

PREFACE

Education forms the basis of any development that takes place in a nation. The term education has a different meaning to different people, while for some it means formal schooling or life-long learning, for others it may mean training for the people's minds in a particular direction in order to bring about desirable changes. Education in India has long been subject to many plans and policies. It is a Constitutional commitment in India to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen years. The eve of Indian independence largely presented a picture of an educational fabric that was filled with large gaps and inadequacies in terms of quantity and quality. The quantifiable defects were the low enrolment ratio, low percentage of literacy amongst adults, unequal development of education amongst classes etc. Independent India, therefore, had to make urgent attempts to reconstruct educational system in two ways:

- To expand the existing system of education sufficiently in order to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 to result in expansion
- To reduce some of the loopholes of the educational system and make it a worthy instrument of social and economic reconstruction.

Post-independence, there was a high demand that priority should be given to the objective of universal elementary education in the national development plans and it should be reached through a phased and short-range programme. With this, the following provisions were adopted in the Directive Principle of State Policy of the Constitution of India, adopted in 1950:

Article 45: the State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. In 1950's, at the time of framing the Constitution, the aim was to achieve Universalization of Primary Education, which is mentioned in the Directive Principles of State Policies. Significant efforts have been made in the last few years to universalize primary education. Since Education falls in the Concurrent List, efforts, both at Central and State levels are made to ensure that each child is in school and learning well. Many plans and policies came and went. While some could provide significant results, some

could not achieve the results which were desired to achieve the national goal of Universalization of Elementary Education.

The Sustainable Development Goal 4, as declared by the United Nations envisages at “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.” Earlier it was envisaged in the then known as Millennium Development Goals that universalization of education would be achieved by the year 2015. While the developed countries have met the target more or less, the race is still on for the developing and under-developed nations to reach the target. Out of the many Programs of the Central and State Governments, some which have helped increase enrolment, retention, realized the gender ratio specific enrolment and quality of education in the Government Primary Schools include- The Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, The Nutritional Support to Primary Education or the Mid- Day Meal Program at the Central Level, the Shala Praveshotsav, Kanya Kelavani Rathayatra and Gunotsav in the State of Gujarat.

These programs and policies have helped in achieving the goal of Universal Elementary Education at a manifold level. Despite these many efforts, there seems to be lop-sided development at the educational front in the State of Gujarat. The present research is an attempt to bring in the conceptual understanding of the perspectives of the beneficiaries of Government Plans and Programmes for Primary Education. Social Welfare administration and Community Organization form very important components of social work practice which help in ensuring a just and equitable society. Through deliberate efforts, it is important to identify why the goal of universalization of elementary education has not been attained yet and whether the welfare schemes have had any impact on the beneficiaries or not. The main aim is to place the study within the larger perspective and critically analyze the perceptions of stakeholders from the communities encompassing not only the direct beneficiaries i.e the parents of the children studying in the government run schools but also the school administration viz the teachers in the primary education system. This report has been prepared using the APA sixth edition guidelines. The formatting of the entire document and referencing has been done with the help of the APA sixth edition itself.