Chapter - 1

Meaning and Concept of Primary Education in India

This chapter presents conceptual meaning, objectives and growth of primary education in India. The origin of District Primary Education programme as well as problems and significance of primary education have also been discussed in this chapter.

1.1 Introduction to Education

Education being a man making process is a must for the survival of humanity. A human being is incomplete till he is educated. Education brings transformation in human beings and also glorifies men's lives.

Education is a means to the attainment of those ends which make a person human and distinguish him from other animals. Through education a human being develops a sense of discrimination and acquires different values, which make his life the pride of 'human species'. Education makes an attempt to develop man's multidimensional personality. It is not only needed for his personal enrichment but also effective participation in the development of society.

Education enables people to think freely for themselves. If education is of the right type, it will enable people to stand on their own legs and make them better equipped with knowledge and skills.

Education is one of the basic needs of a child and an important instrument for unfolding its innate capacities in a more appropriate manner to bring about its all round development. Education of people means planning the 'self improvement' of masses and raising their standard of living and values. Thinkers and philosophers of almost all ages have emphasized proper education of children.

In the words of Dewey (1910) “Education is development of those capacities in individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities.” He continues, “Education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.”

Dewey (1920) explains that educational process has no end beyond itself. It is its own end. It is a continuation, reorganization, reconstruction
and transformation. Since in reality there is nothing to which growth is relative save more growth, there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education.

Dewey in his Educational Essays (1920) emphasized that the only aim of education is continued growth. Education is for the growth and development of personality and the pure atmosphere of the school are of great significance for the proper development of character. Education is a very important element in social growth, coordination and direction because it stands “midway between the extreme simplification of the laboratory and the confused complexities of ordinary life”.

In the words of Krishnamurti (1959): “Education is not merely acquiring knowledge, gathering and correlating facts, it is to the significance of life as a whole”.

Education in its wider sense includes all the influences that act upon an individual during his passage from cradle to grave. Education as such is not the teaching of 3 R’s i.e. reading, writing and simple arithmetic. It consists of development of head, heart, hand and health i.e. four Hs.

Accordingly, education is not limited to schooling, institution or training. The child receives education even in the laboratory, library, in playground and in home and society. In broader sense sum total of life experiences constitutes education.

1.2 Concept of Primary Education

Education which is given to those children who fall in the age group 6 to 11 years could be called primary education. At one time it refers to grade levels I to V and at other times the concept refers to grade levels I to VIII.

Primary education in terms of ‘citizenship education’ is desirable for perfect citizenship, preparation of worthy citizens, basic knowledge of good citizen and further, in terms of reading and writing of the mother tongue, people’s rule, proper control of administration and abiding by normal social order.

During the period of primary education the child is at least made competent to be able to exchange its ideas, understand things and put its ideas and feelings across effectively for the comprehension of others. The
completion of primary education is a turning point in human life. Hence, it is essential for the children to acquire primary education, which should be complete in all respects in order to have the desired end. In conclusion we can say that primary education is the springboard for developing all the necessary qualities and the fountainhead of all the learning experiences for making the child a "balanced and mature adult".

Primary education constitutes a very important part of the entire structure of education. Primary school is the time when a way of life begins outside family. After the birth of the child, it begins to observe the behaviour of others in the family and other people in the environment when it is sent to the school at the age of five or six. The education which it receives at school provides the foundation for his harmonious development. Sound elementary education gives a fillip to sound secondary and higher education. Primary education is the foundation, which the child needs at this formative stage. Primary school environment provides the child with first hand experience of group life outside the family. Primary schooling is a very significant period for shaping child's future growth and personality. Thus, primary education plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of the country.

Universalization of primary education in our country is a constitutional obligation of government and hence is the first and foremost educational priority before the nation. Elementary education deserves the highest priority not only on grounds of social justice and democracy, but also for raising the competence of the average worker and for increasing national productivity.

The great leaders of Indian freedom movement realized the fundamental role of primary education in national development. They also realized that it is primary education which plays a vital role in the development of individuals as it encompasses the impressionable years of a child's life. Hence, after independence great stress has been laid on the development of primary education.

Keeping in view the importance of education for the tasks of national reconstruction and strengthening of democracy, the founding fathers of
Indian constitution stated "state shall endeavour to provide within ten years of the commencement of the constitution free and compulsory education to all children" in the age group 6-14 years.

Apart from being a constitutional obligation, the provision of universal elementary education is crucial for spreading mass literacy, which is a basic requirement for economic development, modernization of the social structure and the effective functioning of democratic institutions. It also represents an indispensable first step towards the provision of equality of opportunity to all its citizens.

1.3 Objectives of Primary Education

The University of the State of New York Committee for Elementary Education in its report (1932) entitled "Cardinal objective of Elementary Education" has evolved an adequate statement of educational objectives for young children. According to that elementary education is expected to help every child to:

a) understand and practise desirable social relationships,
b) discover and develop his own desirable individual aptitudes,
c) cultivate the habits of critical thinking,

d) appreciate and desire worthwhile activities,
e) gain command of common integrated knowledge and skills, and
f) develop a sound body and normal mental attitudes.

According to Educational Policy Commission (1948) the objectives of primary education are:

a) The primary school will help to develop basic skills, independence and initiative for successfully solving the problems;
b) It strives for the discovery and full development of all the human and constructive talents of each individual and
c) It emphasizes social responsibility and the co-operative improvement of social institutions.

The Regional Meeting of the Representatives of Asian Member States and UNESCO on Primary and Compulsory Education held at Karachi in Dec. 1959 and Jan. 1960 suggested that the objectives of primary education should be:
a) To give an adequate mastery over the basic tools of learning,
b) To bring about a harmonious development of the child’s personality by providing for its physical, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic, moral and spiritual needs,
c) To prepare children for good citizenship, to develop in them a love for their country, its traditions and its culture and to inspire in them a sense of service and loyalty,
d) To develop international understanding and the spirit of universal brotherhood,
e) To inculcate scientific attitude,
f) To inculcate a sense of the dignity of labour and
g) To prepare children for life through the provision of worthwhile practical activities and experiences, including work experiences.

Hindustani Talimi Sangh has laid down the following four objectives of primary education in the context of Basic National Education:

1. All boys and girls in India should grow up into citizens of a new social order, based on co-operative work as envisaged by Nai Talimi Sangh and with an understanding of their rights, responsibilities and obligations in society.
2. Every individual should have full opportunity for the balanced and harmonious development of all his faculties.
3. Every individual should acquire capacity for self-reliance in aspects of cleanliness, health and culture.
4. Every individual should understand social and moral implications of life.

According to School Council’s Aims of Primary Education Project, the most important objectives of primary education are as follows:

1. Children should be happy, cheerful and well balanced;
2. They should enjoy school work and find satisfaction in their achievements:
3. Individuals should be encouraged to develop in their own ways;
4. Moral values should be taught as a basis of behaviours;
5. Children should be taught to respect others.
6. They should be taught courtesy and good manners;
7. They should be taught to read fluently and accurately;
8. They should read appropriate material with understanding.

The objectives of primary education, according to Kothari Commission (1964-66) are the following:
1. To develop and train basic skills to children so that they become useful members of home and society,
2. To develop such aspects of the child's personality as physical, intellectual, social and moral,
3. To teach the three R's with a view to develop in the child ability to read. Write and do simple arithmetic,
4. To develop the sense of cleanliness of body and environment and inculcate healthy habits in children.

Besides the above, the Commission has also stressed upon the following objectives of primary education:
1. To help children understand and practise desirable social relationships,
2. To help them discover and develop their own desirable aptitudes,
3. To cultivate the habit of critical thinking,
4. To help them appreciate and desire worthwhile activities.

The Mid-Century Committee on Outcomes in Elementary Education as pointed out by NCERT (1970) has enunciated that primary education should be expected to bring about desirable behavioural changes in young children. The behavioural changes may be grouped under the following domains:

a) Knowledge and understanding,
b) Skill and competence,
c) Attitudes and interests and
d) Action pattern.

The above four types of objectives may be realized through learning experiences under the following nine broad areas:

1. Physical development, health and body care,
2. Individual, social and emotional development,
3. Ethical behaviour, standards and values,
4. Social relationships,
5. The social world,
6. The aesthetic development,
7. The physical world,
8. The communication and
9. Quantitative relationships.

1.4 Development of Primary Education before Independence

At the beginning of 19th century the British administration first began to organize a modern system of education for India. From the viewpoint of Universal education, however, the quantitative aspects of the work at these elementary schools were not satisfactory and women were also almost totally uneducated.

The period of modern system of education in India is generally held to have been organized with the charter Act of 1813 under which parliament directed East India Company to accept the responsibility for the education of Indian people. But the official policies of this period were greatly defective. In 1835 Lord McCauley presented a lengthy minute to then Governor-General on the shape of Indian education.

The first to put forward a suggestion towards the demand of compulsory primary education was William Adam (1838) who observed that law should ultimately be enacted compelling every village to maintain a school. A more direct suggestion came from captain Wingate, the Revenue Survey Commissioner in the state of Bombay who in 1852, proposed to levy tax of five percent on land revenue and to utilize it to give compulsory education to the sorts of agriculturists. Having a profound faith in the necessity of compulsory education, Gokhale began his attack in 1910 by moving a resolution in the Central Legislature to demand the appointment of a commission to report on the subject. Although Gokhale failed in his major objectives but it paved the way to the complete victory, which came in the next round.
In 1871 the government of India began to partially support primary education. The primary education however, became popular after the introduction of plough tax and the government grant. Between 1854 and 1921, excepting the award of scholarships nothing was done for primary and technical type of education in 1953-54 when the government declared education upto the end of primary schools to be free and the scheme of social education first began in 1952.

In 1937, Mahatma Gandhi evolved the concept of basic education and its meaning:

"By education, I mean all round drawing out of the best in child and men—body mind and spirit. I, therefore, begin the child education by teaching it a useful handicraft".

In 1945, the Central Advisory Board of Education submitted Sergeant Plan to introduce compulsory and free education for boys and girls within the age of 6 to 11 years. But before it could be finalized, India achieved independence.

1.5 Primary Education in Post-Independence Era

After the achievement of independence compulsory primary education was given great importance. The recommendation of the Sergeant Report for universal primary education found expression in constitution as the provision for elementary education.

The First Five Year plan 1951-56 contained recommendations for improving the existing system of primary education and expanding basic education. The need to improve the techniques of basic education and to develop methods for training teachers with somewhat lower educational qualifications was stressed. The limitations of the prevailing system of primary education were well known. It was, therefore, thought better to devote new resources to the building up of a system of basic education and to the introduction of crafts in existing primary schools as a first step towards their conversion into basic schools.

In 1956, The Central Government appointed the Assessment Committee on Basic Education to survey the existing situation in Basic Education in the various states and to recommend ways and means of
bringing about effective improvements. The Central and State Governments accepted the principle of education of all children of 6-14 years.

Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) extended compulsion to the remaining children of same age group so that at the end of ten years all the children between the age of 6 to 11 years would be under compulsory instruction. In the years 1959-60, additional school facilities at the elementary stage were provided for about 22 lakh children. The National Institute of Basic Education continued research on important topics relating to syllabi, curricula and craft work.

Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) recommended a special drive to bring children to school and keep them there till the end of primary stage. Education facilities for the backward classes were increased by awarding scholarships, arranging the midday meals and by providing aid towards books, stationary, etc.

Setting up of school within the reach of every child is necessarily the first step towards universalization of enrolment. To achieve this goal each state formulated phased programme for the implementation of recommendation of Education Commission (1964-66) of universal education for all children in the age group 6-14 years. The commission recommended that educational system should be reconstructed in different steps:
1. By improving the effectiveness of primary education,
2. Introducing work experience,
3. Vocationalising secondary education,
4. Improving the quality of teachers,
5. Providing teachers in sufficient strength,
6. Liquidating illiteracy,
7. Paying attention to children,
8. Research in agriculture,
9. Two languages should be taught,
10. Evaluation at lower primary stage.

During Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) it was experienced that in some states the enrolment of girls and children of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes had been quite low. So it was decided that first step must
be universalization of enrolment. Inspite of the appreciable rise in the number of children going to school, it was still far from fulfilling the constitutional directive of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Several measures were envisaged to achieve this objective, such as better organization of the schools, free supply of textbooks and the extension of the midday meal programme.

In the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) the major quality improvement programme was in curriculum and examination reforms, improvement in teaching-learning methodologies, teacher-training, improvement of textbooks, the increasing use of mass-media as a support to the educational process and the improvement of physical facilities. The expansion of educational facilities continued to receive emphasis and major share of the resources was allocated for elementary education.

The main thrust in the expansion of education had to be planned with reference to the most backward areas:

(a) to promote enrolments,
(b) to ensure the retention of the children for the full time of compulsory education in school,
(c) to provide a variety of incentives,
(d) provisions were made for free distribution of textbooks and stationary, mid-day meals and uniforms and scholarships. Very high priority was given to this programme under the Directive Principles of the State Policy as free and compulsory education was to be imparted to all children up to the age of 14 years.

The committee appointed by Sh. Jaya Prakash Narain, under the auspices of Citizens for Democracy in May 1978, headed by Dr. J.P. Naik, suggested that elementary education should be made universal and an intensive and sustained programme adopted spread over 5 to 10 years. Special attention should be given to the enrolment of girls and children from poor sections of society. Multiple entry system should be adopted and part-time education be provided to all children who could not attend school on a full time basis.
The Draft National Educational Policy (1979) laid down that the highest priority must be given to free education for all up to the age 14 years. The facilities for formal education in elementary schools for all children should be provided.

The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) approach to universalization of elementary education was envisaged to cover:

i) Intensified use of existing facilities, including the adjustment of schooling hours, which would not be more than 3 hours a day according to local conditions,

ii) Provisions of new facilities which would be economically viable and educationally relevant, and

iii) Promotion of non-formal system of learning.

It was also felt essential to ensure appropriate incentives like free midday meals, supply of uniforms and learning materials and compensation to the families of scheduled caste girls towards the opportunity cost involved. Efforts should be made by the State Governments to introduce measures with a view to eliminate wastage and reduce dropout in elementary education.

It was estimated that universalization of the primary stage of education would imply additional enrolment of about 170 lakhs children in classes I-V over the next five years or an average annual rate of enrolment of 34 lakhs children.

In the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), main thrust area was achievement of universal primary education for the age group of 6-14 years by 1990. For achieving the goal of universal elementary education the motivation of the children as well as their parents was seen as a prerequisite. Teacher training is also an important part of primary education. It was felt that facilities will have to be created for the training of additional teachers required during the Seventh Plan period.

Since children belonging to poor sections of the society, specially the girls, cannot afford to attend regular schools, the formal system of elementary education alone cannot help in achieving the goal of universal elementary education of the age group 6-14. For this section of children
and also for large-scale dropouts, the programme of non-formal education was recommended so as to provide basic literacy to all children up to 14 years of age.

Presiding over the meeting of The Consultative Committee, the then Union Education Minister K.C. Pant, committed to universalization of elementary education by 1990 informed the members that the Ministry of Education has substantially stepped up assistance to the nine educationally backward states for implementation of the schemes. Steps were taken for providing facilities for pre-service and in-service training of elementary school teachers and non-formal education instructors. These schemes were expected to significantly improve the quality of elementary education.

The National Policy on Education (1986) led to operation blackboard in 1987, which aimed at strengthening the infrastructure in primary schools making them fit places as seats of learning. Under the “Operation Blackboard” the following provisions were aimed at:

i) School buildings with at least two rooms, a verandah and toilet facilities,

ii) Academic Staff of at least two teachers for every school,

iii) Essential teaching and learning materials like blackboards, educational charts and toys, musical instruments, scientific and mathematical equipment and mechanical tools (Program of Action 1986).

On the eve of Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) with the new thrust in elementary education for universal enrolment and universal retention, new schemes of operation blackboard (OB) were launched. It was estimated that educational enrolment to be achieved during the Eighth Plan to reach universalization was approximately 5.61 crores children. Besides expansion of school facilities, there was need to improve the quality of education by providing existing schools with sufficient facilities. Therefore, the “Operation Blackboard” scheme was not only continued and completed during the Eighth Plan in relation to primary schools but also extended to upper primary schools. The eventual aim was to move towards a situation where every class has a classroom and a teacher.
In the case of teacher education the stress was on improving the standard of pre-service teacher education institutions and the quality of its programmes, providing continuing education of a suitable kind to every teacher educator and to a substantial number of teachers and creation of a system to discourage setting up of sub-standard institutions.

Lastly, the provision of facilities that have special relevance for retention of girls, such as establishment of day care centres for pre-school children and infants, provision of free uniforms, textbooks, and stationary, attendance allowance and coordination of support services such as drinking water, fodder and fuel to release children, especially girls as well as women from related domestic chores, had also been included in the plan.

Keeping in view the importance of literacy and education in development, a summit of Nine High Populous countries was held in December 1993, on Education for All – A Reality till 2000 A.D. Besides demographic and other complex ground realities, the main goals framed in EFA with special reference to universalization of elementary education were:

(a) Access to elementary education for all children up to 14 years of age,
(b) Universal participation till they complete the elementary stage through formal and non-formal education programmes,
(c) Universal achievement, at least, of minimum levels of learning.

1.6 Genesis of District and Primary Education Programme

The National Policy of Education, after a serious thought on the ongoing disparities in educational development, namely – gender, regional and social, proposed new thrust on action programmes for universal primary education as a step towards universalization of elementary education by the end of the twentieth century. The District Primary education Programme (DPEP) is the new initiative with the need to provide:

- emphasis on local area planning while formulating the district plans;
- greater rigour and infusion of professional inputs in planning and appraisal;
- focus on primary stage with the stress on girls and socially disadvantaged sections.
To begin with, the DPEP was launched in 1993, in selected districts in the states of Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West-Bengal and Tamil-Nadu. Later on it was extended to some selected districts in the states of Bihar, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh while some other districts in Orissa were covered in the second phase.

The District Primary Education Programme is a result of sequential experiences in the field of primary education through various internally evolved and externally funded projects. It deviates from the previous experiments in its being totally area-specific, in its flexibility, and no doubt, within the framework of national concerns and priorities. The objectives of the programmes are:

- to provide all children access to primary education through formal primary schools or its equivalent through alternatives,
- to reduce overall drop-out rate at primary level to less than 10 percent,
- to increase achievement level by 25 percent points over and above the measured baseline levels, and
- to reduce disparities of all types to less than 5 per cent.

The programme has the basic characteristics of planning from the bottom, planning and developing competencies at district level and participatory process of planning. Major thrust of the plan at district level is to develop education and to create conditions for initiating developmental efforts at the local level.

Since each district is expected to undertake research studies in the area of learner achievement, teacher motivation, problems specific to special disadvantaged groups, textbook and curriculum issues, gender issues etc., it is worthwhile to take into account the research efforts already made in the elementary education in wider context as well as at micro level (Grewal and Gupta, 1991) to provide a database for improving the school processes and outcomes.

However, Shukla (1996) has been critical of the foreign assistance to strengthen the primary education and also the universal elementary education programme for being replaced by the foreign funded District
Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in the country. The latter is now spread over to 271 districts in 18 states, and is being perhaps visualized as the universal pattern to be followed. Foreign participation and supervision in curriculum, evaluation and instruction has made further inroads. The DPEP has acquired the services of highly paid experts (not necessarily of great competence).

The DPEP has resulted in the addition of a new layer to the administration. If has also focused attention on the “quality” of inputs. However, there are problems associated with the programme. First, costs are three or four times the cost of existing programmes though in itself quite welcome providing such costs are sustainable as an universal model. More importantly, the transmission to the field of quality visualized is proving to be problematic. The contents of text have often been unrealistic in terms of being remote from the local environment. Moreover, while the DPEP seeks to impart skills and attitudes of a higher order, the existing system is barely ready for better attainment in routine areas such as factual knowledge and simple operations. But because the agreements for foreign funds (to fund the DPEP) stipulate higher outcome levels, serious strains within the system are discernible and fudging of reports on outcome is being resorted to.

Quite akin to the experience with the growth of higher priced substitutes in other areas, the DPEP pattern is likely to lead to a neglect of the existing system prevalent in most parts of the country. At present the extension of the DPEP to all the 600 plus districts in the country does not appear to be a very plausible goal. This goal is now officially believed to be realizable only by 2010, though optimistic projections have set the date between 2002 to 2006. The present enrolment figures are heavily biased against girls, rural children and children belonging to Scheduled Caste/Tribes. There have been no improvements in retention rates up to 5th grade (just 50%) or in achievement rates related to the prescribed syllabus (20% to 30%).

Still, the interventions in primary education are a welcome step and need to be looked into as an alternative model of planning and execution. The experiences of these interventions are going to provide a major basis
for formulating educational programmes for the country at national level while going through micro-level educational programmes.

1.7 Problems in Primary Education

Primary education in our country is faced with a number of problems, whose complexity, extent and types vary from one state to another, from one area to another and even from place to place. The problems involve a large number of economic, physiological, physical, social and cultural factors. We can describe them as follows:

1. Economic Difficulties
   a) Due to dire poverty, many children are not attending the school and government also on account of its inability to raise adequate resources is yet to implement a programme of providing a good elementary education to every child.
   b) The problem of wastage and stagnation is mostly due to economic difficulties. The studies conducted on the subject have shown that in about 65% cases the wastage is due to poverty. The Education Commission, 1964-66 has rightly mentioned that a child is willingly sent to school between the ages of 6 to 9, because at this stage he is more nuisance at home than a help. After the age of 9 or 10 the child becomes an economic asset because he can work at home or earn something outside. This is especially true of girls who have to assist the mother at home. The child is, therefore, withdrawn from the school or irregularly attends the school and thus it is ultimately a case of wastage or stagnation.

2. Physiological Difficulties

The handicapped children viz, the blind, the orthopaedically handicapped and also mentally retarded have to be provided education not merely on humanitarian ground, but also on grounds of utility, social justice and democracy. The Constitutional Directive on Universalization of Elementary Education cannot be fully implemented without their education. There are a number of handicapped children in the country but only a few schools have been opened for their education. The general schools do not provide any special care for these handicapped children. Hence, specific
arrangements have to be made and special care be taken for the handicapped children in the general school.

3. Physical Difficulties

The Third Education Survey has revealed that 92.6% of the rural population is served with primary education facilities at the state level. But backward areas and tribal people are not adequately served with primary education facilities mainly on account of various natural barriers like dense forests, inaccessible hills, rivers, deep terrains and so on.

All these findings suggest that a large number of children are still deprived of primary education on account of economic, physiological and physical barriers.

There are some other problems of primary education like follow:

1. Defective policy of government of India is creating problem for universalization of primary education

2. India is a big country with many natural and geographical difficulties. There are no good means of communication and it is not possible to conduct the inspection of these institutions efficiently. In many parts it is impossible to establish schools, and if established, the teachers are hesitant to serve in these areas because of lack of facilities.

3. Finance is the greatest difficulty in this field. A huge amount of money is needed to implement the scheme of compulsory primary education but the government is not able to arrange the money.

4. Social problems like that of untouchability and problems of the aboriginals and the hill people have also been responsible for the slow development of primary education in India.

5. There are about 1642 languages and dialects taken together in India. A good deal of agitation has been going on with regard to national language and the regional languages. Due to these problems the introduction of free and compulsory primary education has been hindered to a very great extent.

6. Due to lack of finances it is not possible to open as many schools as are needed for the implementation of compulsory education scheme successfully.
7. Dearth of the institutional buildings and dearth of the trained teachers are other problems of primary education.

8. Due to untrained and ill-equipped teachers the standard of primary schools education is very low. Due to lack of finances, the institutions are not properly equipped. There is lack of teaching-aids and adequate facilities.

9. Unbalanced, unattractive, burdenful and lengthy curriculum is another problem. It does not fulfill the local needs of the students. It is required that the curriculum should be balanced, attractive, re-organised and re-oriented as to make the primary education pleasing and scientific.

10. Heavy strength of students is also a problem of primary education. From the above discussion, it appears that the objectives of primary education have not been realized to a satisfactory extent in our country.

1.8 Main Constraints to Achieve Universal Elementary Education (UEE)
- Over-population
- Uneven spread of education
- Inadequate admission of backward classes
- Inadequate admission of girls
- Apathy in general
- Economic backwardness of the parents
- Child labour
- Low educational status of the parents
- Dropout, wastage and stagnation
- Defective curriculum
- Uninspiring teaching-methods
- Lack of adequate instructional materials
- Lack of efficient teachers
- Mere inspection not supervision
- Irregular attendance of the children
- Faulty admission policy
- Social barriers regarding co-education
- Unattractive school buildings
- Poor nutrition of children
- Lack of awareness of available facilities
- Lack of part time facilities
- Rivalries in education bodies
- Financial crisis
- Lack of female teachers
- Defective evaluation pattern

Present system of education lays greater emphasis on narrow individualism, unhealthy competition, verbal fluency (specially in English) and more acquisition of information while it neglects social objectives, values, co-operation, manual work, training in skills and building up of character. The system maintains a set of double standards. Access to good institutions is selective and is mostly availed by the rich social groups. This dualism leads to undesirable social segregation and to a perpetuation and strengthening of inegalitarian trends in our society. All such problems need to be solved urgently because in the words of a renowned philosopher Goethe “Decline in the education system indicates the decline of the nation”.

1.9 Significance of Primary Education

Primary school is the time when a way of life begins. After the birth of a child, unconscious imitation commences. He soon begins to observe the behaviour of others in the family and other people in the environment. As soon as he attains the age of five, he is sent to school. The child at this stage, if provided with proper education or more technically called the primary education, can progress and develop in different aspects of his growth.

Primary education is the foundation, which the child needs at the formative stage. The primary school environment, through wide horizon of school and community, provides the child with the first hand experience of group life outside the family. Since the child is in the most impressionable years of his life when he is in the primary school, the schooling is a very
significant period for making his life. In fact, primary education lays the very basic of the child’s future growth and personality. Therefore, primary education is of vital necessity for every child, more so a rural child, who being poor and ignorant, is devoid of the rich and conducive environment. It becomes incumbent upon the state, therefore, to provide in the rural set up primary schools that can impart effective education and also can contribute to the child’s development as it provided that the state shall endeavour to provide within ten years of the commencement of the constitution free and compulsory education to all children from the age 6-14 years.

The education system in India has been geared right from the beginning to the pursuit of these three major goals of quantity, equality and quality (Naik 1975) while the pursuit of quality has usually resulted in its being linked with the privileged, the ideal of equality has been greatly hampered by the many inequalities in society. In this way, the pursuit of quantity may lead to a substandard education both in its tangible and semintangible aspects, the pursuit of quality in the absence of adequate resources may lead to good schools only for the privileged, and the socio-economic inequalities in the larger society may frustrate all attempts at achieving equality within educational institutions.

This gigantic task has remained unfulfilled as felt in the National Policy on Education (1986). It was rather too difficult to achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education for the age group 6 to 14 years by 1990 as the new enrolment anticipated would have been about 650 lakhs children. As such, the group recommended staggering the target and achieving the universalization of elementary education for the age group 6 to 11 only by 1990 and for the age group 11 to 14 by 2001.

While analyzing the significance of primary education, there is a need to undertake a comprehensive study covering all aspects of Primary Education. Accordingly a detailed study on District Primary Education Programme which has made a significant dent in the field of primary education has been executed.
1.10 Statement of the Problem

Evaluation of District Primary Education Programme in Sirmaur District of Himachal Pradesh.

1.11 Objectives

The proposed study was pursued with the objectives to undertake a comprehensive investigation into the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the functioning of the DPEP in one of the four districts of Himachal Pradesh where the DPEP is already in operation. The main objectives of the study were:

1. To study the scenario of primary education in India.
2. To examine the existing network and performance of primary education in Himachal Pradesh.
3. To analyze the students’ perception regarding the performance of primary education including infrastructure facilities, standard of education, enrolment, attendance and dropout in DPEP district of Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh.
4. To examine the opinion of teachers in respect of infrastructure, standard of education, basic facilities, enrolment, attendance and dropout with the launching of DPEP.
5. To find out the perception of parents, community leaders and DPEP authorities in the performance of DPEP in the state.
6. To make the comparison of pre-DPEP period with post-DPEP period in respect of certain indicators relating to the performance of primary education.
7. To identify the problems experienced at different stages and to advance suggestions to make the study more result oriented.

1.12 Delimitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to one district of Himachal Pradesh.
2. It is restricted to 500 students, 50 schools, 50 teachers and 50 parents, community leaders and DPEP authorities.
3. It is delimited to DPEP related aspects only.
4. Sample is confined to the district where the DPEP is in operation.
1.13 Organization of the Research Report

Having presented the meaning and concept of Primary Education, which includes Introduction, objectives of primary education, development of primary education before and after independence, genesis of DPEP in India, the chapter-I deals with the problems and constraints in the way of primary education and significance of primary education. The chapter-II is devoted to Origin, Growth and Performances of DPEP. The chapter-III deals with the Scenario of Primary Education in Himachal Pradesh. The chapter-IV deals with the review of the related literature. The chapter-V deals with methods and procedure. The chapter-VI & VII deal with the analysis and discussion of results. Simultaneously, an attempt has been made to furnish a global picture of different type of enquiries. Summary and conclusions form the contents of the last chapter i.e. VIII, which gives the overall view of the whole research. A bibliography and appendices are attached at the end of the research report.

Rationale Behind the Study

The objectives of Primary Education are multi-dimensional and broad based. The primary stage is the foundation of the entire superstructure of education. Since independence and more prominently in recent past the emphasis has been given to universal elementary education (UEE) and especially universal primary education (UPE). The National Policy of Education (1992) has strongly emphasized to achieve the objective of universal literacy by the beginning of the new century. This has led to launching of NLM in 1988 to promote literacy drive and its impact on awareness for universal elementary education by 2000 A.D. The launching of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in the country since 1990's and in Himachal Pradesh from 1995 is the new impetus in this direction. This programme is to improve schooling facilities and enhance learning achievement of students with the following objectives:

i) To provide all children access to primary education through formal primary schools or its equivalent alternatives;

ii) To reduce overall dropout rate at the primary level to less than 10%;
iii) To increase achievement level by 25 points over and above the measured baseline levels; and

iv) To reduce disparities of all types to less than 5 per cent.

The District Primary Education Programme is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in four educationally backward districts of Himachal Pradesh. The programme, which was launched in 1996-97, lasted up to the end of 2002. This project was one of its own kinds and was started to strengthen the primary education in the state. Moreover, a huge amount of money was spent on this project. So it becomes essential to undertake a study on the sustainability of DPEP and structures created under it. Further it is observed that hardly any study has been conducted on this aspect. Moreover, there are certain other basic questions, which are crucial and require attention. Some of them are: Is DPEP playing positive role? What is its contribution in strengthening primary education? What is its role in creating general awareness among girls about education? What is the regional disparity in the extension of primary education in selected districts? What are the expectations and requirements of students? What should be the role of DPEP in their perception?

In view of these hitherto un-attempted questions, there is an urgent need of a study, which could evaluate the role, impact and shortcomings of DPEP in the state and suggest remedial measures for on ground applications and implementations.