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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 The problem
A Study of Non-detention Policy in Relation to Dropout and Wastage in Primary Education of West Bengal

1.1 Background of the problem
Primary education is a pre-requisite for building a just and equitable society. It is also an established fact that primary education improves the level of human well-being especially with regard to life expectancy, infant mortality and nutritional status. Naik, J.P., an eminent educator stated that the progress of primary education is an index of the general, social and economic development of the country as a whole.

Education is recognized as a basic right of all people in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1948 and education is considered as the right of every child in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in November 1959. UNESCO held four world regional conferences on Education during 1960-66 that help establish time-bound regional goals to provide free and compulsory primary education to all children. In March 1990, 155 Member States of the United Nations Organization adopted the World Declaration on ‘Education For All’ in Jomtien, Thailand. In the E-9 Education Summit (New Delhi, December 1993), the leaders of 9 highly populous developing nations of the world reaffirmed their commitment to pursue with utmost zeal and determination the goal set in 1990.
Progress towards ‘Education For All’ has, however, been much slower than expected at various Declarations, Conferences and Summits at regional and international levels in different years since 1948. There are about 130 million (about 21%) primary school-age children in developing countries of which about 60% are girls who do not attend school, out of a total of about 625 million children of these age groups in these countries (UNICEF, Facts and Figures, 1998). The number of children enrolled in primary school continues to increase both globally and for all regions of the developing world. Nevertheless, the goal of ‘Education For All’ by the year 2000 remains elusive in most regions. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the regions facing the greatest challenges in enrolling all their children in primary schools.

Again, among the children entering the first grade of primary school, 75% in the developing countries, 58% in least developed countries reach grade five. The percentage of primary school entrants reaching grade five is almost same in Middle-East and North African regions (91%) and East Asia and Pacific region (90%) which is better than Sub-Saharan Africa (67%) and Latin America and Carribean (74%) region (UNICEF, The State of World Children; Education, 1999, p. 109).

The educational status of girls and women is particularly grim. More than two-thirds of South Asian out-of-primary school children are girls. Nearly two-fifths of girls enrolled in primary school dropout before grade five (The Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre, Human Development in South Asia 2000; The Gender Question, p. 104). Repetition of students in primary education is another crucial problem in different developing and least developed countries, specially in the African and South Asian countries. But Seychelles, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and
Nevis, St. Lucia, Turks and Caicos Island, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, Papua New Guinea, and Tuvalu do not face this problem since, in the first level of education they incorporate into their system the policy of automatic promotion. In none of these countries there are repeaters in the primary grades. Incidentally, in the secondary level in Japan even in the upper secondary level in Sweden, automatic promotion system is in practice. Again, Ghana, Gambia and Srilanka, though they have adopted this policy officially, but in practice there are repeaters. In Yemen this policy of automatic promotion is adopted in grade I and in grade II. Costa Rica was one of the first Latin American countries to experiment with automatic promotion in basic education in the 1960s (Husen, T., Postlethwaite, T., Neville (Ed), The International Encyclopedia of Education, Volumes 2, 5, 6, 9 and 11, USA, 1994).

South Asia’s primary education glass is two-thirds full, one-third empty. In 1998, the region has 150 million children who are attending primary school, but a further 50 million children are not attending schools. In addition, over 40% of those who do enter primary school, dropout before completing school. The education explosion in Nepal has been most dramatic. Official enrollment figures indicate that the country has increased its enrollment rate at primary stage of education more than four times since 1970, to 107% in 1998. Maldives, Bangladesh, India and Srilanka have also achieved primary gross enrollment rates above 100%. Though several countries in South Asia have achieved or are moving slowly towards universal primary enrollment, the most populous countries of the region are still a long way further from ensuring universal primary education. Fewer children entering grade I survive till grade V than in any other region in the world, two out of every five children entering primary
school never graduate. Low completion rates are the result of high rates of early dropout, which are themselves partly due to poor academic achievement and high rates of repetition. High repetition and dropout rates in South Asia also lead to a substantial divergence between Gross and Net enrollment rates. The mean number of years of schooling that South Asian children receive is very low: in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Bhutan, girls receive less than 1.2 years of schooling. Boys’ averages are considerably higher, indicating that there is a gender gap in learning achievement as well. But Srilanka and Maldives have better records even in this area (Haq, M. and Haq, K., Human Development in South Asia, The Human Development Centres, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 35-38).

**Historical perspectives in the development of primary education in India**

In India, Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale made heroic efforts between 1910 and 1913 to make Government accept the principle of compulsory primary education. He introduced a bill for compulsory primary education but unfortunately the bill was rejected. Compulsory Primary Education Act was passed in most of the provinces of British India in the period of diarchy (1921-1937). An epoch-making event in education under Provincial Autonomy (1937-1947) was the scheme of basic education formulated by Mahatma Gandhi. An All India National Education Board was established at Sevagram, Wardha in 1939 known as Hindustani Talimi Sangha, and to Basic Education Gandhiji gave the name of Nai Talim.

After independence, universalization of primary education is a constitutional mandate. Article 45 of the constitution stipulates as a
directive principle of state policy that 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 till they complete the age of fourteen years. But in view of immense difficulties the constitutional directive has remained unfulfilled. According to Education Commission (1964-66), the dual problems of stagnation and dropout are identified as the great problems of primary education. The Commission has broadly classified the reasons behind the problems into three areas: Economic, Social and Educational. The Commission recommended universal provision, universal enrollment and universal retention. The Commission observed that the wastage among girls and in grade I is the highest, it diminishes in upper grades. According to the Commission, wrong examination system, unsuitable curriculum, etc. are the causes behind the stagnation and wastage in class I. The Commission has suggested some remedial measures: "The examination at the end of class I should be abolished and the first two classes (and wherever possible, even the first three or four) should be regarded as one teaching unit, within which each child can progress according to his own pace".

On the basis of the recommendation of the Education Commission (1964-66) Government of India in its National Education Policy (1968) suggested that suitable programme should be developed to reduce the prevailing wastage and dropout in schools and ensure that every child who is enrolled in school successfully completes the prescribed course. The National Policy on Education (NPE) on 1986 has emphasized universal enrollment and universal retention of children up to 14 years of age and on the substantial improvement in the quality of education. The thrust is given upon childcentric approach and on activity based process of learning. Remedial instruction is to be provided to the first generation
learners. These learners should be allowed to set their own pace. About
Non-detention policy at primary stage, it will be retained making
evaluation as disaggregated as feasible. On school facilities National
Policy on Education (1986) suggested that provision will be made of
essential facilities in primary schools, including at least two reasonably
large rooms that are usable in all weather, and the necessary toys,
blackboards, maps, charts, and other learning materials. At least two
teachers, one of whom is a woman, should work in every school, the
number increasing as early as possible to one teacher per class. A phased
drive, symbolically called Operation Blackboard, will be undertaken with
immediate effect to improve primary schools all over the country.

The National Policy on Education (as updated in 1992) and Programme of
Action (POA) in India emphasize rectifying historical inequalities. The
emphasis is reflected in the objectives of primary education. In order of
priority these are to reduce dropout rates, improve learning achievement
and expand access for unserved students. Girls and students from S.C.
and S.T. are to receive priority attention. Again, Scheme of Operation
Blackboard which was earlier recommended in NPE (1986) enhanced in
the programme of action 1992.

Recently (2001), the Government of India, has initiated the Sarva Shiksha
Abhiyan towards achieving the long cherished goal of Universal
Elementary Education through a time-bound integrated approach, in
partnership with the states. The objectives are:

1. All children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate
   School, ‘Back to School’ camp by 2003;

2. All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007;

3. All children complete eight years of schooling by 2010;
4. Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life;
5. Bridge all gender and social gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010;

To implement the National Policy on Education 1986, Government of India initiated a series of programmes to assist the states with the development of primary education. The Department established a scheme to finance the creation of institutes of education and training in all rural districts (DEETs). The most intensive effort was taken by the Central Government to increase enrollment, retention and quality in primary education through District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), the channel for all substantial external assistance. Besides, Operation Blackboard, Minimum Level of Learning Programme, Mid-day Meal Scheme, Non-formal Education, Teacher Education, Mahila Samakhya, Education Guarantee Scheme, etc. and a number of state-specific programmes namely, Bihar Education Project, Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Project, Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan, etc. were also implemented.

In different five year plans, specially from the Third Plan and onwards elementary education received special emphasis and various programmes of action as stated earlier in this report were initiated. In the Eighth Five Year Plan it was stated that additional 5.61 crores of learners should be taken care of, out of which 4.38 crores will come under the umbrella of formal education; one crore will be educated through non-formal centres and the remaining should come under open learning channels.
In the Ninth Five Year Plan, it is suggested that the administrative affairs will be decentralized through the Panchayet in the rural areas, and through local bodies in the urban areas. Mid-day meal system will encourage school attendance. Six per cent of GDP will be allotted for education out of which 50% shall be earmarked for primary education, specially in creating and improving the infrastructure. But budget allocation for education in different five year plans are not encouraging. While Kothari Commission (1964-66) suggested a budgetary allotment of 10%, but the actual allotments were 2.8% in 1999-2000, 2.5% in 2000-2001 and 2.22% in 2001-2002 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, Selected Educational Statistics 2001). In the financial year of 2002-2003 only about 2.3% of the total budgetary allotment is allowed.

In 1997, for the first time after independence, the Government of India introduced a bill, the 93rd Constitutional Amendment Bill, to make schooling compulsory. The Bill proposed to amend Article 21 by introducing the clause “The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all citizens of the age six to fourteen years” (Parikh, K.S.(ed.), India Development Report 1999-2000, p. 76-77). After the Unnikrishnan Judgement, the Government of India, on 18th September 2001 in a land mark decision, announced to introduce a Constitutional (93rd) Amendment Bill in the Winter Session of parliament. The Bill proposed to make elementary education a Fundamental Right; ensure early childhood care and education until the age of six and make it a fundamental duty of every parent or guardian to arrange for education of children from 6 to 14 (The Statesman, September 19, 2001).
Problems of dropout and stagnation

It is a matter of serious concern in India that we have yet to achieve universalization of primary education. Out of the 200 million children in the age group of 6 to 14 years, 59 millions are not attending school. Of these, 35 millions are girls. There are problems relating to dropout rates, low levels of learning achievement and low participation of girls, tribals and other disadvantaged groups (Report of the Government of India in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2000). Although the dropout rate in primary education (Class I-V) in India has decreased since independence. From 1960-61 to 1997-98 the rate has fallen by 25.32%. Yet, the rate in 1997-98 is 39.58% while it is 41.34% for girls and 38.23% for boys. In different states the rates vary and in some states e.g. Meghalaya, Bihar, Rajasthan, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram the dropout rate (class I-V) is above 50%. The rate is lowest in Kerala. It is also low in Daman and Diu, Pondicherrri and Chandigarh (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, Annual Report 1998-99). Figure in West Bengal is also showing the same trend. In relation to total enrollment in class I the dropout figures are as follows:

Dropout in class IV : 1973 (83.53%), 1978 (77.08%), 1986 (61.85%) and that in 1993 (49.92%) (Ashok Mitra Commission (1992) and Sixth All India Educational Survey, 1997).

Stagnation is another problem in the way of achieving universal primary education. This is supported in the report of Kothari Commission (1964-66), in Ashok Mitra Commission of West Bengal (1992) and in various research studies (SCERT, West Bengal, 1991; Malgavker, 1995; Dave, P.N., 1997; Rao, D.P., 1998). In India the percentage of repeaters in classes I, II, III and IV are 9.05, 7.09, 10.07 and 7.72 respectively. It is slightly higher for girls. But the statewise variation is prominent. The
percentage of repeaters in classes I-V is high in Dadra and Nagar Haveli (26.68%), Sikkim (23.06%), Tripura (18.81%), while it is low in Andhra Pradesh (3.17%), Uttar Pradesh (1.80%), Chandigarh (1.47%) and West Bengal (5.47%) (NCERT, Sixth All India Educational Survey, 1997). The Kothari Commission (1964-66), NPE (1986) though recommended the introduction of non-detention policy in states, still even after the introduction some states have high figures of repeaters.

Different research findings have revealed that dropout is a severe problem. Gadgil (1945) gave very significant observation that it was necessary for a pupil to complete a four year course at school in order to ensure the retention of literacy throughout his later life (Buch, M. (ed.), Third Survey of Research in Education 1978-83, p. 995). The Kothari Commission (1964-66) observed that as against 100 children enrolled in class I, there were only 37 in class IV in 1965-66. NCERT, in its publication “Wastage and Stagnation in Primary and Middle Schools in India”, 1971 has shown the total rate of wastage and stagnation is 65.30% by the time children reach grade V and 78.35% by the time they reach grade VIII. Of 100 pupils enrolled in grade I, about 39 dropout or stagnate in grade I, eleven in grade II, eight each in grades III and IV, seven in grade V, three in grade VI and two each in grades VII and VIII. This study of the seventies has revealed that causes behind wastage and stagnation are school related, pupil related and family related. Schools that have introduced co-curricular activities, and have a low figure of student-teacher ratio show a low figure of wastage and stagnation. Families with first generation learners, low level of income and a low level of education show high rate of wastage and stagnation (NCERT, Wastage and Stagnation in Primary and Middle Schools in India, 1971, p. 98-103). Again some later studies (Raina, 1988; Banday, 1991; Yadav,
1991; Mishra, 1992; Sarma, 1993; Nayer, 1995) have identified poverty as a cause of wastage. Like previous studies, some recent studies have shown that the wastage was high in class I and it is also higher among girls than boys (NCERT, Fifth Survey of Educational Research, Vol. I, 1997). In 1998 a DPEP study has shown that in some districts of Madhya Pradesh, the repetition rate of girls surpasses the rate of boys. The recent PROBE (Public Report on Basic Education) survey 1999 of 200 villages in the four northern states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh has some significant findings. On average, the expenditure on fees, books, slates and uniforms for a child was Rs. 318 a year. This is a high level of expenditure relative to income for many households such as that of an agricultural labourer. Kaul, R. (2001) also revealed that for 81.14% of the 175 dropout and unenrolled children, low family earnings and poverty were the main reasons for their not being able to attend school. A large majority of these children were engaged in some work or another to sustain themselves (Economic and Political weekly, January 13, 2001, p. 157). Several other studies have indicated that the poor quality of schooling is responsible for retention (Colclough, 1993; Dreze and Gazdar, 1996; Bhattty, Kiran, 1998; Banerjee, 2000). Ray, M. (1993) studied on causes of dropouts in primary schools in Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal. He found that the rate of dropout in rural areas was higher than that of urban areas. The parents of the dropout children were educationally backward and very low earners. It was also found from the study that the early marriage caused dropout in rural areas and specially in backward communities.

Non-detention policy

Non-detention policy (NDP) has been introduced for reducing the wastage at primary stage for achieving the stipulated target of
universalization of primary education. Jyoti and Reddy (1996) in their own investigation studied the findings of Kabra (1971); Krishnamoorthi (1971); Spokesman, Government of Kerala (1973); Venkata Reddy (1976) and Seshadri (1984) have seen that new evaluation procedure of effective and continuous testing and consequent application of remedial measures render annual detentions unnecessary, avoiding a lot of dropout and stagnation. Rao (1977) opined that it is not correct to detain the child, if he is regular in school, yet has not attained the minimum expected level since the fault may not necessarily be with the students, it may be somewhere else (The Progress of Education, Vol. LXX, No. 7, 1996, p. 280-283). It was also visualized by Jyothi, Lakshmi and Reddy (1998) that this system would allow teachers ample time and freedom to experiment with new methods of teaching and evaluation and also to develop the desired intellectual skills and personality traits among the students. Different shades of opinions (Rao, P.V., 1971; Kabra, 1971; Reddy, 1976; Seshadri, 1984) have been expressed over this innovative non-detention policy (The Progress of Education, Vol. LXX, No. 7, 1996, p. 280). The reason, however, for the abolition of traditional examination system in primary education is that if a learner at the primary stage is detained, he loses his enthusiasm and desire for learning. Besides, he becomes unwilling to learn with learners who are juniors to him. Repetition in same class sometimes creates psychological problem to the child. Rao, P.V. (1971) contended that education is best imparted in an atmosphere of free progress where the incentive and urge to improve spring from within the educational process rather than from the terror of examinations and detentions.

Jyothi, Lakshmi and Reddy quoted from their own article in the Education Review, 1971 that the system was criticized as the most un-academic
decision on an academic matter to abolish detentions with a stroke of pen. The system was also condemned on the ground that standards of education which are already low will slide down further and would lead to staggering proportions of dropouts. It was also contended that this measure would initiate indiscipline in all matters of education (Mukhopadhyay, M. et al. (ed.), Education India: The Next Millennium, 1998, p. 29). Malle Krishna Moorthi (1996) stated that non-detention system led to the prevalence of slackness on the part of the teachers and negligence on the part of the parents towards education (Daily Andhra Jyothi, 5th September, 1996).

The innovative scheme of non-detention is an educational policy that has been seriously implemented in state of Andhra Pradesh at school level in 1971. The policy was pioneered by Government of Andhra Pradesh. According to the scheme, the pupils enrolled into class I will be automatically promoted to the subsequent classes upto VII in the elementary stage, and there will be a common public examination at VII standard. If the pupils are successful in getting through the public examination at the end of VII standard, promotion to the next class upto X standard is again automatic (Rao, D.P., Economics of Primary Education, 1998, p. 184-186).

The policy of non-detention policy has been put into practice in Assam, in Jammu Kashmir, in Maharashtra, and in Rajasthan upto class IV, upto class II in Haryana, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar (Union Territory) and in Delhi. In Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and in Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the policy was implemented upto class II (Yadav, S.K., Evaluation Programme and Procedure in the Context of NPE-1986, NCERT, 1988).
Non-detention policy in West Bengal: policy implication

In 1950 after the independence Junior Basic Scheme was adopted in West Bengal. After a long spell of 31 years (1981), in the changed context of socio-political set up the curriculum was re-structured and one of the significant features of the new system was the adoption of non-detention policy (Paschim Banga Prathamic Shiksha Parshat, Mulyayan Nirdeshika, 1994, p. 5). In a report on the syllabus and curriculum of primary education in West Bengal, the Committee said, “No student upto class IV can be detained at the end of the academic year. Some students, however, may be detained for an extra academic year in class V on the basis of an overall evaluation depending on the necessity of compensating any drawback in the students’ efficiency” (Prathamic Shiksha Adhikar, Paschim Banga Sarkar, Prathamic Shikshar Shikshakram O Pathyasuchi, 1997, p. 9).

To reach the goal of universal primary education, the policy of comprehensive and continuous evaluation, the adoption of no detention policy is scientific and socially relevant practice (Paschim Banga Prathamic Shiksha Parshat, Mulyayan Nirdeshika, 1994, p. 5). According to Mitra Commission (1992) non-detention policy and continuous evaluation system is a right step towards achieving the educational goal. To realize this, four stages were comprehended e.g. immediate evaluation based on unit planning, terminal evaluation, remedial teaching, maintenance of cumulative record card and progress report. Teaching with respect to abilities of the learner, identification of weakness and deficiency of individual students, administering remedial teaching and on the basis of these, promotion to the next higher class are the key points of non-detention policy (Paschim Banga Prathamic Shiksha Parshat, Mulyayan Nirdeshika, 1994, p. 5-14). Therefore, non-detention policy is
not the abolition of examination, but it is identification of deficiencies, remedial teaching, evaluation, both immediate and terminal are the hallmarks of non-detention policy. It will reduce wastage.

**Some critical observations on research findings in India**

While reviewing the various studies conducted by investigators some contradictory findings were noticed. As for example Malgavker (1995) has seen that dropouts and detention are directly related. SCERT, Hyderabad (1976) and Reddy (1989) have identical findings. These two studies have shown that non-detention policy has decreased dropouts. Even Jyoti, N.M. (1992) has observed that non-detention policy not only reduced dropouts but has contributed to the qualitative improvement. But Sharma, R.C. (1981) has observed that though non-detention policy has reduced dropout but this is at the cost of attainment. Again Yadav, B.S. (1991) observed that with the introduction of non-detention policy, dropout has risen. The SCERT, Hyderabad (1986) study has shown that regular study habits of students were impaired as a result of non-detention policy.

Shukla, S. (1998) has observed that the achievement level of the students has gone down due to non-detention policy. The teachers have no suitable training for it (Buch, P. and Dave, J.P. (ed.), 1998, Contemporary Thoughts in Education, p. 204-245). Sixth All India Educational Survey (1997) also observed that 20% of primary schools are single teacher schools and 0.8% had no teacher at all. There are huge variations across states. Thirty per cent of primary schools of Madhya Pradesh had only one teacher. In Haryana, 2.5% of primary schools had no teacher. In West Bengal, 7.2% of schools had only one teacher and 0.2% had no teacher. The above data show the constraints behind the spirit of evaluation.
Significance of the study

The review of contemporary research has revealed that many studies were conducted on wastage (stagnation) and dropouts. But very few studies are available as to how the examination reform (in primary education), the introduction of continuous evaluation, the adoption of Non-detention policy (NDP) have affected the question of dropout and stagnation. In Andhra Pradesh a few studies have shown whether NDP reduced the rate of wastage, or whether NDP has any influence on achievement. Some studies which went through NDP and achievement are silent about the inter-related elements of immediate evaluation, remedial teaching, terminal evaluation and cumulative record card and progress report. They did not consider it even. There are some constraints in implementing these. Those studies had no room for this aspect of non-detention.

No direct study on Non-detention policy in West Bengal is available. Since 1981, when NDP was officially accepted, some studies like SCERT, 1991; Banerjee, M., 1993; Banerjee, S.N., 1993; West Bengal Education Commission, 1992; and Pabitra Sarkar Committee, 1999; dwelt upon primary education but there is only a cursory mention on NDP. Whether NDP is a failure, or it has any problem in its ground level practice, or has it any influence on achievement level of the students, there was no fruitful study. Wastage and dropout were not new in our education, but the quality and quantity of this before and after 1981, has eluded the scrutiny of the investigators and academicians. There is no study to show if wastage and dropout have shown any remarkable
change. Moreover, a single study which embraces all aspects in its totality like:

1. If Non-detention policy has reduced wastage/stagnation and dropout, to explore the causes of dropout and stagnation;
2. How much of Non-detention policy has been implemented;
3. The constraint behind the implementation;
4. Socio-economic background of promoted, stagnant and dropout students and differences of these if any;
5. The effect of Non-detention policy on achievement are absent in the previous studies.

The present investigator considers that all the above elements are significant, they work in tandem. No element works in isolation. So, a total approach is what is necessary to take a clear insight into the problem of non-detention policy and its fall-out on wastage/stagnation, dropout and achievement. So, this study is especially relevant and significant in the context of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000) and particularly District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) presently running in various districts of West Bengal for achieving the universalization of primary education.

1.2 Objectives of the study

1. To find out the rate of stagnation at primary stage (class I to IV) before and after declaration of Non-detention policy (NDP).
2. To find out the time taken by the students to complete primary education before and after declaration of Non-detention policy.
3. To find out the rate of dropout at primary stage of education (before arriving at classes II, III and IV) before and after declaration of NDP.
4. To find out whether there is any difference between male and female students as regards the rate of dropout and stagnation at primary stage of education.

5. To study the socio-economic background of dropout, stagnant and promoted student at primary stage of education.

6. To find out the implementation of non-detention policy at primary school.

7. To find out the various constraints for the effective implementation of non-detention policy.

8. To find out the causes of dropout at primary stage.

9. To find out the attainment level at the end of class IV of primary stage of education.

1.3 Hypotheses

1. Non-detention policy will reduce the percentage of dropout at the primary stage of education.

2. There is a difference in proportion of dropout between boys and girls at primary stage of education.

3. Socio-economic background influences promoted, dropout and stagnant students of primary education.

4. There is a difference among the promoted, dropout and stagnant students when classified in respect of their socio-economic background.

5. Non-detention policy as implemented in the districts of West Bengal has been effective to prevent dropout.
1.4 Methodology

Sample
A multi-phase stratified random sampling technique was adopted. Murshidabad, South 24-Parganas and Midnapore districts of West Bengal were selected on the basis of literacy level (low, medium and advanced) for this study. Eighteen primary schools were selected from where the records of attendance are available during 1974 to 1981 and 1990-91 to 1997-98 from these districts. Sample of the study was, all students who were admitted to class I in the academic year 1974 as the period before declaration of Non-detention policy and 1990-91 as period after declaration of Non-detention policy. 200 students of class IV in the session 1997-98 and another seventy two dropouts, seventy two promoted and seventy two stagnant students totalling 216 in classes I, II, III and IV in the academic year 1997-98 were selected from the eighteen schools of the three districts. 51 teachers (available) out of 60 and 18 headmasters were taken from the eighteen schools.

Tools
With a view to achieving the above mentioned objectives following tools were needed for the study:

1. Questionnaire on general information of the school.
2. Student attendance registers (class I to IV from 1974 to 1981 and 1990-91 to 1997-98).
3. Interview schedule on the opinion of teachers regarding Non-detention policy at primary education.
4. Schedule on socio-economic background (income, education and occupation).
5. Checklist regarding causes of dropout.
6. Attainment level test.
All the tools were prepared by the researcher under the guidance of the supervisor, Dr. Sharmistha Chakrabarti, Department of Education, Calcutta University and finalized on the basis of the result of pilot study and opinions of experts.

**Statistical treatment**

For quantitative analysis of data percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, t-test, Z-test, Chi-square test and ANOVA were applied and qualitative analysis was done on the basis of observation during visits to schools and home.

1.5 **Pilot study**

Pilot study was conducted in two schools where the different tools were applied to find if the items are working properly or not. In the light of these findings necessary changes were made in consultation with a few educationists and economists.

1.6 **Collection of data**

Information regarding dropout and stagnation was collected from students’ attendance registers of primary school. Headmasters and teachers were interviewed regarding non-detention policy and general information of the schools. Parents were interviewed to get information about the socio-economic background of the students and also information was collected to know the causes of dropouts. The attainment level test was administered on 200 students of class IV of 18 schools.
1.7 Limitation of the study
Samples were limited to eighteen schools in three districts (rural area) as it was an intensive enquiry including home visits and document analysis of four classes (I to IV) from eighteen schools during the period 1974 to 1981 and 1990-91 to 1997-98. The schools in urban areas are outside the purview of this study. The state population is scattered through 18 districts – with varying level of educational standards and practices. This study is mostly centred around three districts none of which belong to North Bengal. The findings mainly show the trend.

1.8 Operational definition of the variables
1.8.1 Primary education
The first stage in formal education i.e. classes I to IV has been considered as primary education and studied for this research work.

1.8.2 Dropout
UNESCO (1970) has defined dropout as “Leaving school before the completion of a given stage of education or leaving at some intermediate or non-terminal point in a cycle of schooling”.

In the present study we mean dropouts are those children who enrolled but do not complete and leave out at different levels of primary education and whatever may be the number of years they spent in primary schools. In this study dropout refers to those students who left the schools before arriving at the next higher classes i.e. classes II, III and IV.

1.8.3 Stagnation
retention of a student in a class for a period of more than one year. The Education Commission (1964-66) has described the stagnation for a particular class in a year as the excess period spent by the pupils in that class over one year i.e. the normal period.

By stagnation we mean the period held up by repetition irrespective of completing or not completing of primary education.

1.8.4 Wastage
In the Encyclopaedic Dictionary and Directory of Education, Vol. I, Biswas, A. and Aggarwal, J.C. (1971) have given the meaning of wastage as “the term used to imply the infructuous expenditure of time, energy and resources on the students who prematurely withdraw from schools. In the primary stage it is measured by comparing the total number of students enrolled in class I in a given year to the total number of students reaching class IV in 4 years or class V in 5 years, whichever be the final year of the primary stage”. In the Statistical Measurement of Educational Wastage, UNESCO (1970) has defined wastage as “Incidence in a country’s educational system, from the point of view of its efficiency, of factors such as premature school leaving and retardation or repetition”.

The present investigator accepts the term wastage as the number of students who left out without completing the entire primary level of education.

The distinction of the above three terms are thin, in general interpretation, all these terms are used interchangeably. In this study we restricted the meaning of wastage in terms of number of years taken by the students to complete primary education and percentage of children leaving primary
school. Dropout and stagnation lead to wastage. There may be wastage due to dropout and in some cases it may be due to stagnation. The investigator accepted this idea conceptually in this study.

1.8.5 Non-detention policy
Non-detention policy (NDP) is a policy which has been introduced to reduce wastage for achieving the stipulated target of universal primary education. Under this policy all the enrolled students are promoted to the next higher classes at primary stage. The students have to achieve a desired minimum level in all the subjects. According to Ashok Mitra Commission (1992), non-detention policy and continuous evaluation system is a right step towards achieving the educational goal. To realize this, four stages were comprehended e.g. immediate evaluation based on unit planning, terminal evaluation, remedial teaching and maintenance of cumulative record card and progress report. Teaching with respect to abilities of the learner, identification of weakness and deficiency of individual students, administering remedial teaching and on the basis of these, promotion to the next higher class are the key points of non-detention policy (Paschim Banga Prathamic Shiksha Parshat, Mulyayan Nirdeshika, 1994, p. 5-14).

In the present study we define non-detention policy as onward promotion to the next higher class without detention through continuous evaluation system which include the implementation of immediate evaluation, remedial teaching, terminal evaluation and maintenance of cumulative record card and progress report.
1.8.6 Socio-economic background
It is a global measure comprising ratings on income, education and occupation level of the family. In the study socio-economic background was assessed by level of income, education and occupation of the family.

1.8.7 Attainment level
Attainment level of a student at a particular stage of education indicates to what extent the student has acquired the competency level which is necessary to bridge the next higher stage of education. In this investigation the present investigator has framed his attainment level test on the basis of the above concept.

1.9 Chapterization of the report
The details of chapters in this report are as under:

Chapter one is the introductory chapter. It includes title, background of the problem, objectives of the study, hypothesis, methodology, limitation of the study, collection of data, and definition of the variables.

In chapter two review of the related research studies and project are presented.

In chapter three, sample, the tools and their administration and scoring, collection of data and statistical treatments are presented.

In chapter four presentation of data, analysis and interpretation of results and discussion are presented.

Chapter five presents summary, conclusions and recommendations.

Bibliography presented.
Appendices – which separately presents:

**Appendix one**
- Questionnaire on general information of school
- Interview schedule on the opinion of teachers regarding non-detention policy at primary education
- Schedule on socio-economic background
- Checklist regarding causes of dropout
- Attainment level test

**Appendix two**
- Proforma of cumulative record card
- Proforma of progress report

**Appendix three**
- Item analysis of attainment level test