CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the study

1.1.1 The Disadvantaged People in India

The disadvantaged people are those who are from the lower caste or class or both. This group comprise of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and the OBCs (other backward classes). Apart from these three groups, there are those who belong to the so called upper castes, but are below the poverty line (economically backward). Most "social scientists" identify the following categories of Indian population as disadvantaged (Gandhe, 1999, p. 3).

- Scheduled castes.
- Scheduled tribes.
- Woman living in villages (small towns).
- The rural poor: landless agricultural labourers, marginal farmers, small farmers, general artisans, traditional fishermen, shepherds, vagrants, monks and mendicants.
- The urban poor: slum dwellers, rickshaw pullers, beggars, prostitutes, roadside vendors, casual labourers, child-labourers etc.
- People living in hills, deserts, forests.
- Handicapped.

The term 'scheduled' caste/tribe is originally from the provision in the Government of India Act, 1935. The act contained an official schedule or list of castes/tribes in need of special Governmental assistance and protection. The term "Other
Backward Classes” was first used by a Committee appointed by the then Government of Bombay in 1928. Later the Kaka Kalekar Commission (known as Backward Classes Commission) finalised a list of communities to be considered as OBC’s. Then the Mandal Commission appointed by the Government of India made several recommendations for extending many constitutional benefits to the OBCs.

"About 580 million or almost 60 percent of India’s estimated population of 1998 belongs to the disadvantaged groups". (Gandhe, 1999, p. 3). It means that about 40 percent of the Indian population enjoys most of the socio-economic-political benefits. Paulo Freire addressed himself to the problem of illiteracy among peasants in Brazil. He attacked the culture of silence' inhabited by the peasants. He advocated a system of education wherein the learner had to win back his right to say “his own word”, and to “name the world”.

In India, the dilution in status of the Shudras will take centuries, it appears. While the progressive upper caste persons show their willingness to share their cake with the backward classes persons, the orthodox upper caste persons would like to eat the cake and have it too. “The orthodox new Brahmins shared the political objectives of the liberal new Brahmins. But unlike the latter they refused to countenance social action which was designed to weaken the traditional structure of Indian society. Politically the concept of equality has struck roots but in practice the renaissance sought by the liberal Brahmins never came”. (Gore, 1994, p. 8). On the part of the institutions, the ideals with which it starts off is left behind compromising a slow progressive growth in favour of the backward for a quick growth in favour of the urban student. This deal is struck in terms of curricula too. For example, One of the objectives of IGNOU is to extend education to the disadvantaged sections of the Indian population. But the truth is that almost 85 percent of its enrolment is from urban dwellers and almost 70 percent are registered for two programs above viz: management and computers both being relevant to urban-corporate life (Gandhe, 1999, p. 5).
As per 1996 census, the total population of Goa is 11,69,793 and the scheduled caste population is 24,364 which is 2.08 percent of the total population. Five communities (Bhangi, Mahar, Chambhar, Mahyanshi, Mang) have been notified as scheduled castes by the Government of Goa. There is no scheduled tribes notification at all, but 376 ST persons (not of Goa origin) live in Goa.

The Gaudes, Velips, Dhangars, Kunbis, Dhobhis, Nhavi, Koli, Nathjogi, Gosavi, Kumbhar, Teli, Shimpi, Christian Mahar, Kalaikar/Blacksmith/tin smiths/Pagui/Gabit, Christian barber, Satarkar and Bhandari Naik are declared as socially and educationally backward for providing them protection under Article 15(4) (no discrimination) and Article 16(4) (reservation).

In theory the access to education through the reservation policy of the Central and State Government for the SCs, STs and OBCs sounds good enough. But in the real sense, access to education has meaning only if those who enter are able to continue at the same pace as others. Otherwise, undesirable tension retards their absorption in the mainstream of education. The problem of disadvantaged children are often rooted much deeper in their childhood environment-home and social.

1.1.2 Constitutional Safeguards for the Disadvantaged People in India

There is no denying that for centuries the disadvantaged sections of Indian society were trampled and oppressed by the educated and so called high castes and upper classes. The Indian constitution recognized this fact and it considers all equal in the eyes of the law and at the same time certain special provision have been made for the protection of these disadvantaged sections of the society. The interests of these classes are safeguarded to bring them upto the level of other advanced communities in India. Part-III of the Fundamental Rights containing Articles 14 to 16 ascribes the Right to Equality. Article 14 assures equality before and equal protection by the law. However, the fact is that the articles promising equality before and equal protection by the law is yet to be materialised...in the real sense even after 50 years of the commencement of the constitution. Even today we have habitations of people living in hovels, using a pavement
for cooking and a roadside tap for their personal needs. Nearly one-half of our total population has never been to school. Article 15 prohibits discriminates on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. But the contemporary scenario gives a different picture. In the caste-ridden Indian society, incidents of violence and atrocities against the lower castes and dalits is not uncommon. Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. At the same time the constitution made provisions for reservation of jobs for SCs and STs. In recent years such provision have been extended to the other backward classes with the exclusion of the advanced sections or the creamy layer among the backward for the reservation of jobs after implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations. Article 17 stresses for abolition of untouchability. But till today there are certain states in India which have a very strong caste hegemony. Untouchability prevails very much in these states. “Untouchability and caste discrimination exists not only among illiterate rural folk but at the highest level of bureaucracy and government. IAS Officers, Superintendents of Police and Income-Tax Commissioners all complained of discrimination. These officials have not been promoted, have been labelled corrupt or subject to harassment because of their caste” (Kumar, 2000, p. 39).

Traffic in human beings and beggars and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited under Article 23 and any contravention of this provisions is an offense punishable in accordance with the law. However, with organised mafia in cities it would be difficult to believe that organised beggary is not taking place. Labour contractors are well known in port cities and industrial cities. It is an open secret that this law is violated in its various forms.

Though Article 24 states that no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any hazardous employment, it has been observed that child labour very much exists in India. It is a well known fact that India has a bad record of violation of children’s rights. There are about 44 million children in India who are employed in different occupations. “Children as young as three are found in the labour force. They weave carpets from dawn to desk. Others work in
dangerous chemical factories. They work 15 or more hours a day, frequently in poor lighting. They are preferred to adults because they are compliant and work for less payment". (Myron, 1995).

Further the Directive Principles of State policy which are fundamental in the governance of the country contain several articles relating to welfare of children and the weaker section of society. Article 39 directs the states to make policy in such a manner that all men and women would have the right to an adequate means of livelihood and that the children are not forced by economic necessity to enter a vocation unsuited to their age or strengths, and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation. It may be mentioned here that the UN convention organised on November 20, 1989 emphasized the need for protecting the rights of children. It laid down certain provisions emphasizing the need to extend special care to the child as stated in the Geneva Declaration of Rights of the Child 1924 and adopted by the General Assembly on November 20, 1959, and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23 & 24). The Government of India recognized the Rights of the child adopted at the convention of the United Nations (November 20, 1989) and acceded to the same on December 11, 1997. In the Declaration of the Rights of the child it is stressed that the child being of tender age and by reason of his/her physical and mental immaturity deserved special safeguards including legal protection.

The Indian constitution further stresses that the children be afforded opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in the conditions of freedom and dignity and that the childhood and young are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment. And Article 45 states that free and compulsory education for all children till the age of 14 should be provided within ten years of the commencement of the constitution.

Moreover, Article 46 emphasizes the need for protection of educational and economic interests of SC, ST and other weaker sections. However, due to several obstacles the desired objective is yet to be realised even often 50 years of the
commencement of our constitution. Today there are about 12 million out of school children in India and the fact is that all these children are from the SC, ST and other backward communities. It is a known fact that those in a disadvantaged positions once continue to remain so. Inspite of the several measures taken by the Central and State Governments children belonging to the backward communities continue to remain out of the school due to various compulsions.

1.1.3 First-Generation Learners — The Disadvantaged Group

First Generation Learners are the first in their family lineage to get formal education. They generally belong to the socio-economically disadvantaged communities like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The ancestors of such learners were deprived of education due to various reasons. While the caste system trampled on their right to be educated, the right of equality guaranteed to them by the constitution remains mostly on paper. In reality the backward communities have a miserable life, distant from possibilities of being educated. It has been observed that they drop-out and stagnate often and if in case they reach SSC they do not absorb enough to compete with the privileged groups for further studies or employment.

The First Generation Learners have a number of handicaps while entering the school. They unlike the second or third generation learners basically do not get the necessary motivation to pursue academic studies. Their families acknowledge the value of education but do not have the sustained enthusiasm to educate their children. Such children mostly participate a great deal in domestic work and have poor exposure to the outside world. They suffer from many problems arising out of poverty and ignorance such as poor health, poor self-confidence, malnutrition etc.

The Governments (both Central and State) are providing many facilities such as free education, merit scholarships, free uniforms, mid-day meals, free rice grain etc to the children from disadvantaged communities in order to bring them at par with the
advantaged. Apart from these, the NGO's do make efforts to make education accessible to the disadvantaged groups.

From time to time, various commissions have made several recommendations for removal of inequalities in educational opportunities among the different sections of societies. The Education Commission (1964-66) described the widening distinctions in educational facilities for the "classes and the masses". It considered the their existing educational system as undemocratic and inconsistent with the ideals of an egalitarian society. The commission suggested that special attention be paid to the education of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. The National Policy of Education 1986, and its Program of Action (PoA) specially emphasizes "investment in the development of the young child, particularly from sections of the population in which first-generation learners predominate", (Part-V, 5.1). The NPE – 1986 further states, "First Generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and be given supplementary remedial instruction".

1.2 Need and Significance of the Study

First generation learners appear to be the most disadvantaged among all learners. They have the double handicap of having class/caste disadvantage as well as a totally illiterate background. These factors cripple the healthy learning of the first generation learners. Though the educational system promises benefit for all, generally the privileged sections and middle class reap the benefits. Though 70 percent of the country's population live in the villages, text books, teaching methods, the curriculums, teacher etc. suit mainly the urban middle classes. The National Policy of Education (1986) and its Program of Action (POA) subsequently modified in 1992 suggest several measures to be taken for learners from socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged groups. It states, "first generation learners should be allowed to get their own pace and be given supplementary remedial instruction". This is perhaps for the first time the Government of India has considered first generation learners as a priority group. There are no two views about the fact that before taking any step for the upliftment of this disadvantaged group,
we must understood them properly, their requirements and how do they differ from other sections of the society, and it is research that helps us in this direction.

To the best of the knowledge of the investigator so far only a limited number of studies have been conducted on first-generation learners (Kothari, 1964; Patil, 1989; Ramakrishnan, 1991; Mrinal et. al., 1994; Iyer, 1995; and Pradhan and Iyer, 1996).

Patel’s (1989) findings revealed that the unhealthy family climate did not permit the first generation learners to perform well in school. However, in a similar study, Ramaskrishnan (1991) found that the overall academic achievement of first generation learners was better than non-first generation learners. Though the two studies were conducted on different samples the contradictory findings necessitates further research in this area.

Mrinal et. al. (1994) found that first generation learners differed from non-first generation learners on family problems, school/college problems, social problems, and personal problems. But no further researches of this type have been conducted so far to substantiate these findings.

Iyer (1995) studied the educational and vocational aspiration among first generation learners and found that the majority of them had average and above levels of educational and occupational aspirations.

Pradhan and Iyer (1996) conducted a comparative study of educational and vocational aspirations of first and non-first generation learners. Though they found no significant differences between the two groups in educational aspirations, the non-first generation learners exhibited significantly higher vocational aspirations than the first generation learners. However, from only one study it is not possible to draw valid conclusions about the variation in educational and vocational aspirations between first and non-first generation learners. Moreover, both the above studies were purely quantitative in nature and standardized tools were used to measure the educational and
vocational aspirations of the subject. No attempts were made to find out the levels of educational and vocational aspirations in qualitative terms. Hence, in order to get a better comparative picture about educational and vocational aspirations between first and non-first generation learners it is necessary to conduct qualitative studies.

From the above mentioned studies it is evident that comprehensive and in-depth studies covering important psycho-social variables are yet to be conducted on first generation learners. All the studies conducted so far emphasized only a limited number of aspects. Hence, it was considered important to undertake the present study which is very indepth and comprehensive.

The present study besides contributing for expansion of knowledge in the field, is also expected to be useful for the policy makers, teachers, counsellors and researchers.

Considering that the literacy rate of India is 52 percent (1991 census) a large number of first generation learners are present in the current student population of India. This large group should be given due importance by policy planners in education.

The findings of the present study would help the policy makers in deciding about the appropriate steps to be taken to retain these children in schools and the type of education most relevant for this group. The study would aid teachers to plan for appropriate learning experiences of the first generation learners. It would also facilitate the teachers in understanding the psychology of the learner and his adjustment to the school environment. The study will help guidance workers, counsellors in guiding the first-generation learners effectively. Children suffer from nightmares due to an unsuitable curriculum, hostile peers and unsympathetic teachers. The counsellors can help the child in adjustment to the school environment and facing the ordeals of school while emerging victorious in academic studies.

Researchers working on this disadvantaged section of society have much to benefit from this study. The findings of the study would generate interest among
researchers working in this area for further on first generation learners. The dividing line between literate and illiterates determines many factors, which may be relevant for research.

Above all much has been studied about disadvantaged sections of Indian society in general but little about first generation learners. However, this study though on a modest scale is expected to add to an important but much neglected area of research.

1.3 Specification of the Problem

1.3.1 Objectives of the Study

The present investigation was conducted to study the:

1) socio-demographic background of first generation learners;
2) home background of first generation learners;
3) educational problems of first generation learners;
4) variation, if any, in social problems between first and non-first generation learners;
5) variation, if any, in emotional problems between first and non-first generation learners;
6) variation, if any, in home environment between first and non-first generation learners;
7) variation, if any, in emotional problems between boys and girls;
8) variation, if any, between boys and girls in social problems;
9) variation, if any, in self-concept between first and non-first generation learners;
10) variation, if any, in self-concept between boys and girls;
11) variation, if any, between first and non-first generation learners in attitude towards education;
12) variation, if any, in attitude towards education between boys and girls;
13) levels of educational and occupational aspirations of first and non-first generation learners;
14) variation, if any, in levels of educational and occupational aspirations between first and non-first generation learners;
15) different areas/fields of occupation aspired by first and non-first generation learners;
16) persons and factors influencing educational and occupational aspirations of first and non-first generation learners;
17) comparative dropout and stagnation trend in Classes I-X between first and non-first generation learners;
18) variation, if any, in dropout and stagnation between first and non-first generation learners;
19) difference, if any, between percentage of first and non-first generation learners successfully completing S.S.C. (Class-X) in ten years of schooling;
20) causes of dropout and stagnation among first generation learners;
21) perception of parents of first generation learners about the concept and importance of education.

1.3.2 Hypotheses of the Study

To realise the objectives of the study (except objective Nos. 1, 2, 3, 13, 16, 17, 20 and 21) the following hypotheses were formulated and tested.

1) There is no significant difference in social problems between first and non-first generation learners.
2) There is no significant difference in social problems between boys and girls irrespective of type of learners i.e. first or non-first generation learners.
3) There is no significant difference in social problems between first generation learner boys and girls.
4) There is no significant difference in emotional problems between first and non-first generation learners.
5) There is no significant difference in emotional problems between boys and girls irrespective of type of learners i.e. first generation or non-first generation learners.

6) There is no significant difference in emotional problems between first-generation learner boys and girls.

7) There is no significant difference in home environment between first and non-first generation learners.

8) There is no significant difference in home environment between boys and girls irrespective of type of learners i.e. first generation or non-first generation learners.

9) There is no significant difference in home environment between first generation learner boys and girls.

10) There is no significant difference in self-concept between first and non-first generation learners.

11) There is no significant difference in self-concept between boys and girls irrespective of type of learners i.e. first or non-first generation learners.

12) There is no significant difference in self-concept between first generation learner boys and girls.

13) There is no significant difference in attitude towards education between first and non-first generation learners.

14) There is no significance difference in attitude towards education between boys and girls irrespective of type of learners i.e. first and non-first generation learners.

15) There is no significant difference in attitude towards education between first generation learner boys and girls.

16) There is no significant difference between percentage first and non-first generation learners aspired for different levels of education.

17) There is no significant difference between percentage first and non-first generation learners aspired for different levels of occupation.

18) There is no significant difference between percentage of first and non-first generation learners aspired for different areas/fields of occupation.
19) There is no significant difference between first and non-first generation learners in percentage of:
   a) drop-out and stagnation (combined) in each class (Classes I to X);
   b) total dropout (dropout in Classes I – X taken together);
   c) total stagnation (in Classes I – X taken together);
   d) total dropout and stagnation (both dropout and stagnation taken together in Classes I – X).

20) There is no significant difference between percentage of first and non-first generation learners successfully completed S.S.C. (Class-X) in ten years of schooling.

1.3.3 Operational Definitions of Variables/Important Terms

The meaning of different variables/terms as used in the present study are given in the following paragraphs.

i) First Generation Learner

A first generation learner is a school student or a school dropout whose forefathers had not received any formal education. In other words, a first generation learner is the first in the family lineage to receive formal education.

ii) Drop-out

Premature withdrawal of a child from the school cycle before the completion of the prescribed school years is considered as drop-out (prescribed school years is 10 years in the present study).

iii) Stagnation

Stagnation means the retention of a child in the same grade/class for more than one year before completion of the prescribed school years (10 years in the present study).
iv) **Socio-Demographic Variables**

In the present study age, gender, caste, religion, language (mother tongue) and place of residence of the first generation learners were considered as socio-demographic variables.

v) **Home Background**

The home background of a first generation learner includes the following:

i. physical facilities at home;

ii. facilities for study at home;

iii. facilities for entertainment/use of leisure time;

iv. family members and relationship among them,

v. occupation and economic status of parents and siblings,

vi. involvement of children in different activities at home.

vi) **Educational Aspirations**

The educational aspiration of a child is the specific academic goal he/she sets for himself/herself. In other words, it is the specific educational qualification a child aspires to acquire.

vii) **Occupational Aspiration**

The occupational aspiration of a pupil is the specific career goal that the pupil sets for himself/herself. In other words, it refers to the specific occupation a child aspires to enter after leaving school.

viii) **Self-Concept**

Self-concept refers to an individual’s own way of looking at himself/herself. It includes what a person comes to known about himself/herself through experience, reflection and feedback from others. “The self-concept is an organised, cognitive structure comprised of a set of attitudes, beliefs and values that cut across all facets of experience and action organised and tying together a
variety of specific habits, outlooks, abilities, ideas and feelings a person displays (Wenar, 1985, p. 4505).

In the present study, Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) by Saraswat was used to measure the self-concept of the subjects. The self-concept dimension included in the questionnaire are physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual. The sum total of scores obtained by an individual student in the SCQ was considered as his/her self-concept score.

ix) Educational Problems

Educational problems in the present study refer to all the obstacles/difficulties faced by the students relating to their study in school as well as at home.

x) Social Problems

The term ‘social’ is used with reference to the relation of an individual to other individuals in society. Social problems include: ‘insecurity and loneliness’, ‘feeling of inadequacy’ and inferiority and shyness.

xi) Emotional Problems

Emotion is a complex state of organism by strong feeling and usually an impulse towards a definite form of behaviour. Emotional problems include: hypersensitivity, feeling of discouragement, hurt feeling and irritability, fear and rage, grief and sorrow, jealousy and anger.

xii) Attitude Towards Education

By attitude we mean positive or negative feelings that an individual holds about objects, persons, or ideas.
An attitude is an emotion or affect that is directed towards a specific person, object or situation" (Beck, 1996). In the present study, the feelings of a student towards education is considered as attitude towards education. Sum total of scores obtained by a student on the standardized form of the Attitude Scale Towards Education by S.L. Chopra is considered as his/her attitude score.

xiii) Home Environment

The human elements around a child in the family is called home environment. In the present study, home environment includes the following:
- Interpersonal relations
- Freedom at home
- Attention and care
- Acceptance
- Peace and harmony at home.

1.3.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the present study is very wide. It intended to study the socio-demographic background, home background, socio-emotional problems, educational problems, educational and occupational aspirations, self-concept, home environment, attitude towards education of the first generation learners in Goa and comparing them with non-first generation learners on these variables. It also investigated the comparative dropout and stagnation trend among first and non-first generation learners including the causes associated with the same along with the perception of the illiterate parents about the concept and importance of education. The findings of the study can be generalized to the first generation learners studying in other schools of Salcete Taluke in particular and other schools of Goa in general provided the characteristics of the pupils and the context remained the same as that of the subjects included in the study.

The limitations of the study are as follows:

1) Only four schools having Classes I to X and having high concentration of first generation learners were included in the study.
2) Only the pupils registered in Class-I in the academic year 1987-88 were considered to study drop-out and stagnation trend. For this purpose only two schools were finally included. (Other schools did not co-operate in the matter).

3) Students of Classes VIII and IX (both boys and girls) were considered for administration of written self-report tools.

4) All the written self-report tools except the Educational Problem Questionnaire and Home Background Questionnaire were administered on both first generation learners and non-first generation learners in each school. Home Background Questionnaire and Educational Problem Questionnaire was administered only on the first generation learners home background.

5) Interviews were conducted only with some of the subjects belonging to different categories of subjects selected for the purpose and agreed to participate.

6) Only 30 parents of first generation learners were interviewed to study their perceptions about the concept and importance of education.

7) Only 29 teachers agreed to participate in the study.

8) Data relating to the causes of dropout were collected by interviewing the teachers, dropout children and their parents. However, data relating to the causes of stagnation were collected only from the teachers and academically backward first generation learners.