PHASE II
CHAPTER V
GENESIS OF THE PTA MOVEMENT

It is observed in the revised edition (1960) of the Encyclopedia of Educational Research edited by W.S. Monroe that "in addition to the surveys and (other) studies, it is helpful in obtaining a perspective of the problem of Parent-Teacher Relations to trace some of the events that lead to the developments of organised Parent-Teacher Groups." It is with this view of having a better insight into the present, that an attempt has been made here to trace the development of the PTA as an organised movement both abroad and in our own country.

In the Country of Its Origin.

It was the Great American Philosopher Emerson who once said, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man (1)."

The story of PTA vindicates such an observation. The worldwide PTA movement as we see, now had its birth in the USA towards the close of nineteenth century. The seeds of the organisation were sown on a cold day of January, 1895 when an idea winged its way into the imagination of Alice McLellan Birney, wife of a lawyer in Washington. In her note book appears the following:

[Further text not visible]
"At the time of birth of my last daughter in January, 1895, the idea which culminated in the National Congress of Mothers came to me. We had been living in Washington not quite two years, and I was impressed, as I am sure most new residents must be, with the great number of conventions and assemblies of all kinds and for all purposes held at the National Capital ... I built in imagination a new world, such as it seems to me might be a reality if each new-born soul might enter into life in a happy up-lifting environment.

"There was no novelty in such an idea. Hundreds have held it besides myself .... Oppressed with the sense of needless suffering, I asked myself for the thousandth time 'How can it be prevented, how can the mothers be educated and the nation made to recognize the supreme importance of the child? .... Why not have a National Congress of Mothers whose growth would quickly become international'?"

Only two years later, on February 17, 1897 under the leadership of Mrs. Birney and Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst, the first Congress of Mothers was convened in Washington D.C. The emphasis of the first congress was upon the education of mothers. On preparing for its second meeting which was to be held in May, 1898, two significant decisions were made: first, that the programme should be international in scope and, second, that the duties of both parents in the rearing of children should be emphasized by the Convention programme.
The proceedings of the third convention reveal a fast growing awareness of the importance of home-school relationship. The emphasis upon the joint responsibility of parents and teachers and the need for cooperation between the two increased in the following meetings and in 1908 the name was changed to the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations. The Conference got the present name i.e. the National Congress of Parents and Teachers in 1924.

From this brief description of the origin and history of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers it becomes clear that the first emphasis was on the education of parents as the major means by which the welfare of children was to be enhanced. Later there was a shift in the emphasis. The importance of cooperation with the school entered the picture and it has continued to the present. The National Parent Teacher ... the magazine of the Conference has become a recognised leader in the field and the membership of the organisation has also shown phenomenal progress. It is reported that the organisation had, in April, 1947 a membership of over 44,00000 in some 22,000 local Parent-Teacher Associations(3). By March, 1966 the membership of all local PTA units totalled 11,710,117 and the work of the National PTA is carried on
through its 46,099 local Teacher Parent Associations. The achievements of the congress are really miraculous specially when the National Congress of Parents and Teacher happens to be a voluntary organisation.

The objects of the Congress as reported in the PTA manual of the National PTA and in the Encyclopedia of Educational Research quoted earlier are:

1) To promote the welfare of children and Youth in Home, School, Church and Community.
2) To raise the standards of Home life.
3) To secure adequate laws for the care and production of children and Youth.
4) To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the training of the child.
5) To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for every child the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education.

Parent Teacher Movement in the U.K.

Upto the close of the 19th Century there was a tendency in the U.K. for teachers to work behind closed doors and for parents to show only a passive interest in
the working of the school (4). Although many individual associations existed, it was not until 1929 that sufficient groups joined together to form the first organisation on Parent Teacher Cooperation called the Home and School Council of Great Britain. The Council was founded at a time when rapid advances were being made in the understanding of children and their fundamental needs. The Council's purpose was to provide an opportunity for both parents and teachers to study the new developments in Child Psychology which related to the upbringing and the education of the child as a whole.

The movement made sufficient progress in the 1930's and it is reported (5) that by 1939 some hundreds of PTA's had affiliated to the Council which by then had contacts with similar bodies in other countries.

Owing to the difficulty of obtaining adequate financial support and because of the conviction then widely held by teachers and professional bodies that it would be a professional blunder to over-organise and make efforts to make home school cooperation conform to a single pattern, the Home and School Council ceased to exist in the early 1950's. It was argued that such a country-wide movement could destroy the spontaneity and originality from amongst
the local units which was certainly not desirable.

It was in 1954 that the need for having a national organisation in this connection was again felt. The Birmingham Federation gave a lead and arranged a meeting of the various regional representatives. A lot of discussion was held on the topic and as a result of that it was decided to form a national federation of PTA's in England. It was called the National Federation of Parent Teacher Associations. It came into existence on 9th June, 1956.

This national body of PTA's in England exists to promote the formation of new associations and also to act as a clearing house for ideas and suggestions. It also publishes twice yearly its own magazine the Parent Teacher which has a wide circulation throughout England. Representatives of all the important organisations of teachers in England, e.g. The NUT, The NAS, the Joint four and the NAHT take active interest in this national organisation and they usually attend the Executive Committee meeting of the National Federation.

The PTA movement in Scotland is in a way older than that of England. It is reported (6) that there have been PTA's in Scotland for over 35 years. The Education Acts of 1945/46 gave fillip to the movement throughout
Scotland and it was on 15th May, 1948 that a Conference was held in Glasgow where delegates unanimously established the Council of Parent Teacher Association of Scotland.

Then came the internationally famous publication the Plowden Report — Children and their Primary Schools, in 1967. The emphasis given in this report to the issue of Parent Teacher Cooperation has gone a long way in popularizing the Parent-Teacher Association movement in the UK and judging by the present conditions it can be said with all certainty that the future of a movement in the U.K. is very bright.

In the USSR

Writing on the topic Ivan Svadkovsky (7) observes, "the Soviet School is called upon to educate the children of the people, in the interest of the people, in the interest of the children themselves. The question of relationship between the family and the school is not only a pedagogical question, it has a social background. Wherever there is the domination of classes oppressing the people school serves not the interests of those who study in it but of those who exploit the working people." It is with this background in mind that the author observes parents and teachers worked separately in the pre-revolutionary Russia and further that the schools now are fast
becoming truly democratic institutions. The new philosophy of the post-revolutionary Russia is responsible for the democratisation of schools. All the bodies for the administration and leadership of the schools—from the local public education departments to the ministry of public education of the Republic—consist of people either directly elected by the people, or appointed by the elected organs of people's power. Realising the important role of parents in particular in working of the schools, the Russians have given serious thought to the problem of direct participation of parents in the building up of better schools for better education right since the first years of Soviet power. As a result of interest and activities in this direction the Soviet Union now has a number of forms of organisations of parents. Only a few years ago in the year 1968 new regulations on the Parent Committee at Schools were adopted on the basis of their experience and after a wide discussion in the journal 'Family and School' as well as by parents and teachers at their meetings. The regulations have in the past years been firmly established.

So we see that in the USSR the pattern of Parent Teacher Cooperation is somewhat different from the pattern already discussed in the UK and the USA. Instead of PTA's
in this country they usually have parents' committees at the school level. We can learn a lot from the pattern and working of their Parents' Committees.

A general meeting of the parents whose children attend the given school elects a Parents' Committee. A Parent Committee is also elected for each class. Whereas the parents committee of the school raises and solves questions and problems of general interest, the parents' committees of separate classes deal with everyday affairs of a small number of pupils, help the teachers and the class teacher to ensure good discipline and progress of all children and to arrange the educational process so that each school boy and girl should find an occupation of their choice and should have an opportunity for the all round development of their abilities.

The parents of school going children in Russia are an enlightened class. They know their limitations but they also know how they could be of maximum help to the schools where their children study. They well realised that they had no pedagogical training and so it is not much of their job to interfere in the professional affairs of the school. The scope of activities of the parents committees is usually limited to improving the material conditions of the children, repair of school building and
furniture, provision of coal, wood etc., for heating, organisation of lunch for children and to direct the attention of the public to the important matters in the school. There are carpenters, fitters, house painters, engineers and economists among the parents and it is really educative for other countries to see that each parent in USSR is glad to make his contribution to make the school building a better place for the education of the children or to improve its surroundings, grounds or the gardens. This however should not give us the impression that giving the school material and organisational assistance is the only important activity of the parents committee. What is paramount is care of all round, physical and moral development of the youth. However good is the preparation of teachers they cannot answer all the requirements and cater to the individual needs of each child.... As many children as many inclinations. And it is here that parents come to help. An Actor would come from a local theatre and lead a theatrical circle at school, ballet dancer would gather around her young ballet lovers, a fitter would head a clever hands circle, a designer would work with children who like making models etc. etc. Enlisting the cooperation of broad public in out-of-school work with children in this way makes it possible to organise
at school dozens of different associations, clubs, societies and circles where children satisfy their curiosity and begin to find their calling. It is in this way that parents of the school going children in Russia are solving one of the most important problems of pedagogy to ensure the unity of educational influence of the school and the family and to have broad circles of the population take part in educating the youth — and thus making the school programme really effective.

Besides all this the parents committees are never complacent with regard to the education of parents. In fact, they are always on it. They arrange programmes for spreading among the parents correct pedagogical views and acquainting them with up-to-date scientific methods of teaching. Parents thus learn how important it is to create all the necessary conditions for children's studies. Thus the Soviet School teaches and educates not only children but also their parents. And that naturally brings positive results. Such in brief is the position with regard to parent-teacher cooperation, the role of parents and the parents committees in schools in Russia.

In Other Countries.

The value of Parent-Teacher Cooperation has been recognised since long in other countries as well. It was in
1866 that a National Organisation to further the cause of cooperation between the school and the home was formed in Holland. In Canada there has been an increasing interest in the organised home and school movement and delegates from the Canadian Association have appeared on the programme of the National Congress and the World Federation. Before World War II parent councils were quite common in Switzerland where an ordinance expressly give parents the right to participate in a counselling fashion in the affairs of the school. Teachers in Norway are obliged to visit parents at least once a year although the movement to organise associations had not made much headway at the time of World War II. Much progress in this direction has been made since then. In Finland organisations for the purposes of Home education have existed for long. In Turkey meetings of parents are part of the school routine. In France 'La Federation Nationale des associations de parents de l'école des lycées et collèges' has been active and has made many contributions to secondary schools. Then there are national PTA (National Congress of Parents and Teachers in the USA) local units in Afghanistan, Liberia, Saudi Arabia, Virgin, Singapore, and on the island of Guam, as well as on American Samoa, the Azores, Bermuda, Cuba, Japan, Marshall Islands, Okinawa, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Taiwan. Parent-teacher associations are also very
popular in Philippines. They have helped effectively in the provision of books and educational equipment and also in building new schools both with money and voluntary labour in that country.

In Korea, Australia, Norway and Japan the Parent-Teacher Associations are getting more and more interested in bringing about an all-round improvement in working of schools and parents is considered to be a must for any successful and complete education. About 90 per cent of the Japan's elementary lower and upper secondary schools have Parent-Teacher Associations. The activities of the PTA's there include such things as studying new educational techniques by parents and teachers, planning school health and sanitation programme, assistance for protection of handicapped children, providing school equipment, guiding children in the use of leisure time, vocational guidance, planning of social welfare services and many more such activities (8).

IN INDIA

PTA movement in India is a recent phenomenon. True that about the time of turning of the current century there were some parent teacher associations but these never worked in an institutionalised forms. It was about the beginning of the second half of the present century that the thinking on the institutionalisation of PTA
emerged. And as observed in the pamphlet "Parent Teacher Associations" - a survey published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, it took about ten years time for the idea to develop. Commenting on the position it is observed in this very publication; even though a infinitesimally small number of schools had their parent-teachers associations before independence, their establishment is a recent phenomenon on the educational firmament.

Before 1950 the idea of Parent Teacher Association did not exist in an institutionalised form and was mainly in the shape of work of individuals in a few schools in the country (9). It was during 1952 that a State Parent Teacher Association was organised in Delhi (10). This movement was initially started in some of the schools in Delhi. At the initial stage there were no properly constituted Parent Teacher Associations in schools but the schools organised activities and other programmes where parents were involved as essential participants. Parents were usually invited to discuss some of the important problems related to student welfare and discipline or activities like collection of funds, school functions, community service etc. etc.

In 1959 a registered body under the name Delhi Parent-Teacher Association came into existence. Within a
year over 200 schools set up regular and constitutional PTA's in Delhi. The Union Territory of Delhi has shown remarkable progress in spreading the movement further. It was in 1966 that the Delhi Directorate made it obligatory for all the schools to establish PTA unit in them, and now every school of Delhi has a PTA.

There are at present two organisations at the All India level committed to the cause of spreading the PTA movement in the country. These are (1) Parent Teacher Association of India; (2) National Parent Teacher Association of India. Both are located in Delhi and both are contemporary organisations. Their growth has almost been parallel and the lines on which they work are also similar.

It was in 1962 that the Parent Teacher Association of India was established as a registered body. Only one year after i.e. in November, 1963 the other All India body i.e. the National Parent Teacher Association of India came into existence.

The aims of these two all India bodies are almost the same, the main being to bring about a better understanding amongst the teachers and the parents on the education and psychology of children and to bring about a
a sense of participation and cooperation amongst the parents and teachers so that the aims of educating the child are achieved. The ultimate aim of both the organisations is to promote the welfare of the students by a close cooperation of parents and teachers.

The movement showed an excellent progress during the late 60's. Different States of India welcomed the idea of starting the Parent-Teacher Association and the PTA's from all over the country began to get themselves affiliated with the All India body. The maximum number of affiliation was from Delhi and the integrated Punjab (including Haryana and Chandigarh).


The Data Processing and Educational Surveying Unit of the National Council of Educational Research and Training conducted a study of the Parent-teacher Association in the country only recently. The results of the
study have been published in the form of a pamphlet quoted earlier (Parent Teacher Association - A survey published by NCERT, 1970). The survey was conducted with the help of a mailed proforma collected through District Education Officers, and in some cases, direct from the school. The returns received up to the end of April, 1968 have been analysed and from the results published we find that out of 362 Educational Districts in the country, 29 districts have no PTA's at all. The returns were received only from 154 districts and the total number of PTA's reported in these districts numbered 1940. According to the findings Kerala has maximum number of PTA's and Uttar Pradesh and the Gujarat the minimum. Whereas Kerala has 432 PTA's, Punjab has 106. Punjab gets the fifth position in this list. Of the total number of PTA's in India about 32 per cent are in primary schools, 25 per cent in middle schools and 42 per cent in secondary schools. Co-educational institutions have the maximum number of parent-teacher association whereas the girls schools have the minimum (only 77 per cent).

PTA movement in Punjab.

While discussing the PTA movement in India it was observed that the idea of Parent Teacher Association did not exist in an institutionalised form and was mainly in the
shape of work of individuals in a few schools in a country. Going through the history of the PTA movement in Punjab we can safely say that the conditions in this connection in Punjab are not very much different from those prevailing in the whole country.

The movement of Parent Teacher Association in Punjab obviously is very much linked with the All India movement. As we saw earlier it was only in early 60's (1962-63) that two All India Bodies of Parent Teacher Associations came into existence. It is only after that the movement spread in other parts of the country. The new movement was welcomed everywhere and as the study conducted by the NCERT shows, Punjab was one of the first few States as far as the formation of PTA's and their affiliation to the All India body were concerned.

If one were to point out some specific date with regard to the beginning of the movement of Parent Teacher Association in Punjab, one could say that it is 4th of June, 1965. It was on this date that a circular letter was issued by the Director of Public Instruction, Punjab, Chandigarh to all the Circle Education Officers and District Education Officers in the State (Appendix VII). The letter was on the specific subject of the formation of
Parent-Teacher Associations in schools. The Parent-Teacher Association of India, New Delhi was for the first time officially introduced to the schools in Punjab. It was stressed and desired that Heads of educational institutions should make the best use of the services offered by the National body. It was for the first time that the Department authorised each PTA to purchase/subscribe the publications brought out by the Central body and that charges on that account could be debited to the Amalgamated funds of their schools. It was really something significant that in this very circular the Heads of educational institutions in Punjab were also authorised to incur expenditure out of Boys' funds of their schools on calling the meetings of parents. The Circle Education Officers were requested to issue immediate instructions to all the Heads of institutions under their control to take immediate action as desired in the circular.

The circular seems to have a very encouraging effect and we see that a large number of Parent Teacher Associations were formed during the late 1960's. The N.C.E.R.T. study quoted earlier sufficiently substantiates this assessment, although the percentage of schools which accepted this idea and implemented it by forming the PTA
in the schools was very small, as compared with the total number of schools in the State. A study of the Newsletter published by the Parent Teacher Association of India gives us an idea of the different schools in different Districts of the Punjab which gladly came within the fold of this new movement. Enthusiasm shown by these schools inspired many others and the movement began to grow.

Efforts to spread this movement continued during the late 60's but the persons responsible for giving a lead in this direction were either some office bearers of the All India body or some enthusiastic and progressive heads of institutions working in different parts of the State. The interest taken by the then Chief Minister Mr. Ram Kishen and later by Education Ministers Shri Prabodh Chandra and Pt. Amar Nath Vidyalankar and the then Director of Public Instruction, Punjab, Shri J.D. Shanta, went a long way towards propagating the newly started movement and making it more and more popular.

The movement prospered but the coordination between individual institutions, District Education Officers and the Department of Education at Chandigarh remained a weak point. It is a sad commentary on all concerned that despite DPI's repeated circulars to the District Education authorities, the Department has not been able to collect the relevant
information with regard to the names, postal addresses and brief details of the activities of all the PTA's in the State. The National Council of Educational Research and Training, wrote to the Director of Public Instruction, Punjab on 26th February, 1970 on the subject and the Department endorsed this letter to all the District Education Officers in the State on the 1st of June, 1970, requesting them to supply the desired information within a week. With the exception of one district the response up to 31st December, 1971 was nil.

However, the individual institutions associated with the PTA movement went on with their work. The devoted efforts and competent guidance given by Shri A.K. Sahni, General Secretary, Parent Teacher Association of India in spreading the movement in Punjab richly deserves all credit. Through publications, newsletters and personal contacts and tours of the whole State, Mr. Sahni has proved to be the real pioneer and worker in the cause of parent teacher cooperation in schools.

It is encouraging to see that the Department of Education, Punjab in spite of its frustrations kept its interest alive in this vital problem of education. The department conducted a full fledged meeting on this topic.
once again on the 18th of March, 1971. The subject of discussion was 'Parent Teacher Associations'. Miss Sharda Kaura, Assistant Director (Evaluation) prepared a paper for this Departmental meeting and as a result of discussion many useful decisions were taken, the chief being that "every school will have a regularly constituted Parent-Teacher Association with a clearly defined constitution". It was also decided that the Director of Public Instruction would issue a letter to every school for setting up PTA's by 15th May, 1971 and that the intimation to this effect would be sent to District Education Officers by 1st of June, 1971 (11).

Before making a mention of a few more circulars issued by the Department in this connection, one is obliged to remark again that the decision mentioned above have remained a decision on paper even upto this date when the year 1972 has begun. It does not imply however that the Department has not been keen to implement this decision. As for its duty and role it has been doing something in this connection. That it has not made any notable and observable effect on the institutions is a different story.

As hinted the Department has been quite serious about this problem after the meeting referred to earlier. Records show that four circulars were issued by the Department
to all the Circle Education Officers and District Education Officers on the subject. The respective dates of these circulars are 6th April, 1971, 3rd June, 1971, 8th June, 1971 and 29th November, 1971.

All the circulars pertain to the subject of Parent Teacher Association. The communication No. 10/4-7a-37.29 (C) dated 6th April, 1971 is somewhat different in content as compared with others. In this memo the plea given for the formation of Parent Teacher Association in schools is quite interesting and revealing as well. It is stated therein that because of the lack of cooperation and contact between the teachers and the community, the members of the community make many complaints to the Directorate direct instead of talking out the same to the teachers themselves. Consequently it was argued that the Parent Teacher Association in each school should be formed so that the members of the community may talk to the teachers direct whenever they have any complaint against them. One may refrain from making any comments on the contents of this letter but spontaneous reaction to this letter is likely to be that the argument given herein for the constitution of a parent teacher association is neither very educative nor in good taste. There are many positive reasons for which we could stress upon the schools to have a parent-teacher association.
The communication No. 10/14-71-(6) dated the 3rd of June, 1971 again stressed that each school must form a PTA with a regular constitution by 15th June, 1971, and that the information to this effect must be supplied to the District Education Officer latest by 30th of June, 1971. Obviously a concession of about one month was given through this communication to the schools to take action on the decision taken earlier.

Only five days later detailed instructions were sent to all the District Education Officers in the State for the guidance of different types of institutions. Part I of the instructions was primarily meant for the school level; Part II was mainly for the colleges of education; Part III was mainly for the Government and Education Department and Part IV was given the heading 'Misc.' In these instructions, schools were apprised of the main recommendations of the Department in connection with parent teacher cooperation at the school level. More than five months later i.e. on 29th November, 1971, a reminder was sent to the District Education Officers in the State. The Department expressed the hope in that circular that necessary steps for the setting up of PTA's at the school level must have been taken by them.

And the District Education Officers were again requested to send the names of schools whose PTA's had been constituted.
As reported earlier the desired information has not been received by the Department unto the end of 1971.

This, in brief, tells the story of Parent Teacher Association movement in the State of Punjab. As we see and as we noted in Chapter III a lot of work has been done in this connection and there are quite a number of Parent Teacher Associations, in Punjab which have done excellent work in the service of their schools. What is needed is a better organisation and a more enlightened direction in this movement so that the real aims of the formation of Parent Teacher Association are achieved.

REFERENCES


5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.


