CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
1.1 Education and development

Education is the most powerful instrument for social change and development. The social returns received from education is the highest among all kinds of investment. In consumption or welfare school of thought, education has been considered as a social service whereas the investment approach is concerned about the economic ramification of educational programmes, and also on how output thereof can be maximised in terms of monetary benefits. However, mixing the concepts of both welfare and investment school of thought, a hybrid system of 'mixed economy' approach in education has been conceived which is a mixture of welfare and economic principles, whenever these are found appropriate (Enaohwo, J.O., 1990, p.1)

According to the Nobel Laureate Amrtya Sen “if education makes person more efficient in commodity production, then this is clearly an enhancement of human capital. This can add to the value of production in the economy and also to the income of the person who has been educated.” The benefits of education, thereby extends to a much larger sphere where the individual can be treated as a resource and education as a real investment (Konwar, U., 2003, p.91).

According to Frederich Harbison, “Development is brought about not by passive entities such as natural resources and material capital but by
human beings who are the active agents of change and bring about production of physical resources" (Mathur, S.S., 1992, p.220). Thus optimum utilisation of human resources rather than other entities is more effective for change and development. Education is the only means to generate such opportunities and build up individual's personality. The Education Commission (1964-66) also expressed that "The Development of Physical Resources is a means to an end, that of Human Resources is an end in itself; and without it, even the adequate development of physical resources is not possible" (NCERT, 1970, pp.7-9).

The world is fast changing in its values and identity. Consequent upon globalisation and liberalisation of economic policy, the open market system has now been accepted by almost all the developing countries of the world. It has led every individual country to uphold and assert their entity and identity in the midst of such a worldwide competition. As a result, it has become difficult for the underdeveloped countries to move along the mainstream of development. Mary Jeon Bowman says, 'until opportunities are both perceived and acted upon, 'development' is only a potential, and without action that potential may wither away' (Bowman, M.J., 1978, p.78). Hence due emphasis is to be given for educating one and all individuals of a country irrespective of sex, caste and credulity. It is a time of maximum explosion and utilisation of knowledge in every aspect of this dynamic world.

In many third world countries education has been categorised under social services or overheads in order to ensure a sustainable economic development. Likewise, in developed countries such as Great Britain, the
United States, Canada, Western Europe and the whole of the Communist
World, education at primary and secondary levels is provided to citizens free
of charges as a matter of right with an expectation that they will acquire some
basic talents, attributes, competencies and primary skills which are necessary
to live together in a society as worthy citizen (Enaohwo, J.O., 1990, p.3).

In India the lower stages of education i.e. whole of elementary
education is considered as welfare provision by central as well as state
governments. As such education at this level has been made free for its
people with sufficient government subsidy basically to cover capital
development such as improvement of school building and other physical
assets, and also to provide teachers with professional competence. At this
stage no fees is imposed on the students, although expenses on food, board
and lodging are met by parents because they would generally provide these
without government assistance if their children were not in school (Enaohwo,
J.O., 1990, p.2). However, government of many countries including India has
been providing Mid-day Meal to the children of elementary stage during
school days.

In the third world countries of Africa, Latin America or Asia, there is
government presence in every facet of education and participation of
community in policy decision, educational planning and administration is not
significant. In these countries all the decisions, modes of organisation and
operation in the field of education are basically controlled either by state or
union government. Due to the extensive and archaic bureaucracy in such
countries, many local or school specific problems are unattended to because
government approval takes years to materialise. It is therefore evident that sometimes although sufficient fund is available in a country particularly in the time of economic boom, inadequate planning and misguided priorities have restricted the improvement of quality in education. It occurred in case of Nigeria and similar countries in Africa which experienced healthy cash flow in the seventies due to the oil boom, but could not guarantee adequate facilities at any level of education. The Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE) scheme became a nightmare in Nigeria in 1976 because of inadequate teachers and physical infrastructures, despite the fact that money was not a problem at that time (Enaohwo, J.O., 1990, p.4). Hence proper planning and optimal allocation of resources and utilisation thereof are the pre-requisite for the success of education system in any country. School mapping exercises help to level off the existing disparities in respect of distribution of educational facilities by prioritising investment (Varghese, N.V., 1997, pp.5-9). On the other hand micro planning at the lowest possible spatial unit ensures optimal use of existing resources by generating local demand for education and mobilising community to make educational plan more participatory and local specific (Varghese, N.V. and Zaidi, S.M.I.A., 1997, pp.6-9).

The incidence of dropout and non-enrolment results in high cost to society generally in terms of unemployment, underemployment, lower wages to individual, crime, squalor, terrorism, delinquency etc. They are the root causes of value erosion in today's society. The illiterate section has been exploited through the explosion of emotion planned by some chance takers in the society resulting in humanitarian crisis and under development of the society. Levin (1972) identifies seven social consequences of the failure to
complete school: foregone national income, foregone tax revenues for the support of government services, increased demand for social services, increased crime, reduce political participation, reduced intergenerational mobility and poorer levels of health. Social service costs for dropouts, such as welfare, aid for food and shelter and medical services, and access to the criminal justice system also are high (Lecompte, M.D. and Dworkin, A.G., 1991, pp.6-7). This altogether affects the developmental initiatives in the country. Hence, it is high time to take necessary step to keep children in school rather than to deal with the heavy social and economic consequences later on.

1.2 Universalisation of Elementary Education: international and national perspectives

1.2.1 International efforts

The world educational scenario at the beginning of the new millennium was characterised by existence of 88 crore adult illiterates and 11 crore out of school children along with high gender discrimination and poor quality of learning at elementary stage particularly in third world countries resulting in wastage of a huge quantity of potential human resources and under utilisation there of. The overall economic prosperity of a nation is highly constrained by such phenomenon. Hence tremendous emphasis has recently been laid by the international communities on levelling off the growth and development of all nations by creating opportunities for providing educational facilities at least upto the elementary stage.
1.2.1.1 The Jomtien Conference (1990)

The first international initiative to universalise the elementary education was made at Jomtein (Thailand) Conference in 1990. This world conference on Education for All (EFA) was participated by delegates from 155 countries and representatives from 150 worldwide organisations. This conference resolved for Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE) and for reducing illiteracy before the end of the decade along with the following ten objectives: meeting basic learning needs, shaping the vision, universalising access and promoting equity, focusing on learning, broadening the means and scope of basic education, enhancing the environment for learning, strengthening partnership, developing a supportive policy context, mobilizing resources and strengthening international solidarity.

1.2.1.2 The Dakar Framework for Education for All (2000)

The World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April, 2000 was attended by more than 1000 representatives from all over the world and it adopted the 2000 world Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our collective commitments by reaffirming the goal of Education for All laid out by the Jomtsein World Conference and other international conferences. This framework for action identified six goals of Education for All which ensures special focus on gender equality and quality education with special reference to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), elementary education and literacy, and life skills education for adults and young people. The 2000 World Dakar Framework for Action resolved to ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those
belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality. This framework also put emphasis on improvement of every aspect of the quality of education, and on ensuring excellence so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (UNESCO, 2000, p.8).

1.2.1.3 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The Millennium Development Goals are the international time bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions with reference to the rights of each person on the world to health, education, shelter and security. One of the Millennium Development Goals is to achieve universal primary education.

1.2.1.4 Third High Level Group (HLG) meeting

The Third High Level Group meeting held at New Delhi, India during November 10-12, 2003 focussed particularly on the gender issues in education. The meeting appreciated progress that was made during last ten years in gender parity, particularly at primary level. On the other hand, the Group expressed its concern that since 57 percent of the world's out of school children are girls and that almost two thirds of the 860 million non-literate are women, girls continue to face sharp discrimination in access to education at all levels. The participants of the meeting proposed a series of immediate actions to be operationalised by government agencies, NGOs and civil societies in order to ensure the achievement of gender parity in education by
2005 and gender equality by 2015, the target dates already set at the World Education Forum held in Darkar, Senegal (IGNOU, 2007, pp.5-6).

1.2.1.5 Global Monitoring Report (GMR)

The EFA Global Monitoring Report is basically concerned with quality of education. According to this report, quality must be seen in the light of how societies define the purpose of education. The GMR adopts a framework with emphasis on the following five major factors that are responsible for quality of education:

- learners, whose diversity must be recognised;
- the national economic and social context;
- material and human resources;
- the teaching and learning process and the outcomes; and
- benefits of education.

1.2.1.6 International Commission on Education for the 21st Century

The prestigious International Commission on Education for the 21st century (1996), under the chairmanship of Jacques Delores, in its report 'Learning : The Treasure within' talks about various dimensions of quality education required for quality living in twenty first century. In this report the concept of learning throughout life has emerged as one of the keys to the twenty first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. It meets the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world. According to the report, education throughout life is based on the four pillars of education namely 'Learning to learn'; 'learning to do';
‘learning to live together’; and ‘learning to be’ (UNESCO, 1996, pp.20-21). These pillars are based on cognitive, psycho-motor and affective domains of human personality. These four pillars are conceptualised as the foundations of quality education. In compliance with this report human being must pre-eminently learn to advance towards a learning society, where every aspect of life, individual as well as social, offers opportunities for learning and doing; where school should impart both the desire for, and pleasure in learning, the ability to learn how to learn, and intellectual curiosity; and where each individual would, in turn, be both teacher and learner (NCTE, 1997, p.5). This report put forward a number of recommendations to make system of education capable of overcoming the tensions of 21st century and to ensure quality of life and living.

1.2.2 UEE: efforts at national level

During post-independence period, a number of programmes and schemes have been operationalised in order to achieve the constitutional goal of UEE in India.
1.2.2.1 Operation Blackboard (OBB)

The scheme of Operation Blackboard was started in 1987-88 and it aims at improving the teaching-learning environment by providing infrastructural facilities, additional teachers and teaching-learning material to primary schools and by making provision of a third teacher to schools where enrolment exceeds 100.

1.2.2.2 Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education

In order to create opportunity for teacher and teacher educators for continuous upliftment of their professional competence, the scheme of
Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education was operationalised in 1987 under the aegis of MHRD, Government of India. This scheme attempts to strengthen the institutional base of teacher training by taking up special programmes for training of teachers in specified areas and other non-institutional training programmes.

1.2.2.3 District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

With the financial support from international communities such as the World Bank, the European Commission, Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, Netherlands, UNICEF etc., DPEP was launched in eighteen states of India in November, 1994 for executing interventions for achieving UPE/UEE through district specific planning with emphasis on decentralised management, participatory processes, empowerment and capacity building at all levels. Unlike schematic piecemeal approach of the earlier programmes, DPEP takes a holistic view of primary education based on contextuality and research based findings.

In Assam, Darrang, Dhubri, Karbi Anglong and Morigaon districts were covered in phase I of DPEP during 1994-2002 and Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Barpeta and Sonitpur districts were included in phase II during 1997-2003.

1.2.2.4 Mahila Samakhya

In order to promote women's education and their empowerment in rural areas, particularly women in socially and economically marginalized groups, Mahila Samakhya, an externally supported programme was started in
1989 with special emphasis on girls education. Under this programme, a team of trained women activists was created with the help of Mahila Shikshan Kendras to reach the poor and marginal women and to help them overcome problems related to child labour, child marriage and violence against girls.

1.2.2.5 Mid-Day Meal Scheme

Provision of Mid-Day Meal is the most effective incentive scheme undertaken so far for increasing enrolment, attendance and retention at primary stage. National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education in short 'Midday Meal Scheme' was launched by the Central Government in 15th August, 1995 to give nutritional support to all primary school going children.

1.2.2.6 Non-Formal Education (NFE), Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative Innovative Education (AIE)

The Programme of Action (POA), 1992 developed as a follow-up of the NPE, 1986 envisaged NFE as an alternative channel to elementary education of comparable quality for children who cannot afford to attend full time formal schools. The scheme was started in 1977-78 to extend education to those children (6-14 years) who could not attend formal schools due to socio-economic and cultural reasons. However, the scheme was not found effective later on perhaps due to lack of enthusiasm among field level functionaries, poor quality training inputs, ambiguity in curriculum and textbooks, lack of community participation, weak management system, insufficient fund outlay, lack of emphasis on mainstreaming etc. On the other
hand, most NFE centres were established in such habitations which were already served by formal schools (IGNOU, 2007, p.9).

The NFE programme was redesigned in 2000 and renamed as the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative Innovative Education (AIE). Under these schemes, varieties of interventions for out of school children such as bridge courses, back to school camps, seasonal hostels, summer camps, mobile teachers and remedial teaching were operationalised.

1.2.2.7 Janshala programme

The Government of India and United Nations agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA collaboratively started community based Janshala programme in 1998 in order to strengthen the national efforts towards achieving UEE by making primary education more accessible and effective especially for girls and children of deprived communities, marginalized groups, SCs/STs, minorities, working children and Children with Special Needs (CWSN). The major interventions under this programme were teacher training, multigrade teaching, education of disabled, setting up of block and cluster resource centres and strengthening capacities at the state, district and block levels.

1.2.2.8 Major initiatives by different states

In addition to the above national efforts, some State governments also initiated efforts as mentioned below to address issues related to quality of school education.
i) **Shiksha Karmi Project and Lok Jumbish Project in Rajasthan**

With the help of external aid, Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish projects were started in Rajasthan as a community owned programmes in order to check the obstacles in achieving UEE such as teacher absenteeism, high rate of dropout, non-participation of working children, uninteresting teaching-learning processes, lack of contextual learning materials, low motivation and low professional competence of teachers, centralised and inflexible approach etc. Under this project the exercise of school mapping and micro planning was prioritised for ensuring universal enrolment (MHRD, 2001, pp.34-35).

ii) **Bihar Education Project (BEP)**

With emphasis on education of deprived groups of society such as SCs /STs and women, BEP was operationalised in 1991 for qualitative improvement and quantitative expansion of elementary education in the state.

iii) **Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Project (UPBEP)**

This World Bank supported project was started in Uttar Pradesh as one of the major strategies for achieving Education for All in the state. Under this project construction of school building and strengthening of DIETs and BRCs were focused to enhance the professional competence among school teachers.
iv) Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project (APPEP)

The APPEP was launched with an emphasis on increasing female literacy in the state. For improving classroom teaching-learning, teachers training and school construction work were prioritised under this project.

1.2.2.9 Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Building on the lessons learnt from implementation of various micro and macro level educational interventions like Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project (APPEP), Bihar Education Project (BEP), Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Project (UPBEP), Shiksha Karmi Project, Lok Jumbish and of late the DPEP as well as various research findings, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) that a holistic and convergent national programme targeting quality elementary education within a clear cut time frame was conceptualised by the government and operationalised it from 2000. It is a comprehensive and community based initiative to universalise quality elementary education in a mission mode through district based, decentralised, context specific planning and implementation strategy (MHRD, 2002, p. (iii)).

Goals of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan –

- All children to be in schools, Education Guarantee Scheme Centres or alternate schools, 'back-to-school' camps by 2003;
- All children to complete five years of primary schooling by 2007;
- All children to complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010;
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.
• Bridge all gender and social disparities at primary stage by 2007 and at upper primary level by 2010; and

• Universal retention by 2010.

1.3 Legal implication of Right to Education

Article 45 of the Indian Constitution directs that the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. Reiterating the Constitutional Directive, the National Policy on Education, 1986 and Programme of Action 1992 also endorse that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality shall be provided to all children upto the age of 14 years before entering the 21st century. On the other hand, the Supreme Court of India also in series of its judgements has extended the scope of fundamental rights by applying the Doctrine of Implied Fundamental Rights to incorporate right to education as a fundamental right. In 1992, the Apex Court in the case of Mohini Jain Vs. State of Karnataka [(1992)3 SCC 666] incorporated right to education as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution. On the other hand, the Supreme Court has in its judgement in Unni Krishnan Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh, 1993 held as the following –

"The citizens of the country have a fundamental right to education. The said right flows from Article 21 of the Constitution. This right is, however, not an absolute right. Its contents and parameters have to be determined in the light of Articles 45 and 41. In other words, every child/citizen of this
country has a right to free education until he completes the age of 14 years. Thereafter his right to education is subject to the limits of economic capacity and development of the State."

Further the Supreme Court in M.C. Mehta Vs. State of Tamil Nadu reiterated the need of education for developing full potential of children. Again in Bandhua Muti Morcha Vs. Union of India [(1984)3 SCC 161 at para 10] Justice K. Ramaswamy and Justice Sagir Ahmed, observed that illiteracy has many adverse effects in a democracy governed by rule of law. According to them educated citizens could meaningfully exercise their political rights, discharge social responsibilities satisfactorily and develop spirit of tolerance and reform.

On the other hand, the Report of the Committee of State Education Ministers on Implications of the proposal to make Elementary Education A Fundamental Right (MHRD, 1997) also recommended to amend the Constitution of India to make the right to free elementary education upto 14 years of age a fundamental right.

The year 2002 is a landmark in the history of elementary education in India. The 86th Constitution Amendment Act, 2002 which was enacted in December, 2002 seeks to make free and compulsory education a Fundamental Right for all children in the age group 6 to 14 years by inserting a new Article 21-A in part II (as 'Fundamental Right') of the Constitution of India.
Article 21-A reads, "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine."

In an attempt to implement the 86th Amendment Act, a bill of Right to Education was drafted in the year 2005, which still awaits discussion in the Parliament and the assent of the President thereafter.

The drafted bill of Right to Education would make it obligatory to the State to provide necessary infrastructure and facilities for provision of elementary education in a given time frame. The citizens would be within their right to challenge lack of provision of educational facilities in the courts of law. On the other hand, the State would be within its right to make parents liable for punishment for not sending their children to school without reasonable justification as it would tantamount to violation of a Fundamental Duty.

In the light of the Constitutional provisions, 14 States including Assam and four Union Territories have already passed Acts making primary education compulsory. The most important act passed in Assam is the Assam Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Act, 1974. Accordingly to U/S 21 of Chapter VII of this Act no guardian or person shall utilise the time or the services of a child in connection with employment of such a child, whether on remuneration or otherwise, in such a manner or at such time of the day as to interfere with regular attendance of the child in a school as required under this Act. Any guardian or person who contravenes the provision of Section 21 shall be punishable with fine not exceeding two rupees and in case of a continued contravention with an additional fine not exceeding fifty paise for
everyday during which such contravention continues. But this Act has remained unenforced due to various socio-economic and cultural factors as well as administrative and financial constraints.

1.4 State profile

Assam is one of the eight states located in North-Eastern region of India. It was mentioned as Prāggyotisha in both the Epics, the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata (Barpujari, H.K., 2004, p.1). The territory is called “Ashām” in the Ain-i-Akbari and “Asam” in the Padshāhnāmāh and the same name was applied by Francis Hamilton in his Account of Asam compiled during 1807-08. Assam is apparently the English form of ‘Asam’ (Barpujari, H.K., 2004, p.1).

The present name of the state is derived from the word Ahom, the native people referring to the Tai conquerors asam i.e. ‘peerless’ or undefeated.

Assam is surrounded by Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar (Burma) on the North-East and North-Eastern Border, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya on the Southern border, Bangladesh and West Bengal on the West and again Arunachal Pradesh on the North-East.

1.4.1 Area and population

The present state of Assam extends from the latitude 24°48’ N to 27°09’ N and longitude 89°42’ E to 96°10’ E. It is the second largest State in North East India, with an area of 78438 sq. km. (Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2007, p.2). It comprises of three well defined regions – the Brahmaputra valley in the north, the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills and plateaus in the middle, and the Barak valley in the south.
The Brahmaputra plains which is about 500 km. long and 60 km. broad is termed by erosion and depositional activities of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The plains are wide in its eastern and western ends but narrow in the middle. An important feature of Brahmaputra is that it has a very wide bed and brained channels. It has created an Island called Majuli (area 925 sq. km.) which is the largest river Island in the world. Because of the flatness of the plains, existence of many tributaries and occurrence of heavy rainfall, there are frequent flood in the summer season.

The Karbi plateau is geologically part of Shillong plateau. It's average height 300-400 meter. South of Karbi plateau lies the North Cachar Hills, unlike the former it has steep hills and deep gorges.

The Barak plains have been created by erosion and deposition of the Barak river and its tributaries. The plains are about 30 km. long and 60 km. wide. It has many hillocks, swamps in it. The plain is bounded by hills in three sides and open only in towards the west.

The State is situated in an earthquake belt. During the past one hundred fifteen years, it has experienced, in addition to many minor ones, three major earthquakes, one in 1897, the second one in 1930 and the third and the most devastating one in 1950.

According to the 2001 Census, there are 26655528 persons in Assam, out of which 13777037 and 12878491 are male and female respectively. 87.10 percent of total population lives in rural areas and 12.90 percent lives in urban areas. The sex ratio of the State is 935 and the density of population is 340 per sq. km. (Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2007, pp.6-7).
1.4.2 Language

Assamese is the main language of the state of Assam and serves as lingua franca for its people. It is also the official language of the state, although English too has been retained in practice. Bengali is spoken by the majority of the people of the Barak valley and so it has been given the status of an associate official language for this valley. Likewise, Bodo spoken by the Bodos has been given the status of an associate official language for the Kokrajhar District. Karbis, Dimasas, Mising, Rabhas, Tiwas, Deuris, Meiteis, Hmars, Bishnupriya Manipuris, Nepalis, Tea garden communities, etc. speak their respective mother tongues. Of these Manipuri (spoken by Meiteis of Manipur and Assam) and Nepali are developed languages. The rest are yet to be developed properly. The Ahoms are now Assamese language speakers, but attempts are being made by them to revive their original mother tongue – the Tai language. This linguistic diversity of the state has an important bearing on the school education of Assam. Apart from the leading Assamese literary organisation, Asam Sahitya Sabha (established in the year 1917), almost all the linguistic groups have now their own Sahitya Sabhas aimed at the development of their respective languages.

1.4.3 Economy

The economy of Assam is overwhelmingly agricultural. Much of the agricultural activity is subsistence farming, particularly in the hill areas, where jhum cultivation is the mainstay.
According to Census 2001, the State has a gross cropped area of about 39.57 lakh hectares and net sown area of about 27.53 lakh hectares. Approximately 79.27 percent of the State's main workers pursue agriculture and allied activities. Principal food crops of the State are rice, maize, wheat, oil seeds and potato. On the other hand, jute, tea, cotton, sugarcane etc. are important cash crops.

The State has an important position in the sector of agro-based industries. Tea gardens occupy about 2.71 lac hectares of State's land. The State also produces a considerable amount of crude oil. It has four oil refineries at Digboi, Noonmati, Bongaigaon and Numaligarh. In addition to these, there is a fertilizer factory in Namrup, one cement factory at Bokajan, one sugar mill each at Dergaon (presently non-functioning) and Badarpur, Jute mill at Silghat, a Span mill at Jagiroad, a paper mill each at Jagirod, Jogighopa and Panchamgach, a cotton mill at Charduar and one Plywood factory each at Margherita and Moriani. Important cottage industries are Handloom, Sericulture, manufacture of Bell metal and Brass utensils and processing and weaving of Andi, Muga and paat silk.

1.4.4 Education

As per 2001 Census report, the literacy rate of Assam is 63.25 per cent. 71.28 and 54.61 per cent are literacy rates of male and female in the State respectively. Only 59.73 and 85.35 per cent of rural and urban population of Assam are literate (Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2007, p.18). According to Census 2001, 66.78 and 62.52 per cent of SC and ST population are literate. The State has 199 Pre-primary schools, 30499 Primary schools,
9716 Middle schools, 4776 High schools, 620 Higher Secondary schools, 131 Intermediate or Junior colleges (Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2007, p.183). 5338651 students are in classes from I to XII, out of which 604011 are SC and 836413 are ST (Statistical Handbook, Assam, 2007, p.189). Assam has five universities, one IIT, two colleges of Agriculture, three Engineering colleges, 72 Law colleges, 2 Veterinary colleges, 7 Medical colleges (including Homeo, Ayurvedic, Dental, Pharmacy, Nursing), 348 Art/Science/Commerce colleges, one SCERT, 42 recognised B.Ed. colleges, 18 DIETs, 19 Basic Training Centres, 7 Normal Schools, one Govt. Pre-primary Teacher Training Centre.

1.5 Area of the study

Out of 27 districts of Assam, two districts namely Kamrup and Marigaon districts were selected for conducting the present study.

1.5.1 Profile of Kamrup district

The present Kamrup district was a part of ancient Prāgjyotisha or Kāmarūpa. There are references to Prāgjyotisha or Kāmarūpa, Saumāra, etc. in Kālikā Purāṇa, Yogini Tantra, Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata. The name “Prāgjyotisha” seems to be derived from prāg-jyotis meaning “the eastern light”. Thus “Prāgjyotisha” appears to mean “the city or land of the eastern light” (Barpujari, H.K., 2004, p.60). Later on, the name ‘Kāmarūpa’ has become more popular. There is a famous story, according to which Kamdeva was burnt here into ashes by a fire glance of third eye of the lord ‘Shiva’ and eventually regained his life and his origin form (Rupa) in Assam and land
where this took place become known as Kamrup (Kāmarūpa). On the basis of linguistic and racial proofs it can be mentioned that Negreto, Astro-Asiatic, Tebeto Burma, Aryan people lived in ancient Kāmarūpa. In the beginning of the thirteenth century Tai-Ahoms entered into Assam. During the last two centuries, Muslim and Christian came into Assam.

Kamrup is one of the largest district of Assam which is located between 25.46° N and 26.49° N latitude and between 90.48° E and 91.50° E longitude. Climate of Kamrup district is sub-tropical with semi dry-hot and cold in winter. It experiences heavy rainfalls during May to August along with devastating flood every year. Kamrup is situated at both bank of the mighty Brahmaputra River. It is surrounded by States and districts like Udalguri and Baska district in the North, Darrang district in the East, Meghalaya State in the South and Goalpara and Nalbari district in the West.

The total area of Kamrup district is 4345 sq. km. It has 17 Development Blocks, 14 Revenue Circles, 178 Gaon Panchayat, 1393 populated villages. Total population of Kamrup district is 2522324 as per 2001 Census, which is 9.46 per cent of State's total population. 6.76 and 9.93 per cent of the population of the district belong to SC and ST. People cultivate paddy, mustard, potato, wheat, jute, sugarcane, black grams etc.

The literacy rate of Kamrup district is 74.16 which is higher than State average. So far important educational institutes are concerned, there are one university (Gauhati University), one IIT, one Medical college, one Engineering college, one SCERT, 11 recognised CTEs, one DIET, one BTC, 72 Higher Secondary schools, 504 High schools, 762 Middle schools and
2182 Primary schools in Kamrup district. In addition to this, SEBA, AHSEC, State Mission Office of SSA are also situated in this district.

1.5.2 Profile of Marigaon district

Marigaon district was created in 14th October, 1989 by bifurcating Nagaon district of middle Assam. Apparently Marigaon district has no separate known historical background, but its history is the history of undived Nagaon district (Marigaon District Administration, 2008). The importance is Marigaon grew during the reign of the Ahoms in Assam when Kajali and Jagi chowki became major administrative and military garrison of the Ahom, with royal representatives like Gohains and Phukans were posted in these areas. Many part of the present day district were once within Gobha, primarily a tribal kingdom. Traces of the interesting past of the region are still found today, an instance would be the "Junbeel Mela", where the old traditions continue and people from the hills and the plains congregate to pay a symbolic tribute to the Gobha king. Interesting sidelights of the event are traditional community fishing and barter trade which takes place. Some historical places of the district, the living oral traditions like "Lali Hilali Geet", the colourful dances and dresses, the "Buffalo fights", festivals like "Borat Puja" etc. speak of the traditions and the culture of Marigaon's colourful past. As per available literature, the name Marigaon comes from 'Maribeel', on the bank of which Bhim Singha established his kingdom.

The main occupation of the population is agriculture. People cultivate paddy, jute, sugarcane, wheat, potato, mustard seed, black gram, etc. In char area, people cultivates seasonal vegetables. There are two tea
gardens in Marigaon district. Besides agriculture, people are engaged in mills, small factories, trade and commerce etc.

Marigaon district is located between 26.15' N and 26.50' N latitude and between 92' E and 95.50' E longitude. At present it is surrounded by the district of Nagaon on the East, Kamrup on the West, Karbi Anglong on the South and the mighty Brahmaputra river lies to its North.

The total area of Marigaon district is 1551 sq. km. It has 5 Development Blocks and 5 Revenue Circles, 85 Gaon Panchayat, 636 populated villages. As per 2001 Census, total population of the district is 7,76,256, out of which 3,98,926 and 3,77,330 are male and female respectively. Marigaon district contains 2.91 per cent of State's total population. 12.93 and 15.55 per cent of the population of the district belong to SC and ST respectively. The demographic pattern of the district indicates that the district is multi-ethnic. The majority of the inhabitants belong to the Tiwa community. The other inhabitants belong to non-tribal Assamese sections, Karbis, Bodo and a variety of immigrant community.

The literacy rate of Marigaon district is 58.53 per cent, which is far below the national as well as State average. So far educational institutes are concerned Marigaon district has one DIET, 1 recognised CTE, 3 provincialised colleges, 14 Higher Secondary schools, 138 High schools, 283 Middle schools and 816 Primary schools.

The table 1.5.2 shows the different indicators of district profile of Kamrup and Marigaon district.
### Table 1.5.2
District profile of Kamrup and Marigaon district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Kamrup District</th>
<th>Marigaon District</th>
<th>Assam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area (as per 2001 Census)</td>
<td>4345.00 Sq. km.</td>
<td>1551.00 Sq. km.</td>
<td>78438.00 Sq. km.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of block (as on 31-03-2008)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Revenue Circles (as per 2001 Census)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Gaon Panchayat (as on 31-03-2005)</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>2489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of villages (as per 2001 Census)</td>
<td>1393</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>26312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Towns (as per 2001 Census)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (as per 2001 Census)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Person</td>
<td>2522324</td>
<td>776256</td>
<td>26655528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Male</td>
<td>1326981</td>
<td>398926</td>
<td>13777037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Female</td>
<td>1195343</td>
<td>377330</td>
<td>12878491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rural</td>
<td>1614107</td>
<td>738268</td>
<td>23216288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Urban</td>
<td>908217</td>
<td>37988</td>
<td>3439240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scheduled Caste</td>
<td>170541</td>
<td>100346</td>
<td>1825949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>250393</td>
<td>120730</td>
<td>3308570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex ratio</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate (as per 2001 Census)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Person</td>
<td>74.16</td>
<td>58.53</td>
<td>63.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Male</td>
<td>81.16</td>
<td>65.15</td>
<td>71.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Female</td>
<td>66.31</td>
<td>51.51</td>
<td>54.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rural</td>
<td>66.90</td>
<td>57.09</td>
<td>59.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.6 Needs and significance of the study

The goal of Education for All (EFA) has been receiving high priority at international level and has been regarded as an essential pre-condition for human development. As such provision of basic education to all children has been emphasized in the UN resolutions adopted at Jomtein, Dakar and other places. During post-independence period, arduous efforts have been made in our country also for achieving the goal of UEE in a time bound manner. The
provision of free and compulsory education to all children until they attain the age of fourteen years was made a directive principle under article 45 of the Constitution. While adopting the Constitution in 1950, it aimed at achieving this goal within a short period of ten years. But the target date of achieving the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) had to be revised several times due to non-achievement of the target in time (Mehta, Arun C., 1993, pp.27-28). The National Policy on Education (1986) envisaged that by 1995 all children upto fourteen years of age will be provided free and compulsory education and by 1990 all children who attended the age of about eleven years will have to complete five years of primary schooling, or its equivalent through the non-formal stream. The NPE emphasised three aspects, namely universal access and enrolment, universal retention and a substantial improvement in quality of education to enable all children to achieve the essential levels of learning. Again in 1992, the Revised Policy Formulations (Programme of Action, 1992) recommended that free and compulsory education of comparable quality would be provided by the turn of the last century. Of late, target date for achieving UPE and UEE through Sarva Siksha Abhuyan (SSA) had been extended to 2007 and 2010 respectively.

Since 1950 determined efforts have been made for achieving the goal of UPE in Assam also. The substantial expansion has been made in respect of schooling facilities covering entire State as may be seen from the table 1.6.1.
Table 1.6.1
Increase in number of primary schools, teachers and enrolment in Assam between 1951 and 2005-06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population of the State</th>
<th>No. of Primary schools</th>
<th>No. of Primary teacher</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>7970998*</td>
<td>11172*</td>
<td>17303*</td>
<td>626282*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>28506000&quot;</td>
<td>30499&quot;</td>
<td>80072&quot;</td>
<td>3141277&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number increased between 1951-2005-06</td>
<td>20535002</td>
<td>19327</td>
<td>62769</td>
<td>2514995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of increase</td>
<td>257.62</td>
<td>172.99</td>
<td>362.76</td>
<td>401.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is a fact that percentage of increase in number of teacher as well as in enrolment in primary school between 1951 and 2005-06 was far greater than the percentage of increase in population.

According to Seventh All India School Education Survey (as on 30.09.2002) 56.13 and 88.05 percent of rural population of Assam was served by primary classes within and upto 1 km. distance respectively.

In order to facilitate the disadvantaged section of population, several schemes like supply of free textbooks, mid-day meals, attendance scholarship, TLM grant, establishment of EGS centres (Amar Parhasali), opening of Sanjogi Siksha Kendra as Alternative Innovative Education, running of Residential Bridge Course Centres as well as Hard to Reach
Children Centres (Jyoti Kendra) and many other incentive schemes have been introduced during recent past in the State. For enhancing quality of teaching-learning process, emphasis has been given on improving professional competence of primary school teachers through short-term in-service training on different aspects of school education. In addition to this, to make primary school system internally efficient, different infrastructural facilities including construction and repairing of school building, supply of teaching-learning materials, appointment of teacher etc. have been made especially under various centrally sponsored schemes during post-independence era.

Despite all these praiseworthy efforts, the co-efficient of efficiency of primary school system of Assam during 2003-04 was recorded 80.7 which is far below than that of all States average i.e. 87.8 and also below the corresponding figure for the year 2002-03 i.e. 82.9 (Mehta, Arun C., 2006, p.142). It indicates that there is good scope for further improvement of internal efficiency of primary school system of Assam as 19.3 percent of the total resources have gone waste. This wastage indicates missed opportunities for individuals, communities and entire State or nation. It deprives optimum use of scarce resources. Hence, finding ways to reduce school wastage must become an urgent priority for developing countries or States. On the other hand, during 2003-04, Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of Assam was 73.82 which is slightly lower than country's average (73.99) (Mehta, A.C., 2006, p.149). It reflects that 26.18 percent of primary school going age group children of the State still remain out of school. High dropout (7.22 percent) and repetition rate (3.81 percent) are also recorded in 2003-04. Dropout and repetition rates in
Assam are still very high in Class I i.e. 13.37 and 4.88 percent respectively during 2003-04 (Mehta, A.C., 2006, pp.134-138). Repeating grades and dropping out exert a terrible personal toll on the pupils involved and absorb a large share of the limited resources available for education. Hence finding ways to minimise school wastage must play a central role in any serious effort to reach the goal of Education for All. Now question arises whether Assam would be able to meet the challenge of UEE by 2010 A.D. or not with the existing rate of enrolment, retention and dropout. Therefore, a thorough analysis of different indicators of quality education and identification of factors responsible for its ineffectiveness is urgently needed. It is also a fact that without Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE), Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) cannot be achieved. Moreover, primary stage is the most sensitive part of elementary education, because most of the students have to discontinue their study forever in this stage for several reasons. On the other hand, even after 59 years of the independence, primary education system of Assam is still characterized by insufficient qualified teachers as well as inadequate physical infrastructure, dilapidated condition of school building, low NER, poor academic achievement, etc. The table 1.6.2 depicts the present scenario.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicators</th>
<th>Percentage / Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of single classroom school</td>
<td>62.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of single teacher school</td>
<td>15.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of female teacher</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of schools with common Toilet</td>
<td>24.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of schools with girls toilet</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of teacher per school</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of enrolment in Govt. school</td>
<td>99.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of girls enrolment</td>
<td>49.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparent survival rate upto Grade IV</td>
<td>47.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pass out</td>
<td>93.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of passed with &gt; 60% marks (Boys)</td>
<td>24.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of passed with &gt; 60% marks (Girls)</td>
<td>23.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average instructional day</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average No. of days spent on non-teaching activities</td>
<td>9.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment ratio</td>
<td>85.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net enrolment ratio</td>
<td>73.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source : State Elementary Education Report Card, 2004 (Assam), NIEPA, New Delhi]
**Table 1.6.3**

Dropout rate at primary stage in some selected States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Dropout rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandigarh</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source: State Report Cards, 2005, NIEPA, New Delhi]

**Table 1.6.4**

Repetition rate at primary stage in different classes of some selected States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source: State Report Cards, 2004, NIEPA, New Delhi]
Table 1.6.3 depicts that the dropout rates are higher in Assam than that of many other states of India. On the other hand, overall scenario in respect of grade repetition (Table 1.6.4) reveals that Assam still shows a high repetition rate at primary stage as compared to many other states of India. As such, the internal efficiency of primary school system in Assam cannot be 100 percent on account of high incidence of dropout and repetition. Due to high rate of dropout and repetition in the primary level, not to speak of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), the Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE) is also becoming a distant dream for Assam. Hence a series of action will have to be taken to achieve the goal of UPE. However no significant attempt has yet been made to study internal efficiency of primary school system of Assam, except a few with a very small sample size. Therefore, an extensive study is urgently needed for examination of internal efficiency as well as cost effectiveness of primary schools of Assam along with the reasons for inefficiency, if any, at disaggregated level.

In view of the fact stated above, the researcher has proposed to take up the problem. It is expected that the findings of the proposed study will be helpful for the educational planners, teachers, educationists and administrators in implementing decentralized planning at grassroot level. It will help the planners to know the actual problems and prospects of primary education in different areas. The activities of Axom Sarva Siksha Abhijan Mission (ASSAM) will be benefited by the study especially in preparing Annual Work Plan and Budget with a new insight into the different problems like infrastructural deficiency, inadequate qualified teachers, high incidence of drop-out and grade repetition, etc. at primary stage of education in Assam.
The findings of the study will also provide new perspective for reviewing curricula, textbook and teaching methodology in order to relate education with the need and aspiration of the people. Moreover, the findings of the study will reveal many other avenues for further study.

Considering the facts stated above, the investigator finds it significant and hence the present study is justified and taken up for the research work. It is a humble attempt to find out the pros and cons of the problem of inefficiency and ineffectiveness at primary school system and to suggest some measures for enhancing internal efficiency and cost-effectiveness thereof.

1.7 Statement of the problem

Even after continuous interventionist role of government and concerted efforts thereof, the goal of UPE, which was conceived some fifty five years ago still remains a distant dream for Assam. A large number of school going age group population is now not in the school. They are either never enrolled or dropouts. Many of them have to earn their livelihood. On the other hand, State as well as Central government have been investing significant portions of their respective annual budgets for educating these children. Moreover, as per national report on Learning Achievement of Class V children (Mid-term Achievement Survey) conducted by NCERT, 2008, Assam occupied 28th position in respect of achievement in language, 31st position in respect of achievement in EVS and 20th position in respect of achievement in Mathematics out of 33 States of India. All these indicate huge
wastage of human as well as financial resources which directly or indirectly influence social and economic prosperity of the State.

It is a fact that in today's knowledge based society, those who obtain a good basic education can continue to learn various life skills throughout their life and thus remain socially and economically viable, while those lacking a purposeful educational foundation are destined to fall further and further behind. Reducing school wastage and increasing internal efficiency and cost-effectiveness are thus a critical necessity on ethical and economic grounds (UNESCO, 1998, p.5).

In the light of above facts, the investigator is inspired to conduct a study on the problem which is stated as "Internal Efficiency and Cost-effectiveness of Primary Schools – A Case Study of Kamrup and Marigaon Districts."

1.8 Operational definitions

Internal efficiency: The internal efficiency of the Primary school system means the ability of the system to educate the maximum number of children who have entered the system in a specific year in the optimum time with the minimum possible use of human and financial resources.

Drop-out: Drop out means pupils of school going age group who leave school, for any reason other than death, before completion of primary stage and without getting transferred to another elementary school.

Primary education or Primary stage/ level: These terms denote first four years course (grade I to IV) of elementary education.
Cohort: A pupil Cohort is a group of children who enter the first grade of a school cycle (primary school) in the same year and each of them experience promotion, repetition, dropout or successful completion of the final grade in his or her own way.

Unit cost: Unit cost means the amount of recurrent expenditure incurred on each student in a particular year of reference.

1.9 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are –

1) To know the existing enrolment trend in primary schools across urban and rural areas and gender disparity thereof.

2) To assess the internal efficiency of primary schools across urban and rural areas.

3) To identify the cost effectiveness of primary schools across urban and rural areas.

4) To study the factors responsible for the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of primary schools.

5) To know the Government interventions for increasing internal efficiency of primary schools.

6) To suggest strategies for making the primary school system internally efficient and cost effective.

1.10 Delimitation

The study was subjected to several limitations:
(i) This study was confined to only Kamrup and Marigaon districts of Assam. Because of the time and resource constraint, the investigation had to confine in two blocks (one urban and one rural) of each district for collecting primary data. In terms of sample size and location, the study was delimited to five percent of urban and rural primary schools of Kamrup and Marigaon district. Hence, the results of the present investigation may not be applicable to the entire State.

(ii) In this study attention was paid to lower primary stage only i.e. classes I to IV. Hence, results may not be applicable for entire elementary stage i.e. classes I to VII.

(iii) Private schools of English and Assamese medium were not included in the sample. Therefore, findings of the present study may not be applicable for privately managed institutions.

(iv) While calculating co-efficient of efficiency, the student years required by the pass out, student years wasted due to dropout and repetition were only taken into consideration with an assumption that all these three indicators in an integrated way would exhibit the overall efficiency of the primary school system.

(v) While calculating unit cost, only annual recurring expenditure was considered. Fixed cost and depreciated value of building and other fixed assets were not considered. Household cost of primary education was not within the purview of this study.
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