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CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0: INTRODUCTION

India is a multilingual country and more than 15 languages have been recognized by Indian constitution. According to census of India more than 380 languages or dialects are spoken in India. Hindi is spoken by maximum people. Different states of India are linguistic states. In a multi lingual country total literacy can be achieved only through mother tongue. However it is also important to have a national language for having inter-state links. The constitution of India adopted in 1950 provides scope for development of Hindi to become the link language. Thus Hindi is the National language but in state of Tamilnadu, people protest against this and till now the state follows two language formula that is the first language is the mother tongue and the second language is English which is used as a link language.

Albert H Marckwardt has made a distinction between English as a foreign language and English as a second language. According to him, When English is taught as a school subject or on an adult level solely for the purpose of giving the student a foreign language competence then it is taught as a foreign language. English becomes a second language when it is a
language of instruction in schools and colleges and is used as a link language among speakers of widely diverse languages, as in India.

3.1: PROFILE OF THE STATE

In the state of Tamil Nadu, there are 32 Revenue Districts, 73 Revenue Divisions, 206 Taluks and 17,371 Revenue Villages. On the development side, there are 8 Corporations, 102 Municipalities, 611 Town Panchayats, 385 Developmental Blocks, 12,619 Village Panchayats and 64846 habitations in the State. The entire State has been divided into 39 Parliamentary Constituencies and 234 State Legislative Assembly Constituencies.

Census 2001 has recorded the total population of Tamil Nadu as 6.24 crores comprising 3.14 crore male and 3.10 crore female. The decadal growth rate of Tamil Nadu is 11.19 which are comparatively lower than the National rate (21.34). The increase in sex ratio from 974 in 1991 to 986 in 2001 indicates the growing awareness of the people of the State on gender equity.

The school educational structure in Tamil Nadu has four levels namely, Primary/elementary, Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary. The Primary/elementary comprises class I to class V, Upper Primary VI to VIII classes, Secondary IX and X classes and Higher Secondary XI and XII classes. In Tamil Nadu, there are 53,194 schools, by all categories, which cater to both primary and upper primary, secondary and higher secondary sections. They consist of 34,800 primary schools, 9020 upper primary schools with primary sections, 4520 High and 4854 higher secondary schools with upper primary sections.
3.2: ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA

For over a century and a half, Indian intellectuals have been studying English and now it has entered the fabric of India’s culture. In India, English continues to be the medium of instructions in colleges and universities and is also the language of the administration. The Kothari commission, one of the Education Commissions has said that no student be considered to have qualified for a degree unless he has acquired a reasonable proficiency in English (or in some other library language). According to this, the implications of this are two-fold:

1. All teachers in higher education should be essentially bilingual. They should be able to teach in the regional language as well as in English.
2. All students, particularly post-graduate students should be able to follow lectures and use reading materials in the regional languages as well as in English.

Emphasizing the importance of the knowledge of English, The Radha Krishnan University Education Commission observed, “It (English) is a language which is rich in literature, humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we should give up English, we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge.

3.3: PLACE OF ENGLISH IN PRESENT DAY CURRICULUM

Now in India, English is taught as a second language as well as a foreign language. In different states of India English is introduced from class V and is compulsory up to degree level. But there is slight uniformity
regarding this language introduction in school curriculum from state to state. Some states give emphasis on English while others take it as an optional one. To eradicate the conflict, which arises among our people about the teaching of English, The Kothari Commission (1964-66) has made certain recommendations. They have also given the right directions of how to introduce English in the curriculum. The three language formula suggested by the commission envisages that:

- Only one language which will be regional language will be taught during lower primary classes i.e. from class I to class IV.

- From class V to class VII, two languages will be taught. One of them will be regional language. The other can be either Hindi or English. A third language can be studied as an optional subject.

- From class VIII to class X three languages will be taught. One of these will be the regional language. The second will be any modern Indian language. For non-Hindi speaking students it can be Hindi. The third will be a foreign language i.e. English.

- After class X, language study will be optional.

But in our state Tamilnadu, as already mentioned we follow the two language formula and English is introduced from class ONE itself.

3.4: INTERVENTIONS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT UNDER SSA

Pursuant to the implementation of National Policy on Education (1986), several interventions were launched. To accelerate the pace of UEE (Universalization of Elementary Education), DPEP (District Primary
Education Project) was launched in 1994 on an experimental basis and later it evolved into a result-oriented project. As DPEP yielded tangible results in terms of enhanced access, enrollment, retention and learning achievement, the Government of India launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2000 which has been addressing the quality needs such as infrastructure, teacher recruitment and training, preparation of TLM (Teaching Learning Material), establishment of BRC (Block Resource Center), CRC (Cluster Resource Center) and VEC (Village Education Committee) structures in Elementary Education System.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a flagship program of Government of India for achievement of universalization of elementary education in a time bound manner, as mandated by the 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to children of ages 6-14 (estimated to be 205 million in number in 2001) a fundamental right. The program aims to achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education of satisfactory quality by 2010.

In the last few years, India has witnessed what has perhaps been the most active period of its development in the area of basic education. As a result of these interventions, more than 95% of the population has access to primary education. The number of out of school children has come down from 32 Million to 9.5 Million. Now the attention has been shifted to the improvement of quality which has been a major challenge to education in India.
COMPUTER AIDED/ASSISTED LEARNING:

Computer Aided/Assisted Learning (CAL) is one of the successful programs implemented by the State. Children exhibit enormous enthusiasm in learning, more so in the case of rural children. Under this program, Block Resource Centers (BRCs), Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs) and selected Middle Schools function as learning centers which are equipped with computer systems to provide training on CAL to teachers and Computer Aided Learning to children at the Upper Primary level. These trainings are undertaken by Azim Premji Foundation, Microsoft, INTEL and IL & FS on cascade mode. Computer-based learning modules for subjects in VI, VII and VIII Classes have been prepared in collaboration with NIIT, INTEL, Azim Premji Foundation, Microsoft and IL & FS.

To start with, the CAL centers in the blocks have been equipped each with 4 computers and required accessories. A total number of 1648 computers have been installed. These Computer Aided Learning Centers are housed in specified BRCs/CRCs/Middle Schools in each block head quarters. Children from the neighboring school within a radius of 0.5km can attend the class in their allotted time slot. 412 Computer Aided Learning Centers have been set during the period 2004 – 2005. Special time-table for the classes has been framed and attendance registers are also maintained. The children are able to handle the computers and use CDs as an aid for learning. This has been found to be very effective and even the farthest village child enjoys learning through computers and parents feel proud of it.
During 2005-2006, an additional 422 Computer Aided Learning Centers have been established in selected Cluster Resource Centers by providing 2 Computers with a LCD. One DIET lecturer, one BRTE (Block Resource Teacher Educator) along with a teacher have been selected as Key Resource Persons (KRPs) from each district and 4 days training has been conducted in three phases covering all the Districts. Around 4944 Teachers who are working in CAL Centers have been trained for 3 days by the KRPs who have extended the benefit to 82,400 children. 1082 Headmasters have also been given one-day Orientation Training before giving training to the teachers. 62 bilingual content CDs have been prepared for the use in teaching English, Tamil, Mathematics, Science, Social Science and General Knowledge. A team of teacher experts has been selected and the responsibility of preparing the child-friendly CDs has been entrusted to it. These CDs have been replicated and supplied to all the CAL Centers.

During 2006-2007, 3666 CAL centers have been opened in CRCs. The supply of around 5200 Computers to these centers is in progress. Appendix number 4 provides information about the number of schools covered, teachers trained and children benefited during 2004-05 to 2006-07.

During 2002-03, 49 schools were covered, 18 teachers were trained and 1,775 children benefited by CAL. During 2003-04, 2,687 schools were covered, 2,620 teachers were trained and 2,68,810 children benefited. During 2004-05, 1927 schools were covered, 3,073 teachers were trained, 2,83,306 children benefited. During 2005-06, 942 schools were covered, 10945
teachers were trained and 1,15,164 children benefited. During 2006-07, 1,165 schools were covered, 10,860 teachers were trained and 1,52,330 children benefited by CAL. As per the projection worked out in the Census 2001, the State believes that there will be a total of 97,04,718 elementary school-age children in the State, who will possibly comprise 60,88,639 children in the age-group of 5-10 years and 36,16,079 children in the age group of 11-13 years.

**COMPUTER AIDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES (CAL):**

The reduction in drop out and repetition rate, enhancement in the achievement levels and making learning joyful are some of the objectives of SSA. It was felt that use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and computers in the form of Computer Aided Learning (CAL) might help in achieving the said objectives. Keeping this in view, a component of computer education was kept under the Functional Head of ‘Innovation’ in the framework of SSA. Under this component there is a provision of Rs.15 lakh per district per year available to the States for CAL.

The main interventions required for introduction of CAL and making use of ICT in Elementary Education, are (i) training of the teachers, (ii) creation of infrastructure, development and (iii) production of State specific e-teaching/learning material in local languages.

Role of private sector was considered important in not only implementing CAL in elementary stage but also for mobilizing additional resources. With this in view, several rounds of discussions with some of the
private sector firms were held to orient them about SSA and CAL there under and also the expectations from them.

Some of the salient features of the CAL activities include the following:

- Procurement of hardware
- Identification of learning related hard spots
- Content development
- Procurement/ development of software
- Public Private partnerships

3.5: AZIM PREMJI FOUNDATION

Azim Premji Foundation is a not for profit organization with the vision of transforming the lives of millions of children in India by catalyzing universalisation of elementary education. In partnership with the Government of Karnataka state, the Foundation is currently implementing programs focused on improving the quality of learning.

Azim Premji Foundation began exploring the possibility of using technology in elementary education in April 2001, with pilot projects of 35 Computer Assisted Centers. Based on the results achieved in the pilot study, in the last two years (2003-04), Azim Premji Foundation has implemented Computer Assisted Learning Centre (CALC) initiative in a total of 225 rural government schools in Karnataka state in partnership with the Government of Karnataka state covering around 85,000 children.

The main objectives behind setting up Computer Assisted Learning Centre are:
• Improve academic learning levels of children
• Attract out-of-schools children to join mainstream formal school
• Facilitate improvement of attendance of children

The initiative to introduce computers to rural schools began when the Foundation came across two interesting aspirations of the parents of rural India during its work with the rural communities- (a) the child must learn English and (b) the child must get an opportunity to work on a computer. It was in this context that Foundation began its initiative of using computers in rural government schools to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. An impact study that evaluated the pilot phase of the project showed promising results with regard to the learning levels of children at the Computer Assisted Learning Centre.

The Head Teacher, other teachers in the school, the volunteer who operates the center (called Young India Fellow), members of the School Development and Monitoring Committee, parents and other general members of the community/village and the Education Functionaries such as Cluster Resource Coordinators and Block Education Officers form the critical support system for the Computer Assisted Learning Centre.

APF (Azim Premji Foundation) has signed in 2005 a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Tamilnadu and the Foundation is currently implementing programs focused on improving the quality of learning. SSA- the Government of Tamilnadu provides the hardware for the center and operating expenses for the first year, Azim Premji Foundation
provides the curricular based CD content (68 CDs) and management inputs such as training and supervision of the center and the local community commits to providing revenue to sustain the center after the first year.

Out of 68 CDs supplied, seven CDs were specially meant for English language learning. But none can be used by the first standard students for practicing to acquire listening skill and also the CDs are not syllabus oriented. Head masters and teachers of the CAL centers were given academic support and training. The investigator acted as one of the resource persons to impart crucial information during the training program. While visiting the CAL centers for the follow up work, it was realized that it is essential to run a thorough research study to evaluate the impact of CAI on the learning achievement of the children.

3.6: NEW INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS UNDER SSA
(Special Efforts towards Quality Improvement)

To overcome the difficulty in teaching learning process a suitable strategy called Activity Based Learning (ABL) was evolved to be implemented in schools all over Tamilnadu. The ABL approach is unique and effective to attract out-of-school children to schools/AIE centers (Alternate Innovative Education centers). The teachers who are involved in implementing this method have developed activities for each learning unit which facilitated readiness for learning, instruction, reinforcement and evaluation. ABL has transformed the classrooms into hubs of activities and meaningful learning.
ABL – An innovative approach

The ABL concept has been taken from the Rishi Valley practices. This has been introduced in the Corporation Schools of Chennai with slight modifications. Seeing the success of the scheme this has been introduced in the Panchayat Union Schools.

Initially, a core team was asked to investigate the current practices of classroom process and find out the reasons for the low achievement of children. As the team members had rich exposure in the field of primary education they had strong faith on children, parents, teachers and the government that they would not be responsible for low achievement of children. Then, after close study in some of the schools in the corporation area, the team identified the following as the malady of conventional process.

- Teacher dominates the classroom always.
- Rare use of teaching learning materials
- Most of the time the lecture method was followed.
- Importance was given to rote learning.
- Teachers are under the assumption that they know everything and children do not know anything.
- Teacher assumes uniform learning pace and uniform level of achievement among children.
- The gap between teacher and children are more.
- Focus is given on teaching rather than learning.
• No scope to cover the loss of learning during the period of absence of children

• Multigrade and multi level is not addressed.

• Traditional way of evaluation

• Absence of joyous based extra activities.

• Absence of play way and learning by doing activities.

• Less chance for mutual and self learning

• Coverage of syllabus by the teacher and not by the children

• Classroom with fewer facilities for learning activities

• Instructional materials neither intensive nor attractive

• Lack of learning freedom - more of time restricted environment.

To overcome the above problems in teaching learning process a suitable strategy called Activity Based Learning (ABL) was implemented in Schools all over the state of Tamilnadu.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ABL APPROACH

Implementation of this approach was divided into four phases viz. I) Preparation/Capacity Building Phase II) Experimental Phase III) Extension Phase and IV) Evaluation Phase

• During capacity building phase a core team consisting 4 program coordinators and selected 26 practicing teachers were trained by Rishi Valley Project people three (or) four times repeatedly during 2003 and 2004. The four coordinators along with the experienced teachers developed the module.
• The ABL approach was experimented for one year in selected 13 schools in 10 zones during (2003) the experimental phase.

• Since printed cards were not available at that time photocopies of the same were used in the classrooms.

• During this stage, only classes I & II were integrated. The ultimate idea is to integrate up to class IV.

• As the results were encouraging, this approach was extended to all 264 schools in Chennai Corporation during 2004.

• During this phase, learning cards for classes I & II (4 subjects) and teachers manual were prepared, printed and distributed.

• In the year 2005, class III was integrated with class I & II.

• Workbooks for classes I & II for four subjects were prepared, printed and distributed during 2004-2005.

Training of classroom teachers and other Staff

• Experimental school teachers handling class I & II were trained initially and recurrently with reasonable time in ABL methodology during 2003 and 2004 under capacity building phase.

• Appraisal and review meetings were conducted periodically for smooth conduct of the program.

• To enhance resource support a team of 100 members ten in each zone / block were trained sufficiently in the ABL methodology (Teacher instruction) who in turn trained all the classroom teachers handling classes I to III and other teachers also who are handling IV to VIII.
• For effective monitoring and supervising of the ABL, all BRTEs, HM's, DEOs, CEOs and Supervisors, AEEOs were trained by core team members in various cycles during 2004-2005.

• Teachers and Headmasters are also trained and oriented by visiting model schools and other schools of appreciable performance and interaction with successful teachers.

• Apart from these, teachers were provided on the spot support by expert team periodically and regularly.

• A resource centre was functioning to offer all time support to teachers at Corporation Middle School, Ranganathan Street, Nungambakkam.

The Process of ABL approach

• Competencies are split into different parts/units and converted into different activities.

• Each part/unit is called a milestone.

• In each subject, the relevant milestones are clustered and linked as chain and this chain of milestones is called LADDER.

• Each milestone has different steps of learning process and each step of learning process is represented by logo.

• Milestones are arranged in a logical sequence from simple to complex and also activities in each milestone.

• To enable the children to organize in groups group cards are used.

• Evaluation is inbuilt in the system. Separate cards / activities are used for this purpose.
• Each child is provided with workbook/worksheet for further reinforcement activities.

• Children's progress is recorded through annual assessment chart.

• Each milestone has different type of activities such as introduction, reinforcement, practice, evaluation, remedial and enrichment activities represented by different logos.

3.7: WHY THE STUDY FOCUSED ON ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, CALL AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) observes that education must serve as a “powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals”. Provision of universal elementary education has been a salient feature of the national policy since Independence in accordance with the Constitutional commitment to ensure free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. This resolve has been spelt out emphatically in the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA), 1992. The most important initiative of the Indian Government in this area is the new scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abiyan (SSA), 2000 which aims to provide eight years of quality elementary education in mission mode with community participation.

Social justice and equity are by themselves a strong argument for providing basic education for all. It is an established fact that basic education improves the level of human well being especially with regard to life expectancy, infant mortality, nutritional status of children etc. Certainly Universal education significantly contributes to economic growth.
Knowing the four fundamental skills of language learning i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing at mastery level right from the grass root level is very important for the child in school. English language learning also plays an integral role in most of the private schools because of it being the language of instruction for all the subjects. Hence non-mastery in it at the primary stage may lead to low achievement in future.

The best formative years in one's life are the childhood era. Elementary education plays an important and significant role in the development of concepts, achievement of basic language skills which must be rightly and joyfully imparted. Information technologies can be very helpful to the elementary students who can learn the concepts correctly and acquire the language skills effectively with computer assisted instruction.

3.8: SUMMARY

The dramatic pace at which the enrolment of students to English medium schools has increased, has been revealed in the data collected by the National University for Education Planning and Administration (NUEPA). The spurt in English schooling shows that it is now the third biggest medium of instruction in India after Hindi (National language) and their mother tongue.

While acquiring the mother tongue, whatever children listen through their ears becomes the main source of the language. Listening skill in any language enhances easy acquiring of the language. Hence listening skill in English, among the four basic linguistic skills – LSRW, should be given
priority and its due significance. However in reality, even after completing 12 years of learning English up to higher secondary level, students are found to be incompetent in this receptive skill. The investigator, through her years of experience as a teacher educator, has observed that the listening and speaking skills of the teacher trainees are found to be inadequate.

In spite of the introduction of innovative instructional strategy ABL at elementary level in the state of Tamilnadu, the listening and speaking skills of students are not on par with the expected learning outcome. Since computer aided technology gaining impetus in the class room instructions in the state of Tamilnadu, the investigator feels the need for applying such a technology for developing the listening skill of the students at elementary level.