CHAPTER VI

PROBLEMS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE NORTH-EASTERN REGION OF INDIA

6.1 Genesis:

The North-Eastern Region of India has continued to enjoy a very vital, strategic and sensitive location in India. These characteristics assumed much more significance since World War II, when the Japanese started knocking at this corner and hoisted the flag of Indian National Army (INA) on April 12, 1944 as the first liberated area in India, at Moirang in Manipur. Partition of India and the creation of erstwhile East Pakistan now Bangladesh, in this part of the continent gave this region an unprecedented importance. Flanked by four foreign countries and establishment of "War Cemetery" by the Britishers in Manipur and Nagaland and the Japanese at Maibam Lokpaching, 17 km. south from Imphal, in the NER of India, today attracted all eyes towards it. There has been no year which has not witnessed bloodshed, turmoil, clash, uprising, disturbance, riot and alike in one or other part of this region. This vulnerable part of India with continuous occurrences of violence and report of secessionist activities have created a potentially explosive situation. The gravely disturbing situation in this part of our country

has posed a major challenge to the country and its people. It is often said that the hypersensitive people of NER of India, who have been for a fairly long-time harbouring grudge and anger against the "aliens" are anxious to retain and strengthen their "distinct identity" as well as "cultural traditions". In order to fulfil the aspiration of people of this region, political units have been created, out of Assam from time to time. Notwithstanding these and other concessions, political, and economic, one does not find peace in the region. It is very important to search peace for proper development of the region in order to compete with the rest of the country in all walks of life.

The reasons of chaotic condition in this area are the political and socio-economic status of the people. Many attempts have been made to analyse the situation on these grounds, but with no everlasting solutions. It seems that the people of this region particularly educated unemployed youths, even they know the history and development from the books before independence, they could not satisfy the tremendous change taking place in all walks of life since independence, as the region still could not develop up to the mark at par with other states in the country. There will be peace and prosperity if rural poverty could have tackled, only by application of science and technology and the type of education imparted according to the needs and requirements of the region.
6.1.1 A New Vision:

Education is regarded as the political instrument of socio-economic transformation and important means of national development. It is only by education that would determine the level of well being and prosperity of the people. The success of this regional reconstruction would largely depend on the quality of the young people. In order to accelerate the pace of the upliftment of NER, it is felt essential to frame an imaginative and well-defined educational policy and to take determined and vigorous action for vitalising and improving the quality, as well as, quantity of education in order to meet immediate needs and requirements of this region, in the world of works.

The world is fast moving towards a new educational order. Most countries both developed and under-developed are busy reforming their educational systems, so as to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The educational transformation lays stress on "Education for All" with focus on equity and special attention to education of the disadvantaged groups and weaker sections of the society, modernisation of the delivery systems, use of new educational technologies, improvement of quality of education at all levels with greater emphasis on raising the standard of primary education which forms the foundation of the educational
structure and increasing the relevance of curricula to the needs and aspirations of the society. The NER of India is currently engaged in reorienting its educational system to meet the new needs and requirements at present and in future.

6.2 Problem of Small and Scattered Habitation:

One of the handicaps on the path of progress has been that of the population in many parts of the North Eastern Region of India due to small and scattered habitations. It will be easier to achieve universalisation of primary education at easily accessible and comparatively compact localities. But in many areas, particularly hill areas, the population is small in a number of hamlets. The hamlets are wide apart. In such places, the teacher-pupil ratio cannot be maintained and naturally the cost of education per child goes-up.

There are 74,146 habitations population of 300-400, and those with population of 200 or more but less than 300 are 1,13,790 according to the First Educational Survey, 1957. The number of habitations are very large in the lower population slabs. Habitations having a population range of 100 to 200 are 1,89,329 while those having a population of less than 100 persons are 2,54,071. There are 574, 21,262, 1,566 407, 709 and 2,372 habitations with population of 300 or more served by primary
schools in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, respectively, according to Fifth All India Educational Survey 1986. The percentages served within the habitations in the above seven states of NER of India are 80.31\%, 78.38\%, 88.99\%, 89.34\%, 97.79\%, 98.59\% and 58.52\% respectively. In Manipur, there are 438 habitations in the population slab of below 100, of these 242 habitations (55.23\%) covering 69.90\%, population have primary sections upto a distance of 1 km.²

The above position revealed by the Educational Survey, was a laudable landmark in the constructive efforts of the NER, to impel darkness of illiteracy and diffuse the light of education in far-flung small pockets of darkness in NER of India. Without an educational survey or without having an accurate idea of the vast multitude of small habitations and hamlets, it would not be possible to appreciate the causes of failure by the government in the matter of non-achievement of the goal of compulsory education for which a date-line of ten years had been fixed in the Indian Constitution. Our constitution makers were carried away more by emotion and enthusiasm than by the dispassionate judgement of the stark realities. The thorniest problem is presented by habitations having a population of less than 100 persons. The major problem of

scattered population in small habitations is uncomfortably long
distances between the homes in one habitation and the school in
another.

The NER of India cannot afford to follow the American type
of having a centrally situated school for several habitations, and
providing free transport facilities to students to school and back
to home. It would similarly be a luxury to think of the Sweedish
pattern to establish "Children's Homes" at convenient centres.
Iceland follows the itinerant school system having a school functioning
at a centre for 6 months in the year and then for another 6 months
the same school is run in another centre. But this scheme is
obviously unsuited to backward conditions in rural and hill areas
of NER and would result in enormous wastage and stagnation. Even
the peripatetic teacher of school system as followed in some places
of Australia due to large area and small and scattered nature of
population, which has been partially recommended by the educational
surveys, would not be feasible all over India, particularly in NER,
where teachers at the primary stages are low-paid. Unless the
state governments in NER of India, could extend educational facilities
to small and scattered population in rural areas, particularly hill
areas, it cannot enforce free and compulsory primary education
throughout the region.

3. Sayidain, K.G. et.al.: "Compulsory Education in India", Universal
There are wide variation of habitation within the states in the NER of India. Arunachal Pradesh has the largest area with the lowest density of population (8 per sq. kms.) whereas Assam has the highest density of population (234 per sq.km.) and followed by Tripura (196 per sq. km.), Manipur (64 per sq. km.), Meghalaya (60 per sq.km.), Nagaland (47 per sq.km.) and Mizoram (23 per sq.km.), respectively, as per 1991 census. Remote and sparsely populated places have less educational opportunities than populous and easily accessible areas. The area having the largest number of educational institutions have also the highest number of pupils. The development of primary education in the NER of India, are not uniform due to the small and scattered habitation throughout the hilly areas.

6.3 Regional Disparities and Educational Imbalances:

Regional disparities are one of the most important topics and problems not only for NER of India but also for the nation and world. Regional disparities within countries are quite common and the Indian disparity ratio of opportunity is 1:3 between the most backward and the most advanced states. But in the NER of India, except Assam the remaining six states are the most backward in comparison with the rest of the states in all walks of life. But

in India these disparities refer to basic economic condition, different level of productivity and income, rather than to literacy rate, whereas according 1991 census report, only two states (i) Meghalaya (49.10%) and (ii) Arunachal Pradesh (41.59%) out of the seven states in NER, are lower than that of the national rate of literacy 52.19% as stated earlier. These disparities are extremely important and seem to be increasing. In this region, industry remain very weak and agriculture not much productive and Green Revolution could not meet the daily needs and requirements of the people. Strong regional disparities do not mean that there is a break between highly developed and poorly developed regions of North-East. There are lots of politicians living in the poorly developed areas of NER, who can retain a certain power and to reap some advantages. The development of educational facilities in the different parts of the country including NER has been very uneven and one of the important objectives of educational policy should be to strive for reducing the existing imbalances to the minimum.

The NER of India, as a whole, is educationally backward region and there are a very wide regional disparities not only within the states but also within the districts, municipalities and villages. In each state, there are some districts which have a poor and improper educational facilities and are lagging behind in the matter of educational development than other districts. The progress of primary education after independence has not been rapid
and uniform throughout the NER of India. It is a burning problem to reduce the educational imbalances in the region and this can only be achieved if educational facilities like improvement in quality of education, increasing the duration of compulsory primary education, educational facilities and expansion of education are provided to the neglected far-flung, remote, difficult, and inaccessible hill areas. At present, Assam has the highest number of 28,876 primary schools in NER of India, whereas Mizoram has the lowest number of 1,066 primary schools during 1992-93. Meghalaya has 4,170 primary schools followed by Manipur (3,180), Tripura (2,065), Nagaland (1,305) and Arunachal Pradesh (1,171), respectively at the primary stages of school education. It may not be out of place to point out here that within the states of NER, the capital district has the highest number of primary schools in comparison with the rest of the districts in each and every state except in Assam where Nagaon District has the highest number of educational institutions (2,943) at the primary stages of school education.

6.4 Medium of Instruction:

The vast proportion of tribal population of the NER of India and their concentration in certain hilly regions has created a difficult situation in regard to provision of educational facilities. A study of the efforts made by the British Government revealed that as they proceeded to form a policy of isolation and status-quo, the tribals had to remain at the mercy of petty officials and nothing positive was achieved by the way of rehabilitation and
development. Consequently, they become the poorest of the poor and remained as the most backward group in the society. No systematic effort was made to educate the large population of this backward community at the early part of the British rule.

Immediately after independence and integration of the princely states, the national government lost no time to realise the importance of devoting special attention towards its vast backward population particularly to the NER of India. The emphasis on educational progress is fully justified because without spread of education and consequent enlightenment, the tribal people cannot fully realise their own status. The progress of education and literacy hold a very important place in any programme of amelioration of the tribal people. One of the most important and remarkable problems for development of education in the NER of India is the medium of instruction at the primary stages of school education among the innumerable tribal dialects and languages.

6.4.1 Medium of Instruction at the Primary Stages:

It is a well known fact that Article No. 350 provided that "It shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education".
to children belonging to linguistic minority groups... One of the main reasons for the slow progress of the students of the NER of India specially in tribal areas, is that the medium of instruction is other than the mother-tongue of students. Specially at the primary stages the tribal children are not acquainted with other languages/dialect except their own. So they face a lot of difficulty in understanding their lessons. It is to be noted that at the primary stage, the medium of instruction should be the mother-tongue of the children.

It is noteworthy that more than 80% of the population of (i) Meghalaya (ii) Nagaland (iii) Mizoram and (iv) Arunachal Pradesh are tribals. There are 23 recognised major tribes in Assam, 12 tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, 29 tribes in Manipur, 5 tribes in Nagaland, 19 tribes in Tripura, 14 tribes in Meghalaya and 14 tribes in Mizoram. Again there are also 16 Scheduled Castes in Arunachal Pradesh, 7 Scheduled Castes in Manipur, 16 Scheduled Castes in Meghalaya, 32 Scheduled Castes in Tripura and 16 Scheduled Castes in Mizoram respectively in NER of India, speaking different dialects. Some state governments in this region have expressed their inability to implement the recommendation of Education Commission (1964-66) and National Policy Education (1986), that the medium of instruction should be mother-tongue of pupils at the primary stage, on two grounds:

i) The tribal dialects are innumerable, and

ii) There is a lot of difficulty to prepare text-book in the local dialects.

The prevailing medium of instruction at the primary stages of education in NER of India, under the provision of Article No. 350 as on January 1, 1993 are as follows:

a) Arunachal Pradesh:
   i) Primary Stage : English and Hindi
   ii) Upper Primary Stage : English, Hindi, Assamese and Sanskrit is use as a third language.

b) Assam:
   i) Primary stage/
   ii) Upper Primary Stage : Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, English and Bodo

c) Manipur:
   i) Primary Stage : Major Indian Languages (MIL) generally Hindi, Bengali, Manipuri and 5 recognised Tribal dialects.
   ii) Upper Primary Stage : MIL generally Hindi, Bengali, Manipuri, and English.

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d) Meghalaya:

i) Primary stage: Mother tongue, namely Khasi and Garo. In other schools, Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and Nepali are also adopted as the medium of instruction.

ii) Upper Primary: English in all school except in some schools where Bengali, Hindi, Assamese and Nepali are used medium of instruction.

e) Mizoram:

i) Primary stage / Upper Primary stage: Mother tongue namely Mizo, Nepali, Bengali as the case may be.

f) Nagaland:

i) Primary stage: Local dialects and English

ii) Upper Primary: Local dialects namely AO, Konayak, Angami, Sema, Lotha and English.

g) Tripura:

i) Primary stage: Bengali, English, Kokborak, Hindi and Lusai.

ii) Upper Primary: Bengali, English, Provision for Hindi, Sanskrit, Pali Arabic are adopted as the optional.
Even though there are a large number of tribal dialects in NER of India, all the states in this region gradually take up the initiative to produce text-books for the primary stages in Roman script of the major tribal dialects recognised by the respective state government.

The medium of instruction in NER of India is very complicated and this is a factor for wastage and stagnation. As for example, there are 29 dialects in Manipur as stated earlier and Manipuri is used as the medium of instruction upto secondary level. In the hill areas wastage and stagnation are caused by students whose mother-tongue is not Manipuri. As a remedial measure government has introduced a policy from 1980 onwards to adopt medium of instruction and examination for Classes I-V in the schools of Manipur in any of the following:

a) Manipuri  
b) Hindi  
c) Tangkhul  
d) Paite  
e) Lushai  
f) Hmar  
g) Thadou/Kuki and  
h) Any one of modern Indian languages as approved by the
   Government of Manipur from time to time.
The pupils receiving primary education through any of the recognised dialects viz, Tangkhul, Lushai, Paite, Hmar and Thadou/Kuki are to learn regional language (Manipuri) as a separate language subject, from Class III-V, so that they may not find any difficulty at the time of switching over to the regional language at the end of Class V. Those pupils whose mother tongue is neither regional language nor any of the recognised dialects have to opt either Manipur or any one of the recognised dialects as their medium of instruction and examination.

6.4.2 Languages taught at the Primary Education in Manipur:

The following languages are taught at the primary stages of school education at present in Manipur:

a) Classes (I-II):

Only one language is taught, hence mother tongue of the children is to be taught. However, out of the 29 dialects spoken by the tribal children only 5 dialects viz, Lusai, Hmar, Paite, Tangkhul and Thadou/Kuki are recognised and hence the children speaking these dialects should be given the opportunity of learning through their dialects in Classes I and II. But the children speaking the remaining 24 dialects will have to opt either one of the recognised 5 dialects or Manipuri (Meiteilon).
b) Classes (III-V):

Three languages are taught in the following pattern at this school stage of education:

i) Mother tongue as the first language
ii) English as the second language
iii) Hindi as the third language

The tribal children speaking the 24 dialects which are not yet recognised by the government will have to opt either one of the recognised dialects or Manipuri (Meiteilon). Those who offer either one of the recognised dialects will have to learn Elementary Manipuri as a subject, carrying 50 marks so that they may be conversant with this language.

c) Classes (VI-VIII):

Three languages are taught at the upper primary stage of school education:

i) Manipuri (Elementary Manipuri for Scheduled Tribes)
ii) English as second language
iii) Hindi as third language

In addition to these subjects, the opportunity for learning of Meitei Mayek (Old Manipuri Script) in Class VI is provided for those desirous of learning the language.
6.4.3 Problem of Language:

The language problem is a very controversial issue in NER of India. It is necessary to pay special attention to the education of children from the backward classes which include the Scheduled Tribes, denotified communities and a few nomadic and semi-nomadic groups. Manipur state has a language and script of its own, which is in the Kuki/Chin branch of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. Assam already had its own language and script. In NER of India, only two states have their own script and remaining 5 states have no script of their own and the missionaries introduced Roman script in their languages. Thus, one of the major problems in tribal education is that of language and script. As they have no written language of their own and teaching of literacy subjects in a different language have no appeal to them. Therefore, the question of an uniform language for the tribes of NER of India is a serious problem.

At present, the tribes in NER of India, are educated through different regional languages. The question of language has been creating a considerable confusion in the tribal areas not only in Manipur but also in the whole area of NER. The tribals have been demanding for imparting primary education through the medium of their own languages and dialects.

6.4.4 Languages of NER in the Eighth Schedule:

In NER of India, only Assamese language was included in the Eighth Schedule, when the country's constitution drafted and others languages in this region were neglected. At present there are two languages: i) Assamese and (ii) Manipuri in the Eighth Schedule in NER. The demand for recognition of Manipuri as one of the national languages by including it in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution is a long-standing one. Being a native state, Manipuri was represented on the constituent assembly when the country's constitution was drafted and the case of Manipuri with an ancient script and rich literature for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule went by default.

20th August, 1992 is the "Red Letter Day" in the history of Manipur language (Meitelion) and Manipur state by smooth passage of Constitution (71st Amendment) Bill 1992, in both Houses of Parliament for inclusion of Manipuri Language in the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution, along with Konkani and Nepali. Introducing the Bill in the Parliament, the Union Home Minister S.B. Chavan felt that the Government was taking a step forward in fulfilling the aspirations of the Manipuri, Konkani and Nepalee. In both the Lok Sabha as well as the Rajya Sabha, the Bill was passed without any opposition. In the Lok Sabha, all the 343 members supported the

Bill, while in the Upper House, it was passed without a discussion and all the 130 members voted in favour. Manipuri is the 1st language in Tibeto-Burman group to be included in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution and inclusion would help in bringing the people of Manipur and particularly the youth, to the national mainstream and would strengthen national integration. Thus, there are two languages (i) Assamese and (ii) Manipuri in the Eighth Schedule in the NER of India with effect from August 20, 1992.

6.4.5 Problem of Text-books at the Primary Stages:

Preparation of text-books for the major languages like Assamese and Manipuri are not difficult up to University level. But it is a very difficult problem to prepare text-books for the tribal children specially at the primary stages in the NER of India. The text-books which have been prescribed for the tribal children of a particular grade are either too difficult or defective in the manner in which the subject matter is presented. So due attention should be paid by the authority for preparing text-books for the tribal students of different age level. It is also necessary that the common text-books meant for general students of a state should include lessons depicting the life of the tribals, their folk-songs, and the life of important personalities. This will enable both non-tribal and the tribal people to understand each other better. There are some recognised dialects of all the 7 states in which text-books for
primary stages of school education were produced. But it is impossible to produce text-books of all the tribal dialects in the NER of India for primary stages school education.

6.5 Wastage and Stagnation at the Primary Stages:

All the developing countries of the world are facing the problem of educational wastage and stagnation at the school stage in general and primary stages in particular. To combat this problem which is common in almost all countries various steps have been initiated by the countries with varying degrees of success. Hartog Committee defined "Wastage as the premature withdrawal of children from school at any stage before the completion of the primary course". The Committee also defined stagnation as "Retention of a child in a class for a period of more than one year". In India, the problem of educational wastage was first taken up by the Hartog Committee's Report in 1928 which remarked that "Throughout the whole education system there is waste and ineffectiveness". The first ever study in this area seems to have been made in the beginning of 1940s when a report on stagnation and wastage in primary schools was brought out by the Bombay Provincial Board of Primary Education, in the erstwhile Bombay Province. The first effort to study wastage and stagnation at the national level was made by the

Health Education and Welfare (HEW) Project. In this study the wastage and stagnation was determined separately for primary and upper primary schools by cohort method over a period of ten years starting from 1950-51.

The drop-out rate at the end of Classes V and VIII are 82.68% and 86.74%, comprising of 81.90% boys and 83.66% girls in Class V and 85.64% boys and 88.22% girls in Class VIII, respectively, according to the data furnished by the Directorate of Education(s) Government of Manipur during 1979-80. Total drop-out rate at the end of Class V and Class VIII decreased to 70.35% and 74.29% during the year 1990-91 in Manipur. As worked out by the Directorate of Education(s) Manipur, drop-out rate of Class V for boys and girls are 69.21% and 71.66%, whereas the drop-out rate at the end of the class VIII for boys and girls are 74.11% and 74.50% during the year 1990-91. Meghalaya has a drop-out rate of 84% in the Class I A to VI according to the Report of the State Planning Board, Meghalaya (November, 1989). The Government of Tripura has given top priority to the task of implementation of the New Education Policy in NER and is paying all attention to the universalisation of primary education and fight against the problems of non-enrolment and drop-out among the children of the weaker sections of society.  

6.5.1 Causes of Wastage and Stagnation in Class I:

The most important programme to be implemented at the primary stages in the NER of India is to improve the quality of education and to reduce stagnation and wastage to the minimum. In fact, the task of universal education begins when children are enrolled in Class I. It is completed only when they are successfully retained till they complete upper primary stage. In this regard, the education of wastage and stagnation in Class I is obviously the most important element.

The higher rate of wastage and stagnation in Class I is due to a variety of causes which include.\(^\text{11}\)

a) The heterogeneity of the age-group of pupils.
b) The practice of making fresh admission throughout the year.
c) Irregularity of attendance
d) Overcrowded classes
e) Unsuitable curricula
f) Inability of teachers to use play-way technique which can assist in initiating the children pleasantly to school
g) Poor teaching of beginning reading
h) Inadequately prepared teachers
i) A wrong system of education etc.

The remedy for some of these defects is self-evident and most of them could be eliminated through the development of qualitative programmes. The adoption of play-way techniques in Class I for introducing the child to school life in a pleasant way should be emphasised. For this purpose, methods of instruction in Class I should be patterned in the light of the techniques utilised at the pre-primary stage and the teachers in-charge of this class should be trained accordingly.

6.5.2 Causes of Wastage and Stagnation at the Primary Stages:

The extent of wastage and stagnation at the primary stages in NER of India, may be broadly classified into three categories:

a) Economic Causes: The poor economic conditions of the parents is the greatest obstacle in the way of education of the children in NER. A large number of parents withdraw their children from schools, because they depend upon child labour. Though education is free for the tribal students, still the parents are so poor that they are unable to provide the school uniform, stationery and books for proper education.

b) Educational Causes: A large number of elementary schools have insufficient, unattractive school building, inadequate equipments, over-crowded classes and indifferent teachers. About 30% of the wastage is due to educational causes. Curriculum is heavy and
irrelevant to the day-to-day life. There are heterogeneity of age-group and parents of rural and hill areas are indifferent to education. Most of the villages in the region are sparsely populated and they are inaccessible and hilly, so there are some villages without a single primary school and if there are such schools the enrolment is very poor. Large number of single teacher schools are also available.

c) Social Causes: A large number of students in NER of India drop-out before the completion of primary education particularly in the rural and hill areas due to the lack of interest. Most of them are first generation learners. The parents want them to work at home and in field particularly in the rainy and harvesting seasons. They are not conscious of their future career as well as the importance of education. The majority of the population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in NER do not realise the value of education and indifferent to the cause of education. Most of the people who are engaged in higher occupations, services and business send their children to educational institution for higher studies, while the people engaged in occupations like farmer, factory worker and daily wage-earners withdraw their children early from the school.

Another social factor is tradition and cultural background of the parents. The tradition compelled the parental opposition to the girls in rural areas of NER of India, particularly Muslims, whereas
in most of the urban areas the education of girls is more perfect. The main causes of wastage and stagnation at the primary stages in the NER of India, are losing interest in schooling and remain in the same classes for a number of year, due to irregular attendance, indifferent teaching, unsuitable curriculum, defective method of teaching and examination.

6.5.3 Percentage of Drop-out at the Primary Stages of School Education.

The percentages of school drop-out at the primary stages of school education in NER of India in the classes II, III, IV, V, VI, VII and VIII are 43.68%, 50.41%, 58.87%, 62.90%, 69.15%, 73.15% and 78.07% respectively out of the 100 pupils enrolled in the class I, which is higher than that of the national rates 26.59%, 34.05%, 43.54%, 50.72%, 58.60%, 68.48% and 68.89% during 1986-87. It is very interesting to note that Manipur has school drop-out rates, 20.56%, 31.20%, 37.42%, 43%, 50.27%, 51.96% and 57.74% in the classes II, III, IV, V, VI, VII and VIII, at the primary stages of education, in the NER of India and which is lower than that of the national rates during the period under review.

The drop-out rate at the class V in NER is 62.90% which is higher than that of the national rate (50.72%). Meghalaya has the highest percentage (78.17%) of school drop-out rate at the class
V in the NER followed by Arunachal Pradesh (69.82%), Mizoram (65.51%), Assam (63.15%), Tripura (60.84%), Nagaland (60.05%) and Manipur (43%). The percentage of school drop-out at the Upper Primary stage in NER is 78.07% which is also higher than that of the national rate 68.89%. Again Meghalaya has the highest rate (83.93%) of school drop-out at the Upper Primary stage (Class VIII) in NER followed by Arunachal Pradesh (83.91%), Mizoram (83.19%), Nagaland (83.10%), Assam (78.65%), Tripura (75.92%) and Manipur (57.74%) respectively.

It is observed that only 21.93% reach Class VIII out of the 100 pupils enrolled in Class I in NER of India and 78.07% pupils drop-out from the school education at the primary stages. Manipur State has the lowest school drop-out rate (57.74%) in the NER. Table No. 6.1. shows the percentage of drop-out at the primary stages of school education in NER of India.
TABLE NO. 6.1

PERCENTAGE OF DROP-OUT AT THE PRIMARY STAGES OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN NORTH-EASTERN REGION OF INDIA

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<td>Nagaland</td>
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<td>49.64</td>
<td>59.12</td>
<td>60.05</td>
<td>74.65</td>
<td>77.39</td>
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<td>Tripura</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>43.15</td>
<td>43.72</td>
<td>52.10</td>
<td>60.84</td>
<td>63.67</td>
<td>70.68</td>
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<td>43.68</td>
<td>50.41</td>
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<td>62.90</td>
<td>69.15</td>
<td>73.15</td>
<td>78.07</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>26.59</td>
<td>34.05</td>
<td>43.54</td>
<td>50.72</td>
<td>58.60</td>
<td>68.48</td>
<td>68.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6 Teachers and Teacher Education in NER of India:

Teachers play a vital role in the improvement of quality of education in NER. In any assessment of educational system, it is important to know whether there are enough teachers, who are not only well qualified to teach the different subjects but are also able to cope with the changing curriculum and growth of knowledge. It is important to know about the facilities that exist for upgrading their knowledge and improving their skills of teaching. Further, since the teacher is regarded as an agent of change particularly in rural and hill areas, where he can play an useful role in removing class prejudices, bringing about a social reform, it is a matter of concern to study what new roles he can play in a transforming society, how well he is equipped for the purpose and what facilities exists for his training. The programme of improving the training of primary teachers was given a high priority in the Third Five Year Plan. In view of this, the Ministry of Education undertook a survey of teacher training institutions at the primary level in all the states and Union Territories in 1959 including NER of India.

A sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education. Investment in teacher education can yield very rich dividends in this economically backward region of NER of India, because the financial
resources required are small when measured against the resulting improvements in the education. In the absence of other influences, a teacher tries to teach in the way in which he himself was taught by his favourite teachers and thus tends to perpetuate the traditional methods of teaching particularly in the remote, rural and hilly areas throughout NER.

In situation like the present nuclear age when new and dynamic methods of instruction are highly needed and demanded, such an attitude becomes an obstacle to progress. It can be modified only by effective professional in teaching and lay the foundations for their professional growth. First-rate teacher training institutions can thus play a crucial role in the development of education. The present burning problems of law and order throughout NER can be solved within the class-room, if the teachers in the primary stages imparted values of education and ideas of national integration to the pupils. It is a fact that the teacher builds the nation by educating the future citizens and takes a major part in the educational and national reconstruction. To carry out the assigned responsibilities of nation building and also to be a friend, a philosopher and guide to the students, the teachers are to equip themselves with new knowledge and skills.
6.6.1 Teacher Education in the NER of India:

Teachers education in the NER of India was started first in Assam in the following type of institutions:

a) Normal Schools and Basic Training Centres for primary school teachers
b) Training Institutions for under graduates of secondary schools
c) B.T. Colleges for graduate teachers, and
d) Training Institutions for teachers of special subjects.

The first type of institutions, Normal Schools and Basic Training Centres for primary school teachers provide training to the teachers of primary and upper primary school. The school is also residential in character. Assam has no separate institution for the training of undergraduate teacher or the secondary schools. Such training was provided in the P.G.T. College at Jorhat. The college conducted Teachers Diploma Course (T.D.C.) for them. Under Gauhati University also certificate courses in the method of Teaching of Geography (T.G.) and the method of Teaching English (E.T.) are conducted for them, although these courses are attended by graduate and post-graduate teachers also.
Formerly Graduate Teachers of Assam were deputed to the Dacca Training College under Dacca University. Later on, B.T. classes started in the St. Edmunds College at Shillong in 1936. When the Gauhati University opened B.T. Department in 1949, under its direct management, 30 teachers were deputed for the course. The government also started a B.T. College of its own at Jorhat, the Post-Graduate Training (P.G.T.) College in 1957.\textsuperscript{12} In Meghalaya P.G.T. College was started at Shillong for the Training of Secondary Teachers in 1964\textsuperscript{13} and B.Ed. Course also started in the University of Arunachal Pradesh during 1987-88.

\textbf{6.6.2 Present Position of Teacher Training Institutions in the NER:}

The total number of teacher training institutions in the NER are 69 during 1992-93, contributing 3.66\% only to the total number (1,885) of training institutions in India. At present, there are 53 and 16 teachers training schools and colleges in NER, against the national figures of 1,328 and 557 contributing 3.99\% and 2.87\% to the total number of India. In Assam, there are 33 teacher training schools and 9 teacher training colleges, respectively. Thus, Assam has the highest number of teacher training institutions (42) contributing 60.87\% to the total number of training institutions in NER, followed by Meghalaya having 11 teacher training institutions contributing 16\%.

\textsuperscript{12} Saikia, S.:"History of Education in India", Mani Manik Prakash Guwahati, 1975, p.106.

\textsuperscript{13} Tiwari, R.P.:"Problems of Education in North-East India" Prakash Brothers, Educational Publishers, Ludhiana, 1988, p. 125.
There are 5 teacher training institutions, of which 3 are teacher training colleges and 2 are teacher training schools in Manipur. Nagaland has also 5 teacher training institutions, but there is only 1 (one) teacher training college and 4 teacher training schools. Thus, Manipur State has higher number of teacher training colleges in NER next to Assam. There is one teacher training college each in Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura respectively. The number of teacher training schools in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura are 10, 2 and 2 respectively during 1992-93. It is observed that Assam provided more facilities than other states in NER for imparting teacher education at the primary and secondary in service teachers as well as pre-service candidates, in order to meet the need and requirement of the students. B. Ed. Course was also started in the University of Arunachal Pradesh, during 1987-88 as stated earlier.

6.6.3 Teacher Education in Manipur:

A. Basic Training Institute (B.T.I.):

Teacher education programme in Manipur started with the setting up of one Normal Training Institute, where 60 (sixty) undergraduate and matriculate teachers were given training, during 1952-53. After running for two years, it was closed down in 1955-56. Later, three more Basic Training Institutes (B.T.I.) were established in order to impart the necessary training to the teachers serving in the primary schools in Manipur one each at...
a) Canchipur in 1959 (Imphal District)
b) Ukhrul in 1961 (Ukhrul District)
c) Kakching in 1961 (Thoubal District)

These three institutions were residential. The teacher education of secondary school teachers started on the 1st August 1959 along with the Certificate of Teaching (C.T.) course as an adjunct to the Undergraduate Department of Education in the erstwhile D.M. College, Imphal. Prior to this, the government used to depute untrained working teachers outside Manipur, particularly in the Central Institute of Education, Delhi and the B.T. Department of Gauhati University as stated earlier.

B. Basic Training College (B.T.C.):

The Basic Training College (B.T.C.) was established for giving training to the undergraduate teachers serving in the upper primary stage, in 1961.15 B.T.I. at Ukhrul was abolished during 1975-76. All the staff members were transferred to B.T.I. Imphal, even though there was adequate number of its own staff. The B.T.I., Imphal was amalgamated with B.T.C. during 1979-80. After the abolition of B.T.I. in Kakching and Canchipur, all the Craft Instructors serving in these institutions were transferred to the offices of Inspectors of Schools- Zone-I, Zone-II, Zone-III and Zone-IV respectively.

15. ibid, p. 79.
C. District Institute of Educational Training (DIET):

The B.T.C., the only training college conducting full time course for giving training to the undergraduate working teachers was upgraded as District Institute of Educational Training (DIET) for Imphal District under State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Manipur, in the year 1990. The concept of DIET is to become model for other educational institutions in the district in terms of meticulous, efficient and effective planning and execution of functions, harmonious and creative organisational climate, maintenance of a clean and attractive campus. At present, Manipur has 3(three) DIETs one each at Imphal, Thoubal (Kakching) and Churachandpur. These DIETs in Manipur are giving training to both pre-service and inservice candidates. They are under the direct control of the Director of State Council of Educational Research and Training.

D. State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT):

The former State Institute of Education (SIE) has been upgraded to State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) since 1989. It is the academic wing of the Department

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17. ibid. p. 81.
of Education, Government of Manipur. The campus of SCERT is very small and it is running in a small L.P. School. Library is extremely poor and equipment are not available. Guidance programme cannot be taken up as there is no trained guidance officer. The SCERT, Manipur needs immediate improvement by providing sufficient funds, infrastructure and equipments.

6.7 Operation Blackboard (O.B.) in the NER of India:

It is a fact that the universalisation of primary education has been one of the most important goals of educational development in our country including NER. Provision of free and compulsory education to all children till they complete the age of 14 years is a Directive Principle of our Constitution as stated earlier. It is a part of the Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) as well as the 20-Point Programme 1986. The NPE-1986 and Programme of Action (POA) have recommended a number of schemes for the quantitative and qualitative improvement of primary education. One of these has been symbolically termed as "Operation Blackboard" (O.B.), which aims at the substantial improvement in facilities at primary education. Operation Blackboard lays down the minimum level of facilities to be provided in all primary schools which have so far been established and it also prescribes the minimum level of funding for all primary schools to be opened in future.

There are three components of Operation Blackboard:

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

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

c) Provision of essential teaching and learning materials.

The "Operation" implies that there is an urgency in this programme. Steps are also proposed to be taken to obtain land for a playground to be attached to the school.

6.7.1 Type of Buildings at the Primary Stages of School Education in the NER:

There are 3,355 pucca buildings, 12,785 partly pucca buildings, 18,571 kachcha buildings and 10,094 thatched huts at the primary stages of school education in the NER. Assam has the highest number of pucca building educational institutions (2,377) at the primary stages of school education, followed by Meghalaya.

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19. ibid, p.123.
(438), Arunachal Pradesh (217), Nagaland (168) Tripura (80) and Manipur (75). There is not a single pucca building, at the primary stage in Mizoram. Assam has the maximum number of partly pucca building educational institutions (9,664) in the NER, followed by Meghalaya (922), Mizoram (873), Manipur (596), Nagaland (483), Arunachal Pradesh (74) and Tripura (73) respectively.

In the NER of India, Assam has the highest number of kachcha building educational institutions (12,333), followed by Tripura (1,913), Manipur (1,633), Meghalaya (1,401) Nagaland (619), Mizoram (509) and Arunachal Pradesh (163). Again Assam has the highest number of thatched huts educational institutions (6,490) in NER followed by Meghalaya (1,587), Manipur (889), Arunachal Pradesh (680) Tripura (210), Nagaland (152) and Mizoram (86) respectively. There are 9 and 68 educational institutions at the primary stages running under tents in Meghalaya and Tripura. Again Tripura has 2 upper primary educational institutions running at the open space. Thus, there are 79 educational institutions at the primary stages of school education comprising of 9 in Meghalaya, and 70 in Tripura running under tents and open space respectively. Table No. 6.2, shows the various type of buildings at the primary stages of school education in the NER of India.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Educational Institutions having</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pucca</td>
<td>Partly Pucca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradesh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>1,962</td>
<td>7,578</td>
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<td></td>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>2,086</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,377</td>
<td>9,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>479</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>117</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>596</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>698</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>150</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>992</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>Primary</td>
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<td>401</td>
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<td></td>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>483</td>
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<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Primary</td>
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<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>U.P.</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>2,857</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>3,355</td>
<td>12,785</td>
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</table>

6.7.2 Role of Central and State Governments

The Government of India has undertaken a greater responsibility, specially in relation to schemes aimed at the qualitative improvement of education for effective implementation of NPE-1986. For the implementation of Operation Blackboard too, responsibility is being shared between the Central and State Governments. Funds for construction of buildings have to be arranged by State Governments from the schemes for which funds have already been provided by the Government of India. States including NER, have been asked to plan the use of funds provided by the Eight Finance Commission for construction of school buildings. A decision of the highest level has also been taken to give high priority to the construction of primary school buildings by the judicious allocation of funds provided to states under the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). The entire cost of the operation will be provided by the Central Government.

The following clarifications have been made to the States regarding the construction of school buildings under this scheme:

a) Each of the rooms to be constructed, should be 30 square metres in area and the depth of the verandah should be approximately 9-10 feet. Even if there are
two rooms in existence at present whose area is less than the recommended area, new rooms should be constructed.

b) Separate toilets for boys and girls must form a part of construction activity. Toilets should be so constructed that they inculcate desire toilets habits among children.

c) The design of the building should provide scope for expansion. Every effort should be made to utilise local materials to keep the cost low. The buildings should be adequate without being ostentatious and should merge with the environment. It should also be ensured that there is built-in space for storage of equipment. Well-plastered blackboards should also form part of the structure itself in the rooms, as well as at both ends of the verandah.

In the actual implementation of the O.B., the local community will have to play a very important role. The role of the local community has been defined in the scheme are as follows:

a) Necessary land for construction of school buildings, including land for games and sports has to be provided by the local community.
b) The local community, preferably village Education Committees, have to give a formal undertaking that they will accept responsibility for repair and maintenance of the building.

c) The local community has also to accept responsibility for an appropriate fencing around the school compound.

6.7.3 Provision of a Second-Teacher in Single-Teacher Schools:

There is a large number of schools in the NER of India which are being managed by single teachers although efforts have been made over the past years to reduce the number of single-teacher schools. Under Operation Blackboard, the states in NER have been asked to appoint a second teacher in all single-teacher schools. The Government of India will give financial help to the states for payment of the salary of the second teacher during the Seventh Five Year Plan period.

For the effective implementation of this component:

a) The State Government has to give a categorical assurance that all new primary schools to be opened will be provided with two teachers.

b) To the extent possible, all new teachers to be appointed will be women. It is advisable for every school to have at least one women teacher. In case of any
difficulties in rural areas, the second teacher may also be male, but a corresponding increase in the number of women-teachers should be made in urban areas in other localities.

c) Special considerations need to be borne in mind in the appointment of teachers. If trained teachers belonging to remote areas are available, they should be given preference without disturbing the broad policy regarding the appointment of teachers. Likewise, preference should be given to trained teachers belonging to SC/ST.

d) In cases where persons trained 2-3 years prior to the appointment are appointed they should be provided with a suitable refresher course approximately of one month's duration. Necessary preparations for this purpose should be made immediately. Materials prepared by NCERT, for a massive teacher training programme should also supplement other sources.