Chapter-2

Policy on Primary Education in Tribal Areas: Role of Community

“Education is the responsibility of the state, therefore, the state ought to be held accountable for any mismanagement in the system. If schools do not operate regularly or properly, if they lack infrastructure, if teacher absenteeism is a problem, if children drop out, it is due to a lack of concern on the part of the state.”1

The present chapter is an attempt to understand various policies on primary education with reference to Scheduled Tribes. It also explains the provision for community participation in various phases. As discussed in chapter one, Scheduled Tribes in India are occupying the lowest position in terms of educational development. For the last 60 years, educational progress among them has not only been very slow but has also varied widely across the states, male–female, social groups etc. Even though, the primary education of tribal children has been given priority in the constitution of India their enrollment rates are low and drop-outs are very high compared to other sections of the society. However, there has so far been no clear policy devised for educational development of these communities. Whatever we have today is a set of few provisions of the constitution, and suggestions and priorities indicated by various committees and commissions.

In this context, K. Sujatha argues that “the review of the policies and programmes adopted for tribal education from British time, through successive five-year plans reveals that they have largely been based on a macro perspective which does not reflect the tribal reality that is characterized by heterogeneity and as well as inter-group and inter-state disparities”2. It is in this context an attempt is made here to understand various policies adopted for primary education with reference to Scheduled Tribes.

## Table 2.1: Education Policy in India in 4 phases

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<td>Several innovative programmes were started as centrally sponsored schemes, mostly with foreign assistance and usually involving NGOs; target group oriented.</td>
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<td>During this phase, decentralization and community participation is emphasized as a major policy thrust.</td>
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During this phase, decentralization and community participation is emphasized as a major policy thrust.
Based on changes in Central Government policy towards education it has been divided into four phases of educational development in India. They are, from 1951 to the mid 1960s; mid 1960s to 1986; 1986 to 1992; and from 1992 onwards. These different phases of government policy and associated programmes are summarized in the Table 2.1.

1. **First Phase: 1951 to 1968**

The first phase, that is the period from 1951 to the mid 1960s, is one in which the Constitution provided certain protection and safeguards to the Scheduled Tribes along with the Scheduled Castes and other Backward Classes. Its objective was to bring them up educationally and economically to a level where they can be on par with the others community members in the society.

1.1. **Constitutional Provisions**

The constitution of the India adopted on 26th January 1950 provided the basic framework within which the policies were formulated in education. The constitution of the country is committed to the principles of democracy, secularism and equality. It aims to secure to all its citizens: Justice–social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all; fraternity assuring dignity of the individual and unity and integrity of the nation.

Directly or indirectly many articles in the Indian Constitution strongly emphasized that the child rights and childhood should be protected, and enforced that the state has the prime responsibility of doing so. Fundamental Rights given in the constitution confer on the citizens. Article 14 ensures equal rights and opportunity in political, economic and social sphere. Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the ground of

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religion, race, caste and sex. Article 16 provides equal opportunity in the matter of public appointment for all.\(^5\)

Importantly Article 21A, which was amended through the 86\(^{th}\) Constitutional Amendment Act in 2002 says that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the state may, by law, determine.\(^6\) Article 24 says that no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in hazardous employment. Article 29 says that “No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them” and Article 30 guarantees to (i) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. (ii) The state shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language. Article 39 says that the state shall direct its policy toward securing that the tender age of children is not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter a vocation unsuited to their age or strength and that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.\(^7\)

In respect to education, Article 45 of the Directive Principles of the State Policy directs the state that “there shall be free and compulsory education to all persons, including the children, irrespective of their race, colour, caste, religion and language” up to the age of 14 within ten years of the adoption of the constitution.\(^8\) A part of these Constitutional guarantees on education, the 1993 judgment of the Supreme Court in the case of J. P. Unni Krishnan and others vs. state of Andhra Pradesh and others (1993) was also considered to have the status of a Fundamental Right. The Apex Court had declared: “The passage of 44 years – more than four times the period stipulated in Article 45 has

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 12.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 95.
\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 46-71.
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 94.
converted the obligation created by the Article into an enforceable right. At least now the state must honour the command of Article 45 and make it a right.”

According to this judgment, “Right to Education is implicit in and flows from right to life guaranteed under Article 21” and “Every child of this country has a right to free education until the age of 14, thereafter his rights are circumscribed by the economic capacity and development of the State.”

Article 46 of the Directive Principles of the State Policy further directs “the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation”.

Article 338 of the constitution specifies that the Special Officer for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes to be appointed by the President of India. Further, it shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under this Constitution and report to the President upon the working of those safeguards at such intervals as the President may direct and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each house of Parliament.

Article 350A of the constitution requires the state to make adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue to the children belonging to minority groups at the primary stage of education. Moreover, education is in the Concurrent List in the distribution of powers between the union and state governments. As such, the responsibility for educational development of tribes lies with both the union and state governments.

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10 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 102.
14 In 1976, through 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act education has been brought under the Concurrent List as 25th item.
Compulsory education laws make it a duty of the government to provide the facilities and the means for children to be able to go to school. All these constitutional guarantees with reference to education are means for achieving a larger goal of universalization of elementary education in India. In recent times education was also added in the list of Fundamental Rights. With the passing of 93rd Constitution Amendment Bill, a major stride was witnessed in this direction. Through the 86th Constitution Amendment Act in 2002, for the first time since the framing of the Constitution, education as a Fundamental Right was added to the Constitution of India. With this, the Indian Constitution now guarantees eight years of elementary education to each and every child in the county. This is discussed in length in the later part of this chapter.

1.2. Nehru & Tribal Panchsheel

The 'Nehruvian' understanding of 'Tribal Panchsheel' provides the official perspective of tribal policy that development of the tribes will be along the lines of genius of their community. Further, that their integration with the rest of society will be in a manner that “their traditions and culture remain undisturbed and there is no loss of identity by tribals”.

The policy accorded a high sense of respect and recognition for the tribal culture and traditions and was strongly opposed to any kind of interference by outside agencies which were likely to lead to the destruction of the tribal art, culture and so on. This was clearly envisaged in the five fundamental principles popularly known as ‘Tribal Panchsheel’ of tribal development evolved by Pandit Nehru, the former Prime Minister of India. These five fundamental principles were:

1. People should develop along with lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.

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2. Tribal rights in land and forest should be respected.

3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development, some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

4. We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should work through, and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.

5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

These principles have a strong bearing in the evolution of policy relating to tribal education. ‘Tribals should develop along the lines of their own genus and their traditional arts and culture must be encouraged in every way’. The subsequent governments also emphasized the perpetuation of the same policy.

1.3. B. G. Kher Committee (1953)

When it comes to the community participation and management, the B. G. Kher Committee (1953) emphasized the need for decentralization of management to attract community involvement at the grass root level. It recommended involvement of all types of local bodies to promote and manage education in the interest of mass education.17

1.4. Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)

Subsequently the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) recommended that primary education should become the responsibility of the Panchayats. While the matter of standards remained with the Department of Education, financial and administrative aspects of management were transferred to Panchayati Raj Bodies. In spite of some deficiencies, some significant gains were noted as a result of this move. Many states

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enacted Panchayati Raj Acts in the 1950s, and Andhra Pradesh is the second state in India which introduced the Panchayati Raj Act. However, interest in and support for the panchayats declined in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{18}

1.5. Elwin Committee

In the context of basic education in the tribal areas, the Elwin Committee (1959) on Special Multi-purpose Tribal Blocks deliberated on education for Scheduled Tribes and suggested two lines of development. The first was to provide a type of education to produce young tribal men and women as leaders, professionals, administrators, agriculturists, etc. for tribal areas as well as outside. The second was to provide a type of education for the masses of the people likely to continue to live by agriculture in the hills and forests and for whom a simple and practical type of teaching is required.\textsuperscript{19}

1.6. Dhebar Commission

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, popularly known as the Dhebar Commission, constituted in 1960 in pursuance of Article 339 of the Constitution dealt with the problems of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes comprehensively and recommended that in tribal areas a school should not be located at a distance of more than one mile. Lessons should be imparted in the tribal dialect and the teachers should invariably know the tribal language. However, lessons could be taught in the regional language from the third year. The emphasis in education should be on crafts and it should have a technical bias. As far as possible, the idea of a residential school should be encouraged.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, the first phase largely focused on constitutional provisions meant for the educational development of schedule tribes along with scheduled caste and other backward communities. Tribal Panchsheel during Jawaharlal Nehru period was an important document for understanding tribal tradition and culture. It was recommended that the tribals should be integrated in the education process too. As discussed in the first

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp. 18-19.
phase, the recommendations of various commissions/committees like Kher Committee (1953), Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), Elwin Committee (1959), Dhebar Commission (1960) etc. were important developments in the first phase in the field of education. Most of these commissions/committees have recommended for the decentralization of education. Followed by all these developments in the first phase, the Indian Education Commission came up with various recommendations for improving primary education in tribal areas in a decentralized process. The second phase starts with National Policy on Education, 1968 which was the first ever education policy in India.

2. Second Phase: 1968 to 1986

The second phase, that is the period from 1968 to 1986, started with the Report of the Indian Education Commission (1964-66). During this period, the Indian Education Commission and the National Policy on Education, 1968 emphasized on equal educational opportunities to all sections in the society including in the tribal areas. The period also witnessed the decentralization of the education system, where the Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) strongly recommended for the transfer of the powers to the local bodies for better participation of the community.


The National Policy on Education, 1968 emphasized on initiating programmes to give equal educational opportunities to all social groups. Recognizing the continuance of the inequalities in the system, the Education Commission (1964 - 66) devoted a whole chapter on *Equalization of Education* covering the Scheduled Tribes along with Scheduled Castes and other Backward Classes of the society.\(^{21}\)

The Commission stated that one of the important social objectives of education is to equalize opportunity, enabling the backward or under-privileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever for the improvement of their condition. Every society that

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\(^{21}\) The Chapter VI of the Education Commission (1964 - 66) as 'Towards Equalization of Educational Opportunities' from page 97 to 129 deals with Education of Scheduled Tribe along with Scheduled Caste and other Backward Classes.
values social justice must ensure progressive equality of opportunity to all sections for an
egalitarian and human society in which exploitation of the weak will be minimized.

The Commission identified three tasks related to Scheduled Tribes: First, development of
communication; Second, care of forests, improved systems of shifting cultivation, settled
cultivation and pasture; Third, development of the system of education related to the
scheme of economic and social development responsive to the cultural and economic
need of the people. They found different tribal people at varying stages of economic and
cultural development. Hence, they recommended that each group and the area in which it
lives should be studied closely and appropriate patterns of development worked out in
close cooperation with the people. It is in terms of such a design of development that
educational programmes, institutions and priorities should be proposed.22

Based on the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964 -66), the first
National Policy Resolution on Education was prepared and passed by the Parliament in
1968. In respect to equalization of educational opportunities, it suggested: "more
strenuous efforts be made to equalize educational opportunities. Regional imbalances in
the provision of educational facilities should be corrected and good educational facilities
be provided in rural and other backward areas… the common school system be
adopted…. the education of girls should receive special emphasis. More intensive efforts
are needed to develop education among backward classes and especially among the tribal
people.23

The National Policy on Education, 1968 advocates increasing access to education by
bringing primary and middle schools within easy reach of each child; providing
incentives and financial support for schooling; distributing midday meals in schools to
encourage attendance. The Policy made it clear that “more intensive efforts are needed to
develop education among the backward classes and especially among the tribal people”.24

23 Kusumm K. Premi, ‘Access, Equity and Equality in Education with focus on Scheduled Caste, Scheduled
Tribes and Girls’, A paper presented at the National Seminar on Implementation of Education Policy in
India, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi, March 11, 2000, pp. 2-3.
24 J. C. Aggarwal and S. P. Agrawal, National Policy on Education: Agenda for India 2001, Concept
However this policy resolution was not implemented by all the states for the simple reason that education was on the State List. Thereby, taking this fact into consideration, in 1976, through 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, education has been brought under the Concurrent List as 25th item.\(^{25}\)

### 2.2. Bongirwar Committee (1971)

The strongest support for community involvement in education came from the review of primary education in Maharashtra. The Bongirwar Committee (1971) viewed education as an instrument of social change and stated that education can not function in isolation from social forces. The village schools have an important role to play in creating a proper environment in rural areas. Therefore, the local people must be associated with the working of schools. This committee recommended transfer of more functions to Panchayati Raj Bodies including transfer of teachers, academic administration and supervision of the school etc.\(^{26}\)

### 2.3. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978)

The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) advocated transfer of substantial powers and responsibilities in education to Zila Parishads. These powers and responsibilities included transfer of teachers, monthly transfer of salary funds from the state and composition of a Board of Education for maintenance of quality and standard of education.\(^{27}\)

The later developments in National Policy on Education 1968, focus has also been given to improve the status of tribal education. In 1978, the standing committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education has agreed that every effort should be made at the elementary level, to enroll all the children of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It advocated that all the steps necessary for the purpose should be adopted. These include incorporating the tribal language, provision of special allowances and other facilities of teachers working in tribal areas, free supply of educational materials, cloths, mid-day


\(^{27}\) *Ibid.*
meals, provision of scholarships and hostels when necessary, increasing number of Ashram Schools, etc. Regarding the funds to ensure all the above incentives, the CABE advised that the funds should be provided on a priority basis.28

Infact, the Draft National Policy on Education 1979 expressed grave concern over the very low educational condition of certain disadvantaged sections of the society including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It stated that while there had been considerable expansion in all sectors of education in our country, imbalances and inequalities still persisted. Girls, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, landless laborers, Backward Classes and urban slum poor generally continued to lag behind in education. Special effort must be made to identify the problems in these cases and to bring all such people into the fold of education.29

3. Third Phase: 1986 to 1992

The significant development during the third phase was adoption of National Policy on Education, 1986, which strongly emphasized universal primary education. It accepted universal enrolment and retention of children up to 14 years of age, substantial improvement in the quality of education and compulsory education to all children by 1995 irrespective of their caste, community and region across India. The children belonging to scheduled tribes are not exempted from this policy.


The National Policy on Education, 1986, which starts in the third phase, has given "unqualified priority to universal primary education (UEE). The thrust in elementary education emphasises (i) universal enrolment and universal retention of children up to 14

years of age, and (ii) a substantial improvement in the quality of education"\textsuperscript{30} to all children.

The policy emphasized that the child-centred approach commended in National Policy on Education (NPE) attempts to build the academic programme and school activities around the child. The Policy also recognizes that unattractive school environment, unsatisfactory condition of buildings and insufficiency of instructional material function as demotivating factors for children and their parents. The Policy, therefore, calls for a drive for substantial improvement of primary schools and provision of support services. A variety of measures have been proposed for securing participation of girls and children from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families, other educationally backward sections and minorities.\textsuperscript{31}

The policy resolved that "all children by the time they attain the age of about 11 years will have had five years of schooling, or its equivalent through the non-formal stream, and likewise it will be ensured that free and compulsory education up to 14 years of age is provided to all children by 1995".\textsuperscript{32}

The National Policy on Education, 1986, outlining the policy for educational development of tribes, emphasized on the following measures to be taken urgently:\textsuperscript{33}

1. Giving priority in opening primary schools in tribal areas. The construction of school buildings in these areas to be taken on a priority basis using the normal funds for education, as well as funds under the various schemes.

2. The socio-cultural milieu of the STs has its distinctive characteristics including in many cases, their own spoken languages. This underlines the need to develop the

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
curricula and devise instructional material in tribal languages at the initial stages, with arrangements for switching over to the regional language.

3. Educated and promising Scheduled Tribe youths to be encouraged and trained to take up teaching in the tribal areas.

4. Residential schools, including Ashram Schools to be established on a large scale.

5. Incentive schemes to be formulated for the STs keeping in view their special needs and life styles. Special remedial courses and other programmes to be organized to remove psycho-social impediments to improve their performance in various courses.

6. Anganwadis, non-formal and adult education centers to be opened on a priority basis in areas predominantly inhabited by the Scheduled Tribes.

7. The curriculum at all stages of education be designed to create an awareness of the rich cultural identity of the tribal people as also of their enormous creative talents.

Similarly, the Operation Blackboard, which aims at substantial improvement in the facilities to be provided in all primary schools, has the following components.34

1. Provision for at least two reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather with a deep verandah, along with separate toilet facilities for boys and girls.

2. Provision of at least two teachers, as far as possible one of them a woman, in every primary school.

3. Provision of essential teaching and learning material, including blackboards, maps, charts, a small library, toys and games and some equipment for work experience.

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34 Ibid.
A whole chapter in the National Policy on Education, 1986 is devoted to education of Scheduled Castes / Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Sections, and says that "the central focus in educational development of SC/ST is their equalization with the non SC/ST population at all stages and levels of education". Regarding the enrollment of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe children, the policy document said that the proportion of enrollment of Scheduled Tribe children continues to be much less than their population proportion and the drop-out rate continues to be very high at all levels of education; the problem is more severe in the case of girls of these communities. The situation calls for systematic efforts directed towards the educational development of SC/ST. In this connection, the policy has also directed that cent percent enrollment of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe children in the age group 6-11 (Classes I-V), ensuring their retention in school leading to satisfactory completion of the primary stage of education or its equivalent through the non-formal steam has to be achieved by 1990.

Regarding community participation and preparation of community level micro plans, the policy said that constant micro-planning and verification ensures that enrolment, retention and successful completion of courses by Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe students do not fall at any stage. Further it emphasized that “micro-planning will include formulation of detailed village and block level plans within an identified time-frame; mapping of education infrastructure and removal of deficiencies; extension approach at the village level to persuade parents to send the children to school, with the involvement of teachers, parents, local leaders, social workers, etc.”

At the primary level, the policy called for priority attention for reducing the disparities in the enrollment of girls, and for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe students. To implement the policy, the Department of Education created a set of centrally sponsored grant schemes to provide assistance to states with the development of basic education. The schemes included Operation Blackboard, the creation of District Institutes of

35 GOI (Government of India), 1986, op. cit., p. 55.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
Education and Training, Non-formal Education, Total Literacy Campaigns, and the development of competency standards known as Minimum Levels of Learning.\(^{38}\)

The policy document spells out the strategies to be adopted in attaining the goals of equity. These include priority in opening schools in backward areas and provision of other necessary infrastructure facilities. It also proposed redesigning curricula in accordance with the needs of the deprived groups. Through Operation Blackboard an attempt was made to ensure that every primary school is provided basic infrastructure. To cater to the requirements of the meritorious students from rural areas the policy proposed setting up of Novodaya Vidyalayas in each district of the country. Suitable reservation has been provided to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children in those schools.\(^{39}\)

The National Policy on Education, 1986, felt that monitoring of education programmes in tribal areas should be given high priority. Hence it suggested both central as well as state governments that a single nodal agency for coordination of all programmes leading to the development of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes and other backward sections may be developed at the central and state levels. It was suggested that a Standing Committee of the CABE under the Chairmanship of Minister (HRD) may be constituted to monitor and review implementation of all educational programmes for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and other educationally backward sections at the Central level. A similar committee under the State Advisory Board of Education may be constituted at the state level.\(^{40}\)

### 3.2. Ramamurthi Committee, 1990 (Review Committee on National Policy on Education, 1986)

The major objective of the Ramamurthi Committee was to review the National Policy on Education, 1986 and recommend suitable changes required to the Policy. After five years of implementation of the National Policy on Education, 1986, it was felt by the

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\(^{39}\) Kusum K. Premi, 2000, op. cit., p. 4.

\(^{40}\) GOI (Government of India), 1986, op. cit., p. 56.
government to review the policy based on the needs of the country in education. It is with this objective the Ramamurthi Committee was appointed in 1990 and submitted its report to the Government of India in 1991.

It was also envisaged by the National Policy on Education 1986 that review of the implementation of various parameters of the policy every five years is necessary and the government shall modify it as per the recommendation of the review committee. The then Government also felt that education is a matter of grave concern that “our people comprise 50 percent of the world’s illiterate and large sections of children have to go without acceptable level of primary education. Government accords the highest priority to education both as a human right and as the means for bringing about a transformation towards a more humane and enlightened society. There is need to make education an effective instrument for securing status of equality for women, and persons belonging to the backward classes and minorities”.

It is in this connection and based on the National Policy on Education, 1986, recommendations to review the policy implementation and in pursuance of its election manifesto, the National Front Government headed by Shri V. P. Singh, appointed a Committee with Acharya Ramamurti as its Chairman, to review the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 on May 7th 1990. The Committee was called National Policy on Education Review Committee (NPERC) and its report was entitled ‘Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society – NPE, 1986 – A Review’. It submitted its report to the Ministry of Human Resource Development on December 26th, 1990. The report was tabled in the both the houses of Parliament on January 9th, 1991.

The approach of the Committee in reviewing the National Policy on Education, 1986 and its implementation has bee guided by the following:

1. Equity and social justice.
2. Decentralization of educational management at all levels.

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3. Establishment of a participative educational order.
4. Inculcation of values indispensable for creation of an enlightened and humane society.

The committee strongly emphasized on removing disparities in educational development across the various sections in the society. In connection with this, the committee felt that the rural areas in general and the tribal areas in particular, have suffered in terms of resources, personnel and infrastructure facilities. This phenomenon of regional disparities in educational development had acquired a major political dimension in the current Indian scene. It was reflected in the regional and sub-regional movements. Therefore, the need of the hour was planning for, and implementation of, educational development programmes in terms of disaggregated targets and, area, community and gender specific activities. This would mean concrete programmes being established on ground for the disadvantaged groups like Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, women, the educationally backward minorities and the handicapped with appropriate budgeting for the same.43

In keeping with its philosophical approach to the relationship between education and socio-economic development, the National Policy on Education Review committee expressed the view that upliftment of SCs and STs should not be an isolated activity in individual departments but instead should be part of an equity package. Reforms in education should not be isolated phenomena but part of an all-round reform in all related areas. The Committee was of the view that the participation of the weaker sections in the educational process will be a far cry unless they were put in possession of means of production and livelihood through measures such as land reforms, meaningfully provided with essentials of life such as fuel, fodder and water, and assured of fair wages.44

While exploring the idea of decentralization of education at all levels, the Committee strongly felt that there is a need for decentralization of educational planning and

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43 J. C. Aggarawal, 1995, op. cit, p. 47.
44 GOI (Government of India), 1992, op. cit.
management, from the centre to the states, from the state to the districts, from the districts to the blocks, from the blocks to the panchayats/villages and habitations.  

4. Fourth Phase: 1992 onwards

The most significant aspect of the fourth phase is Programme of Action (PoA), 1992. The National Policy on Education, 1986 was reviewed during 1990-92 by the Acharya Ramamurthi Committee (1990) and N. Janardan Reddy Committee (1992) and necessary amendments were made. On this basis the Programme of Action (1992) was chalked out. And also based on its recommendations, provisions were made in the eighth plan. The fourth phase in education started in India with implementation of Programme of Action (PoA), 1992.

4.1. Janardan Reddy Committee (CABE Committee), 1991 & Programme of Action (PoA), 1992

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) examined the procedure to be adopted for consideration of the report of the National Policy on Education Review Committee (NPERC). It decided that a CABE Committee be constituted by the Chairman, viz., Union Minister of Human Resource Development, to consider the recommendations of the NPERC. Therefore, the Minister of Human Resource Development set up a Committee of CABE to review the implementation of the various parameters of NPE.

In this background and objective, the CABE Committee under the chairmanship of Shri N. Janardhana Reddy was set up in 1991 by the Government of India to review the National Policy on Education, 1986. Taking into consideration the report of the NPERC, the Committee submitted its report in 1992.  

In their advice, the Janardhan Reddy Committee (CABE Committee) felt that a standing CABE committee on education of SCs and STs and other educationally backward sections should be constituted to monitor educational programmes for these disadvantaged groups; educationists from these groups should have representation in that

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45 Ibid.  
46 Ibid.
Committee. Further at the state level, a single focal agency should be identified in each state for the purpose of monitoring the programme and reporting to the Central Government. The Committee also strongly felt and recommended that the following points deserve priority during the Eighth Five Year Plan in the area of Universalisation of Elementary Education.\textsuperscript{47}

1. Universal enrollment of all children, including girls and persons belonging to SCs and STs.

2. Provision of primary school for all children within one kilometer of walking distance especially in tribal areas and of facility of non-formal education for school drop-outs, working children and girls who cannot attend schools.

3. Improvement of ratio of primary school to upper primary school from the existing 1:4 to 1:2, this being a precondition for larger opportunity for widening girls’ participation at upper primary stage.

4. Reduction of drop out rates in tribal areas as well as among the general category children between Classes I to V and I to VIII from the existing 45 percent and 60 percent to 20 percent and 40 percent respectively.

5. Improvement of school facilities by revamped Operation Blackboard, to be extended to upper primary level also.

6. Achievement of minimum levels of learning by approximately all children including scheduled tribes and scheduled castes at the primary level, and introduction of this concept at the upper primary stage on a larger scale.

7. Local level committee ensuring community participation, with due representation to women and teachers, to assist in the working of primary education and to oversee its functioning.

\textsuperscript{47} Quoted by J. C. Aggarawal, 1995, op. cit., p. 53-54 from Statement of the Minister of Human Resource Development, Government of India, attached in reply to Question No. 625 for 28.2.92 in Rajya Sabha.
8. Improvement of the monitoring system in both tribal areas as well in the non-tribal areas for universalization of elementary education to see to the achievement of above mentioned goals.

The aspect which was considered important from the viewpoint of social justice in education is the concern for the educational needs for SC/STs. By giving a separate chapter on *Education of the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and the other Backward Sections*, the Committee stressed the importance for the schools, curriculum, remedial coaching, recruitment of SC/ST teachers, Special Component Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan of ST habitations.48

While emphasizing the importance of community participation the CABE committee on policy, 1992 said that “the concept of participatory educational order should go beyond involvement of educational institutions and should extend to the community itself”.49 The PoA had elaborated some of the mechanism for enlisting people’s participation in achieving Universalization of Elementary Education such as Village Education Committee and Micro-Planning.50 While emphasizing the community mobilization for achieving educational goals the CABE committee felt that “people’s participation in education – particularly elementary education and adult literacy - should be in the form of informed facilitation of achievement of educational goals, and through a well formulated system of overseeing the laxities and under performance of the system”.51

4.2. Constitutional Amendment to Make Education a Fundamental Right

In the early 1990s a sudden revival of interest was observed in the matter of securing the right to free and compulsory education for all children in India. It was the Ramamurthi Committee Report in 1990, on the review of the National Policy on Education, 1986, which for the first time recommended to the government to recognise the right to education as a fundamental right. In its report, the Ramamurthi Committee felt that “now time has come to recognize ‘Right to Education’ as one of the fundamental rights of the

48 Ibid.
49 GOI (Government of India), 1992, op. cit., p. 4.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
Indian citizens for which necessary amendment to the Constitution may have to be made and more importantly, conditions be created in society such that this right would become available for all children of India”.52

With passing of the 93rd Constitutional Amendment Bill by the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament, on 27th November 2001, and then by the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, on 14th may 2002, a major step was witnessed in the evolution of the 93rd Constitutional Amendment Bill into the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act. With this Act, for the first time since the framing of the Constitution, was a Fundamental Right added to the Constitution of India. The Indian Constitution now guarantees eight years of elementary education to each and every child in the country.53 After Article 21 of the Constitution, the following Article on right to education was inserted namely “21-A. The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6-14 years in such manner as the state may, by law, determine”.54

4.3. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment

The Compulsory Education Act facilitated the Panchayat Raj Institutions to participate in education related activities at grassroots level. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992) have provided for decentralization of powers and responsibilities to these local bodies. The basic function of democratic decentralization is to ensure that development planning is made more responsive and adaptable to regional and local needs of the population. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment identified 29 subjects for transfer to the panchayats, including primary and secondary education, adult and non-formal education, libraries, technical training and vocational education. All state governments enacted their state Panchayat Raj Acts in order to realize the Constitutional mandate of decentralized democracy and development.55

53 Ibid., p. 1.
54 Ibid., p. 28.
Education is one of the subjects that was recommended in the eleventh and twelfth scheduled of the 73\textsuperscript{rd} and 74\textsuperscript{th} amendments to the Constitution for transfer to the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Hence it may anticipated that once the states have completed the task of devolving power and responsibilities to the local governance, the implementing agencies of the fundamental right of the child to education, in the state, would be the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

The experience of the states, in the matter of devolution of powers, has been rather slow. On the other hand, some states, notably Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, have enacted new legislations giving power to parents and PRI members in school, through the formation of School Education Management Committees (SEMC) and School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC) respectively.\textsuperscript{56}

Particularly SEMCs in Andhra Pradesh have representation of parents, teachers and PRI members. The issues and decisions regarding education and school at the village/habitation level would be taken at the community level, so that the community is more aware about the school resource, functions of teachers, enrolment, dropout and monitoring. It further strengthens their contribution to developing the school. It is understood that communities are the main actors in school related activities.

4.4. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF)–2005

National Curriculum Framework 2005 is a principal document which provides a means of evolving a national system of education, recommending a core component derived from the vision of national development. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) prepared the school curriculum after a number of deliberations made across India. As part of this effort, it has prepared and circulated a new national curriculum framework which will indicate to all those who will be engaged in writing the new school textbooks, the guidelines within which they will have to work.

An important curriculum development principle was recommended by the National Policy on Education-1986 when it envisaged that, “The National System of Education will be based on a national curriculum framework which contains a common core along with other components that are flexible. The common core will include the history of India’s freedom movement, the Constitutional obligations and other content essential to nurture national identity. These elements will cut across subject areas and will be designed to promote values such as India’s common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes . . . . . and inculcation of the scientific temper.”

With the major recommendation of NPE, 1986, that the implementation of education policy and emergent trends in education should be reviewed periodically, the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been engaged in a major exercise of reworking the school curriculum. As part of this effort it has prepared and circulated a new national curriculum framework. The responsive initiative towards this was “The National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education; A Framework”, 1988, the first document detailing a national curricular framework in schools. A second review carried out by the NCERT and this was entitled “National Curriculum Framework for School Education”, 2000. Both this and the present document “National Curriculum Framework”, 2005 perforce address a number of common themes like language education, medium of instruction, the need for common school system at all stages, of social cohesion, secularism and national integration and the relevance of these issues to the entire educational process.

The National Curriculum Framework 2005, a part of providing a common understanding on curriculum aspects in India, it also emphasized strengthening Panchayat Raj Institutions by the adoption of a more streamlined approach to encourage community participation as a means of enhancing quality and accountability.

While explaining the community participation in the school, the framework elaborates that parents and community members could come into the school as resource persons to

57 GOI (Government of India), 1986, op. cit.
share their knowledge and experiences in relation to a particular topic being studied. Regarding community contribution for maintaining schools, the framework says that “community involvement can also be sought for maintaining the school and its facilities. There are examples of local contributions for building school boundary walls, augmenting facilities, and so on. However, community participation must not mean the economic burdening of poor families. On the other hand, there can be an understanding that school space can be shared with the community for local events and that there will be some collective responsibility in maintaining its premises.”

The framework clearly emphasized the role of community and parents participation in overall development of children education. It said that the participation of the community in the child’s world of education and learning should allow for the community to:

a. Transfer oral history like dealing with folklore and traditional knowledge like sowing, harvesting, monsoons, traditional crafts etc. to children, while the school encourages critical reflection wherever it is required.

b. Support children in their exploration and creation of knowledge and information.

c. Support children in their practice of democracy through their participation in information generation, planning, monitoring and evaluation with local government and school.

d. Participate in setting criteria for vocational training.

e. Monitor the realization of children’s rights as well as violations of these rights.

f. Enable the village to become a learning environment for children realizing the concept of the ‘village as a school’.

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 strongly emphasized the importance of mother tongue language at the primary stage of child’s learning. Most of the tribal communities in India speak their own languages and some of them are not aware of the

59 GOI (Government of India), December 2005, op. cit., p. 89.
60 Ibid., pp. 88-89.
state languages, which are called official languages. The tribal children are not exposed to the official languages and many studies found that they are well versed in their own languages. It is in this context the National curriculum Framework emphasized that during the primary school it said, “Child’s languages must be accepted as they are, with no attempt to correct them. By Class IV, if rich and interesting exposure is made available, the child will herself acquire the standard variety and the rules of correct orthography, but care must be taken to honour and respect the child’s home language(s)/mother tongue(s)”\textsuperscript{61} It further explains that “while helping children to use their home language and make a transition to the school language, teachers many seek inputs from local languages speakers to facilitate communication in the mother tongue, teaching of languages and creating material. The school must explore opportunities for active engagement by parents and the community in the process of learning”.\textsuperscript{62}

As we know planning is an important aspect in the implementation of any programme or activity, the National Curriculum Framework 2005 on this aspect explained that micro planning, which includes village level mapping of school participation (non-enrolled children, attendance patterns, children with special needs, etc.), as well as identification of human resource, allows the school to plan a more realistic basis for every child. It also recognized the financial allocation and accountability of them in a more transparent manner. In this aspect the framework said that “it is necessary that financial allocations permit greater flexibility regarding schemes and norms, and also greater transparency and accountability of budget allocations and expenditure”.\textsuperscript{63}

4.5. Community Participation in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

In the light of the above discussion about community participation in education, it is also important to highlight the provisions made in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. For ensuring free elementary education to all children between the age of six years and 14 years, the National Democratic Alliance government launched the SSA in the year 2001 and brought a constitutional amendment in 2002 making elementary education a fundamental

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., pp. 88-89.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p. 104.
right\textsuperscript{64}. Community is the core actor in the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. The policy is made in such a way that the community plans and implements the education programme for achieving greater results at the grassroots level. The community involvement in the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan starts with the preparation of micro level planning at the beginning of every academic year. It also made the provision that under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, funds for the programme flow through community based bodies for all school related expenditures. This issue of community participation in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is discussed in chapter four in detail.

5. Summing up

The discussion above has attempted to explore various policy issues related to community participation and their involvement in general and primary education in tribal areas in particular. The whole discussion has been divided into four phases for easy understanding. If we closely observe the Indian education scenario, it is clear that some of the policies and commissions’ recommendations made a landmark and sea change in the Indian education system. Based on this observation it is felt the need to discus various policy issues on primary education in tribal areas in a phased manner. As it is observed there is no single education policy specially meant for education of scheduled tribes in India. Education policies formulated since India’s independence tend to discuss issues related to all sections in the Indian society, and only sparse information is available in the existing policies with particular reference to primary education in tribal areas. Based on this limitation, the researcher tried to explore as much as possible all the means to elaborate the issues related to policy on primary education in tribal areas.

The first phase, that is the period from 1951 to the mid 1960s, is one in which the Constitution provides certain protection and safeguards to the Scheduled Tribes along with the Scheduled Castes and other backward Classes. Its objective is to bring them up educationally and economically to a level where they can be on par with the other community members in the society. This phase also witnessed ‘Tribal Panchsheel’ during Jawaharlal Nehru period, which is an important document for understanding tribal

\textsuperscript{64} Right to education at the elementary level has been made one of the Fundamental Rights under right to life and personal liberty by the 86\textsuperscript{th} constitutional amendment of 2002.
tradition and culture. It is recommended that tribal tradition and culture should be integrated in education process too. As discussed in the first phase, the recommendations of various commissions/committees like Kher Committee (1953), Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), Elwin Committee (1959), Dhebar Commission (1960) etc. were also important developments. Most of these commissions/committees have recommended the decentralization of education. Followed by all these developments in the first phase, the Indian Education Commission came up with various recommendations for improving primary education in tribal areas in a decentralized manner.

The second phase starts with National Policy on Education, 1968 which was the first ever education policy in India. The significance of the third phase was the adoption of the National Policy on Education, 1986, which strongly emphasized universal primary education. It accepted universal enrolment and retention of children up to 14 years of age, substantial improvement in the quality of education, and compulsory education to all children by 1995 irrespective of their caste, community and region across India. The children belonging to Scheduled Tribes are not exempted from this policy decision.

The significance of the fourth phase is the Programme of Action (PoA), 1992. The National Policy on Education, 1986 was reviewed during 1990-92 by the Acharya Ramamurthi Committee (1990) and N. Janardan Reddy Committee (1992) and necessary amendments were made, on the basis of which, the Programme of Action (1992) was chalked out and based on its recommendations provisions were made in the eighth plan. The most important and significant land mark in the decentralized process in the Indian democracy was 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1992, which provided for the local governments to participation actively in the decision making process at local level. It enhanced allocation of resources and powers to the community members in turn which provided them for more participation in the planning process.

The other important landmark during the fourth phase is that for the first time education became a fundamental right to the children below the age of 14 years. Many of the states amended their laws by providing more space and focus to the community members to act and participate in school related activities. With the result, the state governments formed
village/habitation level education committees, parent-teacher associations, mothers’ committees with the support from the members in Panchayat Raj Institutions. In some of the states like Andhra Pradesh, the PRI members also made part of these committees to look into the issues related to school and education at village level.

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 prepared by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) also stressed the importance of community participation in the school related activities. While explaining the community participation in the school, the framework elaborates that parents and community members could come into the school as resource persons to share their knowledge and experiences. Regarding the importance of planning process, the framework said that micro planning at school level with the active participation of the community members is important for identifying various local resources.

To sum up, community participation is an important aspect for achieving Universalization of Elementary Education in India especially in the tribal areas that is recognized by most of the policies and recommendations of the various committees and commissions. Since India’s independence many efforts were made for universalizing elementary education, but the real effort started only during the third phase, that is, during National Policy on Education, 1986. The task of Universalization of Elementary Education was fulfilled during the fourth phase after Programme of Action, 1992 came into force. The issue of community participation in education became an important criterion during the fourth phase, and the community members were made part of the policy implementation for achieving larger goal of primary education in the tribal areas. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is one of such programmes to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education with community as main actors. In the next chapter an attempt is made to understand the issue of community participation in primary education during the implementation of various education programmes across in India.