CHAPTER IV

DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN DHARMAPURI DISTRICT- A CASE STUDY
Dharmapuri district was formed from the erstwhile Salem district in the year 1965. "Dharma" means charity. A King named Adhiyaman who was noted for his charity and philanthropy ruled this district. It is situated in the northwestern side of Tamil Nadu State. It lies approximately between 11.47° and 12.33° of the north latitudes and 77.28° and 78.48° of east longitudes.

The geographical area of the district is 9,02,989 sq.kms the district comprises of three revenue divisions and there are 8 taluks in it. There are 18 blocks otherwise called the panchayat unions, the administration of which is done by the Block Development Officers.

The population of this district according to 1991 census is 23,95,606, of which 12,32,292 were males and 11,63,314, females. The SC/ST population was 3.22 lakhs which 13.4% of the population. The literacy rate of the district was 46.5% wherein the male literacy rate was 56.65 and 36.8% for females. As Andhra and Karnataka States surround this district, the people here speak Telugu, Kannada, Urdu and the official language Tamil. The literacy rate of Dharmapuri district is the lowest in Tamil Nadu. This district is still economically and educationally backward in spite of the special efforts taken by the Government for its improvement.

ORGANIZATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THIS DISTRICT

The Revenue District consists of two Educational districts namely Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri. In the two Educational districts, there are 18 blocks, out of which the primary schools and the staff of 16 blocks are managed and supervised by the Assistant Educational Officers (AEO). 24 Deputy Inspectors of Schools help the AEOs in the supervision and inspection of schools.

There are 1824 primary schools and 177 middle schools in the district. 44% of the existing schools have a student strength of below 100 and 2.5% of schools have more than 500. The number of school going age children in this district is 3,66,964. The total number of children enrolled in 6-11 age group is 3,16,728. The gross enrollment ration for boys is 98.7% and it is 96.6% for girls. There is no alternative system of education in this district for the age group 6-11. Apart from the primary schools, there are 213 private nursery schools in which 14,335 pre-primary children and 13,977 primary children are enrolled.

UNICEF and World Bank funded schemes are implemented to encourage Early Childhood Care and Education in addition to the 1054 centers run in the district. There are 1409 ECCE centers totally in this district for the age group of 3-5.
PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The main project objectives of the District Primary Education Programme for achieving Universalisation of Primary Education in Dharmapuri District are detailed below:

1. 100% enrollment of children in the 6-11 age group
2. 100% retention up to class five
3. Attainment of Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) at every stage by every student
4. 100% of completion of primary education within five years for each child
5. Involvement of parents and local communities for achieving above objectives

The key strategies of the project are:

1. Priority targeting of girls, SC/ST children and other educationally backward groups.
2. Operationalising Compulsory Primary Education.
3. Linking Total Literacy and Post Literacy Campaigns, Non-Formal Education, And ECCE directly with UPE strategies and activities.
5. Design of curriculum and pedagogy towards attainment of MLL.
7. Encouragement of innovative approaches.
8. Decentralisation and local management of the Primary Education system.
9. Block-level planning and implementation in a systematic manner throughout the district.

THE PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT

Access

1. To increase access by providing schools wherever necessary.
2. To facilitate opportunity to unfortunate children to enter the school stream either formal or non-formal.
3. To provide infrastructure facilities in the existing schools so as to attract the children particularly girls and SC/ST children.
4. To make learning an interesting and attractive one.
5. To involve local community, particularly mothers, in the day-to-day affairs of the primary schools where their children study.
6. To provide additional teaching and learning materials.
7. To watch the health conditions of the children.
8. To give individual attention to the backward students.
9. To give in-service training to the existing teachers in identifying the problems of individual children, enhancing minimum levels of learning and multigrade teaching.
Enrollment
1. To achieve 100% enrollment of all children in the age group of 6-11
2. To increase the enrollment of girls, particularly SC/ST and weaker sections
3. To involve the local community in all the activities of the school like enrollment, retention and achievement
4. To create a social awareness among the community particularly women about the value of education with special emphasis towards girls education by involving them in VEC/MTC/PTA and Magalir Manrams.
5. To link the pre-primary education with primary
6. To attract the children with good school atmosphere like pucca buildings, drinking water facilities, toilet facilities
7. To attract the attention of the parents by providing quality education with the help of the teachers

Retention and Completion
1. To allow the children to complete five years of schooling with higher academic achievement
2. To allow the teachers to identify the potential dropouts and take remedial measures
3. Involving members of VEC/PTA/MTC/Magalir Manrams to reduce the dropout rate to less than 10%
4. To provide a congenial atmosphere for effective learning by children
5. To provide activity based learning
6. To make teaching learning process an interactive and interesting one
7. To give special attention to backward students, especially SC/ST, and girls.
8. To introduce MLL, multigrade teaching, gender sensitivity concepts etc., in the in-service training of the teachers

Dropout
To reduce the dropout level the initiative taken by this project are as follows:

1. To introduce the MLL concept and revision of curriculum based competencies
2. To evaluate learning achievement in terms of MLL
3. To train teachers in preparing low cost teaching aids
4. To reduce teacher-pupil ratio
5. To check the health conditions of the Primary level children
6. To involve the local community particularly women at the school level so as to make them aware of the problems of the children

Achievement
1. To introduce the MLL concept
2. To provide qualitative teaching by toning up the teacher competence and motivation through in-service training
3. To evaluate the achievements of the children on the basis of MLL
4. To stress the participatory process whereby the local community facilitates participation and achievement
5. To pay attention to slow learners, girls and SC/ST children.
PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Access
In terms of access this district does not face any major problems as primary schools have already been provided in hamlets if the population is 500 and above and there is no other school within a radius of 1.5 kms, the school age children are 50 and above. There are separate schools, which provide education in languages like Telugu, Kannada and Urdu. In spite of accessibility there is a small percentage of children in the age group of 6-11 who have not yet been enrolled, particularly SC/ST and girls. The reasons identified for such lag in enrollment are

1. Inadequate building facilities
2. Primary schools do not have drinking water and toilet facilities
3. Absence of non-formal system of education at the primary level
4. Inadequate number of teachers in schools
5. Low literacy rate and economical backwardness of the parents
6. Gender bias
7. Social unawareness
8. Lack of linkage with the society

Enrollment
The gross enrollment ratio of the boys is 98.7% and for the girls it is 96.6%. Though statistically, 100% enrollment has been mentioned to be achieved, there is a minor percentage of children particularly girls in SC/ST who are yet to be enrolled. There is an urgent need to evolve a system to rectify this defect so that all the school age children are enrolled and thus achieve UPE.

Retention and Completion
In primary education it is not 100% enrollment, which ensures the aim of UPE but also 100% retention. A child enrolled in I Std. should continue up to V Std. Without detention or dropping out and complete primary schooling, acquiring the minimum levels of learning. When retention rate decreases due to dropout or non-achievement, the purpose of primary schooling is defeated. The most important reason for the low retention rate is poor attention shown to the slow learners, socially backward children particularly SC/ST children.

Dropout
The amount spent by any government to educate a child becomes a waste if he/she drops out of the school system at any level. It is alarming to note that there is a heavy drop out among the enrolled children themselves when there are some children still to be enrolled. The total percentage of drop out in this district is 18.05% for boys and 19.26% for girls, clearly indicating that the drop out rate is more among girls than boys. A sample study to compare the number of dropouts in each standard indicates that it is more in I and II standards thus defeating the very aim of UPE.
Achievement
According to a sample data only 58% of the children enrolled in Std.V could secure marks in the range of 40-100 but the remaining 42% of them were not able to secure the minimum marks. Right steps to improve the achievement level of the primary school children of Dharmapuri District stand imperative.

PROJECT STRATEGIES

Having identified the problems and issues of the primary education system in this district, the following programme when implemented will realize the project objectives.

Improving Access
1. Construction of buildings, providing drinking water facilities, construction of toilets and appointment of teachers to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio
2. To identify villages where NFE centers are to be opened and appointing instructors and supervisors, providing teaching learning materials to the children who are to be enrolled in these centers
3. To train instructors and supervisors, conduct social awareness campaigns through VEC/MTC/PTA and Magalir Manrams and training them suitably.

Improving Retention and Learning Achievements
1. Providing teaching learning materials to all the schools in the districts
2. Creating a separate Block Resource Center, appointing 18 supervisors for all the BRCs and 54 senior secondary grade teachers as teacher educators. Necessary training will be given to them at the DIET
3. Conducting in service training programmes to NFE center instructors after identifying the place of centers and appointment. Training programme to the ECCE center organizers will be provided in the project
4. All the children will undergo health check-up every year and all schools will be provided with medical kits
5. Special coaching centers in all the schools will be opened to give special attention to the backward children and low achievers, girls and SC/ST students. A teacher for guides will be appointed in each of these centers and necessary training will also be provided at the BRC.
6. Workbooks to enrich the achievement of the children will be provided to all the children of the schools.

Building Capacity
1. All the Block Level Officers of the education department (AEO & DIS) will be trained in DPEP and to develop administrative and supervision skills including 5 officials of other departments at the block level in each block so as to link them in the proper implementation of the DPEP.
2. All the headmasters will be trained in management and teaching skills as well as in the implementation of the project. 15 members of VEC, 2 members of MTC/PTA and 2 From Magalir Manrams will be trained so as to mobilise support of the local community in the school affairs.
3. All the BR centers will be equipped with necessary equipments so as to give quality in-service training to the teachers and others. The AEO offices will suitably equipped for this purpose.

4. A district task force will be constituted comprising eminent persons, educationists in different fields so as to guide, supervise and evaluate the implementation of the project.

5. A special innovative programme will be introduced to increase enrollment and retention of girls by providing Rs.25/- each for books, note books and bags for 50,000 girls students in the I year and 1,00,000 girl students in the second year on a pilot basis. 50 schools will be selected in each of the 18 blocks for this project. Preference will be given to schools where SC/ST population is predominant.

EFFECT OF THE PROJECT STRATEGIES

The above mentioned strategies resulted in the following:-

1. 98.99% enrollment was achieved
2. Dropout was decreased from 18.60% to 10%.
3. Retention ratio was increased to 1.
4. Completion rate of 66.61% was increased by 10%.
5. Teacher – pupil ration was brought down to 1:35.
6. A linkage with the local community and ECCE came into effect and particularly women were involved in the affairs of the school.
7. In-service training to the teachers resulted in effective and qualitative teaching.
8. Non-formal education facilitated the non-starters and dropouts to continue their education.
9. Special coaching classes increased the achievement level of the children by 10% and 85% of the children in all will achieve MLL by the implementation of the project.
10. Medical check-up has also increased the retention ratio by 0.1 and has reduced the dropout rate by 10%.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

District Level
The project at the district level is to be implemented by a District Executive Committee. The District Collector is the Chairman of the Committee. The Chief Educational Officer who is ex-officio District Project Coordinator is the Member Secretary.

The following are the members of the Committee:

1. Officers of the Education Department
2. Officers of other departments at the district level
3. Members of the Non Governmental Organisations
4. Teacher representatives
5. Women representatives
Task Force

There will be a Task Force of 6 groups to assist the Member-Secretary, i.e., the District Project Coordinator in the implementation of the project. The group leaders of the task force are also the members of the District Executive Committee.

Resource Support

Resource support is essential to design and prepare training materials and to provide to the needs of the different groups of beneficiaries like women, SC/ST children, pre-primary children etc. The following institutions of this district will provide the resource support.

1. The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Krishnagiri.
2. Govt. Arts College, Dharmapuri.
3. Govt. Arts College for Men, Krishnagiri.
4. Govt. Arts College for Women, Krishnagiri.
5. Govt. Arts College for Women, Bargur.
6. M.G.R Arts College, Hosur.
8. Rural Extension Training Centre, K.R.P Dam, Krishnagiri and
9. Govt. Teacher Training Institute, Dharmapuri.

The 6 groups of the task force will look after the following activities:

1. Non-Formal Education Centers
2. Training
3. Special Coaching Class Centers
4. Construction
5. Women Development and ECCE

The training programmes will be looked after by the Principal, DIET., Krishnagiri and there will be Consultants appointed on contract basis for the other groups of the task force.

Block Levels

At the block level, officers of the education department will implement the programme in coordination with the officers of other departments, teachers and non-governmental organizations.

At the village level, the Mother Teacher Councils in primary schools and the Parent Teacher Associations in middle schools and Village Education Committees will assist in the effective implementation of the programme.

Monitoring and Evaluation

There will be a Monitoring Cell at the district level and Finance and Accounts Cell to monitor whether the programme components are implemented properly at all levels.
These cells will report to the District Executive Committee. The Finance and Accounts cell will do the function of verifying whether funds allotted are utilized properly as per the rules and also be responsible for maintaining the accounts.

The Mother Teacher Councils, Parent Teacher Associations, Village Education Committees and the non-governmental organizations at the village level and the block level officers, teachers, non-governmental organizations, community leaders etc., at the block level can directly inform the District Executive Committee regarding the stage and the efficiency of the implementation of the programme.  

STATUS REPORT

The Indian educational system is the second largest in the world and is perhaps the most complex in terms of their linguistic, social, cultural and economic background. Implementing educational reforms in such diversified system is fraught with challenges of unprecedented nature. It comprises nearly 627 primary and 190 thousand upper primary schools; about a quarter million of non-formal education center; about 1.9 million teachers and 111 million students study in primary classes alone in the recognized schools. (1998-1999) the number of children studying in primary stage in India is approximately equal to twice the population of France. 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! The latest educational statistics indicate, a Gross Enrolment Ratio of 92.14% for primary classes (82.9% being girls and 100.9% 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 the universal elementary education and is actively pursuing a policy for fulfilling its constitutional and moral commitment.

The Teachers are the single largest category of professionally qualified and educated workers in India. The teachers constitute a diversified group with large variations in their social and economic background. Like students, many teachers belong to the category of first generation learners and their families were also the first to enter public sector jobs.* Many teachers were not even professionally trained when they joined the service. Notwithstanding the critical role of teachers in the development of education and paving the way for egalitarian society, their social standing and respect in the society has declined in the recent decades. This is largely attributed to the emergence of a large segment of the scientific, technical and management professionals who work in more lucrative and powerful positions.

The growth in the number of teachers in the formal education system is a response to the increasing demand for mass education especially at the level of primary and basic education. The increase in demand for additional teachers led many states to dilute the academic and professional qualifications for entry into the teaching profession. This was particularly so in the case of states with inadequate capacity for teacher training. While this helped the states in providing immediate relief and provided the services of a teacher
to a large number of first generation learners, the adverse impact of such short cuts on retention and quality of teaching learning is evident. Many problems of the contemporary educational system (high dropout rates, low internal efficiency, low levels of achievement and declining standards of education especially at the lower levels of educational hierarchy) can be traced to this factors. 

Teachers: an indispensable educational resource

Since the beginning of development planning in India, a number of efforts were made at the central and state level to improve the quality of education by reinforcing the teacher competencies, preparation of supplementary instructional materials, teachers’ guides and recurrent training in pedagogy and classroom teaching learning processes. The NCERT and SCERTs played a significant role in providing policy framework and operational modalities for strengthening the teacher education and training. To provide further boost for these efforts, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was established in 1995. The main objectives of the council are to achieve planned and coordinated development of the teacher education system in India, regulation and proper maintenance of norms and standards of teacher education. The functions of NCTE also includes the laying down of norms for various types of teacher education programs, recognition of teacher education institutions, laying down of guidelines in respect of minimum qualifications for appointment of teachers.

As a follow up of the NPE, 1986 and the subsequent Programme of Action, the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) were established at the district level and it was visualized that each district would have a DIET so as to provide support for the implementation of educational reforms with the full involvement of the teachers in the education and training processes. DPEP also recognized DIETs as the technical and professional institutions for implementing reforms in educational management and teacher education and training.

Strengthening teacher development

As a part of DPEP, the resource centers at the Block and the Cluster level were established to provide academic support to teachers and to strengthen the in-service training of teachers. In many states, the in-service teacher training has been shifted to Block level resource centers. With the help of BRCs and CRCs, the scope and nature of teacher training has also undergone significant changes. DPEP training is perceived to be need based and emphasis is to provide teachers with skills required for activity based teaching learning. In view of its significance for non-DPEP districts, a proper discussion on viable teacher training model should take place.

The teacher is thus the most important resource for teaching learning to take place in the schools. The students come to schools from different social and economic backgrounds and with varying levels of interests and objectives for pursuing education. The teachers address these questions by following a flexible approach to teaching learning so that all children gain the maximum from classroom transactions. Many rural schools exclusively
cater to the requirements of the first generation learners and those belonging to deprived families. Children from these families do not get enough academic support from their parents. Such children are also not able to pay for the private cost of engaging a tutor. The type of situation prevails in some urban schools located in and around the areas dominated by the urban poor. In view of these factors, the same teacher, over the years, produces a variety of teaching learning outcomes. Notwithstanding the key role of teachers, they do not have the freedom regarding the choice of curriculum, textbooks, school timings, certification and evaluation processes. These are the issues of policy formulation and state practices in which teachers as a collective body or individually can contribute immensely.

Recruitment and deployment of teachers: DPEP initiatives

Recruitment and deployment of teachers in the government schools is made according to the state rules and regulations meant for the purpose. The recognized aided and unaided schools also follow the same pattern of recruitment. However the unrecognized fcc charging private schools do not follow a uniform pattern for recruitment of teacher and their remuneration. The teachers in the government schools, once recruited, also have a security of service and lack of accountability, many teachers do not take teaching as a serious activity. One reason for the disenchantment with the government schools is the indifferent attitude of the teachers towards teaching learning and disregard for hardships and social deprivation faced by the learners from poor and vulnerable families. Parents often complain about the uncaring attitude of the teachers. The teachers also have many grievances towards the administration and the members of the community. Given a choice the parents are not keen to send their children to government schools.

DPEP initiatives have resulted in a significant improvement in the availability of teachers. Rationalisation of teachers' deployment, postings and transfers based on DISE and other databases has helped the states in overcoming some imbalances in the demand and supply of teachers.

Recognising the key role of teachers, a systematic effort is made to empower them through intensive and repeated in-service training, on-site academic support and their involvement in the design and development of textbooks and other instructional materials. Teacher training in DPEP is not perceived as a one-time activity but a continuous effort to reinforce the pedagogical skills. State level resource groups exist to guide the authorities to design the teacher training materials. From time to time, in-service training and enrichment programmes are also organized for teachers. In DPEP districts, special packages for in-service teacher training have been developed and practically all the teachers have been provided one round of training in Phase I districts and the second phase of training is in progress. Teacher training is followed through school visits and monthly meetings conducted by BRC-CRC coordinators. A major focus teacher training continues to be to evolve strategies for teaching under multi-grade situations and activity-based teaching. Teacher training programmes are usually residential. DIETs play an important role as nodal institutions for teacher development.
In habitations where regular schools are not viable, DPEP has opened a number of alternative schools and schools under Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and other modes. While these schools are less expensive in terms of teachers' salaries and other investments needed to establish a regular school, the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of such innovative efforts need to be evaluated. The demand for primary school places may soften in states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra and so would be the need for additional teachers. But in other states, the demand for additional teachers would continue to rise.

The above discussion clearly demonstrates that quality of teachers is as important as their availability. Mere appointment of more teachers without adequate preparation to meet the emerging challenges would not lead to improvement in the quality of education. In the Indian context, the indicators of the quality of teachers have not been adequately articulated and defined.

The sex balance of teachers has been quite lopsided in India as is evident in the fact that there is greater realization in the share of female teachers at the primary stage is low and needs to be improved. At the national level, the share of female teachers to total teachers at the primary stage was 35.6%. Recruitment of female teachers has been adopted as an important strategy under DPEP. The overall share of female teachers at primary stage has improved over the years. Generally the districts in the southern part of India had much better representation of female in teaching workforce. This is evident from the survey conducted in Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu. The sex ratio of teachers in the district seemed quite imbalanced with 32.3% male teachers as against 67.7% female teachers (Fig.4.1).

![Fig.4.1: Gender of Teachers](image)

Whereas 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.

From this standpoint, the age distribution of teachers would be a better indicator to determine whether the states and the districts are moving towards gender equity or not. It
is expected that the share of female teachers in the younger age groups would be higher as compared to the higher end age groups. But however, in the surveyed blocks the age factor reveals a smaller creative group at the younger rung. 10% are up to 20 years of age, 21.5% are from 21-30 years and 78% are in the over 30 years category (Fig. 4.2). This factor revealed that the teachers above 30 years of age are more motivated in their work and enjoy teaching in DPEP method. The social background of the teachers plays a major role in the success of the programme. 86.5% of the teachers are married and settled and this reduces the pressure at home grounds for most of them. But this same factor has revealed some drawbacks, such as teachers coming late to school due to household chores (Fig. 4.3).

**Fig. 4.2: Age Of Teachers**

![Age Distribution Chart]

**Fig. 4.3: Marital Status**

![Marital Status Chart]

The educational qualifications of the teachers from their responses suit the DPEP norms as against the responses of the head teachers. 14.5% of them have been qualified up to
Std.10, whereas 2.4% have studied only till Std.8. 48% of them have completed their +2 and 21% and 14.5% of the teachers are graduates and post graduates respectively (Fig.4.4).

**Fig.4.4: Educational Qualification Of the Teachers**

Around 91% of the teachers have completed their certificate/diploma in teacher training with just 1% receiving DPEP training alone. 5.7% of the teachers have a B.Ed degree and 2.4% of them have a M.Ed. degree (Fig.4.5)

**Fig. 4.5: Qualification of the Teachers**

DPEP's positive point is that, it offers continuous in-service training for all the teachers and enables them to stay update in teaching learning method. 99% of the teachers have undergone DPEP training (Fig.4.6) and 90% of the teachers have undergone the training offered by the government (Fig.4.7)
Fig. 4.6: DPEP Training

Fig. 4.7: Government Training

Forty-three percent of them were in teaching profession prior to the introduction of DPEP, whereas 57% became took up teaching as profession only after the commencement of the programme (Fig. 4.8).

Fig. 4.8: Teaching Profession- Before & After DPEP

Seventy-one percent of the teachers came under DPEP scheme as their respective blocks were chosen for the programme. 20.2% of the teachers opted for DPEP schools on their own (Fig. 4.9).
Seventy-one percent of the teachers came under DPEP scheme as their respective blocks were chosen for the programme. 20.2% of the teachers opted for DPEP schools on their own (Fig.4.9).

![Fig.4.9: Choice of DPEP](image)

Out of 297 respondents 34% of the teachers teach Class I (Fig.4.10), Class II has a percentage of 35% (Fig.4.11), Class III-37% (Fig.4.12), Class IV is taught by 35% of the teachers (Fig.4.13) and 18% teach Class V (4.14). Only 2% of them go in for multi-grade teaching (4.15).

![Fig.4.10: Teaching Class I](image)
Fig. 4.11: Teaching Class II

Fig. 4.12: Teaching Class III
Fig. 4.13: Teaching Class IV

Fig. 4.14: Teaching Class V
The confidence and enthusiasm of the teachers is highlighted in their responses to the role played by them in this programme. 95.3% of the teachers say that they play a major part in the success of the programme (Fig. 4.16)

DPEP enforces joyful learning method and the children widely enjoy the same. The teachers are no exception as 41% of them have shown interest in this method (Fig.4.17) and 90.2% follow this method of teaching (Fig.4.18).
Fig. 4.17: Interest in the method of teaching

Fig. 4.18: Teachers follow this method of teaching
Eighty-four percent of the teachers have shown interest in teaching children by way of joyful learning method but 14.5% have expressed discontentment with this method of teaching. When faced with difficulty in teaching this way the head teachers offers help to the teachers (Fig.4.19)

**Fig.4.19 Preference to joyful learning method**

DPEP has brought in major improvements in the following areas.

- Learning capacity of the children (Fig.4.20)
- Reduction in drop-out rates (Fig.4.21)
- Interest of students in education (Fig.4.22)
- Reduction of problem behaviour in classroom (Fig.4.23)
- Leadership qualities and independence (Fig.4.24)
- Creativity (Fig.4.25)
- Application of learnt materials to other situations (Fig.4.26)
- Health physical/mental (Fig.4.27)
- Overall performance (Fig.4.28)

**Fig. 4.20: Improvement in studies**

![Diagram showing preference to joyful learning method and improvement in studies]
Fig. 4.21: Reduction in drop-out rate

Fig. 4.22: Improved Students' Interest
Fig. 4.23: Initiative taken by children

Fig. 4.24: Reduction in problem behaviour
Fig. 4.25: Leadership qualities & independence

Fig. 4.26: Improved creativity of the students
Fig. 4.27: Usage of generalizations

Fig. 4.28: Improved physical & mental health

Fig. 4.29: Overall performance of the students
Fig. 4.27: Usage of generalizations

Fig. 4.28: Improved physical & mental health

Fig. 4.29: Overall performance of the students
Fig. 4.32: Creating innovative teaching aids

Fig. 4.33: Change in the system of examination

Fig. 4.34: More involvement of parents
But 42.4% of the teachers have expressed that the involvement of other agencies can bring some major changes in the programme to cater to the necessary areas of improvement (Fig.4.35).

Fig.4.35: Involvement of other agencies

According to the teachers 98.3% of them have stated that children like to come to DPEP schools (Fig.4.36). Children have many problems at home and school environment. But mostly in rural areas children hardly get to share their problems with elders, and get suitable solutions for the same. 97.3% of the teachers have stated that children come to them with their problems with regard to studies and personal problems or both (Fig.4.37) and 26.6% of teachers are able to solve the problems themselves (Fig.4.38) whereas 70.4% of them do so with the help of the head teachers (Fig.4.39).

Fig.4.36: Like DPEP Schools
Fig. 4.37: Sharing problems with the teacher

Fig. 4.38: Type of problem faced by the children
The teachers have expressed that the head teachers offer valuable suggestions that help their working pattern (Fig.4.40). Regular parents-teacher meetings are held at different span of time in these schools (Fig.4.41) and according to the teachers, parents help in solving specific problems with regard to their wards or any of the school matters (Fig.4.42). The teachers have seen improvement and regularity in the attendance of the students (Fig.4.43).
Fig. 4.41: Parents-Teachers Meeting

Fig. 4.42: Help offered by parents in solving specific problems
Children are very regular to school due to the positive nature of all the contributing factors and 53.2% of the teachers have expressed the effectiveness of the teaching aids as one of the factors (Fig.4.44). Sixty percent of them have expressed that DPEP is successful in their district (Fig.4.45).
Fig. 4.45: Success of DPEP

Head teachers

A prerequisite for the attainment of UPE/UEE is the participation of all children in education through formal or alternative and through government or private modes of education. Therefore, matching the demand and supply of educational facilities is a continuous process and is the outcome of complex social and economic development factors. It is also necessary to recognize that any type of school would not do, if the real education were to be imparted. The quality of infrastructure in formal or alternative systems of education is as important as their availability. All schools should have similar quality of infrastructure whether in rural or urban areas and should be provided with similar quality of teachers and other resource inputs without any discrimination between rural and urban schools or between the schools in economically backward and prosperous regions. A level playing field in terms of facilities and resource inputs for primary schools is vital for achieving the objectives of quantity and quality. Planning for creation and management of educational infrastructure is thus fraught with many challenges, especially in a country like India, which is characterized by vast regional, social and economic differentials. A perusal of various commissions and committees’ reports unambiguously highlights the imbalances in the creation and maintenance of educational infrastructure. It is not difficult to find schools without buildings, schools without teachers and teachers without schools.

DPEP has addressed the issues related to school infrastructure in a big way. But the resources available within the DPEP framework are far too short to completely undo the historically obtained imbalances in school infrastructure. Convergence with social sector development programs and a long-term strategy is required to address many of these issues. A five-year plan period is too short to address infrastructure related questions. The department of education in the states as well as at the national level should develop a ten or twenty year plan of rehabilitation of school infrastructure.
In Dharmpuri district all the 18 Block Resources Centres are fully equipped with the required infrastructure to impart training to the teachers and members of other institutions. There are 176 Cluster Resource Centres functioning. Each CRC is equipped with the necessary furniture. The CRC meetings are conducted on any one Saturday of the month. Model lessons, Teaching Learning Material preparation are taken up at the CRC meetings.

306 buildings have been constructed including 18 BRCs. 101 schools were provided with drinking water and 356 schools with toilets. Two buildings were constructed with the participation of the community. For, till the financial year of 2000-2001 administrative sanctions was given to construct 92 two-class room and 8 three-class room buildings out of this 100 buildings, 10 buildings were constructed with the involvement of the community. Drinking water for 308 schools and toilet facility for 117 schools has been provided by the finance commission.

Still 1478 schools were in line to avail the toilet facility and 808 schools with drinking water. But by the end of the financial year of 2002 most of the schools were given the above facilities.

Demographic challenge

The size and structure of population are both the determinant of development as well as its consequences. It also associated with the provision of educational infrastructure and other social services. One of the reasons for the slow progress towards UPE/UEE was a steep rise in India’s population during the fifties and sixties. Therefore population growth is the single most important factor determining the long-term demand for education and associated services. It not only raises the issues related to the long-term financing of education but also provides an insight into the geographical, social and gender disparities that require resolution in the long-term. It is in this context, the projections of 6-14 year age group population becomes imperative not only at the national but also at the micro level as the investment in creation of physical capital assets like class rooms and other fixed investment are rooted in the micro systems. Studies on enrolment and demographic projections are limited and their implications at the micro level are yet to be examined in a comprehensive manner. Such efforts would be particularly important that the demographic characteristics of various regions in India are undergoing significant changes.

The year 2000 was of great significance in Indian demographic history as the population crossed 1 billion mark. The 2001 census provisional estimates indicate a total population of 1.03 billion as on March 1st 2001. The percentage decadal growth during 1991-2001 registered the sharpest decline since independence. It declined from 23.9% for 1981-91 to 21.3 for 1991-2001.

The Working Group on Elementary and Adult Education constituted by the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) has projected the enrolment till 2006-07. Three alternative scenarios have been presented and all the three projections point to an
enrolment of 117.64 million in primary grades in 2006-07. The current estimates vary from 113 million, given by the MHRD to 102.25 million obtained after adjustment of over reporting. In our view, the problem now is not in terms of the difference of gap in existing and target enrolment but it is a question of locating and bringing the out of school children back to the fold of education through formal and alternative modes of education. Locating the children is thus a major problem, which has to be solved through innovative strategies of targeting.

The other implication of enrolment projections is a clear indication that the pressure for upper primary school places is going to raise considerably. The Working Group estimates indicate an enrolment of about 58.2 million in 2006-07 as compared to the present enrolment of about 44 million. The additional demand for elementary education in the government schools is the net outcome of three factors, namely, the increased coverage at primary stage, secondly, the improved internal efficiency and holding power of the primary schools; thirdly, with a focus on upper primary education, the access to upper primary education and its internal efficiency would also increase. The implication of such a scenario for the policy and development planners needs to be examined not only at the national but also at the state and district level. It requires a clear strategic plan for each district in the country to meet the quantitative and qualitative targets so that the progress towards UEE/UPE does not jeopardize the objectives of equity and social justice.

Improving access

As mentioned above, the provision of primary education facilities is governed by the nature and structure of the target population groups and their distribution across geographical space. In view of the small children who attend primary schools, the provision of schooling facilities within easy walking distance of all children is a prerequisite for achieving the goal of UPE. A unique feature of settlement pattern in India is the presence of a large number of smaller habitations with a population of less than 300 persons. Studies show that an independent primary school with five Grades is not viable in nearly 50% habitations having population of less than 300 persons. The latest data from Sixth All India Educational Survey shows that 93.8% population had access to primary school/section either within the habitation or at a maximum distance of 1km from the habitation. It also shows that nearly 2% of population was without access to a primary school even within 2kms. Therefore, even within the prescribed norms, 6.2% population was not being served by a primary school within the habitation or within a distance of one kilometer from the habitation.

An important reason for the relatively easy success of universal primary education in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka is the near absence of very small habitation s. in Tamil Nadu, the state norm is to provide a school in all habitation having a population of 300 either within the habitation or at a maximum distance of 1 km. Relaxation is available for habitations in hilly and sparsely populated areas.
In Dharmapuri district the access rate is highly commendable. As per the survey result 76% of the schools are situated within 1km radius of the habitations. 1.1% between 1-1.5kms radius 6.9% between 1.5-2 kms and 16.4% over 2 kms radius (Fig.4.46).

**Fig.4.46: Access to school**

The availability of schooling facilities at a particular location does not mean that there is no further scope for improving access. The number of students covered in the district by the schools does not reflect any negatives on the accessibility conditions. Students covered up to 500 in number, rate 85.1%. 1.7% schools cover 500-1000 children and 1.2% cover 1000-1500 students (Fig.4.47). Certain areas present a classic case, when out-of-school children can be found in many of the government schools. Moreover walking a distance of 1 km, in adverse climatic or topographic conditions like hills, uneven terrain, rains, summer and extreme windy weather, has its own problems and affects regular school attendance even though the school is located at a reasonable distance from the habituation. It is also important to mention that the availability of schooling facility does not imply adequacy of infrastructure including teachers, classrooms and instructional materials. Often schools in isolated rural settings are found to be without the above factors.

**Fig.4.47: Number of students covered**
The availability of schooling facility even within the habitation does not offer any guarantee that all children in the eligible age group attend school. The number of other schools other than DPEP schools present in the district is 45.7%, one school areas, 8.6% of two school villages, 4% of three school areas, 1.7% of four school areas and 4.6% of schools are above five in an area. But 35.4% of the head teachers have stated that there are no other schools in their area (Fig.4.48). Estimates indicate that due to various constraints, a large number of children in the age group of 6-10 years continue to remain outside the formal/informal system. These groups include working children, school dropouts and those who never attended a school. Children with special needs are another such group. Therefore, even if the strategy for UDE takes into account non-formal strategies to reach out to those children who are hard to reach.

**Fig.4.48: Other schools present in the area**

![Diagram showing the number of schools by category](image)

Though the trend has been set in the state for more number of pre-schools for 2-6 year olds, there are many government schools which have not included the preparatory classes in their respective schools. In Dharmapuri, only 21.7% of the DPEP schools have kindergarten attached to their schools, whereas 78.3% of the schools do not have them. There are very few children attending pre-school or Balwadi or Anganwadi schools in their habitations or in areas accessible to their places. 78.3% of the head teachers have responded that there are no pre-schools present in their area whereas 1.1% of Anganwadi schools and 20% Balwadis and 6% of other types of pre-schools are present in certain areas (Table.4.1).

**Table.4.1 Type of Kindergarten**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Kindergarten</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No kindergarten attached</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anganwadi</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balwadi</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These DPEP schools are constantly under the surveillance of the Block Resource Centres and most of the schools are nearer to these centers as its easily accessible by the students in their respective blocks. Distance of schools below 10.9% is between 1-1.5kms, between 1.5-2 kms is 2.3% and over 2kms is 78.9%. Distance of primary school from DPEP School varies marginally. Primary school within 1 km range is 23.4%, between 1-1.5kms is 40.6%, 1.5-2kms is 20% and over 2 kms distance is 10.3%. Whereas nearest Anganwadi, Balwadi or pre-school, is 58.3% schools are below 1 km distance, 12% of the schools are between 1-1.5 kms, 4.6% schools are between 1.5-2 kms and 4.6% schools are over 2 kms.

Fig.4.49: Distance of block centers from schools

Fig.4.50: Distance of other primary school
Since its inception, the DPEP has tried to expand access by opening of new schools, especially in the unserved habitations of the district. DPEP has also tried to coordinate and supplement the efforts of the state department of education as far as provision of new classrooms and schools are concerned. Therefore the performance of government schools considerably influences the overall DPEP performance. States with high share of privately managed schools include Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Haryana and Uttat Pradesh. The private schools are practically absent in the states of Assam, West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh. There are large number of venture schools that fall in the category of unrecognized schools.

Each school surveyed in area has a varied strength. It was rather difficult to get a clear picture of the total number of enrolled students and the dropouts for the year.

Adequate provision for qualified teachers and their training and orientation are of paramount importance. It is in line with this thinking that provision of at least two teachers in each school was made an objective of the Operation Blackboard Scheme. As per Sixth All India Educational Survey, 96.56% of the sanctioned posts in primary schools run by government or local bodies are filled. In these primary schools 58.03% teachers are women. The Annual Report (Department of Education) 1999, mentions that at present 100% central assistance would be given for this effort. The sanctioned teachers strength in Dharmapuri, varies from 1-9 and above teachers per school. Whereas the vacant teaching posts vary from 1-3 posts per school (Fig.4.52) But the present strength of the teachers again varies from 1-9and above (Fig.4.53).
Fig. 4.52: Posts to be filled

Fig. 4.53: Present Strength of the teachers

Anyway the head teachers are satisfied with the present strength of the teachers, as they expressed sufficiency to run and maintain the school. 68.6% have expressed satisfaction to the present strength, whereas 31.4% think the DPEP schools need more number of teachers (Fig. 4.53).
Fig. 4.53: Satisfied with present strength

Number of male and female teachers varies from 1-9 and above in each of these schools. (Fig. 4.54 & 4.55)

Fig. 4.54: Number of male teachers

Fig. 4.55: Number of female teachers
There is a variety in the standards of recruitment of teachers across the country. The qualification prescribed for teachers is one of the sources of this variation. A study for the DPEP by N.K. Jangira and others (1995) revealed that Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu prescribe 12 years of schooling and a two-year course of Diploma in Elementary Education. While Kerala and Orissa are satisfied with ten years of schooling with a Diploma in teaching. Assam has a criterion of 10 years of schooling alone and does not insist on training.

In this context it is to be noted that the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) and Parliament envisaged the raising of the general education level of teachers to twelve years of schooling. In a personal communication to the World Bank in 1996, the Secretary, MHRD, informed them that 10 of the 15 major state viz. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have raised the minimum qualification to 12 years. The observation of the World Bank Report in this regard needs to be quoted: This places India ahead of other countries with comparable education indicators and on par with some OECD countries. For example, China required 9 years of general education for primary teachers and Pakistan, 10 years.11

There are other problems with regard to educational qualification requirements of teachers and their teaching work in primary schools. The pattern of education structure adopted in India can broadly be described as consisting of 10+2+3 years. However, in contradiction to the increase in minimum qualification level in Tamil Nadu, Dharmapuri’s teaching force’s qualification range below the expected level. Some schools have teachers who have studied till Std.8 ranging from 1-5 teachers per schools. They mostly come under para-teacher category. Whereas there are some schools where teachers have studied up to Std.10 and +2 or intermediate. Very few teachers are degree holders and post graduates.

Para-Teachers of Elementary Schools

Qualified persons are not available in adequate numbers to teach in elementary schools in different parts of the country. Facilities for training teachers are also not uniform. Even when qualified and trained teachers are available, the state government may not have the resources or compulsion to spend on an adequate supply of teachers for primary education. For all these reasons, several state/UT governments have resorted to employing unemployed educated youth as teachers at elementary level to assist the regular/salaried teachers. They are called by various titles such as ‘para-teachers’, shiksha karmis, ‘contract teachers’, and vidhya upasaks. Information about these teachers is very limited. They are paid consolidated salaries, which vary between one-tenth and one fifth the salaries of a regular elementary school teacher, across different regions of India.

Para-teachers perform several functions such as keeping the school open when the regular teacher goes on leave, following up those students to their homes who are long absentees from school, assisting teachers in enrolment drive, assisting students in their home assignments, assisting slow learners, assisting teachers in maintaining school records, in organizing school functions etc. there are certain remote rural habitations where para-teachers function as regular teacher, whether they are qualified and trained or not.
Several issues of teacher status are associated with the system of employment of para-teachers. One of the allegations with the system of para-teachers is that it tends to set in laxity among regular teachers. Besides the educational bureaucracy has found it convenient to work with para-teachers. They carry an ‘unemployed educated youth’ tag. They accept low payments and are unorganized. The state does not need to spend on welfare benefits and give pension under the para-teachers system.\footnote{12}

Apart from DPEP training, teachers have undergone different levels of training. Out of the 175 respondents it was stated that 1-9 and above teachers in some schools have diploma or certificate training course, teachers ranging from 1-5 per in certain schools have primary or elementary teacher training course and some teachers ranging from 1-7 in each school have a B.Ed and M.Ed degrees (Table.4.2).

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Qualification} & \textbf{Percentage} \\
\hline
8\textsuperscript{th} Std. & 2 \\
10\textsuperscript{th} Std. & 22 \\
+2/Intermediate & 41 \\
Degree & 19 \\
Post Graduate & 16 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Educational qualification of the teachers}
\end{table}

A Pupil Teacher Ratio of 40 is considered ideal for Indian conditions, with relaxation in hilly and SC/ST dominated areas. Operation Blackboard (OB) recommended the appointment of a minimum of two teachers in each school and the central government provided financial assistance for the appointment of the second teacher. The OB scheme also postulated that the second teacher should preferably be a female teacher. In 1993, the scheme was modified to provide for a third teacher and a third room in primary schools wherever the enrolment exceeded 100 and to cover upper primary schools through provision of additional teachers and instructional materials. The MHRD reviews indicate that about 1,50,000 posts of additional teachers for single teacher primary schools, about 75,000 posts for upper primary schools and more than 83,000 posts of third teachers in primary schools with more than 100 enrolled students were sanctioned.* It is also reported that nearly 1,82,000 additional classrooms were constructed under the scheme of OB. The scheme also proposed that no new single teacher schools would be established after 1987. However, the reality is different. The number of single teacher schools in the recent years including the DPEP districts and states has increased sharply. All single teacher schools follow multi-grade teaching. In Dharmapuri 57.7% of schools are covered by OB scheme whereas 42% are not covered by the scheme (Fig.4.56).
Well-equipped schools with basic amenities and ancillary facilities have positive effects on the reach of basic education are well recognized. Tamil Nadu is better placed with regard to infrastructure when compared to many other states. According to the Sixth All India Educational Survey for 1993, only about half the primary schools in the state had adequate number of classrooms. In Dharmapuri the schools in the six surveyed blocks, the number of classrooms in each school varies from 1-9 and above (Fig.4.57). In 1993 the number of additional classrooms required were 32,400 with about one-fourth of the primary schools requiring one more classroom and one-sixth of the schools needed two more of them. Whereas in Dharmapuri, the additional classrooms required schools are 42.9%, whereas 57.1% find the present number of classrooms sufficient.

Some DPEP schools in the district are used for other purposes, such as functioning of other schools or colleges, non-formal education centers, panchayat meetings, religious ceremonies or marriages etc., mostly after school hours or during holidays. 1.7% of the schools are used for running other school or colleges as against 94.9%. 3.4% of the schools are used for panchayat meetings, 3.4% for religious or marriage functions and 18.9% for other purposes (Table.4.3).
Table 4.3: School used for other purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School used for other purposes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running other school &amp; colleges</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious or marriage functions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other purposes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources requirements for UEE

Finding resources to finance UEE is an urgent as well as, contrary to popular fears, an entirely achievable task. On the basis of the recommendation of the high-powered ‘Saikia Committee’, a group of experts was constituted to estimate the financial requirement for making elementary education a fundamental right in the constitution. It was observed that according to the Committee’s estimates, this would provide for a reasonably good pupil-teacher ratio of 1:30, improved physical access to schools, provision of instructional material, other necessary incentives, and on the whole a tolerable minimum level of quality of education to every child in India, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

In the process of review of NPE 1986, the Government of India (1990) for the first time referred in detail to some of the methods that are nowadays being discussed to generate additional resources for education. These methods largely refer to the higher education sector.

As elementary education can be treated as a public good, and as UEE is, more than anything else, a Constitutional obligation, and as the Constitution desired that it be provided free to all, very few in India and even in other countries, argue for raising nongovernmental resources for elementary education substantially. The argument instead is for using existing resources more efficiently, for strengthening the base for local finances, and for generation of voluntary community resources to supplement governmental efforts. The role of local bodies is expected to be vital in not only generating more resources but also in the context of decentralized planning and management of school education.

In Dharmapuri district resources apart from the DPEP project budget, the individual schools receive 16.6% of financial help from the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) (Fig. 4.58) as against 83.4%. 2.3% from the students (Fig. 4.59), 1.1% from the village associations (Fig. 4.60), 3.4% from the NGOs (Fig. 4.61), 5.7% from parents (Fig. 4.62) and 4% from teachers (Fig. 4.63). NGOs receive financial support for their activities from both government and private funding organizations. Government, both state and central, and funding agencies both national and international, are often the main channel through which money for different activities, flows.
Fig. 4.58: Financial help from PTA

Fig. 4.59: Financial help from students

Fig. 4.60: Financial help from village associations
Fig. 4.61: Financial help from NGOs

Fig. 4.62: Financial help from parents

Fig. 4.63: Financial help from teachers
The head teachers in these schools convene regular faculty meetings, which improve the performance of the teachers and enhances their teaching learning goals. The head teachers prove to be a source of information for these teachers and they encourage them in their day-to-day activities. This helps the teachers perform better. The head teacher visits classes regularly to check the progress made in the class. 84% of the schools conduct training for teachers on regular basis (Fig. 4.64), 98.3% of the head teachers help the teachers prepare question papers for exams (Fig. 4.65). The head teacher has a wide range of duties of which 48.6% of them have independent decision-making in the financial matters.

**Fig.4.64: Conduct training for teachers**

![Conduct training for teachers](image)

**Fig.4.65: Helps in preparing question papers**

![Helps in preparing question papers](image)

Ninety-seven percent of the schools have multi-grade teaching. 40% of the head teachers feel that DPEP in the district has been very successful, 53.3% say it is successful with certain loop holes, 5.7% say it is fairly successful with necessary rectification to be made (Fig. 4.66). The PTA and the Village Committees have greatly participated in the success of DPEP in Dharmapuri district. 93.1% of their participation has made the district’s performance highlighted in the State. Participation of students, parents and teachers has been considerably good.
The Block Level Officers and the Cluster Level Officers visit the school regularly for inspection. Whereas the need for increased visits was expressed during the survey.

Children

Any effort towards realizing the constitutional commitment of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) for all children must seriously address the constraints that have hitherto excluded large sections of Indian society from basic education. In Dharmapuri, the six blocks chosen based on random sampling method, were areas that were categorized for low female literacy and overall low, in literacy level. DPEP in this district specifically focuses on the educational development of the girls and children belonging to the SC/ST families who suffer maximum from all types of deprivation.

Out of the 380 samples, 352 responded to the questions posed to them. Out of them 13.6% students studied in Std. I, 18.2% in Std. II, 18.5% in Std. III, 23.9% in Std. IV and 23.6% in Std. V (Fig.4.67).

Fig.4.67: Classes
In a highly stratified society like Tamil Nadu, there are numerous layers of differentiation apart from caste and class. Gender is recognized as more pervasive and distinct category of social stratification. In the context of literacy, gender is an important aspect. For this survey, 52.3% were boys and 44.6% were girl respondents (Fig. 4.68).

Fig. 4.68: Gender of the students

Dharmapuri is an area where most of the habitations are demographically placed interior, underdeveloped and inaccessible areas. Because of this, some of these villages are bereft of basic infrastructure facilities like transport and communication. Data from earlier surveys, clearly show that the number of habitations having schools at a distance greater than 2 kms, is fast decreasing and the number of schools within 1 km of habitations has increased and higher percentage of population coverage is achieved. 94.9% of the students walk to school because of the access condition (Fig. 4.69).

Fig. 4.69: Mode of transport
Enrolment is not an independent variable in the sense that it is dependent on factors such as availability of schools, their regular functioning, regularity of teachers as well as parents' willingness, their perception of the value of education and their capacity. It was found that very limited number of schools has kindergarten and most of the children i.e. 85.2% of them joined Std. I. One observes a positive trend with respect to participation of girls in education in these areas. For instance the proportion of girls has increased considerably. Girls' enrolment shows positive growth in the district. Several innovative interventions such as appointment of local women teachers, micro-level planning and community mobilization and several NGO efforts at the grass root level seem to be major reasons for significant improvement for girls' enrolment (Fig.4.70).

![Fig.4.70: Class enrolled](image)

Enrolment has no meaning unless students are retained in the system for the prescribed number of years to complete the primary level of education. Education is an important factor for their future and the seriousness is fathomed in their interest in attending school. The responses of the children were sharp and spontaneous. The credit for the high performance at school goes to the parents and teachers. The parental support towards educating their children reflects in their guidance given at home. About 25.3% of the fathers help their children complete homework at home, 18.5% of mothers take the initiative, their siblings help 34.4% of them and their guardians guide only 4.3% (Table 4.4). About 18.3% of the children attend tuitions, 8.1% possess all the textbooks, notebooks and other stationery (Fig.4.71). The government under the DPEP scheme has provided free books and uniforms and 72.3% of the children get free books (Fig.4.72).
Table 4.4: Helps to do homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member who helps</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 4.71: Possess all books

[Pie chart showing 1.7% Yes, 10.2% No, and 0% Some]

Fig. 4.72: Purchase of books

[Line graph showing Free with 92%, Old Books with 0.9%, Shoes with 3.7%, Others with 3.1%]

Children showed interest to study much further. About 90.6% of the children wished to study further (Fig. 4.73). But most of them had reasons behind discontinuing their studies due to domestic environment (Fig. 4.74).
Fig. 4.73: Wish to study further

Fig. 4.74: Reasons for not studying further

Probably the most important of all the schemes introduced by the government has been the Nutritious Noon Meal Scheme. Introduced in July 1982 in child welfare centers in rural areas for preschool children from 2-5 years of age and for children from 5-9 years of age in primary schools, it was extended to urban areas from Sept. 1982, and to school students from 10-15 years of age i.e from classes VI to X, from Sept. 1984. However in Tamil Nadu the scheme has not been free of problems. These include pilferage and poor quality of food supplies, lack of storage and cooking facilities, poor infrastructure, unhygienic surroundings, water scarcity, delayed arrival of materials and poor pay for staff. In Dharmapuri, 88.4% children take noon meal in their schools but 11.7% of them have given varied reasons for not taking the meal.

Due to the accessibility of the schools, 92.3% of the children go to school in time. The reasons given by the latecomers, is the distance, for some because of house hold work or completion of homework (Fig. 4.75).
Fig. 4.75: Reason for being late to school

Student performance in school does not deteriorate when the teacher absents herself. 50.3% of the students responded that another teacher takes charge of the class whereas 28.7% of the students have stated that the class works independently during the teacher's absence.

Until recently UPE has been equated with mere enrolment and attendance in the primary schools. In recent years however considerable attention has been paid to the levels of learning acquired by learners. One simple way of judging an effective school is the tangible mood of measuring the learning achievement. The students' improvement is regularly assessed and the performance is conveyed to the student. It is evident that more time is spent on teaching-learning activities and the children are given regular homework wherein the child is able to complete the home in time and it is duly checked and corrected daily. The teacher provides special help and care when a child faces difficulty in the class work. This reflects the care and concern of the teacher towards the children. Apart from their textbooks most of the children do extra reading, which is, a major improvement brought in by DPEP (Table 4.5). However, computer awareness seems far less in these areas (Fig. 4.76)

Table 4.5: Extra reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of reading material</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily magazines/weekly</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story books</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students were given a test to gauge their perception of the teachers’ attitude towards them. Direct questions would have led to socially desirable responses.

Four situations were illustrated to assess whether there was a change in attitude among teachers in the DPEP schools.

The first situation illustrates a child in distress. In traditional school settings this incident is likely to elicit a response where the teacher chides the child for being careless. In the DPEP setting it has been observed that most teachers either console the child or offer practical help like first aid. Few teachers also seem to offer advice making the child aware of their surroundings and to function effectively within it. A marginal number of students responded that the teacher would scold them for being careless.

The second situation is one in which the student asks the teacher to clear a doubt in a lesson. Here most responses have shown an involved teacher either individually answering the query or repeating the lesson to the entire class for the benefit of most of the students. In few situations the students’ doubt was cleared followed by a firm warning to be more attentive in class in the future.
The third situation involves two children. One child threatens to complain about the other to the teacher for breaking a doll. Most responses show the students taking responsibility or breaking the toy and readily accepting to replace it. Most responses being such, means that students perceive the teachers to be supportive and ready to understand the situation and not a controlling punitive person who would chide or punish the child.

The fourth situation shows the teacher and the student discussing an unruly class. In this situation the basic idea is to gauge the teacher’s response to the complaints brought to her. A vast majority of the responses indicate the teacher reacting to the situation in an understanding manner where the teacher realizes the need of the students to play and make noise within the classroom. In fact in most responses, the teacher only guides the student to control the class by introducing some class work. Here again it is evident that the teacher understands her class of students instead of reacting in anger and helplessness as seen in most conventional schools.

Looking into majority of the responses to the four situations it is evident that DPEP’s stress free education pattern induces a warm and understanding attitude of the teacher thereby enhancing the quality of the learning process and making the environment very supportive and conducive for study. Though the current study does have a flaw of the lack of comparison with a conventional school, many of the conclusions are based on common knowledge of students being handled poorly by teachers. This is one of the primary reasons for poor academic performance, a rise in the number of dropouts and ultimately indiscipline among young students.

Parents

The basic responsibility for making education available to their children rests with the parents. Out of the 180 samples, there were 170 parents who responded the questions posed to them. 70% were males and 30% were females.

At the outset parents enroll their children in school and on the process are constricted by various socio-economic constraints that triggers discontinuation of studies and in certain cases the children are forced to lend a helping hand in running the family. But it was found that the literacy level of the respondents was as high as 88.8% (Fig.4.78). Most of them i.e. 43.5% have two children whereas 2.9% of them have just one child. 37.6% of them have three children, 10% have four and 5.9% have more than four children (Fig.4.79). The more the children higher is the difficulty for the parents to educate them. The socio-economic and cultural factors can be outlined as poverty and poor economic conditions, social customs, cultural ethos, lack of awareness and understanding the value of formal education, conflict and gap between the home and the school etc.
Illiteracy is one of the prime factors for the parents' lack of motivation to educate their children further. But in Dharmapuri, though there were 27.6% male illiterates and 54.1% female illiterates, they had the motivation to educate their children further. 97.6% of the parents were willing to continue education for their children in future (Fig.4.80).
Though the government has taken major efforts in improving the economic conditions of the people, about 42.4% of them are rendered jobless. 27.6% of them have part time jobs (Fig.4.81). 50.6% of the parents earn a salary up to Rs.500/- only, 21.2% earn between Rs.500-1000/-, 11.8% earn between Rs.1000-1500/-, 5.9% earn between Rs.1500-2000/- and only 10.6% earn above Rs.2000/- (Fig.4.82).

Even though the elementary education is deemed free in DPEP and additional incentives are given to children, in practice it is not free due to several reasons. It has been observed, that the incentive schemes do not have full coverage and thus have limited value at the community level. Secondly, many of the benefits do not reach the beneficiaries. Third, even though the incentives like books, slate, uniforms etc. are given to the children for free, they are of poor quality and do not reach in time, thus nullifying the entire purpose.
It should be noted that the impoverished economic status given to the lower income groups, make even a small amount of private expenditure involving procurement of writing material, clothing etc., a serious burden on the family. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising if education is not given a priority. In an economy dominated by struggle for survival, options are limited.

But parents with all these deprivations are totally satisfied with DPEP system, which is quite evident from the fact that 90% of their children go to DPEP schools (Fig.4.83) and only 14.7% go to ordinary school and 3.5% go to alternative school. 97.6% of the parents like the DPEP method of working for their children (Fig.4.84) and 97.1% of them have responded that their children are happy with the system (Fig.4.85).

Fig.4.83: Children going to DPEP schools

Fig.4.84: Satisfied with DPEP method of working
Fig.4.85: Children happy with DPEP schools

About 95% of the parents are satisfied with the decision taken by the schools with regard to their child's progress. And this helps them stay in pace with the school and its day-to-day work (Fig.4.86).

Fig.4.86: Satisfied with the decision making

Most of the parents help their children in their homework. Parents take good care of their child's education that 94.7% of them visit the school to know about their child's progress. 85.3% of the parents are members of the Parents Teachers Association and the Village Level Committees.

The first few years of DPEP implementation saw a significant improvement in enrolment in government schools. Last two or three years have stagnation or a small decline in enrolment in many states. Now the Government of India has initiated a new programme under the banner of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), for achieving UEE in the country in a time bound manner. The SSA was launched during 2000-01 and is the first programme covering the whole country. The SSA has proposed the concept of habitation level planning based on the household surveys. Community ownership of the school is a key element in SSA strategy. DPEP has contributed immensely to the formulation of SSA. This would provide the umbrella guidelines for all development cooperation in elementary education including the DPEP. A perusal of the SSA programme will be dealt in detail in the following chapter.
Endnotes

1 Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Dept. of Elementary Education, The District Primary Education Programme – Dharmapuri district (Dharmapuri: GOTN Publication, 1994) 1.

2 Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Dept. of Elementary Education, The District Primary Education Programme – Dharmapuri district (Dharmapuri: GOTN Publication, 1994) 8-11.

3 Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Dept. of Elementary Education, The District Primary Education Programme – Dharmapuri district (Dharmapuri: GOTN Publication, 1994) 4-7.


5 Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Dept. of Elementary Education, The District Primary Education Programme – Dharmapuri district (Dharmapuri: GOTN Publication, 1994) 19-21.


12 Govt. of Tamil Nadu, DfERT, Strategy Plan of Action to Achieve Universalisation in Tamil Nadu by 2000 AD (Chennai: GOTN Publication, 1993) 73.