SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION:

Education is a mirror in which the entire development process finds its reflection. It is education, which determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people and national reconstruction. Education leads to individual creativity, improved participation in the socio-economic, cultural and political life of society and hence to a more effective contribution, to human development. Education comes to be identified as one of the most ‘enabling change agents’, whether for an individual or society as whole. It has been cited as a source for developing a community and individuals because education leads to equity. ‘It provides knowledge, skills and values which enable people to add economic value to their labour beyond that necessary for mere subsistence’. It ultimately makes possible a ‘rational, sustainable and humanistic’ national development. Education is the only instrument by which a nation transforms itself from what it is into what it hopes to be. It is this social instrument through which we can guide its destiny and shape its future.

In confronting the many challenging that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice….education is not a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to a world in which all ideals will be attained, but as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious forms of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war (Learning: The Treasure Within, UNESCO, 1996).

In India, education has been accorded much importance since independence, as it has been perceived that educational development is necessary to ensure economic and over all development of the country. In order to develop human resources in a better way, it is important that education is imparted to all sections of population in the country. This is the reason that plans were developed for the expansion of educational facilities across the country so that all people can have opportunity of participating in education irrespective of one’s caste, class, sex, religion or region.
However, despite these provisions, it has been noticed that the spread of education is not uniform and there are disparities of all kinds in this field. These include gender disparities, regional disparities, social disparities and spatial disparities.

The Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) stated, “Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization.”

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

Elementary Education in India means making education available to children in the age group of 6-14 years in class I – VIII. It is considered as fundamental to all-round development of individual both at material and spiritual levels. It has an acculturating role, which refines and redefines sensitivities and perceptions and contributes to national cohesion. Elementary education is known to lead to better family health and slower population growth. It creates in the individual, the capacity to take advantage of technological change, leading to enhancement in productivity and economic benefit. Researches have shown that increasing the average primary schooling of the labour force even by one year can increase output substantially (Primary Education in India, World Bank). Even at the macro level, social benefits of elementary education are immense. Educated parents send their children to school; elementary education leads to perpetuation of benefits from one generation to another.

Elementary education is one of the corner stones of development. As education is considered to be a booster agent for solving population problems, a catalyst for women empowerment and powerful tool for channeling a host of their socio-economically relevant issues in a positive direction, it is the prime aim of the governing bodies to provide basic education to the teeming millions.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY:

Education alone is a means of progress, development, change and stability. It takes experience from the past, knowledge from the present and tries to make the
future beautiful. It sharpens the intellect, widens vision, helps in the wholesome and balanced development of man and above all, it leads to social, political and economic development of a nation. Education is not limited to contribution in terms of economic returns alone, but has much wider ramifications with implications for poverty reduction, improvement in income distribution, health and nutrition. The progress, prosperity and development of democratic country mostly depend on the education of its masses. Hence, accessing quality education to all children, regardless of caste, creed, colour, sex, race or region is essential for democracy.

Elementary education in the age group of 6-14 in the Indian national perception is essential for all. A well-planned and properly implemented system of elementary education plays a very significant role in laying down the proper foundation of child’s cultural, emotional, ethical, intellectual, moral, physical, social and spiritual development. It has an acculturating role, which refines and redefines sensitivities and perceptions and contributes to national cohesion. Elementary education is known to lead to better family health and slower population growth. It creates in the individual, the capacity to take advantage of technological change, leading to enhancement in productivity and economic benefit. Studies have clearly established that countries, which have made adequate provision for elementary education, are far ahead of those with inadequate provision. In this context, it must be remembered that in developed countries, almost 99 percent of the population have access to elementary education.

The Indian Constitution under Article 45 specifies the resolve of the State to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years, which has subsequently been the focus of various education policies and plans. In spite of such an emphasis, quality elementary education for all children has been a difficult goal to attain. The rapid modernization and globalization of India, adds to the pressure for universalization of education in a more forceful fashion.

There is no doubt that India has made considerable progress in the field of elementary education as far as the quantity is concerned but it has been lagging behind on qualitative front of education. Inspite of the overwhelming increase in Gross Enrolment Ratio, the learning outcomes are dwindling day by day. The
emerging situation in the country in the field of elementary education shall become more and more critical not only for the teaching community of the elementary schools but also for the education planners and administrators of the country. If the situation is not tackled well in advance, it may damage the spirit and policy of our national goal that seeks universalization of elementary education on the one hand and quality education on the other. Therefore, there is a dire need to look into the various problems confronting elementary education and to suggest remedial measures to tackle these problems. Only then, the long cherished dream of providing qualitative elementary education to all children can be realized.

Gandhiji, as a social philosopher, wanted education to be a powerful medium for social change and development. He was of the firm view that, without the change of individuals’ personality, social development is impossible. Gandhiji with his ‘Divya Chakshu’ excelled in understanding the Indian people, the Indian nation and Indian national heritage. The entire world accepts the clarity of his perception and his assessment of the shape of future trends so much that with the passage of time the relevance of his thought and ideas is gaining greater significance globally. With a scientific attitude of mind, he observed facts, sorted them before accepting them and after weighing them well, he drew his conclusion. In the field of education, he made different experiments for a quite long period and finally formulated a scheme of education named ‘Basic Education’, which was primarily concerned with the education of children at primary level. He minutely analyzed the various aspects related with the education of the children and find out how the right kind of education can be imparted to develop the children to the maximum possible extent.

Most of the studies conducted so far deals with the general educational philosophy of Gandhiji and some of them are comparative in nature. A very few studies have been conducted regarding the relevance of Gandhian philosophy in relation to current education problems. The present study was undertaken with the aim of studying the relevance of educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi in the context of problems of elementary education in contemporary India. A fresh re-look of his educational ideas would help in finding a novel solution to the problems faced in providing quality elementary education to all.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

‘RELEVANCE OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI IN THE CONTEXT OF PROBLEMS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA’

KEY TERMS DEFINED:

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

The Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, in its Annual Reports includes Class I to VIII under elementary education (Primary I to V and Upper Primary VI to VIII).

In the present study, Elementary Education implies education of children of Class I to VIII in the age group of 6-14 years of age.

CONTEMPORARY:

In the present study, the word contemporary India implies India in present time.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the general philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

2. To study the educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi with reference to aims of education, curriculum, role of teacher, methods of teaching, discipline, women education etc.

3. To find out the various problems related with elementary education.

4. To study the relevance of educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi in relation to the problems of elementary education in India.
METHODOLOGY:

The study was mainly philosophical in nature and it was based on documental analysis of the works on Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of education. Content analysis was used in this study both as a tool and as technique to analyze the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Content analysis in this study consists of documentary analysis and thematic analysis. For content analysis, primary and secondary sources were consulted. The primary sources included the autobiography, books written by Mahatma Gandhi, his published articles & papers, reports of different education policies, commissions, committees, five year plans, policy documents and research studies related to elementary education and secondary sources comprised of literature on Mahatma Gandhi by other authors, his biographies, articles on Gandhiji, different books on problems of elementary education and other related material from websites and print media.

MAIN FINDINGS:

MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO AIMS OF EDUCATION:

Mahatma Gandhi has visualized education as a means of awakening the nation’s conscience to injustice, violence and inequality entrenched in the social order. Gandhiji gave a very broad-based concept of education and regarded all round and harmonious development of the personality of children as the main aim of education. An all round development means development of the head, heart and hand-nothing less, nothing more. True education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children His concept of education stands for the balanced and harmonious development of all the aspects of human personality-physical, intellectual, social, spiritual etc. to enable the individual to achieve the ultimate aim i.e., Truth.

In the present system of education, the aims are lopsided, as the intellectual training has become the be-all and end-all of education. It does not take in to consideration the physical, emotional, spiritual and other aspects of the personality of the child. Affective and psychomotor domains are not given due weightage in the
whole scheme of education. Therefore, all round development of the students’ personality does not takes place and so the true purpose of education is not realized in the actual sense. In the background of such circumstances, the views of Gandhiji regarding the aims of education are quite relevant, as it takes into consideration all round development of the personality of children, which helps him to become a useful member of the society and the nation.

Gandhiji stressed the character development aim of education and he regarded character formation as suitable foundation of education. Hence, the end of all knowledge must be building up of character. He regarded character as the expression of the whole personality including its ethical and spiritual aspect. According to Gandhiji, Education without character and character devoid of purity would be no good. The prevalent system of education is not character oriented, but information oriented. It is consumerist and makes one selfish, self-centered and cynical. It sharpens reason, but hardens the heart. It lays little or no emphasis on such basic values as truth, love, honesty, humility, compassion, forbearance and justice. It makes one conscious about one’s rights, not duties. In such circumstances, Gandhiji views regarding character development and synthesis of individual and social aims are quite relevant because he did not find any conflict between the two and believed in their proper synthesis. He thought that if individuals are good, the whole society should be good. Acc. to him, if we succeed in building the character of the individual, the society will take care of itself. Therefore, there is a need to seek a proper balance between individual and social aims and to develop the character of the students on the desired lines and for this the school environment has to be made healthy and conducive in which teachers have to play an exemplary role and to be a role model for the students.

Gandhiji believes that education must aim at enabling every individual to earn his livelihood. It must enable him to stand on one’s own feet. In his opinion, education ought to be for them (children) a kind of insurance against unemployment. Therefore, he stressed vocational aspect should be given importance in the field of education.
There is an overall crisis of values in the society and this has a negative impact upon the mindset of the student community as well. The youngsters have fallen in the clasp of eroding values such as dishonesty, insincerity, lack of punctuality, and disrespect for elders and disregard for work-culture. In the light of the above problems, Gandhiji’s views on value-oriented education can prove to be quite fruitful. He was of the view that values can be best transmitted through the general conduct and behaviour of the teachers rather than providing value education through books. He advocated that values should be inculcated among the children from the very beginning only then; we will be able to succeed in transmitting these values in their later course of life which are quite essential not only for the betterment of the individual but also for the society at large. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) also emphasized that values-based education should be imparted which should focus on respect for elders and tolerance for other beliefs. Similarly NCF (2005), value education must be a part of the education system and values or virtues must be integral to the whole process of education.

**MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO CURRICULUM:**

Gandhiji was dissatisfied with what was taught to students in the name of education. He was of the opinion that the curriculum is bookish, theoretical and overcrowded, without providing rich and significant contents. It is dominated too much by examination and it should include vocational and technical subjects, which are quite necessary for making student self-sufficient in later course of life. Inspite of various efforts regarding curriculum revision, the present situation has not changed much in the desired direction and the above problems still exists in one form or the other. In order to overcome these problems, Gandhiji views on curriculum can prove to be fruitful as he suggested a very practical, broad-based and integrated curriculum, which is psychologically, sociologically and biologically sound. He recommended those activities, which are creative and productive. Curriculum according to Gandhiji should be dynamic, flexible and diversified. It should be according to the local conditions of the child, craft-centred, and rather vocationalised. NCF (2005) also suggested that the curriculum of elementary education should have a close link to life of the learner.
MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO METHODS OF TEACHING:

In the present circumstances, the methods of teaching are not joyful and the whole teaching learning process become burdensome and drudgery on the part of the children which finally leads to their dropout in many cases. The Yashpal Committee Report (1993) emphasized that there should be no academic burden on schoolchildren and suggested for adopting child-centered approach for teaching. Gandhiji on the other hand, advocated practical methods of teaching. He advocated that the teacher should take into consideration the psychology of child while teaching. Nothing should be taught to a child by force. He should be interested in everything taught to him. He also emphasized on learning by doing and appreciated the methods of correlation in teaching where different subjects should be taught in the form of correlated knowledge and not in the form of separate subjects. He was not in favour of bookish knowledge and suggested crafts to be the medium of instruction. His scheme of Basic Education combines in it the ideas of experimentation, project method of teaching and learning through participation. Education should appear to the child like a play and play should be made an essential part of education. The means of doing so, he said, “are work, observation, experience, experiment, service and love. Without these, learning through books acts as a hindrance to the development of the spiritual and rational powers of the student and impairs his physique. Gandhiji advocated that stress should be laid on the principle of co-operative activity, planning, accuracy, initiative and individual responsibility in learning. The different survey studies like ASER and PROBE Revisited etc stress the need for making teaching learning more interesting and enriching for the children. The Tenth and Eleventh Five-Year Plans (2002-2007 & 2007-2012) also focused on pedagogic improvement and adoption of child-centred methods.

MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO ROLE OF TEACHERS:

In the present time there are various problems confronting elementary education with regard to teachers. Teacher absenteeism, shortage of teachers, lack of trained teachers, high pupil-teacher ratio, shortage of female teachers, un-friendly attitude towards children and lack of moral character are some of the emerging problems which has been identified as major impediments in improving the quality of
elementary education in India. In the background of above-mentioned problems, Gandhiji’s views on teachers can prove beneficial in providing a conducive and befitting environment for all round development of children. Gandhiji stressed highly on the qualitative aspects of teachers. He assigned a unique and significant role to the teacher in the all round development of the students. Acc. to him, the teacher should be friend, philosopher and guide and should be inspired with the social attitudes and ideals of Ahimsa and Truth. He always felt that the true textbook for the pupils is his teacher and teacher’s work lies more outside than inside the lecture room. In consonance with Gandhiji’s philosophy, National Curriculum Framework (2005) stressed that teacher education must become more sensitive to the emerging demands from the school system and it must prepare the teacher for various roles and responsibilities, as the teacher is the key person who can inculcate all the required values in small children in spite of many odds.

Regarding the selection of teachers Gandhiji was of the view that utmost care should be taken while selecting teachers, especially for the children at primary level and asserted that only right type of teachers could help in achieving the objectives of education. In his view, a teacher should possess knowledge, skill, enthusiasm, patriotism, strong character, special training and spirit of service. He must practice these virtues himself and should be able to establish a heart to heart contact with the students. He has to fashion the hearts of the students rather than their brains. Acc. to Gandhiji, for inculcating values among children the teachers have to be careful about their own conduct and behaviour. Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education.

**MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO METHODS OF EVALUATION:**

In India, the evaluation system at the elementary level is not in tune with the aims and objectives of education. The evaluation system does not take into consideration the scholastic and non-scholastic aspects of student’s personality and thus it becomes a lopsided affair. The evaluation system is mainly examination oriented, more stress is laid on rote learning from textbooks, and thus other important dimensions of child personality are totally ignored. To sort out this crucial problem the views of Gandhiji can prove beneficial to realize the aims of education. Acc. to
him, no external examination needs to be held. At the end of the basic school course, a school-leaving certificate based on internal examination should be given. Promotion from one class to another should be determined by the schools on the basis of internal examinations. He was of the view that the learners should be continuously assessed by taking into consideration his or her performance in different scholastic and non-scholastic areas. In consonance with the Gandhiji’s ideas on evaluation, the Govt. through RTE Act 2009, have made changes in the evaluation process and external examination are totally discarded and CCE has taken its place but the implementation of CCE seems to be quite difficult in existing ground realities. So, there is a need to implement it in a right spirit by making necessary changes in it.

**MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE:**

Corporeal punishment has become so much a part of teaching for maintaining discipline and children are routinely subjected to violence and fear of schools. Not all children are capable of withstanding such insults and humiliations and therefore, some of them choose to leave the school. Inspite of continuous adherence to corporeal punishment, schools are facing problems in maintaining cordial environment in the schools. In such type of circumstances, Gandhiji idea of self-discipline can avert incidence of indiscipline. Self-discipline arises from a pure life of self-restraint, fearlessness, usefulness and self-sacrifice. It may be achieved through non-violent conduct of life. It is synthesis of freedom and external control. Gandhiji believed that highest form of discipline comes through self-control and not by being free to follow stray impulses. He advocated self-discipline and not on an imposed discipline through punishment and rod. He was strictly opposed to inflicting corporeal punishment for maintaining discipline in students. In line with Gandhiji’s ideas regarding corporeal punishment, the National Policy on Education (1986) prohibits corporeal punishment and this was further reemphasized by the Janardhan Reddy Committee (1992). Similarly the RTE Act, 2009 also directed that no child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment.

Gandhiji idea of self-discipline and voluntary discipline can solve the various problems of modern education. So in order to promote discipline, personal contact
between the teacher and pupil should be strengthened. The teacher must prepare the environment in which the child may best blossom and make himself most fruitful.

MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO WOMEN EDUCATION:

Women constitute about 48.4% of population of India as per 2011 census, but they are not well represented in social, political, economic and religious life as per their numerical strength. There is a gender gap in education and the female literacy rate is woefully lower than that of male. Studies confirm that female literacy has a significant influence in improving social and economic status of women. Compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in schools and many of them are drop out. In the background of such conditions, Gandhiji’s views on women education can prove to be quite relevant. Gandhiji felt strongly for the emancipation of women and said that, his greatest hope is in women and they want a helping hand to lift them out of the hell in which they have been kept. He was of the view that women should have the same educational facilities as men and even special facilities where necessary. Education should be given to them according to their particular aptitudes and life demands. Gandhiji believed that women by means of their equipment and nature are best fitted to take up the work of educating small children. He was of the opinion that the question of the education of children cannot be solved unless efforts are made simultaneously to solve the women’s education. Acc. to him, I have no hesitation in saying that as long as we do not have real mother teachers who can successfully impart true education to our children they will remain uneducated even though they may be going to schools. It is the belief of Gandhiji that education of little boys and girls could be more effectively handled by women than by men and by mother than by maidens. To fulfill this, a mother should have special knowledge of the management of the home, care of children, their education, etc. In line with Gandhiji ideas on women education, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) also stressed on the need of women education and said that education of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family. Similarly realizing the importance of girls education, the Government has initiated, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidalaya (KGBV) and the National Programme for the Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) having focus on educationally
backward areas in girls’ education, especially for girls belonging to the disadvantaged sections like those belonging to SC/ST, minorities, etc, for tackling gender-specific issues that prevent girls and women from having access to education.

**MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO ADULT EDUCATION:**

As per India Census Provisional Report 2011, 26.6 per cent of the people in India are still illiterate and as such, they do not fully realize the importance of education for their children. They are indifferent towards education. The prevalence of illiteracy is one of the factors that have stood in the way of universalization of elementary education. To overcome this crucial problem, Gandhiji’s emphasis on education of adults can play a significant role. Gandhiji was a great champion for the cause of adult education in India. In his opinion, illiteracy constitutes a heavy drag on freedom and progress and limits the mental horizon not merely of people but also their posterity. He said that he would have adult education, not as we ordinarily understand it, but the education of parents so that they can undertake adequately the moulding of their children. He clearly saw that it was by an awakening and re-orientation of the adult mind that society could be organized materially, morally and spiritually. In his view, mass illiteracy is India’s sin and shame and must be liquidated. Gandhiji advocated the education of the parents of children and adults as the first concern of the nation. He advocated the education of the adult as a necessary prelude to the growth of the primary education for new generation. The role of parents in the education of the children highlight that the educational status of both parents is known to have a positive impact on the schooling of children both boys as well as girls. Therefore, a massive programme for removing adult illiteracy should be taken and education of the parents is to be looked after for the success of the programme. The National Literacy Mission (NLM), a key programme of the Tenth Five-Year Plan and recently a National Mission for Female Literacy, Sakshar Bharat, a renewed effort to make people- 60 million of them women- functionally literate by 2012 was also guided by the philosophy of Gandhiji’s philosophy of adult and continuing education.
MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION:

Language has been found to be a highly alienating factor in the education of many schoolchildren, particularly amongst minorities, tribal communities with languages without a script, as well as linguistic minorities in most states. Many children resent the imposition of the state language as the medium of instruction, or a second language in school. For the children of scheduled tribes, the main factor for non-participation is cultural discontinuity and alien language of instruction in schools. It is true that several children drop out of school due to lack of proficiency in the language they are exposed to in the school. Acc. to recent estimates, about 25% children are not getting education in their mother tongue. In the context of the various problems related with the medium of instruction, Gandhiji’s views regarding mother-tongue as the medium of instruction, have its unique importance because mother-tongue enhances better learning and good results. This is the most natural thing, as it is being the first medium of education at home. It allows us to think freely, develops originality and it enables us to be creative and overall it lays the solid foundation of our many-sided development. Further, this will develop the interest of the learners in study and leads to less dropouts. Gandhiji was of the view that true national education should be imparted through the language of each province. Thus, two key issues, which need to be recognized, are the language used by children at home and with their peer group and the essential multilingualism of the school classroom. Similar views regarding the medium of instruction in child’s mother tongue at the elementary stage were upheld by NCF (2005). The RTE Act 2009, also stressed that medium of instructions shall, as far as practicable, be in child’s mother tongue.

MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION:

An active involvement of parents and communities as a whole in children’s schooling is seen as being important for two major reasons: first to encourage and help their own children in the process of learning; and second, to put pressure on the government to improve the school environment. Various studies conducted in this field highlighted that the local bodies or PRI’s do not participate in decisions regarding attendance and regularity of teachers and children, or the problems encountered by children in school. They are not much concerned with the problems
faced by teachers, the day-to-day issues that may arise; they do not liaise with authorities or elected bodies to bring to their notice the difficulties children or teachers face such as lack of textbooks, physical infrastructure, public transport and so on. In the light of above problems, Gandhiji’s view on participation of parents and community in the effective functioning of school seems to be more valid even today. He was of the opinion that there should be a close contact and effective collaboration between school and community and the community has to render an important role in the education of children. In his view, important radical changes cannot be brought about by the rulers. It is for the leaders of the people to undertake such pioneering ventures. If we think that the Government alone should do these things, our object may not be achieved for a long while. It is difficult task to put our education on a sound foundation and it calls for Herculean effort. We will have to devote to it our all-the-body, the mind, and the soul, and but not least, money! So in order to realize the goals of education, especially at the elementary level, there is a need of effective collaboration between schools, parents and community members. The RTE Act, 2009 also made a provision regarding the active participation of community in the proper functioning and monitoring of school through the formation of School Management Committee consisting of the elected representatives of the local authority, parents or guardians of children.

MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES:

The phenomenon of dropping out from school can be seen as a reflection of the failure of the school system to retain children in the school until they complete the given level of education. The mere provision of a school facility is not adequate. The school should not only have reasonably good physical infrastructure and committed teachers, but should also provide an attractive learning environment. After all, there is a strong positive correlation between the availability of adequate school infrastructure and enrolments in school, especially of girls’ children. However, the present conditions in elementary schools shows that there are inadequacies even with regard to basic facilities in schools and these are adversely affecting the teaching-learning process. So, Gandhiji views on physical and human resources in schools can help to
overcome these problems. Although Gandhiji was of the view that big and expensive buildings are not necessary for educational institutions however he was quite aware about the basic necessities which make the school environment conducive for learning. Acc. to Gandhiji, the school should be located at a place where students would get clean drinking water, pure air and a peaceful atmosphere. The surroundings must be perfectly healthy. Regarding school building, he said that open spaces should be provided for teaching and physical training in form of playgrounds. The optimum number of boys to be admitted to any class should be 30 and the maximum should not in any case exceed 40, the optimum number in the whole school should be 500 while the maximum should not exceed 750. So, Gandhiji regards that sufficient physical and human resources play a vital role in providing congenial environment for better teaching learning among children. In tune with Gandhiji’s views on availability of human and physical resources, the NCF (2005) states that it is very important that school teaching and learning take place in an environment that is aesthetically pleasing.

MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION:

Efforts have been made to universalize elementary education by initiating several programmes, in order to arrest the dropout of children from schools. However, inspite of all these efforts, the country has not been able to succeed in achieving the desired goals as millions of children are still far away from the ambit of universal elementary education. In such circumstances, Gandhiji views regarding free and compulsory education can prove quite beneficial in providing elementary education to all. He was of opinion that this minimum universal education was indispensable to the successful working of democracy in the country. In his opinion, we can postpone the question of higher education for sometime; but the problem of primary education cannot be postponed even for a minute. In his opinion, education is a birth right of every person and therefore, it should be provided to all boys and girls in an organized way on a free and compulsory basis during the formative period of their life. In this matter, no distinction should be allowed in respect of caste, colour, religion or sex. He was of the view that education should be free and it should not be made to depend on
money, just as the sun gives light to all equally and rain pours down for all. He was of the view that conditions must be created to enable the poorest Indians to receive the best possible education. Realizing the importance of elementary education, the Eleventh-Five Plan (2007-2012) pleaded for the enrolment of all children in all schools until a child completes five years of primary schooling by 2010. In line with Gandhiji’s idea of free and compulsory education, Article 21-A in Part III of the Constitution that made Free and Compulsory Education to all children of 6 to 14 years of age a Fundamental Right was enacted and this Act came into force from 1st April, 2010.

**MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO EQUITY IN EDUCATION:**

Considerable improvements in the number of schools and enrolments have been observed in the last few years. Yet a large number of children are still remained out of school education. The glaring disparities in access and participation in certain section of the population is another problem. The main categories of population that have generally been left out of mainstream education are Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, Girls, Minorities and Children with disabilities. Therefore, there is a tremendous need to adopt Gandhiji’s ideas regarding education for all. Acc. to him education must be provided to all irrespective of any distinction of caste, colour, creed, region and religion. So, in line with Gandhian philosophy there is a dire need in the present context to rectify inequities through their equitour addressal in the policy framework on education. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, initiated in 2002, also stressed a lot on the education of these marginalized sections of society and made many provisions for their inclusion. Similarly, RTE Act, 2009 also laid emphasis that the appropriate Government shall ensure that the child belonging to weaker section and the child belonging to disadvantaged group are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing elementary education on any grounds.

**MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION:**

Pre-Primary Education is essential for compulsory primary education. Adequate and satisfactory provision of pre-primary education is conducive to the effective enforcement of compulsory education. It contributes to its success. It will
minimize the ‘wastage’ in primary education. Gandhiji concept of pre-primary education is comprehensive in nature and he was of the opinion that the real education of children begins from conception as the mother begins to take up the responsibility of the child. If a mother is correctly instructed and prepared for the coming responsibility, then that will be the education of the child as well. Gandhiji’s views on pre-primary education are quite relevant in the present circumstances as more than forty percent of children in the relevant age group are out of the reach of ICDS programmes such as Anganwadis, Balwadis and pre-primary schools. If such a large chunk of children population remained out of mainstream of pre-primary education then this will hinder the progress of first generation of learners, as the age about 3 to 6 is the most impressionable period of children’s growth and the foundation of future adult personality are laid down in these impressionable years. The point, that pre-primary education helps in effective transition of children to elementary level also highlight the importance of education at this stage. The NCF (2005) advocated that greater attention needs to be paid to the development of pre-primary education and there should be expansion of early childhood care and development activities especially for poor disadvantaged and disabled children, through a multi-pronged effort involving families, communities and appropriate institutions.

MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO HEALTH, HYGIENE AND NUTRITION:

Studies have confirmed that the nutritional status of children affects their school participation. Many children were reported coming hungry to school. Hunger is seen to be major limiting factor responsible for children remaining out of school and being responsible for low levels of learning within the school. It is clear that a major cause of child absenteeism is health related problems and illness, not to forget the mental and emotional health issues of a child. In such pitiable conditions, Gandhiji’s emphasis on health and nutritional status are quite relevant for achieving the target of qualitative elementary education for all. Gandhiji was quite aware to the fact that for education to explore, health is a prerequisite. Holistic or integrated health is supreme consideration in his approach to education. So he was of the view, that health of body, mind, and soul should be promoted whenever and wherever possible.
But the stimulation should take place in a natural way. Therefore, in his scheme of education he gave special emphasis on different aspects like health, hygiene, nutrition and physical exercises. For maintaining health, he not only advocated on a healthy and nutritious diet but also emphasized the role of exercise in it. If the body has no exercise, it is sickly and, if the mind has none, it is dull. He was of the view that proper nutritional diet be provided to children for their proper growth, which results into their proper education and therefore, he started serving mid-day meals in his ashram schools.

**MAIN FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO PEACE EDUCATION:**

Regarding the importance for education for Peace Gandhiji said, if we are to teach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on real war against war, we shall have to begin with children; and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won’t have to struggle. Gandhiji not only advocated for peace-education but also education for peace. Education for peace seeks to nurture the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that comprise a culture of peace. Education for peace is holistic. It embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth of children within a framework of human values. Peace mandates the practice of values such as love, truth, justice, equality, tolerance, harmony, humility, togetherness, and self-control. However, education now has become a vested interest and an instrument of exploitation, which is the expression of violence. The importance and the relevance of inculcating the value of peace among the students is felt more today in which children are exposed to the violence born out of human intolerance. If we want to promote non-violent culture in society, we must adopt a non-violent educational system. If we want to eliminate communal strife, and international strife, we must start with foundations pure and strong by rearing our younger generation on the education that springs out of non-violence. To achieve this objective, schools while imparting education to all the children, should serve as nurseries of peace to enable children contribute themselves to building a peaceful society. In the background of such conditions, Gandhiji’s views on peace education as well as education for peace have their own utility and significance in order to establish a non-violent and peaceful global society and for this, we have to start education for peace right from the
childhood stage. Various research studies conducted on education for peace, are in tune with Gandhiji’s ideas expressed that education for peace, cutting across diverse curricular areas, should be the primary concern of the teachers and be made the culture of the school. National Knowledge Commission Report (2007) also endorses that there is a dire need for education for peace in the fast changing society.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

The most outstanding characteristic of any research is that it must contribute something new to the development of the area concerned. The present piece of research has its implications for policy planners, administrators, curriculum framers, teachers, parents and community members concerned with education of children at elementary level.

(1) The present study has its utility in understanding the problems in realizing the aims of education. It also suggests the ways and means of developing the various aspects of a student personality, which is the sole aim of education.

(2) The present study reveals that the curriculum is overcrowded with facts and information, which proves heavy and burdensome and creates disinterest among students. So, there is still need of curriculum revision in order to make it joyful, need based and less burdensome for the students.

(3) The present study find out that in the present conditions the methods of teaching are teacher centered, textbook oriented, having less scope for practical work that makes the teaching learning process dull, monotonous and examination oriented. It also suggests that for the effective learning outcomes among student, the methods should be joyful, need-oriented, practical and activity based. Students should be taught with the help of play-way methods, learning by doing and project method.

(4) The study is helpful in understanding the teacher related problems at elementary level that adversely affect the educational outcome of students. It also suggests remedial measures to overcome these problems.

(5) The study throws lights on the present evaluation system and suggests ways for effective implementation of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation.
(6) The study throws light on the importance of self-discipline or voluntary
disciple in order to overcome the problem of indiscipline among students. It
also suggests that there is no place for corporal punishment in maintaining
disciple in schools.

(7) The present study focuses on the significance of women and adult education in
the education of the children at elementary level and suggests the policy
makers and administrators for the effective implementation of the adult and
women education programmes.

(8) The present study suggests that mother tongue should be the medium of
instruction at the elementary level and provision should be made especially for
the child whose medium of instruction at school is different from his/her
mother tongue.

(9) The present has its utility for the parents and community members as it
highlights and suggests their role in effective functioning of the school for
realizing the aims of education.

(10) The present study has its utility in the sense that it can help the centre and state
governments in understanding the various obstacles in realizing the goal of
free and compulsory education for all. It also suggests the ways and means to
overcome these problems.

(11) The present study highlights the role of pre-primary education in achieving the
goal of elementary education for all and suggests that marginalized groups of
society should also be benefited with Early Childhood Care and Education
Programme.

(12) The present study takes into consideration the problem of health, hygiene and
nutrition that is affecting the education of children to a great extent at the
elementary level. It also suggests the need of initiating various health
programmes in a mission mode.

(13) The present study highlights the importance of peace education in the context
of current educational problems and suggests the ways and means to enhance
education for peace in schools.
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. Similar studies can be conducted at Secondary and Higher education stage.
2. Studies can be conducted on educational philosophy of some other thinkers with regard to problems of elementary education.
3. Comparative studies of two or more educational thinkers can be conducted on the same aspect.
4. Studies can be undertaken on the utility of craft-centred education in the present scenario.
5. Similar studies can be undertaken by taking one or two aspects of his educational philosophy in detail.
6. Studies can be undertaken on vocationalization of education at elementary level with regard to other countries of the world.