CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The introductory chapter in a thesis like this is usually written to highlight the importance of the topic selected for investigation and also to give full justification of the need for undertaking such a research project.

The present work is no exception. It falls in line with many others but 'with a difference'.

In majority of the cases of educational research, the topic is so complex, abstract and away from the commonly used language and daily life that even a specialist may require some time to grasp it fully. It becomes quite essential for the author, therefore, that he explains, clarifies and specifies each term used in the title. And 'since in all educational research, the practical utility of research endeavours for improvement of educational conditions and practices has to be emphasized' (1), the author usually labours hard, sometimes, very hard, to 'prove' the utility of the research project so as to establish its worth.

Quality we must establish, utility we must prove.

And it is in this context that the observation made earlier 'with a difference' may apply.

The topic, A Study of Parent-Teacher Cooperation in Secondary Schools, has an immediacy in our daily life and the vocabulary used herein is so straight, commonplace and simple
that it at once brings it within the ken and capacity of even a lay citizen to comprehend its nature and at least feel its possible utility. In this age of democracy and rapid progress when cry and craze for education seem to be at the top gear all over (2), one can very well understand and guage the interest which even a lay citizen is likely to have in such a study. So intimately related to society is the basic issue underlying the problem under investigation that one is reminded of Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy and following that style motivated to say that the field of present enquiry is indeed a field of the public, by the public and for the public.

The problem is a live one. It has a direct concern with those tender souls who are going to shape the destiny of coming generations; Children are the real treasure of a nation and nothing could be more sacred for humanity than the healthy development of this unexplored and limitless source of human potential. Anything which affects - favourably or unfavourably - this treasure, must become the genuine concern of a nation. But what is it that influences most the growth and development of the growing children? Obviously, the home, in the first instance, and then, the school. And who are those who come at the top as for their role in making or marring the life of an individual? Here again the answer would be: "Parents and Teachers." "I owe my birth to my father but life to my teacher," so said Aristotle .... and in the words of William Penn "Next to God, thy parents."
The signal role which parents and teachers play in the life of an individual can hardly be overestimated. As a natural corollary, the need for parent-teacher cooperation for making the education of children more effective, purposive and meaningful is so well established and admitted the world over, especially in the modern times, that we need not 'labour hard' to prove it.

Highlighting the salient points, however, would be in the fitness of things.

Historical Development of Home - School Relationship.

In prehistoric times, home and school were one, and the teachers of children were none else than the parents, and other near relatives. In those days, there was no occasion for parent-teacher cooperation. "The curriculum was the life of the family and the life of the community. Manners and morals, skills and arts, were learnt while the work was done, food prepared, and thoughts exchanged. The youngster was immersed in this education as were his many teachers. No separation existed anywhere (3)."

In ancient India, there was a system of Gurukulas and Ashramas where children were sent to stay and study, away from home, with the teacher. The Guru worked both as a teacher and father and he was completely responsible for the full-fledged development of the personality of his 'shishya' (the student). Education in those days was meant for the
privileged few. Parental influence was more or less non-existent. And so there was hardly any need for parent-teacher cooperation.

In the medieval period, the family, the 'gurukulas', the 'madarsas' continued to be the agencies of education but side by side the apprenticeship system for training in fine and useful arts and crafts came into existence. In this system, the student had to live with the teacher and work under him for an agreed period during which the teacher provided free boarding and lodging to his apprentice. Here again, seldom did the people feel the necessity of having parent-teacher cooperation.

Gone are those times. With changes in society, in general, and in education, in particular, the home and the school have become separate entities with very little in common them. In spite of the fact that both continue, and will ever continue, to be one as for their impact on child's personality, under the circumstances, it would not be incorrect to say that the two major agencies of education—the home and the school—are like two separate worlds for the child. Instead of understanding and appreciating each other's changing role, the two are poles apart. Our homes are no longer in a position to bridge the gulf and act as supplements to the school and vice versa. We have parents who expect teachers to work wonders and there are teachers who are suspicious of the parents. What is missing is the healthy partnership between the two. There is split between the parents and the teachers and the young learner is caught in the middle. The child stands isolated.
Parent-teacher partnership seems to be the only remedy and rescue for the 'poor' child.

Never in the history of the world changes have taken place so rapidly as in the present century. Talking of scientific progress only, in 1900 we entered a new era of scientific advance. Today our scientific and technological potential seems almost illimitable. Rightly has it been observed, 'In the years since 1900, our scientific knowledge has increased more and more rapidly than in all the centuries before (4). The experts of today envision flights beyond the solar system to other worlds, to other galaxies may be in the distant. From space age, we are thus visualising to enter the cosmic age.

Advances in science and technology, growing industrialisation, competition in all walks of life, terrific increase in job opportunities, cry for universal education, acceptance of democracy as a form of government and also as a way of life, researches in Psychology and other social sciences ... all, as indicated earlier, have resulted in placing home and schools on different footing. Our homes have been so changed by social forces that they are no longer equipped to be the sole centres of learning. None will dispute that in the present age many obligations of the home have shifted to the school.

"Modern conditions have produced marked changes. The typical home today performs fewer functions than it used to. There is less inter-dependence of its members. Economic independence of women, in many cases, has destroyed the home
as a well-knit unit. It is a common feature that children living in big cities have the vaguest notion of what their fathers do when they go off to work. The child has become an alien in his own home (5)."

Parents are 'too busy' to attend to their children. It is the school, therefore, that has to shoulder the responsibilities which hitherto were of the home. The school must train them in basic social learnings; the school must cater to their individual needs and aspirations, and the school must look to all round development of the students. The home has surrendered to school, one after another, its responsibilities for the care and education of the children.

This, of course, does not imply by any means a rigid division of responsibility between the home and the school. At almost every point the two overlap and nothing could be more frustrating for the child than the lack of unity and harmony between his home and school life.

In the event of increase in obligations, the correct position for the school was to have closer relations with the community in general and with the parents in particular because schools are said to be the trustees of community resources, its cultural ideas and aspirations. But things are not what they ought to be.

There is an alarming hiatus between the school and the community. 'Leave us alone' seems to be the general attitude of
teachers; and to harp upon the memory of their own school days as the background for judging the practices of today appears to be true of an average parent. The result is that the understanding and rapport between home and the school which should have been there become conspicuous by their absence. The ways and means will have to be found out to link the two (6) so as to find better answer to various problems arising from the schooling of the child through cooperative planning of parents and teachers.

School and Society must be mutually responsive.

The present age of science and technology which is responsible for rapid changes in our social, economic and political life, warrants that the new role of the school must be clarified and emphasized. Schools are institutions of society, and must be responsive to the needs and interests of the society. This being so, not only are the schools required to interpret social goals, achievements, needs, etc., but the school authorities will also have to learn from the people what they think of their schools and what they want their schools to be.

Without this sensitiveness on each side, one wonders how the two, and for that matter, the child could ever flourish.

Soaring Expectations from Education.

Coupled with the fast changing socio-economic -political fabric of society, another factor necessitating
cooperation between the school and the community is the high return which society now expects from education. Whenever there is anxiety for the survival of a society, there is anxiety about for education. The success of Sputnik in 1957 caused commotion in American society. Many blamed the schools for American shortcomings in the space programme, in foreign affairs and many other aspects of American life. And that was why Americans lost no time to give top-priority to the education of the gifted soon after. Not only are the schools now a major supplement to home, they are the future hopes of all nations. They are the symbols and instruments of our aspirations. In the words of V.V. Giri "As education was the pivot on which the progress of the nation depended, the country had no other alternative but to continue despite hardships and impediments, the efforts to obtain the maximum results that could be achieved under the circumstances." True, 'the destiny of India is now being shaped in her class rooms.'

The teacher of today, therefore, just cannot limit himself to the four walls of the class room or of the school even. He has to go outside the school to meet 'India', to know 'India' so as to build 'India' of his dreams, India which symbolises the aspirations of all its citizens.

The school and the community must work hand in hand. Working in water-tight compartments is absolutely ruled out in any programme of effective education these days.
Changing Concept of Education.

Expectations so exalted, education has to rise to the occasion. Consequently, the philosophy and techniques of education have undergone a tremendous change during the past fifty years. The obligations which the school was expected to undertake twenty years ago were far less than those the society expects today. Indeed, the school of today is a big enterprise in a complex society like ours. It has to cater to the many competing interests. It is being increasingly conceived that a school is no longer a place for the acquisition of facts and other information. It must now include a comprehensive programme of all round development of the child. An enlightened educational worker now spurns the very idea of a book-centred education. Thanks to Rousseau and Dewey, the watch words of modern education are: 'Child-Centred Education' and 'Community-Centred Education'. By all means, the integration of the work of the school with the life of the community is now an important principle of school education (9). Researches in Psychology and Sociology have proved it beyond doubt that not only each child differs from the other, the personality of the child develops as one whole. Every engram must modify the mental structure. The home, the school, all of our experiences, continue to build into the kinds of persons we become.

"Let's remember, once for all, it is the whole child that comes to the school. He is not an arithmetic child or
a reading child from nine to three O' clock five days a week, and some other kind of child the rest of the time (10)."

Without an iota of doubt, the child brings to school more than a 'basta' (note book, books, pencil, etc.); he brings also his fears and hopes, and his sorrows and joys. The pleasant memory of those people who love him and in whom he confides is all the time with him. And he brings to school his aching tooth, his excellent or worn out clothes, his freckles, his changing hair style and a new hair cut. All of these things and a thousand more like them, make up the child who comes to school. How could we ignore any?

If "school, home, and community education ... all are parts of one inseparable experience" (11), the school must take account of the previous and past conditions and relationships in the home and neighbourhood. And the same applies to parents — they must take note of the daily experiences — the frustrations and the encouragements — which the school contributes.

Such like 'musts' have added many other 'musts' in education.

The word 'Guidance' hardly known in educational literature in the beginning of the present century, is taken to be an integral part of education now; it is a % MUST. And to mention a few more in the line — the Cumulative Record Form, Audio-Visual aids, Co-curricular activities, Career
Masters and Counsellors, Visiting teachers, Parent Education, and so on.

As for parent-teacher cooperation, it is another obvious ‘must’... perhaps the MUST of all MUSTS — Parents and teachers will have to work together closely if education is to go forward with purpose and understanding.

Emerging Challenges in Education.

It seems proper at this stage that a mention is also made of the emerging problems of education of which parent-teacher cooperation may prove to be a solution, partial if not total.

The triple explosion of population, of knowledge, and of expectations has added hitherto unknown dimensions to the already vexed and complex problems of education.

Take, for example, the problem of growing number of school going children at the lower secondary stage only. The Education Commission estimated that the total enrolments at this stage were nearly quadrupled and increased from 1.5 million in 1950-51 to 6.1 million 1965-66. In the next 20 years, the enrolment will again be quadrupled and rise from 6.1 million to 24.4 million. The position is similar at the higher secondary stage (12).
The expected and expected increase in enrolments is going to have its repercussions. Student unrest, mass failures, shortage of qualified teachers, less of individualised education, truancy, delinquency, wastage in education, vocational inefficiency, maladjustment and many ills of the like are some of the hard realities of Indian Education these days. Quality has lagged behind quantity and education which, for whatever reasons, neglects quality is sheer waste of time, of effort and of good money. "In the ruthlessly competitive international society, neglect of quality cannot long remain unpunished (13)."

Parent-Teacher Cooperation alone is definitely no panacea for all these sore points of education but there could not be two opinions that genuine partnership between the two can undoubtedly go a long way to better things.

And to conclude the salient points, Parent-Teacher Cooperation is essential for financial reasons too.

EVEN FOR FUNDS

Educational resources - human, physical, financial and non-financial are of vital importance for educational improvement. Commenting on the programme of action required to improve the performance of education in the area of financial resources, the International Conferences on the World Crisis in Education, held at Williamsburg, Virginia, in October, 1967 came out with some excellent recommendations of far reaching consequences.
It observed "Certainly the improvements that have been suggested here cannot be accomplished without additional funds allocated to education. Several sources of supply must be explored (14)."

As for the Government's role, the Conference had a dismal commentary to make: It has been pointed out many times that the allocation of resources is basically a political decision made against many competing claims on national budgets. Resources currently allocated to defence measures, for example, absorb about $150 billion of the world's national budgets (15). The Conference opined that education of the community could play a significant role in getting a better deal for education at the State level.

"In addition", the conference pointed out: "Private sources of funds for the direct support of education have been largely untapped (16)."

And it is here that community in general and parents in particular can play a very important role. They have much to give. In fact, they would love to do anything which would help their children to receive better education. The only requirement is that initiative should come from the school side. 'The schools must rise to the occasion', that seems to be the demand of the present conditions.

Vindicating such an approach, Surjit Singh, the then Education Minister of the Punjab State, observes:
The problems of Indian Education are extremely complex and there is no single solution of these gigantic problems. They have become more complex due to rapid expansion of population and corresponding need for enormous funds for educational expansion. Our weak economy at the Centre and the States has made it impossible to provide due financial aid to education. We can hardly afford 2.9 per cent of the national income for education, when U.S.A. spends 6.2 per cent, U.S.S.R. 7.1 per cent, U.K. 5.3 per cent and Japan 5.9 per cent of its national income on education. As education is the backbone of national prosperity, greater efforts are needed for its expansion and improvement. The major responsibility for financing the educational programme has hereto been placed on Government shoulders but it is being realised now that education needs multi-source financing.

To cope with the demands of the educational improvement programme, it is imperative that the active support and cooperation of the community should also be mobilised for its successful implementation. A number of States have launched the movement for harnessing community efforts for educational improvement. Punjab has also not lagged behind in this respect and has started inspiring the local community for giving financial assistance in the shape of land, construction of buildings, providing equipment and giving donations. The community help received during the past decade has been to the tune of crores of rupees which the State Government could not afford from its exchequer."

And stressing the same point, he goes on to observe further:

"The Education Department has to play a vital role in inspiring the community and enlisting its willing cooperation. I am happy that the officers of the Education Department are providing an active leadership and the motive force to the educational improvement programme through community effort. It is my earnest desire that the Directorate launch a well organised project and achieve greater results in this field. It is needless to assure that the guidance and assistance of the Government will always be there for the successful implementation of the School Improvement Programme (17)."

It is the changed circumstances, then, that have necessitated the urgency of bringing about parent-teacher
cooperation for the benefit of children. It is almost a truism to say, as Dr. Joshi, the then Adviser (Education) Planning Commission, Government of India, once remarked, "Unless the parents of 70 million students and about 2 million teachers are brought together and enter into an intimate dialogue, no educational endeavour will succeed." Emphasizing the same point Atkinson goes on to say, "And let it be understood that it is the people, not the educators, who will make the education. On the whole, schools reflect society in which they exist. Whether this situation is good or bad is debatable. But it is a fact, especially in a democracy, that educators, must in the end, follow the dictates of the parents and other tax-payers."

Part III of the well known Plowden Report is exclusively devoted to the problem of the home, school and neighbourhood and Chapter IV in this part is entitled 'Participation by Parents'. In no other report of this repute, is there, perhaps, so much emphasis on the need of bringing about cooperation between home and school as in this. Commenting on the role of home it remarks, "Despite the acceptance of the importance of the home, the Hadow Report did not give any prominence to it." At other places, its observations are worth quoting. "It has long been recognised that education is concerned with the whole man; henceforth it must be concerned with the whole family." "All schools should have a programme for contact with children's
homes and community schools should be developed in all areas(33)." "Schools can exercise their influence not only directly upon children but also indirectly through their relationship with parents(24)."

The problem is given no less importance in the U.S.S.R. Only three years back, Pravada in its editorial wrote: "To help the country to rear young men and women as worthy successors to the labour and combat glory of their fathers, to rear people who are politically sound, strong in spirit, equipped with essential scientific knowledge, true patriots and inter-nationalists, is a lofty mission. In this noble work, our teachers have the full support of the broad public. School education has become a concern of the entire party and of the entire people(25)."

As for our own country, the subject has been highlighted not at one place but at a number of places by the highest authorities in education. In the words of Kothari Commission Report, "Every Secondary School should develop carefully planned programmes for promoting good school community relations and suitable forms of service to the community(26)." In this very report it is observed: "As an ultimate objective, it is essential that schools and the local community should be intimately associated in the educational process(27)." And that Parent-Teacher Associations should be mobilized for enlisting the cooperation of parents ..... (28).
As for its importance, there are no two opinions. Educationists and scholars who count, reports which matter, persons who are concerned most ... all realise and emphasise that home and school, school and community must work together.

But what about its implementation? What is the position in this regard in our country? Where do we stand?

One can get an idea of this from a pamphlet published by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, some years ago.

In the introduction itself, the author writes:

"While in many advanced countries the home and the school are getting close together, and interacting for the benefit of children, here in our country no serious attempt has so far been made to get the home and the school influence each other for the advantage of the child. The school and the home are separate worlds in themselves(29)."

Right since India became free, we have been doing much for the progress of education in our country. But as things have moved, it remains a fact that in our effort and anxiety to go ahead, quality has not kept pace with quantity. To be more true, quality has lagged far behind.

Reasons for this are many but it will not be wrong to observe that one of the major causes for the poor quality of education has been that we have never seriously explored the immense possibilities of the wonder-drug called home-
school relations. We have only paid lip service to this
great idea and consequently the human treasure in the form
of parental cooperation has by and large remained untapped.

It is, indeed, encouraging to see that we have begun
doing something real and substantial in this direction during
the recent past. The school, the community, the educators,
the research workers .... all seem to be sufficiently
interested in the problem. But all is in its infancy.
Much remains to be done. As for the State of Punjab, no
comprehensive study on the problem has yet been attempted
by any research worker.

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