark.
- Parents create an impression that there is no life beyond engineering and medical profession, unless this attitude changes, we knot stop suicides.

- It is actually the 'pressure' than the coaching drive them towards their goal.
- This group lays greater emphasis on scholastic achievement. They spend more time after studies and show more serious concern for intellectual pursuits. They regard academic success as very important and value high level of success more.
- Throughout the middle class, we find a strong orientation towards individual economic independence.
- Pressure from school seems generally low, the fact that other than child's own capabilities, the family environment constitutes an important factor in reducing the pressures at school.
- Change of loyalties from the parents to the peer group is an important characteristic behaviour of the adolescent.
- In this age of improved technology profitable use of leisure poses a serious problem to the adolescent. Above all he desires to decide everything on the basis of his own values and not the value imposed from outside.
- Most pupils mentioned their family either directly or indirectly influences them. It is usually the male members of the family who had been influential in the choice process either by giving advice or by being admired figures.

From a very early age the life of youngsters is so crammed with activities to make them ready for all the exams that they have to take in the days to come that it becomes difficult for them to find time to think. And after a point they simply stop thinking and do what the world around them is doing. Since marks remain the only parameter for success, a lot of students pass out of schools with their self-confidence heavily dented. The tendency for them is to conform to the herd.

As we have observed, it is not a very good time for adolescents to grow up. Education is one dimensional and schools are not particularly sensitive to their life needs and the parents often articulate terrible anxieties relative to academic achievement and success. But then as we have said despite all these difficulties and challenges life has to be lived.

Growing up as adolescents in contemporary India is truly a challenging endeavour. The fact that most of them, despite all constraints try to go ahead and face the world is indeed a story of achievement.

Conclusion

Our education system obviously needs reform. It just tests individuals on two parameters - that is 'learning by rote' and exams that define whether an individual is a success or a failure. Education is only considered as relevant if it will lead to jobs. Our values of life are being replaced by over exposure to violence, sex and competitiveness. There is no room for tolerance and understanding of self and others.

Any alternative

The educational visions of Gandhi, Tagore, Aurobindo and Krishnamurti pointed towards the bringing of schools with work and nature together in understanding the life. This retrospection can happen when man is free of fear and conflicts. Eternity is not somewhere in a distant or invisible it is here at this moment, where it lies. This is where the key to reform lies. The parents play a crucial role in helping the child to make this happen, they should treat their children as individual. Children are not born from them to show one's authority or demand their expectations to be fulfilled or condition them. But children are born through parents, who have to be treated like a fellow beings, help them to learn everything about themselves. The crux of their vision is allow a man to live with nature. To understand oneself is the primary by applying the view of our thinkers, one can bring this as reality, when human being removed from being relying of books and knowledge.

The educational system must be liberal, free and make learning itself more enjoyable, positive and leisurely. For adolescents, learning is not confined to the space of educational institutions or to other formal and non-formal education system. It is, or should be a continuous learning process involving enacting, observing and socializing and coping with existing situations. Merely to provide or promote literacy to a level would not ensure the adequate education. The course curriculum should be designed on the basis of need assessment. There should be provision of their choice rather than any sort of prescriptions in terms of subjects or discipline i.e., interest based. Children differ from one another in respect of their needs, interests and capabilities. This is particularly evident during the stage of adolescence. This could be an expected alternative to be done in the domains of the society.

The very important role is played by the school and family especially the parents. The cocooned life has to be ended - treating the fellow being as competitors, growing wrath even among the classmates etc. Higher secondary education has a special place in the educational ladder as it is the terminal stage for a very large proportion of students who join the work force as soon as they complete their schooling, it acts as a bridge. We respect and value each other not through marks. Whom we consider successful, would be a failure in school or a drop out or got less marks in school. This is only the milestone to be crossed in the journey towards the quest for knowledge. Exam might seem like the most crucial thing right now but they are only a small part, in our larger life. No one will be looking at the marks we are worrying so much about. Individual is important and not what marks they get.

- Be convinced that the adolescent has put in his/her best.
- Trust the adolescent's capacity to perform well, don't demoralize them.
- De-link examination from future profession.
- Don't attach too much importance to factors which are out of their control - questions and marks.
- Don't keep a particular profession in mind and pressurize the youngster to aim at the same.
- Parents and teachers should understand that it is the student's knowledge that is being evaluated not their parenting or teaching skills.

The nation, family and world of work are institutions contribute to social cohesion. Their weakening by globalization produces distressed individuals, unprepared to confront challenges who lack faith in society and their future. 'Henceforth the race, not the self, must become supreme in the period of adolescence'.⁷¹ No one is bothered about the burden of dullness and irrelevance they impose on children. Children have no opportunity or space for practical experience. Enthusiasm and imagination are evidently lacking. Schools are acting like conveyor belts churning out identical mass-produced products.

⁷¹ Robert, E. Grinder (ed.), *Studies in Adolescence*, The Macmillan Company, London, 1969 P.13.

Higher secondary examination has failed to cater to demands of the society on the whole and fails to train the whole personality of the child. There is no personal contact between teachers and students; excessive burden on written examination is the great hindrance to creative thinking and no independence of thinking.

Education cannot be reformed without a consensus on priorities and the focus of the current curriculum review. 'The Yashpal committee in its report it concluded, more than a decade ago that education becomes a joyless burden in our schools because the quality of our curricula, texts, teaching and examining procedure is so poor'.⁷²

'Union Human Resources Minister Arjun Singh says he is depressed by the high levels of stress in public examinations of class X and class XII. In a circular to his bureaucrats, the minister also pointed to the enormous stress levels faced by students appearing in the Joint Entrance Examination [JEE], especially for Indian Institute of Technology [IIT] and engineering colleges across the country'.⁷³

Schools are constantly looking over their shoulders to see what the competition is along. The secrecy for everything from fee structures to curriculum is ludicrous. Nobody seems to want to work together and exchange ideas on bettering the teaching methodology. In an environment where jobs are increasingly driven by the market rather than contacts, the pressure on schools, both residential and city-based, to produce results that translate into IIT or medical school admissions is immense.

No school can be judged as the best or the worst – it is all with the quality of student-teacher interaction, an environment that brings out or enhances the relationship to its optimum, it could be under a tree or in a centrally air-conditioned classroom or one with just a ceiling fan.

Adolescents are of high concern in all societies, inclusive of India, as they are large percent in the size of the population, ill-equipped or not equipped with necessary education and information and have higher vulnerability to indulge in risky behaviours, like experimentation with drugs and sex. Adolescents are young and at an age where

⁷² For details refer, Yash Pal Committee Report, Learning without burden.

⁷³ Killer exams – How to revamp the system, Outlook, March 28, 2005, P.58.

they are not able to assess their pressures with adequate understanding and have limited or no access to social and educational services. The families are unable to understand the psychology of their adolescents, communicate with them and help them to be on the right path. The home environment insufficiently preparing the child for life outside its boundaries, or failure of the wider cultural milieu to recognize and reward real accomplishments of its younger members.

Competitive instincts of the today's society made education an uncomplicated business. The different types of schools cater to the goals and needs of different social groups. Societies contain children with differing abilities and personalities. Individual is able to develop self-dependence, cultivate independent thinking in evaluating the changing social situations critically, forms the habit of initiation and accomplishes innovative adjustments.

Boards have divergent standards, leading to the multiplicity of entrance tests conducted by different technical and professional institutions for different courses and the institutes coaching students for these tests. This has put a lot of physical, psychological and financial pressure, both unnecessary and counterproductive on students and families. The worst part is that even with their conscious effort if they lag behind, it has been seen as a handicap. Recently Tamil Nadu government scrapped the CET which has been criticized differently by the scholars, educationists, students and parents. Whoever gets good marks in public exam happens to slump in his percentage if he/she scores less marks in the entrance exams vice versa, would not make it to a good institution.

The impact of market has had some consequences for the nature of school as a moral agency. Enforced market behavior and market thinking have changed the moral nature of the institution and its relationships with the outside world, for example, competition between schools for pupils is likely to have an effect on local co-operation and make serving the education needs of the higher ability pupils more attractive than serving others. The picture on the benefits of competition is complicated and it is likely that there are gains and losses.

Though it appears education is functional it is actually dysfunctional. It is doing damage to the nature of human beings. Education is called as a process of development, but today's education hampered the natural growth of human beings. We either see our neighbours or fellow beings as objects or enemies. There is always a thin line of fear running inside us, which denies the aesthetic outlook on the life. And when the individual looks around; everybody seems to be doing the same. Educational degrees are treated as a passport to our big buck dreams. This is a kind of brainwashing that goes on in our country. We always aspire for better quality of life without knowing what the betterment that we are looking for is.

It has become imperative that he/she succeeds in delivering himself/herself from types of stereotypical activity both psychologically and economically and discovers a taste for improvisation, invention and discovery. School must give pupils the capacity to acquire the relevant knowledge and interpret new values that will in turn, guarantee them the ability to remain up to date with the evolution of their environment. If a concerted effort is not made to strengthen the autonomy of the individual then human integrity is under threat by several influences which are replacing traditional standards. Society must aim to allow every individual to develop freely. The individual will have to find his/her own points of reference in a society of constant change that generates sort-lived values.

According to Gandhi, the real education begins from conception as the mother begins to take up the responsibility of the child. It is very clear that if this new education is to be effective, its foundation must go deeper it must begin not with the children but with the parents and the community. Integral curriculum is used here with this broader concept of curriculum and includes that there is no activity in life, apparently big and small or good or bad, that does not contribute towards for every incident has its own lessons for life. 'A master in the art of living', says Johnson and Faunce 'draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play his labour and his leisure, his body and his mind, his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing. To himself he always seems to be doing

both. Enough for him he does it well'. It is in this sense that all life is education and integrated curriculum implies the open book of life.⁷⁴

School with flexible curricula need to be designed both to address changing student and social need. Allow opportunity for individual talent to be expressed and channeled into real social roles. Encouragements are to be given to students to pursue curricula of relevance to their own interests and talents.

Cognitively challenging and connected to the world beyond the classroom. The thinking process in individuals has to be encouraged. There should be scope for experimentation to help the students determine their real potential in life so that they can take it up as a career rather than just follow the herd. Wanted is a curriculum that is relevant to current and future life, with more in-depth and applied learning. Wanted teachers who are interested in what they teach. To find one's true purpose in life, individuals have to be socialized to look beyond textbooks, to be able to experiment and make mistakes, to learn from one's actions, to take feedback and start again. Learning happens only when we sit back and think and analyze our actions. This helps in realising our sense of purpose in life.

Conclusively, the need of the day is awareness of the problems of the youth. The schools and parents should not try to prepare the adolescence for future living by training for tasks they will meet later, but help them to meet their present adolescent problems.

⁷⁴ R.N. Rani, Integral Education: Thought and Practice, Ashish Publishing house, New Delhi, 1983. p.417.

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**ACADIMIC PRESSURES, ADOLESCENTS AND CHANGING
SOCIALIZATION PROCESS**

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Stream of Study:

Medium of instruction:

Socio-economic profile of the family:

Name	Relationship	Age	Sex	Educational Qualification	Occupation	Monthly income

1. What is the most favorite subject of yours?

2. Give reasons

3. Are you prepared to opt for a career in your most liking subject?

- a. Yes b. No

4. What is your career interest? _____

5. Who inspired you?

- a. parents b. siblings c. relatives d. friends e. others

6. How are you preparing yourself for your future career?

7. In which subject(s) do you think you need special attention? _____

8. Give reasons

9. How cooperative your parents in achieving your goal?

10. What is your favorite co-curricular activity, specify?

11. When do you find time for it?

- a. daily b. during weekends c. no time at all

12. How do you feel when exam comes?

13. How will you react when you score below expectation?

14. How will you react when you score above expectation?

15. How do you divide your time daily after school?

Studying _____

Sleeping _____

Recreation _____

16. How do you prepare for the exams?

17. Which time do you prefer to study? _____

18. What is the significance of the medium of instruction?

19. Which aspect of your school atmosphere you like the most?

20. Do you attend any family function or any social gathering?

a. yes b.no

21. If yes, in what ways and how often? _____

22. If no, why? _____

23. Do you have friends in other schools?

a. yes b. no

24. What do you discuss with your friends when you meet them?

1. What are the expectations from your S/D pertaining to their studies?

2. What do you desire your S/D's career to be?

3. In what ways do you encourage them to achieve it?

4. On what criteria did you choose the school your S/D studying?

5. Are you satisfied with the performance of you S/D?

6. If yes, specify

7. If no, why

8. How do you react to their result when they

a. performs on an average-above the average level do you provide any incentives

b. perform below average how do you motivate them to perform better

9. In what ways do you think you could establish rapport with the concerned teachers?

10. Do you encourage your S/D to participate in extra-curricular activities?

a. yes b. no

11. If yes, give reasons

12. If no, why?

13. Have ever felt your S/D is undergoing heavy academic pressure-strain or stress and when?

14. How do think that you could help him or her in overcoming them?

15. Why do you want your S/D to study in _____ medium?

