Chapter-2
Origin, Objectives and Performance of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

This chapter presents the origin and objectives of DPEP. The performance of DPEP at National level vis-à-vis at State level has also been discussed.

2.1 Introduction

The genesis of primary education in the modern sense dates back to seventeenth century when some missionary efforts were first made in India. The overriding effort of the missionary primary schools, coupled with the mandate to East India Company to spend a sum of not less than lakh of rupees for education in India under charter Act 1813, initiated a process, which is known as Anglicization of indigenous system of education in India. In 1830 seventy primary schools were opened in Madras. In 1831, nine vernacular schools of Sagar were given financial aid. In due course, different committees and commissions were constituted to spread and strengthen the primary education. After Independence, keeping in view its importance, the growth of equity and social justice in literacy was assured by the Indian constitution.

The Indian education system is the second largest in the world and is perhaps the most complex in terms of its spatial outreach and presents the most diversified system of students and teachers in terms of their linguistic, social, economic and cultural background. It comprises of 6, 27,000 primary, 1,90,000 upper primary schools and about 25,000 non formal education centres, having 1,9,00,000 teachers and 1,11,000 students in these schools. According to an estimate, out of 200 millions children in 6-14 age group there were about 42 millions who were expected to be out of schools. Further, among school going children high percentage of dropouts is also a major problem. The goal of universal elementary education was reviewed in World Education Forum (U.N World Conference) at Dakar, the capital of Senegal in West Africa in 2000 (10 years after Jomtien) when certain goals remained unachieved. Resultantly, Dakar set revised targets for the countries where the goals of EFA (Education for All) could not be
achieved and made a commitment to achieve it by 2015 with the following objectives:

i) *Early Childhood care and education*: expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

ii) *Free and compulsory primary education by 2015*: ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

iii) *Life skills for adolescents and youth*: ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs;

iv) *Improvements in adult literacy by 50 percent*: achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

v) *Eliminate gender disparities*: eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;

vi) *Enhance educational quality*: improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

It can be concluded that the number of children studying at primary stage in India is approximately equal to twice the population of France. As per the 1991 Census estimates, there were about 116.7 million children in primary school age group in the country and it would have increased to 118 million by 2001.¹ The latest educational statistics indicate a GER of 92.14 percent for primary classes (82.9 percent being for girls and 100.9 percent
for boys). The working Group on elementary education has estimated that out of about 200 million children, there were 42 million out-of-school children in 6-14 age group. However, the estimates from different sources vary considerably. With all the constraints, the government is committed to universal elementary education and is actively pursuing a policy for fulfilling its constitutional and moral commitment.

2.2 Origin of DPEP

National Policy of Education (NPE), 1986 and its Programme of Action (POA), 1992, accorded an unqualified priority to Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The policy shifts the emphasis from enrolment per se to enrolment as well as retention and achievement. The policy received a further impetus as a consequence of the declaration of the 1990 Jomtien World Conference which called upon the countries to take effective steps for achieving “Education for All” by the year 2000 AD. The modified version of the NPE-POA, 1992 stated “It shall be ensured that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality is provided to all children up to 14 years of age before we enter the 21st century”. As a sequel to the spirit of the NPE-POA, a large number of central and state sponsored programmes were launched. Very soon it was realized that most of these programmes were deficient in delivering the goods as they were top heavy, supply based and did not provide for contextuality. It was also felt that in a vast country like India any centralized scheme of education will not succeed because we have to attend to more than half a million habitants and equal number of other small tiny regions and hutments.

Having realized the significance of contextuality for imparting education at the primary stage, it was felt that the planning process needs to be based on disaggregated targets. To begin with, it was decided that the districts may be considered as a unit for planning and management, this ‘home grown’ idea is actually the basis of the emergence of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). Imbibing the spirit of the Constitution and the Education policy provisions the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) emerged in 1994 as a response to various challenges in the Primary Education sector. DPEP adopts a holistic
approach and has the essential ingredients required to Universalize access, retention and improve learning achievement and reduce disparities among social groups. The programme seeks to ‘universalize’ primary education by revitalizing the existing system. It seeks to identify and tackle ‘inefficiencies’ by integrating innovative practices and approaches. Adopting an area specific approach with district as a unit of planning, the key strategies of the programme have been to retain the contextuality and sensitivity to local conditions and ensuring full participation of the community. There is a marked focus on sustainability, equity and local ownership. The emphasis on participative planning and management and capacity building are clearly articulated. Acknowledgement of the fact that the programme would continue to evolve as it progresses, makes it flexible and dynamic in nature, providing room for experimentation and accommodating felt needs through innovation. The scope to pilot and either scale up or withdraw the various approaches tried out has been built into the programme.

2.3 The DPEP framework

In addition to the national commitment for the universalisation of elementary education as reflected in the NPE-1986, a positive ambience for reforming education was created after the Jomtien conference in 1990 and the formulation of DPEP benefited from the same. The DPEP was triggered as a response to Social safety net provisions during the structural adjustment phase of early nineties but was later taken up as a regular Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of the Government of India (GOI). The states besides maintaining the existing level of public expenditure bear 15 percent of the project cost. The remaining 85 percent of the DPEP cost is provided by the central government as grant to the states. Each district has an investment ceiling of about Rs.40 crores spread over five to seven years (about 9 million US$ at current exchange rate). The systemic issues at the time of launch of DPEP were:

- The infrastructure facilities were inadequate and unusable in most rural areas. The provision for creation and maintenance of infrastructure and related facilities were not commensurate with the prescribed norms. There was hardly any information about the
adequacy of facilities even in places where such facilities were available. The shortage of school places co-exists with areas of excess capacity. An assessment of such imbalances in the provision of facilities is yet to be made either through All India Educational Surveys conducted by the NCERT or by other methods.

- Teachers' competence, motivation and performance were at low levels and the increasing backlog of teachers' vacancies was a matter of concern. The quality of the pedagogy and training of teachers was mediocre.

- Textbooks, syllabi and curricula were outdated and inappropriate and required major revisions. Learning outcomes were low even in educationally advanced states like Kerala and non satisfactory system of pupil's evaluation existed in any state.

- Academic support structures were dysfunctional and linkages between directorates of education and the state and sub-state level resource institutions were largely ineffective. Hundreds of DIETs established after the 1986 policy were not fully operational and lacked adequate capacity and the will to handle the new tasks.

- Teacher deployment was not rational and teacher absenteeism was reportedly high in many areas. The school inspection was reduced to a ritual and no one took it seriously. Teaching was not learning oriented and serious concerns about the relevance of education for the unreached children persisted. Multigrade teaching was practised on a large scale in rural areas without proper orientation of teachers to handle such situations.

- Community linkages were weak and the statutory framework for their involvement in planning and management of primary education was non-existent. The 1992 Constitutional amendments (73rd and 74th) made it mandatory for the states to decentralize and delegate authority for planning and management to elected representative at the village level.

- Financial resources provided by the central and state governments were insufficient to undertake major qualitative improvement. The
ongoing concern for inadequate funding is historically reflected in the persistence of low allocations for quality improvement programs and ever increasing number of vacancies of teaching and non-teaching posts. The recent increase in wage bill of teachers due to pay revision has further strained the investment for quality improvement.

- *Persistence of weak monitoring and evaluation framework* for centrally sponsored schemes and other programs of educational development have resulted in *information blackout* on achievements and effectiveness of development programs.

### 2.4 Objectives of DPEP

District Primary Education Programme supports *replicable, sustainable, cost effective* programme development and implementation in order to:

- Reduce differences in enrollment, dropout and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than five percent. Reduce overall primary dropout rates for all students to less than 10 percent. Raise average achievement levels by at least 25 percent over measured baseline level and ensuring achievement of the basic literacy and numeracy competencies and a minimum of 40 percent achievement levels in other competencies, by all primary school children.

- Provide access for all children to primary schooling or equivalent non formal education. It also seeks to strengthen the capacity of National, State and District level institutions and Organizations for the planning, management and evaluation of primary education.

Keeping in view large number of out of school children in 6-14 age group the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) began in 1994 with 42 districts spread over seven states in the first stage and further expanded to 271 districts covering fifteen more states which were most educationally backward with clear focus on decentralized and participatory
planning and monitoring of development initiatives. Consequent upon implementation of DPEP in 1994 at national level it was started in the state of Himachal Pradesh in 1995 in four educationally backward districts, namely Sirmaur, Chamba, Kullu and Lahaul & Spiti w.e.f. 1996-97-2002. This project is one of its kinds to strengthen the primary education in the state now the programme is substituted by Sursik.

2.5 Performance of DPEP at National as well as State Level

A prerequisite for the attainment of UPE/UEE is the participation of all children in education through formal or alternative modes of education, consequently matching demand and supply of educational facilities is a continuous process and is the outcome of complex social and economic development factors. DPEP has addressed the issues related to school infrastructure in big way within its resources availability. From the analysis of Table 2.1, an attempt has been made to examine the performance of DPEP at national and state level in comparative form.

2.5.1 Number of schools covered under DPEP

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Number of School covered under DPEP</td>
<td>2113</td>
<td>2442</td>
<td>2442</td>
<td>2194</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>%age share of having general toilets</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>22.75</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>16.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>%age share of having girls toilets</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>% having drinking water facilities</td>
<td>57.00</td>
<td>60.60</td>
<td>61.15</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>64.90</td>
<td>62.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>% having boundary wall</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>17.55</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>19.65</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>School classroom ratio (SCR)</td>
<td>47.86</td>
<td>32.90</td>
<td>47.17</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>46.50</td>
<td>29.20</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>%age share of OBCs</td>
<td>28.35</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>27.65</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>28.50</td>
<td>6.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>%age share of girls enrolment</td>
<td>45.50</td>
<td>48.20</td>
<td>45.15</td>
<td>48.70</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>48.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Pupil teacher ratio</td>
<td>42.65</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>42.17</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>41.80</td>
<td>25.00</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>% share of female teacher to total teachers</td>
<td>26.73</td>
<td>32.30</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>30.23</td>
<td>33.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>% of male teachers school</td>
<td>59.05</td>
<td>53.20</td>
<td>58.70</td>
<td>55.20</td>
<td>58.15</td>
<td>55.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>%share of ST teachers to total teachers</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>12.70</td>
<td>8.70</td>
<td>11.70</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>11.80</td>
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</table>


The number of schools covered under DPEP increased from 211339 in 1997-98 to 3, 21, 157 in 2000-01 which indicated an increase of 57.12 percent at national level whereas the number of schools at State level
increased from 2442 in 1997-98 to 2929 in 2000-01 showing an increase of 20.60 percent. Performance of DPEP at National vis-à-vis State Level

2.5.2. Status of Physical Facilities

In the following paras an attempt has been made to study the percentage share of general toilets, girls' toilets, drinking water facilities, and position of boundary walls in the school at national as well as state level during the DPEP period.

2.5.2.1 Percentage share of General Toilets

In addition to the number of schools, the availability of adequate infrastructure and teaching aids are considered to be the important pre-requisite for strengthening the primary education. Table 2.1 shows that there was significant increase in the percentage share of having general toilets from 17.5 percent to 26.7 percent at national level showing an increase of 52.57 per cent and 6.6 percent to 23.9 percent at State level during 1997-98 to 2000-01 showing an increase of 262 percent. It is a fact that the general toilet facilities have increased significantly. It is also noted that the increase in the toilet was to the tune of 262 percent in the state, against 52.57 percent at the national level during the period under study.

2.5.2.2 Percentage Share of Girls Toilets

A significant spurt was observed in the percentage share of having girls toilets over the year 1997-98 to 2000-01. The increase of girls' toilets was observed to the tune of 10.7 percent and 2.5 percent in respect of centre and state in 1997-98 which increased to the tune of 18.25 percent and 9 percent, respectively in 2000-2001.

2.5.2.3 Percentage Drinking Water Facilities

To provide pure and drinking water to the children is the prime responsibility of the government. Table 2.1 depicts that the drinking water facility which was available to 57 percent and 60.60 percent schools at national and state level during 1997-98 increased to the tune of 71.55 percent and 69.10 percent at national and state level during 2000-01 respectively. The average increase in respect of the provision of drinking water was noticed as 63.25 percent at national level and 62.92 percent in state level during the said period.
2.5.2.4 Schools Having Boundary Wall

For ensuring the safety of the small children and also to protect the property of the school, the boundary walls and retaining walls are made. In DPEP, the emphasis was also laid on this very aspect. The schools having boundary walls under DPEP showed an increasing trend to the tune of 41.41 percent and 28.35 percent respectively. This increase has been from 15.6 percent and 2 percent in 1997-98 to 22.06 percent and 6.70 percent in 2000-01 at national and state level, respectively.

2.5.3 School Classroom Ratio

The school classrooms ratio was registered to the tune of 47.86 percent and 32.90 percent at the national and state level respectively during 1997-98 which declined to 47.41 percent at national level and 30.60 percent at state level respectively during 2000-01.

2.5.4 Percentage of other Backward Classes in Enrollment

The table indicates that in the year 1997-98, 28.35 percent and 5.8 percent students of OBC categories got enrolled in the DPEP schools at the national and state level respectively. The percentage of OBC students marginally reduced to 28.20 percent in the year 2000-01 at the national level, whereas enrolments status in respect of OBC category remained unchanged at the state level.

2.5.5 Percentage Shares of Girls in Enrolment

As far as the girls enrolment is concerned, 45.5 percent and 48.2 percent of the girls were enrolled in the school covered under DPEP at the national and state level in the year 1997-98 respectively. With 2.79 percent and 1.66 percent increase in enrollment at national and state level, the figures reached to the maximum level of 46.77 percent and 49 percent during 2000-01 respectively. Average increase in respect of national as well as state level was recorded to the tune of 45.89 and 48.7 percent respectively.

2.5.6 Pupil Teacher Ratio

Table 2.1 reveals that pupil teacher ratio was 42.65 percent at national level and 26.5 percent at state level in 1997-98 which increased to the tune of 41.73 percent in the year 2000-01 at the national level. On the
other hand pupil-teacher ratio reduced to 25 percent in the state during the same period.

2.5.7 Percentage Share of Female Teachers to Total Teachers

A gender-sensitive school should have roughly an equal number of male and female teachers. The educators have argued for a much larger share of female teachers especially at pre-primary and primary education stage. The presence of female teachers is also considered necessary to promote girls’ education, especially in isolated rural and educationally backward pockets of urban areas. Because of some social traditions, certain communities do not like to send the girls to schools which do not have female teachers. Following the recommendations of NPE, 1986, priority was to be given to the recruitment of female teachers and removal of imbalance between the deployment of male and female teachers. The perusal of data shown in table 2.1 further reveals that share of female teachers to the total teachers which was 26.73 percent at national level in 1997-98 increased to 29.13 percent in 2000-01 showing an increase of 8.98 percent whereas in the state of Himachal Pradesh, the share of female teachers improved from 32.30 percent in 1997-98 to 33.70 percent in 2000-01 showing an increase of 4.33 percent over this period.

2.5.8 Percentage Share of Male Teachers in Schools

The national and state level position of all male teachers in schools presented in Table 2.1 reveals that their share reduced from 59.05 percent and 53.20 percent in 1997-98 to 56.70 percent and 53.80 percent in 2000-01 respectively which was a healthy trend for the national level, whereas in the State the share of male teachers was still on the higher side. It may be due to typical geography and hilly tracks which discouraged the female teachers to serve in inaccessible and far flung areas of the state.

2.5.9 Percentage Share of SC Teachers to Total Teachers

So far as the SC teachers and their share to the total teachers are concerned, the table indicates that in the year 1977, 12.15 percent teachers at the national level and 11.40 at the state level belonged to schedule castes. The table further reveals that the strength of SC teachers increased continuously at state and national level. The share of SC teachers to the
total increased to the tune of 12.70 percent at the national level whereas at the state level, the increase touched the figure of 12.10 percent.

2.5.10 Share of ST Teachers to Total Teachers

As is evident from the table 2.1, the share of ST teachers was recorded to the tune of 8.70 percent in 1997-98 which marginally increased to 9.10 percent in 2000-01 showing an increase of 4.60 percent at national level. On the other hand share of ST teachers at state level reduced from 12.70 percent in 1997-98 to 11.80 percent in 2000-01 showing a decline of 7.09 percent. The average shares of ST teachers were recorded to the tune of 8.88 percent at national level and 12 percent at the State level during the period under study.

It may be concluded that education, particularly primary education, is the main instrument used for the eradication of many social problems. It is the second largest education system in the world which has passed through different phases since its origin. Many committees and commissions have been constituted from time to time to strengthen and to make the primary education free and compulsory by 2015. The outcome of DAKAR 2000 (10 years after Jomtien) with the launching of DPEP in the country, the network and performance of primary education in the country has made a significant stride. The number of schools covered under DPEP has increased by 57.12 percent and 20.6 percent at national and state level respectively. The toilets, drinking water facilities and share of OBC students and girl students in the total enrolment showed very encouraging results. The share of SC and ST teachers to total teachers increased by 12.43 percent and 8.88 percent respectively.