CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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In India, the chronological age of six is fixed as the criterion for admitting the child; irrespective of caste, colour and creed, to the first grade of the primary school. This criterion for admitting the child to grade I leads one to assume that the rate of mental and physical development is by and large the same or equal. Hence, it is expected from every child that at the age of six he must be ready to learn. For this reason only, the majority of the children beginning school belong to this particular age group. On the other side, it cannot be denied that the interaction of heredity and environment causes different rates of mental development. Moreover, individual differences with regards to the mental make-up or development do exist. This fact is ignored by teachers, administrators and policy-planners. It has been observed for long that the children entering Grade I of primary schools differ from one another in many respects.

For this reason or for some other reasons, it is found that there are two types of entrants seeking admission to grade I of primary schools namely, (i) those who are ready to read and (ii) those who are not ready to read. Thus, majority of the children seeking admission to grade I are so thoroughly unprepared that schooling becomes an
unpleasant and difficult experience for them. This is more or less a universal problem. Wide differences in achievement are found in Britain and Scotland where reading is taught at the age of five, in the United States and India where it begins at the age of six, and in Sweden where it starts at the age of seven. Therefore, chronological age is a convenient but a very inaccurate way of determining when children are ready for reading.

This leads to say that all children don't have equal mental maturity at the chronological age of six. For this reason, the children seeking admission to grade I, learn at different rate and this could be considered as one of the major and important reasons for the colossal wastage and stagnation in primary schools. This 'infant mortality' in education is most disturbing.

Looking to this reality, it is clear that the teacher has to pay attention to the child as he is, when he enters the school at the age of six and for this the teacher must consider what happens to him before this age. This is an alarming state of affairs and the first task of the teachers is to remedy it.

Considering the nature and magnitude of this problem, the programme of pre-primary education (Kindergarten schools) should have been initiated with a view to minimizing the
magnitude of the problem and providing better environment and life-experiences in the early period of infancy. Hence, it will not be out of place to discuss the significance of the pre-primary education.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Researches have clearly revealed the importance of the first four to five years of the child's life as this is the period of most rapid growth. It is also believed that the education of the child starts from the period of its conception. Therefore, the pre-school age (3-6 years) is the most impressionable age in one's life. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, was also quite aware of this. He stated:

We labour under a sort of superstition that the child has nothing to learn during the first years of its life. On the contrary the fact is that the child never learns in after life what it does in its first five years. The education of the child begins with conception.1

This statement gets a lot of support from Benjamin Bloom, Mr. V. Hunt and Jerome Bruner (1966) who believe that an individual's achievement in life depends by and large on what he has been helped to learn before the age of four.

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1. Rajalakshmi Muralidharan (Ed.), 1969, Pre-school Education as an Instrument of Change in Developing Society, New Delhi, Indian Association For Pre-school Education, p. 140.
It is because of this that the programme for pre-primary education is receiving attention day by day in this modern era.

Besides this, the study of the objectives of pre-primary education also helps to threshout the importance of the pre-primary education. The Kothari Commission has spelled out the following broad objectives.  

1.2 **OBJECTIVES OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION**

- to develop in the child good health habits and to build up basic skills necessary for personal adjustment, such as dressing, toilet habits, eating, washing, cleaning etc.;

- to develop desirable social attitudes and manners, and to encourage healthy group participation, making the child sensitive to the rights and privileges of others;

- to develop emotional maturity by guiding the child to express, understand, accept and control his feelings and emotions;

- to encourage aesthetic appreciation;

- to stimulate the beginnings of intellectual curiosity concerning the environment and to help him understand the world in which he lives and to foster new interest through opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment;

- to encourage independence and creativity by providing the child with sufficient opportunities for self-expression;

- to develop the child's ability to express his thoughts and feelings in fluent, correct and clear speech; and

- to develop in the child a good physique, adequate muscular co-ordination and basic motor skills.

Thus, the pre-primary education aims at the all round development of the child namely physical, social, emotional and intellectual. In order to achieve these objectives, attempts are being made to provide the enriched environment through the pre-primary school programmes.

"Most of the activities of the kindergarten are provided for the purpose of induction and orientation of the child to the school". 3

Therefore, the pre-primary education should not be considered as a luxury but a basic need to foster all round development of the child.

development of the child. Frost is justified when he writes:

"Pre-schools are nice for all children but they are essential for the disadvantaged".  

This discussion leads to say that pre-primary education is effective in building the foundation of education or in motivating the child for effective study later on.

It is, therefore, regarded that after kindergarten the child is approximately six years old and is normally ready to enter grade I. However, there may be a few children requiring a little more to be ready for formal schooling. It is for the teacher to decide whether the child should stay a little longer in the kindergarten school or should go to the grade I.

In short, it could be said that the aims and programmes of pre-primary school is to prepare the children for primary schools, that is to build foundation by way of developing reading readiness or motivating the child for effective study, so that the tasks of teaching reading and other subjects become easy in primary schools. The children will learn in a much more effective way than what they would learn in absence of pre-primary schools.

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To cater to this need more and more pre-primary schools are coming up these days. But due to the qualitative differences among these schools, in increasing number of pre-primary schools does not justify the chronological age of six for admission to grade I. Hence, the problem of deciding when to start the teaching of reading to children still remains.

1.3 PRESENT PICTURE OF GRADE I OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

It is discussed in the foregoing paragraphs how the majority of children in our country seek admission directly to grade I, without going through the pre-primary schools. Hence, these children are not exposed to such orientation which develops in them the readiness for learning to read. Therefore, the group of children studying in grade I of primary school is more heterogeneous with regard to reading readiness. The teacher tries to teach reading to this heterogeneous group. A printed book is placed in the hands of the child which he is made to read. At this stage, the child does not know how to differentiate between the different forms, how to read a word or a sentence from left to right etc. Besides this, many children step in the grade I with a very few words at their command. Some of them fail to understand the oral instructions or even make a correct pronunciation. Some of them are not socially, mentally and emotionally adjusted. Such children cannot learn to read well.
If education becomes a battle for the child, in which he feels he may lose the love and approval of his parents and teachers, he has already developed a handicap that could seriously stand in the way of his education.5

This suggests that it is necessary for the teacher in charge of grade X of primary schools to know the children from the viewpoint of their mental make-up which includes, the readiness for reading too. Then alone he can build up and administer a sound programme of teaching reading to children entering grade I. Direct help in the form of practice activities should be provided for individual child with a view to making him ready to learn.

A child who, for one reason or another, is not ready to begin reading when his classmates are - will soon fall behind them. The harder he tries to catch up, the more FRUSTRATION he will experience. Too often, the child comes to the conclusion that he cannot learn to read and gives up. By the time, he is so convinced of his own inability that he hardly even tries.6

This simply means that the right opportunity should be grasped. When a child shows interest in learning the skill and shows evidence of ability to master that skill, he should be taught at that time. Over and above this, the

6. Ibid., Vol. 8., p. 674.
approach of teaching reading to the beginners at an early age should be more and more individualistic. Each pupil should be encouraged to move on at his own pace and no pupil should be made to feel inadequate if his individual needs suggest a later start or slower progress.

1.4 NEED OF A TOOL FOR GRADE I ENTRANTS

In order to find a way out of this situation, it is quite reasonable to say that there must be a valid and reliable tool for measuring reading readiness of children entering grade I of primary schools. The knowledge of reading readiness will help the teacher in planning and building up reading readiness programme for children seeking admission to grade I. Convinced of the long felt need of such a tool, the present investigator has selected this problem.

1.5 THE PROBLEM

"Construction and Standardization of Reading Readiness Test for the Children of Central Gujarat".

1.6 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Before proceeding further, it is necessary on the part of the investigator to explain certain important terms occurring in the statement of the problem.
They are:
(a) Construction
(b) Standardization
(c) Reading Readiness
(d) Central Gujarat

1.6 (a) Construction

Here, 'construction' means the preparation of test items and their arrangement in the test form. All the items to be used in the process of standardization must be evolved or constructed. This naturally leads the investigator to the process of pilot administration and item analysis.

1.6 (b) Standardization

Standardization is a statistical term. "It implies uniformity of procedure in administering and scoring the test. Thereafter, it is a process of establishing the norms, its reliability and validity." 7

1.6 (c) Reading Readiness

Reading readiness is relatively a new concept in education. It is a stage of development when

the child can learn easily and without emotional strain. There can be no decisive answer to this question as to when a child is ready for reading because there is no single criterion that applies to all children or to all learning situations. The different connotations of 'Reading Readiness' have been given by number of experts in the subject and well-known psychologists. Their viewpoints have been discussed in details in the next chapter.

1.6 (d) Central Gujarat

The investigator has included the pupils of Ahmedabad District, Baroda District and Kaira District in Central Gujarat.

1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study has been carried out with the following objectives in view:

1. to provide pre-primary and primary schools with a valid and reliable tool for measuring reading readiness,

2. to establish the norms for children of Central Gujarat.

3. to study the reading readiness of pupils coming from different strata of the society,

4. to study whether there are any sex differences with regard to reading readiness,

5. to study whether there is any difference in reading readiness of students coming from rural and urban areas.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present test even with wide scope, has certain limitations. They are as follow:

1. It is limited to the Gujarati speaking children.
2. It is a culture-loaded test or in other words it could be said that it is a culture free test for the students of the districts of Central Gujarat.
3. The test is meant only for pre-primary and primary school entrants.
4. Its norms are derived from the population of Central Gujarat.
5. The norms are established on the scores made by pupils on the whole test.
6. The children with poor vision, hearing, eye-hand co-ordination are not included in the sample.
1.9 THE SCHEME OF CHAPTERIZATION

The first chapter describes the pressing need of the present study especially for the children of Gujarat. It also shows inadequacy of chronological age as the sole criterion for admitting the child to the primary school.

The second chapter deals with the concept and definitions of 'Reading Readiness'. From the discussion of the concept and the definition a few but important components of reading readiness have been identified and discussed in brief.

Chapter third reviews the past work done in the field of reading readiness. At the same time some well-known tests have been studied with a view to finalising the components that could be tested and the nature of items to be used to test each component. This has helped the investigator in planning the present test.

In the fourth chapter, the preparation and justification of items included in the test have been described in detail.

The fifth chapter describes the experimental try outs of the testing material. The description of the procedure and criteria for selecting the items for the final form of the test are discussed in detail.
Chapter sixth describes all the physical aspects of the final testing; such as the size of the booklet, arrangement of the test items, sub-tests, answer-sheet, scoring key, time-limit and samples. It also deals with the fixation of norms. In this chapter age norms for different areas are reported. At the same time scores in the form of standard scores as well as percentile ranks are reported.

Chapter seventh describes the methods adopted to establish the reliability of the present test. The study of the reliability shows that the present tool is reliable to test one's reading readiness.

The eighth chapter deals with the study of the validity of the test. The investigator has tried to study different types of validity.

The next chapter describes the other related studies. This has been described with the idea of showing the usefulness of the present test.

The last chapter deals with the observations made while the present work was in the process and the conclusions drawn.

Thus, the body of the thesis consists of all the steps necessary for the construction and standardization of a good, reliable and valid tool for measuring reading readiness. Besides this, it also contains adequate graphs, tables, appendices and a bibliography at the end.