

CHAPTER - I



CHAPTER I

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Universalisation of Elementary Education

Education is a process, a long drawn out one, indeed a life-long process. It has long been recognised as one of the corner stones of social and economic development. More recently with technological development and the changes in the methods of production it has become even more important. Because the new technologies and production methods depend upon the human resource that is well-trained and intellectually flexible. More than ever before, the development of the nation today hinges on its capacity to acquire, adapt and then to advance knowledge. This capacity depends largely upon the extent to which the country's population has attained literacy, numeracy, communication and problem solving skills (Lockheed, M. 1990). Providing education for all is thus a challenge for the developing countries. But advanced education and training needs to rest on a solid foundation, which is essentially the product of primary education system. In India, this need was recognised long back and universal education for all children in the age group

of 6-14 was given due consideration in the Constitution as well as in various five-year plans.

Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) has been a persisting concern of the nation since Independence. Tremendous progress has been achieved in the quantitative expansion of primary education and there has been phenomenal increase in the number of schools (Table 1) and enrolment (Table 2). As a result of such expansions, 94 per cent of the rural population has access to primary schools with a walking distance of 1 km (NCERT, 1986). Along with accessibility the coverage of children has also increased considerably. In 1951 only 37.8 per cent of the 6 - 11 age group was covered. This ratio increased to 54.29 per cent in 1961, 74.4 per cent in 1971 and 84.3 per cent in 1981. It further increased to 97.86 per cent in 1987-88.

Table 1: Growth of Recognised Educational Institutions in India

Institution	Years				
	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81	1987-88
Primary	2,09,671	3,30,399	4,08,378	4,85,538	5,43,677
Upper Primary	13,596	49,663	90,621	1,16,447	1,41,014

Source: Education for All By 2000, NIEPA, 1990

Table 2: Enrolment by stages/classes in India since 1951

(Figures in lakhs)

Stage	1951		1961		1971		1981		1987	
	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T
Primary	54	192	114	350	213	570	281	727	378	929
Upper Primary	5	31	16	67	39	133	66	199	107	299

Legend : F - Female; T - Total

Source : Education for All By 2000 NIEPA, 1990

In terms of the number of teachers a substantial increase has been registered. The number of primary teachers during the period 1950-51 and 1987-88 has increased from about 0.54 million to about 1.6 million with a growth of 3 per cent per annum.

Besides the quantitative expansions various supportive programmes to achieve UEE were also introduced. The main programmes are Non-formal Education, Mahila Samakhya, Shiksha Karmi Project, Programme of Mass Orientation of Teachers, Micro Planning, Noon Meal scheme and Operation Blackboard.

Non-Formal Education (NFE) has been recognised as an alternative stream in providing education to working children since the Education Commission of 1964-66. During 1979-80, the scheme of NFE was introduced as an

alternative strategy to impart education to children, who for various reasons cannot attend formal schools. The National Policy on Education 1986 envisaged a large and Systematic programme of NFE to achieve UEE.

Mahila Samakhya was launched with a view to generating demand for education through Mahila Sanghas in villages. The programme also tries to introduce innovative educational inputs for pre-school, non-formal and adult and continuing education.

Another unique scheme, Shiksha Karmi Project is implemented since 1987 in Rajasthan, with an aim to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) in selected remote and socio-economically backward villages. The project identifies teacher absenteeism in backward villages as a major obstacle in achieving the objective of universalisation. It accordingly envisages substitution of the primary school teacher in single teacher schools by a team of two locally resident educational workers called "Shiksha Karmis".

Recognising the important role of teachers, various efforts have been made to strengthen the teacher education system in the country so as to provide effective training and academic support to schools and adult and non-formal education systems. In addition to the pre-service training, diverse methods and mechanisms

are used for continuous and professional growth of teachers. District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) have been established for this purpose.

It was observed by the working group set up for the formulation of Eighth Plan for elementary education that a lot of progress had been made in expanding and improving the facilities and infrastructure for elementary education, but the backward areas and sections of people continued to remain outside the purview of the progress made. So it recommended an area specific population specific micro-planning that would integrate existing programmes with innovative schemes and measures which would ensure enrolment, attendance and retention of children in primary schools or its equivalent at non-formal centre at a pace suitable to him/her.

The noon meal scheme in Tamil Nadu, which developed originally as a people's movement for organised charity in 1956, became a regular feature of the school programme, when the Government approved it in 1957. It was launched to avoid absenteeism of children from economically poor background due to lack of food. Later on the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr. M.G. Ramachandran extended the scheme in 1982 to cover all the children in the rural areas.

The scheme Operation Blackboard was started in 1987-88 in order to bring substantial improvement in facilities in primary schools. The scheme aimed at providing, a building comprising at least two reasonably large all-weather rooms with a verandah and separate toilet facilities for boys and girls; at least two teachers in every school as far as possible one of them a woman; and essential teaching learning materials including blackboards, maps, charts, etc.

Some other strategies though not directly supportive are important for the achievement of UEE are Lok Jumbish, Total Literacy Campaign and Minimum Levels of Learning. Lok Jumbish aims to achieve the goal of education for all by 2000 through people's mobilisation and participation. Total literacy campaign, actually meant to impart functional literacy through area - specific, time bound, volunteer based approach can help to increase the awareness of people about education.

The other strategy, Minimum Levels of Learning aims to lay down learning outcomes expected from basic education at a realistic, relevant and functional level, and prescribes the adoption of measures that will ensure that all children who complete a stage of schooling achieve the minimum levels of learning.

All the above supportive programmes and strategies and the stupendous quantitative expansions clearly indicate the high priority accorded for the achievement of the goal of Universal Elementary Education. However, the goal, supported by the Constitutional mandate continues to be elusive despite all the efforts. The goal of UEE was to have been achieved by 1960 as committed by the Constitution. But universalisation could not be achieved even at the primary stage (classes I - V) by then. So, the Education Commission (1964-66) which went into the whole gamut of education in the country recommended that the goal be achieved in a phased manner. As per that the revised targets were 1975-76 for UPE and 1985-86 for UEE. But these targets were also not achieved. Later National Policy on Education (1986) committed to achieve not only universal enrolment but also universal retention by 1990 at primary stage and by 1995 at upper primary stage.

The recommendations no doubt, indicate the commitment of the nation to the goal of UEE. But it could not be achieved due to various factors such as inter-state disparities in the expansion of facilities, insufficient allocation of financial resources, poor receptivity in communities etc.

The quantitative expansion is not uniform across states in the country. Variations in terms of availability of schooling facilities have serious implications. For example, in Uttar Pradesh only 86 per cent of the habitations had access to primary education within 1 km in 1986. In terms of teachers, while in Kerala hardly 2 per cent of the primary schools are zero teacher or one teacher or two teacher schools, in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh the corresponding figure is more than 70 per cent. In terms of enrolments also variations exist among States. While Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat have achieved a gross enrolment ratio (GER) of more than 94 per cent in 1986, in Uttar Pradesh it is 69 per cent. In West Bengal and Rajasthan it is 80 per cent and 79 per cent respectively. In the case of GER of girls to total enrolment, while West Bengal has achieved 70 per cent, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have achieved only 50 per cent each. Whereas in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Mizoram it is more than 100 per cent. Comparison of retention rates indicates that while Kerala has achieved almost 100, in Meghalaya as low as 22 per cent of children only are retained at primary stage. In Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan the corresponding figures are 59 per cent and 27 per cent respectively.

Most of the variations pertaining to the expansion of facilities may be explained in terms of inadequacy of resources. "Elementary Education suffered in India apart from several factors, because of insufficient allocation of financial resources" (NIEPA, 1990). A glance at the figures in Table 3 on public expenditure on education in general and on elementary

Table 3: Share of Education in GNP (%)

Year	Total	Primary	Upper Primary	Elementary
1950-51	1.2	0.40	0.08	0.48
1960-61	2.5	0.45	0.31	0.76
1970-71	3.1	0.65	0.47	1.12
1980-81	3.1	0.71	0.48	1.19
1984-85*	3.7	-	-	1.77**
1985-86@	4.0	-	-	1.87**
1986-87+	3.9	-	-	1.68**

Source: Education for all by 2000, NIEPA, 1990.

- * Budget Expenditure (Actual)
- @ Budget Expenditure (Revised Estimate)
- + Budget Expenditure (Budget Estimates)
- ** Break-ups for primary and upper primary are not available.

education in particular reveals this. The expenditure on education and elementary education has dropped in the year 1986-87. There has been an overall increase in

education's share between 1950-51 and 1986-87. The share of elementary education has also increased considerably resulting in the increase in expenditure on elementary education from Rs.440 million in 1950-51 to Rs.46790 million in 1986-87. but this increase did not keep pace with the increase in prices and student population. "As a result, we are spending either the same or a lower amount per student today than in the 1950s and 1960s which has obvious implications for the quality of education" (NIEPA,1990).

On the learners' side poor receptivity is a key factor for non-enrolment and dropout. The Schools lack adequate number of teachers and other facilities such as play materials, charts, toys, equipments etc. So they are not attractive to children. Teaching and learning are not based on activities and centred on children's interest and levels of learning. In a multigraded school one or two teachers are unable to make teaching and learning enjoyable. So, a sizeable proportion of children enrolled dropout of the school in different classes. The dropout rate at primary stage is 47 per cent. Among girls it is 49 per cent (Ministry of Human Resource Development,1992). In Manipur it is as high as 72 per cent. According to National Sample Survey (42nd Round), the reasons for non-enrolment/dropout are: inadequate school facilities, lack of interest, economic

compulsions, domestic chores, failure etc. The survey found that about one third to one half of the out of school children find school either boring, irrelevant or threatening. Almost another 40 to 45 per cent of them have to stay away from schools due to economic compulsions as well as the demands of house or family life. (Committee for review of National Policy on Education, 1986). These data suggest that a fairly significant proportion of the out of school children can be brought into the ambit of school education provided quality of education is improved.

Primary Education and National Development

India being a developing country faces problems from all fronts - social, cultural, economics and political. With a population of 84 million in 1981 it is the second largest populated country in the world next to China. With a high growth rate of 2.2 per cent per annum it is predicted that half of the total population of world will be in India by the end of this century. This demographic trend has a tremendous implication on the resources of the nation. Coupled with this, is the poverty. As per the 1983-84 figures it is reported that 40 per cent of the population in rural areas and 28 per cent in urban areas live below poverty line (Observer Research Foundation, 1992). The

other major problem faced by nation is illiteracy. As per the 1981 census, the proportion of illiterates in the country is as high as 64 per cent. Among females 70 per cent are illiterates. India being a pluralistic society, there is rigid social stratification based on a hierarchical caste system. While discrimination based on caste is publicly denied by all, caste considerations continue to play a dominant role in many spheres. Due to gender disparity, women enjoy an unequal status in the family and society.

In order to tackle all the major problems facing the nation, efforts have been taken through various Five Year plans since Independence. They have resulted in an overall improvement of all sectors of development. The proportion of people living below the poverty line has dropped from 48 per cent in 1977-78 to 37 per cent in 1983-84. Literacy among population aged five years and above has increased from 18 per cent in 1951 to 41 per cent in 1981. The female literacy has recorded a three fold increase from 9 per cent in 1951 to 28 per cent in 1981. On the economic front, the Gross National Product calculated at 1980-81 prices has recorded more than four fold increase between 1950-51 and 1988-89. In the fields of health and media there has been general progress in the country. The availability of beds per lakh population has gone up from 83 to 91 during 1981 to

1987. Similarly the circulation of news papers including weeklies has increased from 3.3 crores to 6.2 crores between 1974 and 1985.

Such improvement in different sectors of development are the results of the rapid modernisation of the economy through a large scale application of advanced technologies accompanied by structural shifts and a horizontal redistribution of the workforce. In this process of modernisation all elements viz., economy, polity, religion, education, media etc. of society interact and influence one another simultaneously and continuously, forming a 'Seamless Web' which determines the character of the society at a given point in time. Since the nature and extent of interaction and the transformation are determined by the awareness levels and skills of people, education is a pre-requisite for the transformation. The process of education being a continuum of different stages, from primary to university, each stage covers a specific age group of learners and provides fixed levels learning. Primary stage, which is the first five years of learning, lays foundation for the personality, attitudes, social confidence, habits, learning skills and communicating capabilities of pupils. This stage ensures that 3Rs are acquired by pupils, values are internalised and environmental consciousness is

sharpered. It assists physical growth, rouses interests in sports and develops manual dexterity. So it is a very important stage and "If a child goes through good education at this stage he never looks back in life for he has been prepared to exercise his initiative to overcome difficulties", (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1985).

So, children who come out of primary stage will have awareness about various aspects around them and will be capable of increasing the level of awareness as they grow. Their communication abilities will enable them to keep them in touch with the developments in various fields. Such a process of awareness building will result in an outlook of life which is different from that of illiterate persons. The behaviour reflected due to the changed outlook will influence all aspects viz., occupation, political participation, educational aspiration, religious practices, entertainment, habits etc., connected with life. The changes in all these spheres will inturn influence primary education. Thus, an interactive process emerges between primary education and other sectors of development.

However this interactive process between primary education and other sectors is not uniform. India being

a pluralistic country a lot of variations exist in terms of agro climatic conditions, economy, literacy levels, political awareness, culture etc., and so the interactive process varies across states. Hence the response that primary education evokes will also be distinctly different in each local context.

Rationale

Primary education is a purposive activity and an interactive process which takes place in societal context with mutual influence. The societal context is dynamic, evolving and multifarious in nature. It includes all aspects of life such as social, political, economic, educational religious etc. which operate simultaneously and interdependently. Due to such operation, each society gets a unique character, which is reflected in the perceptions, reactions, symbols of people who are part of the society. All these comprise the experiences of the society in its efforts to make adjustments with the natural and human environment, or in short the social experience. This experience is not uniform but unique to each society and to each local context within the society. Depending upon the level and the nature of the experience each local context responds differently to different aspects of life. This

is why there are variations in the operation of primary education across states and regions within states.

As the response primary education evokes in a particular context is part and parcel of the social experience and it is generally reflected in the living conditions and the interactions of people, the mutual influences of the local context as well as primary education are too global to be discerned. Though social interactions take place in every society discernment and understanding of them will require familiarisation with the distinct cultural context as they give unique meanings, belief and values. Because of this, understanding of the operation of primary education will require several tasks to be carried out including observation of life conditions and delineating the factors and their cultural operations.

Similarly the influence of primary education on the local context though planned and purposeful with a view to transforming it, manifests only in the life conditions and pattern of behaviour of people. Primary education though basic and catering to very young children, has two chief purposes: to produce a literate population that can deal with problems at home and work, and to serve as a foundation upon which further education can be built. Achievement of these purposes

is possible only with favourable and desirable knowledge, skills and attitudes which are essential for qualitatively improved behaviour. Such behaviour will reflect in all dimensions - social, political, economic, religious etc., of society.

Understanding the ways in which such an interactive process operates and manifests itself would involve an attempt of data collection from different socio-cultural contexts and at different levels of the contexts. Such an attempt would also involve a combination of techniques of data generation from different sources at each level of investigation.

Even though primary education is general in its context and limited in its scope, it is possible to identify certain broad tendencies as the influence of primary education by carefully observing the pattern of life of people in a particular context. Any attempt at such a scrutiny at a national level will be too comprehensive and complex to reflect variations peculiar to local contexts. That is to say that data collection attempted at the national level filters out the peculiarities of particular regions and they will reveal only the generalities. For instance, national figures on the various quantitative aspects of primary education will only minimally explain the actual supports and

constraints faced in different regions. Though such information is necessary, also required are the regional variations and factors responsible for the variations or a particular kind of response. Studying such varied details at a national level is too difficult. Hence, the need for studying a particular state and its units-districts, taluks and villages. Such a study requires:

- identification of a state with a distinct socio-cultural environment;
- finding out relevant facts regarding the functioning of primary education therein, - with reference to the target population, schools, teachers, enrolment etc.,
- discerning the socio-cultural features of the local environment vis-a-vis education and
- discerning the reaction (of functionaries and local people within the local context), regarding the interaction of primary education.

Several such studies in different socio-cultural settings would bring out the peculiarities in the interactive functioning of primary education within the context. On the basis of several such studies it would be possible to understand certain most common and

similar ways in which primary education operates across socio-cultural variations.

The Present Study

The present investigation is an attempt to carryout such a scrutiny in the state of Tamil Nadu. Though the State is considered to be educationally advanced (46.76 per cent literacy in 1980-81), it has not yet achieved the goal of universalisation even at the primary stage. The gross enrolment in the age group of 6-11 though is more than 100 per cent 40.76 per cent of children in the age group 5-9 are not attending schools. In rural areas 46 per cent of the boys and 52 per cent of girls are not attending schools (Percentage calculated from the census of India 1981 figures). Tamil Nadu is also culturally distinct. So the investigation attempts to study the way primary education operates in the state. It would require deep understanding and an intensive scrutiny of several factors associated with the interactive process of primary education. In attempting such a scrutiny, the investigation focuses on several aspects related to primary education in the state in respect of:

- The extent to which primary education is effective in drawing beneficiaries;

- The actual proportions from the target population which benefit from the growth of primary education;
- The adequacy of various facilities and their appropriateness of increase in them and;
- The extent of cultural impact perceived by functionaries and the local community.

Title of the Study

EFFECTIVENESS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS OF TAMIL NADU

Objectives of the Study

Keeping in view the various aspects of primary education in Tamil Nadu, the study attempts to examine the:

1. Need for facilities such as number of schools, number of teachers and essential facilities;
2. Facilities available for primary education, their adequacy and the extent of their utilisation.
3. Nature and extent of the effects of primary education on local contexts.

The term "Primary Education" refers to the primary stage of education which includes classes I to V.

"Rural Areas" in this study would mean distinct revenue villages or habitations with a population not exceeding 5000.

As the target of universalisation at the primary stage is the population in the age range of 6-11 years, "Need" in the present study refers to the total population in the age group of 6-11 years, which must be brought under primary education.

"Facilities" in the present study refers to the number of school teachers and other essential facilities such as building, play grounds, drinking water etc.

"Adequacy" means the extent of availability of facilities vis-a-vis the need.

"Utilisation" refers to enrolment and retention of children in primary schools.

The term "Effectiveness" encompasses the adequacy of facilities for primary education, their utilisation and the interaction of primary education in local contexts.

Delimitation of the Study

More than 80 per cent of the total primary schools, teachers and pupils are in rural areas. So, the study focuses only on rural areas.