CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1- Introduction

The Indian government has strived to achieve development in its social sector through various policies and programs. Improving health and education indicators has always been a part of the various five-year plans (First, Second and Third five-year plans from 1951-66) but it was in the XI five-year plan that the government focused exclusively on social sector development. For the plan period 2007-12, the govt set out targeted goals for poverty alleviation and health and education improvement such as to reduce poverty and accelerate growth and income, reduce infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, provide clean drinking water and reduce malnutrition among children, reduce dropout rates in elementary schools and develop minimum standards of education attainment at the elementary level, lower the gender gap in literacy etc.

Improving education indicators was high on the Indian government’s development agenda\(^1\) since the 1950s. Through the various five-year plans\(^2\), national policies on education\(^3\) and several programmes and committees the Indian Government has repeatedly reviewed this goal and the implementation strategies in the states. The literacy rate in India has consistently increased over the years from 18.33% in 1951 to 74.04% in 2011\(^4\), along with the allocation for education in the annual budgets\(^5\). The Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66) aimed at intensifying efforts to improve educational outcomes. A great deal of attention was given to opening new primary, middle and high schools, increasing the number of teachers and providing access to education to the entire population. Nevertheless, despite allocating huge sums of money and substantially increasing the number of schools and teachers, the

\(^1\) Article 45 of the Indian Constitution, says that every child should be given free and compulsory education till 14 years of age. In 1976, education was included as a subject in the Concurrent List, which gave both central and state governments jurisdiction over the subject. In August 2009, elementary education for children between 6 and 14 years was made a fundamental right through the Right to Education Act.

\(^2\) The government accorded high priority to education from the Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66).

\(^3\) National Policy of Education 1968 and 1986; Programme of Action in 1991-92

\(^4\) Provisional Population Totals - India, 2011, Census of India (www.censusindia.gov.in)

\(^5\) Expenditure on education as percentage of Gross Domestic Product- 1950-51- 1.19%; 2000-2001- 4.22% (www.indiastat.com)
government could not achieve its goal of universal elementary education and a huge number of children still remain out of school.

The 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1993 led to the establishment of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in all villages in the country. This provided an opportunity for greater community participation in monitoring, supervising and supporting government plans and programmes at all levels. A policy shift in this regard is noted from the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-1990) onwards. Official documents show that a conscious effort was made by the government to involve civil society organisations (CSO) in service delivery (Chandhoke 2009). The Government of India also partnered with the CSOs and non-government organisations (NGOs) in the field of education to improve the delivery mechanisms and also the quality of education (GoI, 1997:2.64, 2007:9). The involvement of many organisations was legalized by signing memorandums-of-understanding (MoUs) with different state governments in order to help in delivery of social services including education. The government evolved this strategy in the social service sector to bring in innovations and efficiency in service delivery mechanisms. In the education sector, CSOs were brought in for innovation in teaching-learning methods and education delivery mechanisms that were felt lacking in government schools. The government realised that universalisation of elementary education may be too big a task for a single delivery system and hence encouraged and legitimized the role of private providers.

Organisations working in the area of elementary education have increased access to education of disadvantaged children. They have also improved the quality of

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6 According to estimates in this plan, about one-fourth of the children still remained out of school, the socially and economically disadvantaged groups were barely included in the school system and 64% of the total students enrolled in schools would dropout by Class V. The main deterrents cited were the socio-economic compulsions of the families, irrelevant curriculum and the lack of essential facilities in schools. The targeted approach planned to be adopted here was to adjust the schooling hours to suit the convenience of the groups that were being left behind, to provide economically viable and educationally relevant facilities in schools and to promote non-formal systems of learning (Chapter 21, GoI, 1980:352-354)

7 Out of those children who attend school, half of them dropped out before completing the elementary level (GoI, 2007:8).

8 Some examples CSOs working in partnership with the state government for better delivery of education are Eklavya, Samavesh and Room to Read (Madhya Pradesh), Digantar and Bodh Shiksha Samiti (Rajasthan), Azim Premji Foundation (Karnataka), Pratham (Maharashtra) etc

9 The scope of the involvement of private providers’ in education has expanded and is not just limited to offering only financial assistance to government programmes (GoI, 2007:9).
schooling (Jagannathan, 2000). These organisations\(^\text{10}\) influence mainstream education by replicating their own models of education delivery in the government schools. They act as catalysts and not as large-scale providers of education. These organisations found that the demand for schooling was strong even among the poorest and most disadvantaged communities and the causes for the poor response to education could be eradicated by improving the quality of education in schools and the responsiveness of the system itself.

1.2- Concepts Included in the Study

1.2.1- Civil Society

Civil Society is that realm of social activity, which is separate from the state and market. It promotes associational life, good society and outlines a public sphere to discuss and debate ideas. There is no consensus as to where civil society is located or what it actually comprises of. Scholars who use the term civil society are themselves not very clear with the definition and hence prefer to give a working definition while using the concept (Jayaram, 2005). Some debates locate civil society as residing in the economy, property rights and markets and others conclude it as being independent from the market as well as the state. For lack of a proper definition authors are more certain about what they do not mean by civil society than what they mean by it (ibid). In the accessed literature, the term Civil Society is often used in a very broad sense and could encompass all non-state aspects of social life i.e. not only will it include the contractual relations of the modern state, but also the traditional social networks, communities, the voluntary sector and social movements (Joseph, 2002), along with unions, self-help groups, foundations, social service agencies etc. (Mohan, 2002). Some arguments of civil society are based on disillusionment with the state and its method of functioning. Members of the civil society are then called upon to gather all their resources to form their own collective endeavour against the state (Kaviraj, 2001).

\(^{10}\) A study of six organisations working in primary education in India was carried out [MV Foundation, Secunderabad (A.P), Bodh Shiksha Samiti, Jaipur (Rajasthan), Pratham, Mumbai (Maharashtra), Eklavya, Bhopal (MP), CEMD, Delhi and Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre, Chittor (AP)]. The survey showed that the organisations brought in significant innovations at the micro-level and enhanced the implementation of large-scale government programmes. Quality of education as defined by these six organisations goes beyond the learning outcomes of students and perceives the school as a place for self-expression, acquiring cognitive and non-cognitive skills, nurturing the spirit of enquiry in the child, etc.
Neera Chandhoke (2003) states that the concept of civil society has been ‘reduced to a ragbag’ into which everything that is not the state or family has been included. She strongly feels that civil society is what the practitioners make of it. The actors, who are the legal citizens of a country, are important because it is ultimately they who comprise of the civil society and make it work. There is nothing in civil society which will automatically ensure the victory of democratic projects. Civil society only provides the actors with the values, space and the inspiration to battle for democracy. If the citizens follow undemocratic practices then the civil society also gets termed as undemocratic (ibid). And since the state and civil society are essential preconditions for the existence of the other, a democratic political society will ensure the working of a democratic civil society and vice versa.

In recent times, the interest in civil society lies not for the capacity of the concept *per se* but because scholars have their own apprehensions about the role played by the state in delivery of services. Therefore most often we come across literature on ‘state *versus* civil society’ rather than ‘state and civil society’ (Jayaram, 2005). But we can neither be indifferent to the existence of the state, nor can we dispense with the state (Chandhoke, 2005). Since the concept of civil society has been imported from Eastern and central Europe, where it mobilized itself against the state in 1989 it was generally felt the civil society was autonomous of the state and sometimes even pitched against it. But civil society cannot be autonomous from the state since the state itself provides legal and political setting for it to exist and maintain itself (ibid).

Civil society has always been present and has grown on its own addressing various socio-economic issues. It has been actively involved in the process of providing services in sectors of health, education, livelihood etc. Civil society has critiqued the state and even posed as a challenge to it when the latter has failed to fulfill its responsibilities, mainly social and economic welfare activities. But conceptually it is not clear whether civil society should be given a prime role in

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11 Scholars such as Rajni Kothari, Atul Kohli and Prem Shankar Jha argue for the reduction of the state’s role since it has failed to maintain order. However Neera Chandhoke advocates bringing the state back into the civil society discourse since state institutions promote democracy and social justice in their own way (Jayaram, 2005).
fulfilling the welfare agenda of the government or whether it should work in partnership with the government to implement its policies and programmes.

For the purpose of this study, we look at civil society in the form of non-profit making organisations. These organisations work independent of the state but may collaborate with it to improve the latter’s service delivery capacity. These civil society organisations may be working only in specific geographical locations and may target to improve the living conditions of a specific ethnic or social group, but they are successful in bringing about change and improvement in that area.

1.2.2 - Inclusive Governance

In the wake of globalization, neo-liberal theories shifted focus away from the monopolistic control of the state and towards the involvement of other players; a shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance’. Inclusive governance is defined by Dias and Sudarshan (2007) as “…all the people- including the poor, women, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups- have the right to participate in governance processes and influence the decisions that affect them.” The concept of inclusive governance thus includes several characteristics to ensure that the decision-making process is open, transparent, reasonably inclusive, with set roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders and where the decisions are flexible and open to revision with time (www.trustnetinaction.com).

Inclusive governance empowers the stakeholders/ individuals who have an interest and awareness about the decision-making process. It provides the people involved with appropriate knowledge, resources and facilities to organise themselves and influence the decision making process where they can develop their own local strategies and options to solve their problems. The decisions and strategies are flexible and most often open to revision with time. More importantly, inclusive governance provides a platform where the stakeholders recognize the process as being legitimate, even though the decision arrived at may not be fully supported by everyone involved. It legitimizes the accountability of all the involved actors for the formulation and implementation of the decision taken.

Several non-state actors, stakeholders and individuals are involved in the process of inclusive governance and in the various stages of decision making and
implementation, but the state is perceived as the main actor. In this situation, governance became an interaction between the state and the rest of the actors which are recognized as the civil society. Subsequently, the civil society has come to be looked upon as the provider and/or facilitator of social services especially at the local or the grassroots level. In order to ensure maximum participation of the people in the governance process, the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts to the Indian Constitution were passed in 1993 which helped establish at the grassroots level, institutions of local self-government. Through these Acts, a decentralised process of participation and decision making was set up with ‘panchayati raj institutions’ in the rural areas and ‘municipalities’ in the urban areas. Decentralisation was thus looked upon as a tool to ensure maximum inclusion and participation of all the sections of people in the governance process.

1.3- Review of Literature

The structure of education perceived by the Indian state after independence and the policies adopted thereafter in the early years might be indicative of the state of education in present times. The concept of national education began as part of the Anti-Partition Movement in 1905 and continued in the form of experimental institutions formed outside the British system of education throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Ghosh: 2007). After independence the then Union Education Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was keen on revolutionizing the system of education as it existed under the British rule, keeping in view the aims and aspirations of the new Indian state.

1.3.1- State-led Supply of Education: National Education Commissions and Policies

The constitution made education a state subject where the responsibilities were divided between the central and the state governments. Moreover, education was placed under the non-justiciable Directive Principles of State Policy where the Indian Constitution could only direct the state to ensure appropriate measures for providing education to the citizens. The foundation of development and planning in India was laid with the intention to promote the interest of the industrial class and not the intellectual progress of the masses. The capitalist and propertied class of the Indian society which constituted the small ‘civil society’ since the beginning of the
nineteenth century was not interested in the advancement of mass primary education. For them the masses were a source of cheap labour and therefore they saw no reason in building an education system for their intellectual progress (Kumar, 1991:181-182). The Radhakrishnan Commission\textsuperscript{12} (1948) and the Mudaliar Commission\textsuperscript{13} (1952) focused on the areas of education most needed for the ruling elite group of politicians and industrialists.

The government promoted ‘basic education’ after independence, but soon lost track of it by the mid-1960s. Lack of structural changes such as multiple-entry and part-time education continued to result in wastage and stagnation in elementary education. The state’s commitment towards the constitutional directive of universal elementary education (UEE) continued only by opening/constructing new schools and educational institutions with each five-year plan, without any logical method or rationale behind expanding elementary education facilities (Kumar, 1991:185).

It was only by the 1960s that serious steps were taken to promote education in general and elementary education in particular. The Union Education Minister set up the Education Commission in 1966 under the leadership of Dr. D.S. Kothari. The commission was given the responsibility of advising on the development of all aspects of education so that a national policy could emerge. In 1968 the first National Policy of Education emerged with various recommendations including a common school system where access to education would be given to children from all strata of society, vocational education in middle and secondary school level and improving education quality by utilization of existing facilities and resources. The commission also gave expenditure directives on education to the government where it recommended a budget expenditure of 6% of the GDP on education as a part of governmental commitment towards UEE (Ghosh, 2007: 457). The Kothari Commission report underwent recommendations from the Parliamentary Committee

\textsuperscript{12} In 1948, a University Commission was appointed under Dr. S. Radhakrishnan to reconstruct university education to meet the demand for scientific, technical and other man-power needed for development of the country. It talked of technical advancement, extreme specialization and professional education. one of the most important recommendations of the commission was reorganization of the secondary education in order to develop university education (Ghosh: 2007, pp 452-455)

\textsuperscript{13} The Secondary Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. A.L. Mudaliar submitted its report in 1953, while developing the curricula for higher secondary education it aimed at establishing multipurpose schools to provide various courses in commerce, agriculture, fine arts etc so that the students are diverted from university education and explore different possibilities according to their aptitudes (Ghosh: 2007, p 455)
and after being discussed in both Houses of Parliament, the first National Policy of Education was passed in July 1968. The resolutions initially given by the Commission were diluted through the various stages of discussions and implementations and only the basic framework remained for government execution.

After 20 years, another National Policy of Education was drafted in 1986 followed by a Programme of Action in 1992. NPE 1986 drew on a national system of education with equal access to all children irrespective of caste, class, sex etc. The policy emphasized upon three aspects in relation to elementary education namely, universal access and enrolment, universal retention and substantial improvement in the quality of education (MHRD, 1986). In addition, the NPE 1986 highlighted the Kothari Commission recommendation of the 6% GDP expenditure on education which had not been achieved yet and said that the NPE implementation should be reviewed every five years. But even after these two NPE, several studies have shown that the basic skills of students (such as simple text reading and basic arithmetic calculations) and their learning levels in government schools, leaves a lot to be desired. Even the recommendations on Kothari Commission have not been fulfilled by now, since the government has been able to allocate only about 3.7% of the GDP per year for education till now. An additional 1.32% of GDP might be required to fulfill the present commitments of the government towards elementary education (Jha, 2007). Currently the individual state governments are assigning more financial resources towards education than the central government. But the goal of spending 6% of the GDP on education can only be achieved through larger allocation by the central government (Chowdhury and Bose, 2004).

Another concern addressed by the NPE of 1986 was the provision of decent infrastructure for school education as part of providing educational opportunities to all students. It was to be the responsibility of the state to provide infrastructure for education, accessible to all sections of the society. This included provisions for free text-books, stationery and mid-day meals to students in government schools, supplying schools with blackboards and other teaching equipment, orientation of teachers etc. and various other provisions for higher education. Inability to provide

15 Average figure for allocation of GDP towards education for the years 1991 to 2006 (Source: www.indiastat.com).
basic learning conditions till now, has come in the way of achieving desired retention rates, transition rates and completion rates of students in elementary education.

The most recent effort by the Indian government is the Right to Education Act (86th Amendment 2002, bill passed in August 2009) which makes elementary education a fundamental right. As a result of this development, the responsibilities of the central and state governments, in this sector, have increased manifold. Not only does the government need to provide good quality schooling to all children between the specified age groups but also bring within the purview of education about 35 million children who are out-of-school (Jagannathan, 2000). Most of the historically disadvantaged groups (such as scheduled castes and schedules tribes) are still deprived of schools within a reasonable distance from their residence. Moreover, the Act has shifted the obligation of education from the state, to the parent/guardian [Fundamental Duty under Article 51A (k)]. Since most of the parents are poor and illiterate themselves the prospects of even a minimal level of education and literacy appear to be bleak for a substantial section of the population (Jha, 2007).

In a large developing country like India, there are numerous gaps left by the state in the development process- sometimes due to lack of planning, sometimes due to lack of funds and sometimes lack of awareness etc. The society has always organized itself around such issues which have been neglected by the state, in order to raise awareness about them or to try and fill in these gaps. The modern day NGOs and CSOs are mostly development-oriented voluntary organisations. One of the most important roles that the society has played in contemporary India has been to act as a watchdog to the state and in doing so, push the state to be more accountable and responsive to the needs and demands of the citizens thereby creating a framework of participative and mobilisation politics (AGDI, 2008). In this context, the Indian state is viewing public-private partnerships in the field of education to improve the delivery mechanisms and also quality of education (GoI, 2007:9). A policy shift can be noted from the seventh five-year plan (1985-1990) onwards where the official documents show a conscious effort by the government to involve civil society organisations in service delivery (Chandhoke 2009). The NPE 1986 and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) started in 2001 also talk of community ownership of the school system.
1.3.2- Civil Society Intervention in Elementary Education

In India, it is difficult to bring the entire gamut of civil society initiatives under one common definition or derive a common characteristic for it, since every known terminology for civil society leaves out some group, some element or the other. Many ad-hoc initiatives emerge and collapse quickly thus making the Indian civil society vibrant (AGDI, 2008). For example, the initial role played by the voluntary organisations started by Mahatma Gandhi and his disciples, was to fill in the gaps left by the government in development, such as forming cooperatives for marketing handloom and dairy products. The volunteers helped in other areas of development as well, such as running literacy classes for adults at night (ibid). Perhaps the earliest forms of community participation in education have been the missionary schools\(^\text{16}\) and madrasas\(^\text{17}\). These institutions have been imparting education by establishing educational institutions\(^\text{18}\) for many centuries in the past.

After independence, when the state took charge of universalising elementary education in the country, the voluntary organisations and community initiatives turned towards providing education mainly to dropouts and out-of-school children so that they may attain vocational skills and be able to achieve a sustainable livelihood. In recent times, however, the role of civil society has grown to focus on what goes on inside the classroom, the quality of teaching and learning taking place in the class, the retention rates of students and their attainment levels. Many organisations which are involved in evaluating the present education system have standardized learning assessment procedures to establish what and how much the students are learning in schools\(^\text{19}\).

\(^{16}\) Schools run by the missionaries or charities of religious groups.

\(^{17}\) Madrasah is an arabic word which literally means ‘a place where learning/teaching is done’.

\(^{18}\) Such institutions include mainstream schools, informal education institutions and vocational training classes especially for girls.

\(^{19}\) The learning levels of students are assessed by some organizations using assessment tools. The tools designed by Pratham for their Annual Status of Education Report are worksheets which comprise of simple exercises to evaluate the reading, writing and arithmetic skills of the students. Each worksheet has a combination of alphabet and word recognition exercises, along with word building and sentence/paragraph reading. The arithmetic section contains number recognition exercises with one and two digit addition, subtraction, multiplication and division questions. The learning assessment instruments designed by the Vidyakura team from NIAS, Bangalore are more elaborate than the Pratham assessment tools. Along with alphabet and number recognition exercises they evaluate students on recitation of rhymes and story telling with expression and construction of sentences in sequence (Source: www.nias.res.in/site/vidya.htm).
The eleventh five-year plan of Government of India (2007-2011) while talking of inclusive growth outlines its commitment to improve governance in critical areas and improve efficiency and effectiveness in government programmes. The plan acknowledges the problems of teacher absenteeism, low enrolment and high dropout rates, gender gaps and low levels of educational achievement in the country. It intends to improve the condition of elementary education by involving communities in both design and implementation of government programmes. It emphasises that the CSOs can work with panchayat institutions to improve effectiveness of these programmes and that it is important to experiment with programme design at the local level to give flexibility in decision making. An unprecedented priority has been given to UEE especially after the initiation of the SSA. The government is now partnering with over 7000 non-governmental and civil society organisations to fulfil the goals of SSA (Carlson).

In the area of elementary education, the people working in CSOs are highly motivated and have the necessary skills to handle children (who may be first generation learners, may have dropped out of school or may not have attended school at all) and parents (who may be illiterate themselves, may be engaging children of school going age in household or other income earning activities etc). There are many CSOs working in the area of elementary education but they have different agendas and goals. Nawani (2003) categorises such efforts into three types. First, those for whom education is the central concern and all activities revolve around it. Second, those organisations, which have several objectives to fulfill, but consider education to be one of the most integral and having a bearing over all other developmental goals. And lastly, those organisations for whom, education is one of several activities but not a central concern. Organisations in the first category are the ones totally devoted to fulfilling the goal of universal education and all their programmes demonstrate the same. They view education as an end in itself and propose to teach basic literacy and numeric skills to children in schools and even establish out-of-school education centres.

Within the purview of providing elementary education, some organisations aim at enrolling all children in a particular geographical area or those who are in disadvantageous positions in society and making sure that they complete the
minimum years of schooling. There are others who not only enroll children but also see to it that the education they acquire in school is something they can relate to and make sense of. It is the latter organisations which concentrate on redesigning the methods of learning\textsuperscript{20}, improving the school curriculum/textbooks and also lay emphasis on teacher training. Although the government has provided about 90% of the school going population with a primary school within 1 km radius of their place of residence, there is still a relative advantage of having a civil society organisation working in this sector (Nawani, 2003). The government schools have a uniform pattern of education for everyone but it is the CSOs which design special and relevant programmes according to the needs of the people whether they reside in urban slums, rural areas or even in tribal and hilly parts of the country. They pick out the areas that they feel need extra attention or have somehow been neglected or left out by the government. These organisations not only concentrate on fulfilling basic education needs of the people but also work to improve the quality of the education provided.

A study of six NGOs working in primary education in India\textsuperscript{21} documents how NGO action has lead to increased access to primary education for the disadvantaged children and improved the quality of schooling as well (Jagannathan, 2000). The survey showed that NGOs have influenced mainstream education through the replication of their models for government programmes. They brought in significant innovations at the micro-level and enhanced the implementation of large-scale government programmes. The NGOs essentially acted as ‘catalytic agents’ and not as large-scale providers. Some of the findings show that the demand for schooling facilities is strong even among the poorest communities, and that the causes for low education participation can be overcome by improving the quality of education provided in schools and responsiveness of the education system in general. The quality of education as defined by these NGOs moves beyond just the learning outcomes of students and perceives the school as a place of finding means of self-expression, acquisition of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, nurturing the spirit of

\textsuperscript{20} The multi-grade multi-level methodology created and adopted by the Rishi Valley School helps teachers to bring students at different levels of learning in the same classroom, up to an equal level of learning and understanding with the help of school kits which comprises of various teaching aids.

\textsuperscript{21} MV Foundation, Secunderabad (A.P), Bodh Shiksha Saniti, Jaipur (Rajasthan), Pratham, Mumbai (Maharashtra), Eklavya, Bhopal (M.P), CEMD, Delhi and Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre, Chittor (A.P)
enquiry in the child etc (ibid:31). Some examples of effective NGO intervention in elementary education from the above mentioned study are given below.

- **Bodh Shiksha Samiti (Rajasthan)** - The initiators of Bodh Shiksha Samiti used education as a non-controversial entry point for social mobilisation in the urban slums of Jaipur city in the 1980s. They were not educators but social activists who saw education as ‘a felt need of the community’ (ibid: 19). A survey undertaken by Bodh revealed that about 30% of the population of Jaipur lived in slums and out of 279 slums, only 74 had a government school. Bodh opened 6 community schools with a view to provide meaningful and appropriate education based on egalitarian principles, for children with a weak socio-economic background. To teach these children, Bodh recruited under-qualified youth and put them through intensive teacher training so that they acquire not only the necessary teaching skills but also share the world view of the children. In order to have a larger influence, Bodh collaborated with the government and expanded its initiative in 10 Municipal schools of Jaipur. As a result of its successful interventions in the state of Rajasthan, Bodh was nominated as the coordinator of the National Core Group for the education of the urban poor.

- **Pratham Mumbai Education Initiative (Mumbai)** - Pratham used early childhood care as a means to universalise primary education in Mumbai. Addressing the issue of total lack of pre-school facilities, Pratham opened a few balwadis in 1995. It developed a low-cost and effective community based model for early childhood care. The organisation was convinced that it was not possible to universalise primary education without working with municipal schools (ibid:16). Pratham’s initiative has a strong community base with the community youth being recognized and trained as balwadi instructors. Pratham has also helped form women’s groups and hopes to ultimately shift the responsibility of running the balwadis to these groups. To bring the dropout and never-enrolled children into mainstream education and sustain them, the organisation runs remedial and bridge courses. This model has been taken up in other cities such as Ahmedabad, Patna, Bangalore, Pune etc and
Pratham is encouraging the local groups to take up the leadership of formulating and implementing the plans.

- **Eklavya** (Madhya Pradesh)- Two voluntary organisations started an innovative science teaching programme in a few middle schools in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh under the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP) in 1972. Registered under the formal name of Eklavya (in 1982), the organisation initiated activity-based learning to nurture the spirit of enquiry in children. It undertook these innovative experiments not only in science but also in social science and primary education by redesigning the curriculum, examination and evaluation system, and even teacher training. Eklavya was the first organisation to establish an effective collaboration with the M.P state government and to work in government schools (ibid:24). Soon it was able to generate state-wide support for implementation of its programmes and teaching methods along with the usage of its innovative teaching-learning materials. With its commitment to joyful-learning, the ‘Seekhna- Sikhana’ and ‘Khushi- Khushi’ packages of curriculum were adopted for state-wide implementation by the State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT). Eklavya has become an important organisation in elementary education because of its innovations and networks with other NGOs and government programmes in other states.

Even after repeated efforts by the government and civil society organisations, the elementary education system still faces various constraints. Social and gender disparities continue to act as deterrents in achieving universal enrolment especially in state of Bihar, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, M.P, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh (GoI, 2007:2). Most of the out-of-school children are from historically and socially disadvantaged communities and about 69% of such children are concentrated in five states namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (U.P), West Bengal, M.P and Rajasthan (GoI, 2007:3). The state acknowledges that teacher attendance, ability and motivation appear to be the weakest links in elementary education. About one-third of the teachers in M.P, 25% in Bihar and 20% in U.P do not attend schools (GoI, 2007:4).
An important concern which arises here is whether the civil society will take over the social sector responsibilities of the state and push the state in the background? Or whether in partnering with the civil society, the state will deliberately take a back-seat and let civil society fulfill all obligations of the welfare state. Thus while viewing the working of civil society, it is imperative to acknowledge its limitations as well. First, the civil society organisations and agents cannot generate the kind of financial resources needed to make a substantial difference in the socio-economic conditions of the entire country. Only the state can collect revenue and monitor funds for functioning of social sector programmes. Second, the civil society does not have the legal authority to establish institutions that will formulate social policy at the national level nor can it implement such policies by itself on such a large scale. The CSOs can lobby for certain policies to be formulated by the government, identify areas that need special attention in policy making/ implementation and can mobilize public opinion for or against certain policies. Since the ultimate formulation and implementation of policies lies with the government, the CSOs can play a supplementary/ complementary role to provide inputs for policy making to the central and state governments (Chandhoke 2009).

1.3.3- State- Civil Society Partnership

There has been ample mention of civil society initiatives in the policy documents of the government because the government has realised that the extent of the problem in this sector is too large for a single delivery system and hence has acknowledged the partnership of the civil society (GoI, 2007:9). Considering the governmental goal of UEE, the efforts undertaken by the civil society organisations and the willingness of the government to work with the civil society, partnership between the government and the civil society sector for improved policy implementation and service delivery could be one of the useful methods of achieving the UEE goal. The CSOs have largely come to perceive their role as being complementary to the government, with assisting the government in implementing their programmes; they can shoulder the responsibility of providing better access to the people to government services. For example, the CSOs may reach out to those disadvantaged sections of people or remote geographical areas which have been left out by the government. Secondly, even though the government may be able to provide
universal access to elementary education, CSOs can ensure the qualitative aspect of it. They can help bring about a change in the attitudes of parents by educating them about the positive effects of education. Through training workshops and informal discussions, the CSOs can lower teacher absenteeism and enhance their commitment. The CSOs can open out-of-school learning centres where parents and volunteers from the community along with the CSO resource persons can work together to increase the achievement level of students. Such examples of community mobilization and teacher training may result in increased demand for better education facilities from the government and may eventually bring about a positive change in the attitudes of government officials.

Govinda (2003) notes that the states like Madhya Pradesh (M.P) and Rajasthan have recorded considerable progress in the area of basic education with the help of greater community and civil society participation. A lot of government involvement can be seen in both the states with models of decentralization in place to improve primary education. A top-down approach has been followed in M.P by changing the legal provisions and transferring responsibilities of primary education management to locally elected bodies. Rajasthan has followed a bottom-up approach with informal group formation and capacity building among community members, which has been given precedence over legal provisions. The government of M.P has worked in partnership with CSOs and NGOs in its DPEP. In Rajasthan, elementary education has received much support with the help of the Lok Jumbish a programme funded by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Government of India and Government of Rajasthan. The Lok Jumbish workers or a local NGO along with the members of the community have invented a technique of ‘school mapping’ which maps out the entire village depicting each household along with the educational status of its members between 5-14 years of age. There is a lot of community interaction and discussion while preparing the map which provides an opportunity even to non-literate members to participate. Lok Jumbish has helped mobilise and empower the community along with raising the literacy levels. The government involvement in the entire process has been limited to providing funds for the programme.

The PROBE team surveyed five states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh which consisted of more than half of the
country’s out-of-school children. Though these states are not representative of the whole country, the problems and challenges that they face are very similar to the ones faced by any other state in India. Problems of teacher absenteeism, student dropouts, poor state of the school building, no teaching-learning resources, low levels of achievement etc have been common to all the five states in the survey. Taking examples of three organisations from different states\(^{22}\), the report discusses the exemplary performance and commitment of these organisations to universalize elementary education in a common schooling system. The report also observes that though the scale of working and the geographical area covered by the organisations is much smaller than that of the government (which has to take care of the whole country) the performance and commitment of these organisations cannot be undermined.

1.4- Research Questions

The review of literature above provides a brief insight into the theme of elementary education delivery in India. It also brings forth certain questions for research, with respect to civil society intervention in the field of elementary education and the role and scope that the state carves out for civil society. Some of the questions that this research will be focusing on are:

1. Despite various efforts, why has the government not been able to achieve UEE?

2. What is the nature of civil society intervention in elementary education delivery?

3. To what extent is the state willing and justified to share its responsibility of education delivery with the civil society?

4. How far has the state- civil society partnership been able to contribute towards UEE?

5. If efforts by the CSOs have yielded positive results for UEE, to what extent can they be held accountable to the government and the people?

\(^{22}\) *Eklavya* (Madhya Pradesh), *Lok Jumbish* (Rajasthan) and *M.V Foundation* (Andhra Pradesh)
1.5- Focus of the Study

The focus of the present study is on the role of CSOs in improving delivery of elementary education. The CSO is studied through the non-Walrasian model (or the new institutional economics model) to illustrate that ‘in order to make the outcomes more efficient and optimal, appropriate organisations, institutions, processes and mechanisms should be evolved’ (Aziz et. al, 2002). Organizations are the physical bodies through which stakeholders organize themselves; institutions are the legal rules and regulations which govern the proceedings and working of these organizations\(^\text{23}\). Processes are the channels through which the actors work to arrive at decisions whereas mechanisms are the guiding forces that help arrive at decisions and solutions satisfactory to all those who participate in the decision making process. To make the organisation more responsive to the needs of the beneficiaries, there should be scope for interaction between the stakeholders and the authorities at every stage of decision making and implementation. The organisations need to be closer to the people for increased social interaction. The decision making process should be transparent and participatory. In the context of elementary education, the present study will observe whether these organizational and institutional spaces along with the appropriate processes and mechanisms for education delivery are effectively provided solely by the state mechanisms, by the civil society organisations or by a combination of both. Therefore, the CSO taken up for the study will be evaluated in terms of its organizational structure, institutions, processes and mechanisms that it employs to improve the delivery of elementary education. This framework would help in evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the already existing elementary education delivery system and the methodologies used by the government and CSOs to achieve their objectives.

1.6- Conceptual Framework

In order to understand how civil society and state play a role in the delivery process of education and through it ensure inclusive governance, a conceptual framework has been developed for the study. The following framework analyses the

role of the state and civil society organisations in providing elementary education. The state and civil society form the basis for the organisations to emerge, exist and work. These organisations implement certain institutional norms, processes and mechanisms to achieve the aim of improved elementary education delivery. The stakeholders of elementary education come together as part of one or more of these organisations, to achieve the goal of universal elementary education. In this study, inclusive governance would refer to the inclusion of all stakeholders at every stage of education delivery. The aim of an efficient education delivery process is universal access and universal achievement of students.

In the figure below-

- Organisations have been classified under the state and civil society. All these organisations give an opportunity to the stakeholders to organize themselves and work together for elementary education.

- Institutions are defined as a set of rules and regulations which govern the delivery of education. These can be in way of formal policies and rules or even as responsibilities outlined in the MoU.

- Mechanisms are defined as the course of action which the institutions employ towards improving the education delivery. The state endeavors to provide elementary education through constitutional mandates, five-year plans, educational reforms and policy formulation, implementation etc. The civil society tries to achieve the same goal through a different mechanism which includes voluntary service, advocacy, flexible decision making within the civil society, community mobilisation etc.

- The process of participatory decision making aims to improve the school and classroom environment and process. With reference to the present study, this is done through innovative methods of teaching, teacher training, improving regularity and quality of teachers and teaching, increasing student enrolment, attendance and achievement levels etc.

- The organisations, institutions, processes and mechanisms eventually lead to fulfilling the ultimate goal. For the present study, the goal is to improve the
delivery of education to achieve universal elementary education. It is also important that this delivery system should be inclusive of all stakeholders such as parents, PTA, village community, village panchayat, teachers, students, the CSO personnel and the state representatives, to ensure inclusive governance in education.

- The bold arrows in the figure show an institutional or formal linkage between the (or more) aspects. The dotted arrows show a functional or sometimes an informal linkage.
Figure 1.1- Conceptual framework of the study

ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS

State Organisation

- BRC
- CRC
- Panchayats
- Parent-Teacher Associations

Civil Society Organisations

- Cluster Coordinators
- Janmitras
- Balmitras

UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

- Universal Access
- Universal Enrolment
- Universal Achievement

INSTITUTIONS, PROCESSES AND MECHANISMS

- Constitutional Mandate
- Five-year Plans
- Education Reforms
- Policy Formulation
- Policy Implementation
- Participatory Decision Making
- School Processes
- Classroom Processes

INSTITUTIONS, PROCESSES AND MECHANISMS

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Voluntary Service
- Advocacy
- Flexible decision-making mechanism
- Community Mobilisation
- Informal Interactions
- Participatory Decision Making
- School Processes
- Classroom Processes
1.7- Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research is to study the CSO involvement in the delivery system of elementary education; the interrelated objectives of the study have been framed as follows:

1. To analyze the existing policies of the government with respect to education, and elementary education in particular:
   - How have the policies shaped elementary education in India
   - Have the policies been able to meet the objectives of UEE
   - How have the policies shaped civil society intervention and role in elementary education

2. To analyze the role of the CSO in delivery of elementary education:
   - What is the nature of CSO intervention
   - Examine the structure and functioning of the CSO by covering their administrative working; academic planning; pedagogic methodologies
   - Assess the performance of CSOs with respect to their expected role
   - Has the CSO helped in improving the delivery process of elementary education

3. To evaluate the nature of collaborative work done by the CSOs and their extent of partnership with the state and its implications.

4. To suggest measures for improved delivery of elementary education based on the findings of the study.

1.8- Methodology of the Study

The study provides a case study analysis of a civil society organisation working in partnership with the state government to provide elementary education. It is a qualitative study of the process of elementary education delivery in rural Madhya
Pradesh. A combination of purposive and random sampling methods was employed to select the districts, blocks, clusters and villages/schools where the study was conducted. The districts, blocks and clusters were purposively chosen to be the same where the CSO was working with the state government. Within the respective clusters, 9 villages/schools were randomly selected along with 3 control villages/schools which were located in the same panchayat as the CSO villages.

1.8.1- Madhya Pradesh as Research Area-

The extant literature on the topic of state-CSO partnership in education brings forth various examples of CSO involvement in improving the delivery and quality of elementary education in India. Out of these, the state of Madhya Pradesh features as one of the prime examples of improvement in literacy rates and elementary education delivery through reforms in education which revamped the government agenda and also encouraged civil society initiatives and their collaboration with the government. The state therefore stands as a unique case of government-CSO partnership in elementary education. A brief sketch of how the education reforms (known as *Rajiv Gandhi Shiksha Mission*)\(^2\) were introduced in M.P is given below.

Prior to 1994, the state action in education was discreet, dispersed, ad-hoc and without any realistic estimates on the size of the problem in education. No goals were set to measure performance to policy\(^2\). Many structural and academic inadequacies led to dysfunctional schools, teacher absenteeism and low quality of teaching, which had negative effects on the already existing poor access, low enrolment, retention and low achievements of students. The state restructured its overall development strategy to view the people as agents and not only as recipients. Through decentralisation, it created new partnerships with the community and local panchayats so that the dichotomy between the provider and receiver could be dissolved. Substantive

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\(^2\) The education reforms were named *Rajiv Gandhi Shiksha Mission*. This mission was entrusted with the responsibility of developing, coordinating and implementing programmes for universal elementary education especially in the interior, rural and tribal areas for economically and socially deprived children. It performed a dual role of creating and fulfilling the demand for education by providing adequate educational infrastructure and qualitative educational inputs, through community mobilisation, opening new schools, construction of educational buildings, upgrading schooling amenities, developing approved teaching-learning materials, teacher training, strengthening academic support systems etc.

\(^2\) MPHDR, 2002, Government of Madhya Pradesh, pp 17-18
delegation of power to the local panchayats and the Village Education Committees provided greater space for direct community partnerships.

The Mission focused significantly on the issue of quality learning. Curriculum redesigning was viewed as one of the most important constituents of quality learning. M.P was the first state to ‘open its doors’ to new initiatives in curriculum designing (GoMP, 1995:37). With an emphasis on ‘child-centered’ and activity based learning, teaching-learning material (TLM) for primary classes was developed on a field trial basis involving teachers, civil society and non-governmental organisations and academicians. The M.P State Education Board signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with a number of CSOs to meet the challenge of universal elementary education.

The M.P state government claims that it completed universal access to primary education in 1998 under the Education Guarantee Scheme by ending the backlog of habitations without schools. The main tasks before the M.P state government now was to bring the out-of-school children within the purview of education, and to improve retention, completion and achievement rates of the already enrolled students (GoMP, 2002:28). Though community mobilisation and flexibility in functioning of schools has been effective in increasing enrolment in the state, a child-friendly curriculum has ensured that children regularly attend school and complete the elementary years of education. The state has sought the cooperation of civil society organisations in curriculum redesigning, preparing teaching-learning materials and strengthening teacher training institutes. M.P is taken up as the field area for this study in order to analyse the nature and extent of the state-CSO partnership and also to understand the role played by the CSO in helping to achieve UEE.

1.8.2- Selection of CSO for Primary Survey

As already mentioned, many organisations in M.P are working in partnership with the state in order to improve the delivery of education in general and elementary education in particular. Out of these organisations, Samavesh Society for Development and Governance was chosen for primary survey. Samavesh started working in the field of elementary education in 2003, and has achieved noteworthy recognition with the M.P state education board and among the community members of the villages
where it is working. Through its *Shiksha Protsahan Program*, the organisation is working in 50 schools spread over two districts of M.P namely *Dewas* and *Harda*. A detailed description of the organisation and its working will follow in the subsequent chapters.

Some of the reasons for choosing *Samavesh* for the present study are as follows. Firstly, the objectives and agenda of working of the CSO matched that of the present study. Secondly, out of all the CSOs visited as part of the pilot study exercise, *Samavesh* and *Eklavya* were the oldest organisations working in the field of elementary education; but *Eklavya* did not have any partnership program with the M.P state government active during the time that the pilot study and fieldwork were scheduled to be undertaken. Moreover, *Samavesh* had records of baseline studies, six-monthly reports and external evaluation studies of the schools and districts that it is working in, which made for important secondary sources to understand the field area and the condition of the schools before and after *Samavesh* started working with them.

1.9- Outline of the Dissertation and Chapterisation

The dissertation has been organized in the following manner. Chapter one gives a brief introduction of the topic along with the review of literature, focus of the study and conceptual framework, the objectives of the study and a brief note on the methodology followed. The second chapter provides details of the methodology followed for sampling of districts, blocks and villages and gives the methods of data collection from the field along with a brief profile of the study area. Chapter three details on the state-civil society interaction in the field area of Madhya Pradesh with special reference to the MoU signed between the state and the CSO. Chapter four elaborates on the involvement of civil society in the delivery of education by improving the classroom and school processes and strengthening community participation in education delivery. The fifth chapter outlines the role of civil society in the management of education especially at the block level elaborating on the issues faced by the CSO in its initial phases and the interventions it has made subsequently to improve education management. The last chapter highlights the main findings of the study by way of answering the research questions raised at the beginning of the study and indicates the nature and implication of civil society and state partnership.