7.1 INTRODUCTION

India, through its Constitution, has accepted the responsibility of providing free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years. Attempts have been made and are being made to fulfill this responsibility. In this direction it could be seen that all the five year plans of the country are thrusting their efforts. During the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) attempts were made to improve the teaching learning process. The schemes which were undertaken for this purpose were expanded during the Second Five Year Plan Period (1956-61). With all the attempts it was soon realized that the target of universalizing primary education by 1960 could not be achieved. Hence the problem was studied by the Education Panel of the Planning Commission in 1958 which recommended to treat the education of the age group 6-14 to consist of two stages, primary education of five years for the age group 6-10 and middle school education for the age group 11-13. It further recommended that universal primary education should be provided by the end of 1965-66 and similarly the Middle School stage be provided by the
end of 1975-76. To attain the goals during the Third Five Year Plan the following policies were conceived to promote enrolment of girls, to appoint women teachers, to provide for schooling facilities within a walking distance of every child, to expand teacher training programme, and to supply text books to disadvantaged children. Towards the end of this plan period the Education Commission (1964-66), in its report, observed that the three plans had concentrated only on the educational expansion and equalization of educational opportunity. The Commission recommended to give emphasis on the qualitative improvement of education also. During the Fourth and Five Year Plans attempts were made to incorporate many of the recommendations of the Education Commission. In 1977 the Government reviewed the National Educational policy. It was accepted by all the States on consensus that the constitutional directives to be realized by the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan period (1980-85). In this direction all States continued making efforts to universalize primary education.

Meghalaya, carved out of the erstwhile Assam State, came into existence as an autonomous State in 1970, attaining its full statehood in 1972. Apart from the problems posed by the physical features, the State also faces problems with regard to poverty, backwardness and lack of social awareness towards education of people
when the question of achieving the goal of universalization of primary education arises. But efforts are made to reach the goals by implementing various developmental programmes. At this juncture it should be pointed out that according to Paragraph 6 of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, the promotion of primary education in the State, except within the Shillong municipal and cantonment areas, is the responsibility of the District Councils. The Shillong municipal and cantonment area schools fall under the administrative jurisdiction of the Government of Meghalaya.

It is past a decade since Meghalaya is formed. Maybe, time is apt to look back at the various development programmes that have been undertaken to promote primary education in the State. To fulfil this need the present study is undertaken.

7.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The title of the problem under investigation is "A Critical Study of the Developmental Plans and Programmes in Primary Education in the State of Meghalaya since Independence". The study attempts to cover all the developmental plans and programmes introduced by the Government to bring about quantitative and qualitative
changes in respect of primary education in the State.

The term 'primary education' refers to the education of children for the first five years of schooling, namely, classes A, B, I, II and III (the age of entry to Class A is 4 years). Primary schools in Meghalaya cater to these classes.

7.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the investigation:

(i) to trace the development of primary education in Meghalaya;

(ii) to study the developmental plans and programmes launched by the Government of Meghalaya for the promotion of primary education in the State;

(iii) to find out the present position of the implementation of the developmental plans and programmes launched by the Government of Meghalaya in the field of primary education; and

(iv) to make suitable suggestions on the basis of the findings for the further improvement of the primary education in the State.

7.4 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of collection of data with regard to the implementation of developmental programmes, the study is delimited to two out of five districts of the
State. These two districts are East Khasi Hills District (including municipal and cantonment areas of Shillong) and West Khasi Hills District.

7.5 METHODOLOGY

The study involved different techniques to fulfil its objectives. These techniques included study of relevant records and other literature, discussions with some selected personnel, and administration of a questionnaire to the heads and senior teachers of primary schools.

The records and other literature relating to the investigation were studied with two major purposes - (i) to obtain information regarding the development of primary education in Meghalaya; and (ii) to make an in depth inquiry into the developmental plans and programmes undertaken by the State with regards to the development of primary education. This was further supplemented by discussions with various concerned authorities. In order to find out the present position of the implementation of the developmental plans and programmes in the State, a questionnaire was developed to obtain the necessary data. The details regarding the development of the questionnaire are as follows:
7.5.1 Development of the Questionnaire

After studying the relevant records and discussions with the concerned authorities, thirteen programmes which were launched for the development of primary education in the State were identified. These were:

(i) Programme of Opening of New Primary Schools;
(ii) Attendance Scholarship Programme;
(iii) Mid-day meal Programme;
(iv) Programme of Free Supply of Text Books;
(v) Supply of Uniforms Programme;
(vi) Programme of Provision of Scholarship;
(vii) School Health Service Programme;
(viii) Programme of Sports and Games;
(ix) Programme of Provision of School Buildings, Furniture and Equipment;
(x) Programme of Assistance to Authors;
(xi) Programme of Establishment of Text Book Banks and Libraries;
(xii) Science Promotion Programme (UNICEF Science Project I);
(xiii) Programme of Teacher Training.

The details regarding the objectives, method of implementation, and other administrative details regarding each of them were studied. On the basis of this, the first draft of the questionnaire was prepared. Items
were also included to elicit comments and suggestions for improvement. This draft was subjected to experts' critical comments and suitable modifications were made. This draft form of the questionnaire was tried out for finding out its feasibility and communicability, on a sample of 45 primary schools of the Jaintia Hills District, drawn randomly from a population of 425 primary schools. The sample included all the types of lower primary schools in the District, viz., District Council schools, Private Aided schools, and Private Unaided schools. The responses were sought from the head teacher and two senior teachers of each school. In case of single teacher and two teacher schools, the responses were limited only to them. The total number of teachers who thus responded to the try-out form of the questionnaire happened to be 205. Data were collected by visiting each of the schools personally by the investigator. The responses were analysed and consequentially suitable modifications were made. With this evolved the final form of the questionnaire.

7.5.2 Final Sample

The number of primary schools belonging to the different types of schools, viz., District Council schools, Private Aided schools, and Private Unaided
schools, in each of the blocks of the East and West Khasi Hills Districts was noted. Also the number of primary schools in the municipal and cantonment areas of Shillong (all of which belonged to only one type, namely, private aided) was noted. A random stratified sample to cover 25 per cent of the population of primary schools in the East and West Khasi Hills Districts and the municipal and cantonment areas of Shillong was drawn. This gave a sample of 327 schools. But the responses could be got from only 306 schools. Thus the sample for the purposes of analysis and interpretation happened to be only 306 schools (93.6 per cent of the total sample drawn). The details of these schools under each type and district (area-wise) are given in Table 7.1.

TABLE 7.1 DETAILS OF THE SAMPLE OF SCHOOLS DRAWN FOR THE FINAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number of schools Drawn</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District Council</td>
<td>Private Aided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Khasi Hills District</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Khasi Hills District</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal and Cantonment Areas of Shillong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From each of the schools responses were obtained from the head teacher and two senior teachers. In case of single teacher and two-teacher schools the responses were limited only to them. The total sample of teachers including the head teachers who responded to the questionnaire was 577.

7.5.3 Data Collection

In a majority of the cases the investigator administered the questionnaire by personally contacting the respondents. But in some cases help was taken of the extension officers of the Agriculture Department and the Community Development Department, social workers and Gram Sevaks and Sevikas who contacted the respondents concerned and obtained the data.

7.5.4 Analysis of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire provided data which required both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis was carried out as required. The analysis of the quantitative data required mostly the calculation of percentages.

7.6 CONCLUSIONS

A. Some of the highlights in the development of
primary education in Meghalaya were found to be as follows:

At the time of Independence, Meghalaya was a part of Assam and was a part of Hill areas of the State. With the attainment of Independence, the schools in the Hill areas gradually were brought under the State management. Government took steps in preparing schemes and plans for the development of the Hill areas in particular. The most important event during the post-independence period was the establishment of the Primary Education Board at Shillong. (Shillong was the capital of the erstwhile Assam State). This Board had full control over primary education and all primary schools in the State came under its jurisdiction. In 1954, the Primary Education Board was replaced by a new body, viz., The State Basic Education Board.

Meanwhile in 1949 the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution was passed. In accordance with it, in 1958, the Government of Assam finalised the proposed terms and conditions for handing over primary education in the Hill areas to their respective autonomous district councils. It was in 1960 that the District Councils agreed to the terms and conditions of the Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of Assam. Transfer of the control of primary schools in Garo Hills was effected
to its District Council in 1961 and in Khasi and Jaintia Hills was effected in 1962.

In 1970, the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and the Garo Hills District of the Assam State were carved out to form the autonomous State of Meghalaya which attained its full statehood in 1972. The primary education in Shillong municipal and cantonment areas, which was earlier under the administration of the Government of Assam, now came under the Government of Meghalaya and the rest of the schools remained under their respective District Councils.

As can be seen, it was during the Fourth Plan period that Meghalaya was born out of Assam. During the earlier three Five Year Plans, the progress of primary education in the present Meghalaya was a part of that of Assam as a whole. The number of primary schools in the State of Meghalaya in 1971-72 was 2,617 and by 1978-79 it rose to 3,575. The strength of teachers was 3,706 and by 1978-79 it rose to 6,136. The number of students during 1971-72 and 1978-79 were 1,56,533 and 1,85,696 respectively. The enrolment increased by 16 per cent for boys and 22 per cent for girls during the period from 1971-72 to 1978-79 while
increase in the number of primary schools and teachers during the same period was 37 per cent and 66 per cent respectively.

Regarding the financial assistance sanctioned by the State Government to the District Councils on subject matters relating to maintenance, construction, repair of primary school buildings, supply of text books, mid-day meals, sports materials, furniture and equipment, book banks and libraries, and science education showed that during the year 1973-74 it was ₹83,57,545 while during the year 1982-83, it was ₹3,04,51,072.

In 1973 the Meghalaya Board of School Education Act was passed to provide for a better organisational management and development of school education in the State. Financial expenditure incurred in the State of Meghalaya during the plan period were as follows:

The expenditure on elementary education during 1969-70 was 7.69 lakhs against a total allocation of ₹26.65 lakhs on general education. This accounts to about 29 per cent of the total outlay on education. There is an increasing trend in the expenditure on both
general and elementary education during the further years. In 1983-84, the outlay on elementary education was Rs.150.00 lakhs claiming 50 per cent of the total outlay on education. 

The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) was established in 1976 to provide academic support to the Education Department of the State. It was established with an aim to accelerate the development of the State, and to play a vital role in the educational research and training. The SCERT serves as a liaison between the State Department of Education and the National Council of Educational Research and Training and the Ministry relating to matters of education. In line with other States in the country, Meghalaya too has implemented several developmental programmes in the field of primary education to achieve the goal of universalisation.

B. The following salient conclusions were drawn through the field study with regard to the developmental plans and programmes in primary education in Meghalaya:

(i) As many as 42 per cent of the schools studied are single teacher schools. 73 per cent of Private Unaided schools have a single teacher.

(ii) On an average each primary school is having 2.47 teachers as its entire staff.
(iii) On the whole, 56 per cent of teachers in primary schools are female.

(iv) Regarding the qualification of teachers, in the Shillong municipal and cantonment areas 42 per cent have completed pre-university course and only 25 per cent are below matric. In the areas of East and West Khasi Hills Districts, the percentage of teachers below matric ranges from 69 to 75.

(v) Only 39 per cent of the teachers are trained. This figure is as low as 0.9 per cent for Private Unaided schools.

(vi) About 64 per cent of the respondents feel that new primary schools in rural areas should be opened by the Department of Education of the Government of Meghalaya, when the other choices offered were the District Councils and private voluntary organisations.

(vii) Only 2 schools (located in Shillong municipal and cantonment areas) out of 306 schools studied have implemented the attendance scholarship programme. No school in other areas studied has implemented this programme.

(viii) The mid-day meal programme is implemented by only 17 per cent of schools. Among such schools, District Council schools number more. While a few Private Aided schools have also taken up this programme, none of the schools in the Shillong municipal and cantonment areas or Private Unaided Schools have implemented the same.

(ix) There is no regularity in the schedule or the working out of the mid-day meal programme wherever it is implemented.

(x) In majority of the schools where the mid-day meal programme is implemented, transportation of food stuff from the District Council Office to the respective school has been the most felt difficulty.
(xi) Only 25 per cent of schools have implemented the programme of free supply of text books. Wherever it is implemented, it is not done so as a continuous programme over years.

(xii) In most of the schools, where the programme of free supply of text books is implemented, it caters to only some selected students, the criteria of selection being the academic merit of the student and/or the poor economic conditions of the parents.

(xiii) About 88 per cent of the Shillong municipal and cantonment areas schools, 50 per cent of the District Council schools, 13 per cent of the Private Aided schools have implemented the programme of free supply of text books to students, while none of the Private Unaided schools have implemented the same.

(xiv) The programme of supply of uniforms to students has been implemented in about 3 per cent of schools. Among them only 1 school belongs to the West Khasi Hills District. In most of the schools where the programme is implemented, only some students are given the uniform.

(xv) Only in 17 schools out of the 306 schools studied, students have received merit scholarship during the three years from 1980-81 to 1982-83.

(xvi) Among those students who are the recipients of the merit scholarship, about 65 per cent (42 out of 65) belong to Shillong municipal and cantonment areas schools, though the number of such schools in the sample is 16 out of a total of 306. There is not a single recipient from the Private Unaided schools.

(xvii) The programme of school health service is implemented in only 20 per cent of schools. Such schools form 50 per cent of Shillong municipal and cantonment areas schools, 27 per cent of District Council schools, 20 per cent of Private Aided schools and 4 per cent of Private Unaided schools. But the programme is not implemented as a continuous one over the years in any school.
(xviii) The Directorate of Health Services of the Government of Meghalaya is the main agency in implementing the programme of School Health Service.

(xix) About 41 per cent of primary school teachers feel that the facilities provided in schools for sports and games are unsatisfactory, while at the other end only 6 per cent of teachers have expressed satisfaction over the sports and games facilities.

(xx) Not a single student from the sample schools has been selected for the Fitness Programme (which provides specialized training for students who have talent in sports) launched by the Special Officer of Sports and Games of the Government of Meghalaya over the past three years.

(xxi) About 31 per cent of primary schools in the Shillong municipal and cantonment areas do not have independent school buildings.

(xxii) About 39 per cent of primary school buildings do not have a fairly stable roof (1 per cent of school buildings does not have roof of any kind).

(xxiii) Only about 52 per cent of schools provide students with furniture for both sitting and writing. In about 23 per cent of schools, the classroom furniture for students is only piece of log or bamboo structures.

(xxiv) In about 19 per cent of schools logs of wood or bamboo structures are the only furniture provided to teachers.

(xxv) None of the teachers in the schools in the East and West Khasi Hills Districts and Shillong municipal and cantonment areas have utilised the programme of Assistance to Authors for writing or publishing books.

(xxvi) The total number of schools which have implemented the programme of establishing book banks happen to form only 7 per cent.
(xxvii) Only 30 per cent of such schools which have book banks have sufficient number of books to cater to all the children in their schools.

(xxviii) Not a single head teacher has expressed satisfaction on the Book Bank Programme.

(xxix) About 5 per cent of schools possess a school library. Not a single school under the District Council has library facilities.

(XXX) Only 15 per cent of the schools are covered under the Science Promotion Programme (UNICEF Science Project I). Not a single Private Unaided school in the sample is covered by this programme.

(XXXI) Teachers of most of the schools covered under the UNICEF Science Project I do not feel any perceptible change in the learning of Science by pupils after the project.

(XXXII) Only 5 schools out of 306 under study have a science laboratory, though poorly equipped.

(XXXIII) About 46 per cent of the schools have utilised the programme of sending teachers for training. No single teacher is deputed for training from Private Unaided schools.

(XXXIV) About 91 per cent of heads of schools, where teachers have been deputed for training, express great satisfaction over the training received by their staff.

(XXXV) Very few teachers have attended in-service programmes during the years 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83.

7.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As a result of the present investigation, it is suggested that the following further research work could
be undertaken:

(i) Since a great number of primary schools in the State are single teacher schools, an indepth study of such schools could be undertaken with a purpose to improve their functioning.

(ii) Investigations could be undertaken to study the attitudinal changes towards education of their children of those parents who have attended the adult education programmes.

(iii) A pilot experimental study could be undertaken by introducing a model correspondence cum-contact programme of teacher training on a cluster of villages and studying its workability and effectiveness.