INTRODUCTION

Tripura is the smallest state of India and is situated in the northeast region of the country. It is surrounded almost on three sides - west, north and south - by Bangladesh and Mizoram and is connected with the rest of the country through Assam in the North-east, its area is 10,491.59 square kilometers, its population 31,51,168 (2001 census). Once a princely state it merged with Indian Union on October 15, 1949. The first phase was during the days of the Maharajas when Tripura was a princely state. The second phase began after independence; the state was merged with the Indian Union. During the days of the Maharaja established schools in the state. In 1872, there were only two pathsalas, one at Agartala, the capital town and the other at Kalasahar in North Tripura District. There were only 50 pupils and teachers in these two schools. In 1890-91, however, school at Agartala was raised to the standard of an Entrance School. There were 99 primary schools in the princely state of Tripura in the year 1903 and rate of literacy was merely 2.3%. As the enrolment in primary schools remained low, and an act was promulgated to make primary education compulsory in Agartala Town. The scope of this act was extended to some other selected areas of the state. In 1945, some educated tribal youths established a voluntary organization called ‘Jana Siksha Samity’ which started primary schools in the far-flung areas of the state. Some 350 schools established by them received recognition.
According to the 1951 census there were 469,662 Hindus, 1,36,960 Muslims, 15,403 Buddhists, 5,262 Christians and 762 others. Most of the tribals have taken to Hinduism though tribal beliefs and customs still play a dominant role in their lives. Of the tribals, the Tripuris and their sub-groups form a large majority. They are mostly Hindus, and have taken largely to cultivation. The Chakmas and the Maghs profess Buddhism, while most of the Lushais and the Kukis are Christians. The tribals speak various dialects. Tripuri being the most widely spoken dialect except the Lushais who have their language written in the Roman script, other tribals have no written language. Bengali has been the official language here for a long time and the contact of local people with Bengal has been close throughout history. Bengali is widely understood and is used as the medium of instruction in all schools, excepting three situated in the Lushai-speaking areas.

Though the State acceded to India on the eve of independence in August 1947, the old administrative set-up was allowed to continue till its merger in the Indian Union in October 1949. It was constituted into a Part C State with a Chief Commissioner at the head and then made into a Union Territory in 1956. With a view to associating the people with administration, the Tripura Territorial Council consisting of 30 elected and two nominated members was created in 1957. Supervision and control of almost all schools up to the secondary stage is now in the hands of the Territorial Council.

Modern education began in Tripura during the reign of Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya (1877-1896) who initiated many progressive reforms on the
pattern of the British administration. This enlightened ruler who patronized learning and art was one of the first to discern and acclaim the genius of Rabindranath Tagore when the later was more or less unknown. He was followed by Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya (1897 - 1909) who continued the progressive policies of his predecessor. It was during his regime that a number of schools including a high school, came to be established at different places.

The reign of the next ruler Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya saw further extension of the educational facilities. He passed a compulsory education law for the State in 1932 and introduced compulsion in the Agartala Municipal area. During his rule, an ambitious scheme known as the Vidyapattan was outlined with the object of starting colleges for arts, science, medicine, agriculture and technology; but it could not be completed owing partly to limited resources and partly to his untimely death in 1947.

In 1946, Tripura had 32 lower Primary schools (teaching up to class IV), 86 Pathashalas (teaching up to class II), and one reformatory (primary) school in the Central Jail. There were 5,641 students in these besides another 3,000 or so reading in the primary classes of 22 government Middle English schools and 51 private schools. The enrolment in the age group 6 - 11 was about 12.2 per cent of the total population in that group. Most of the teachers were untrained and few of them had any schooling beyond the primary stage. Their pay scales were poor and varied from Rs. 10-20 to Rs. 30-50. The classes were large. Only about 4 per cent of the State revenue was spent on education.
After independence the picture has changed enormously. In March 1961 the last year of the second Plan, the anticipated position was as follows: total enrolment in the 6-11 group 81,000 (54,000 boys and 27,000 girls); 1,100 schools including 229 junior basic; 2,750 teachers including 610 trained teachers; total expenditure on primary education Rs. 47.27 lakhs (35 per cent of the expenditure on primary education); per capita cost of primary education Rs. 47.83 (taking direct expenditure into account only), and teacher-pupil ratio 1:35 (excluding schools in the interior). The third Plan will thus start with an enrolment of 64 per cent at the primary stage, 83 per cent for boys and 45 per cent for girls. The target for the third Plan is to enroll 15,000 additional boys which will raise their enrolment to 96 per cent. The cost of this programme is estimated at Rs 92.4 lakhs. The number of additional schools to be opened would be well over 300 and about 4,000 additional teachers will have to be employed.

The minimum qualification for primary teachers is matriculation (the non-matriculate teacher's number less than 10 per cent). The scale of pay for primary teachers compares favourably with that in other states. The first basic training college in the Territory was started in 1954, with training facilities for 50 teachers. Two more training institutions have been added since, and accommodation in each is being increased to 130 so that from 1962, about 400 trained teachers will be trained every year. The percentage of trained teachers at the end of the third Plan will increase to about 60. It is also proposed to increase the period of training to two years.
Midday meals are proposed to be introduced in primary schools on a subsidized basis, the people contributing 50 per cent of the cost and the Government contributing the other half.

The junior basic schools form about 21 per cent of the total number of primary schools at present. However, the salient features of basic education are being introduced in as many schools as possible through the organization of a systematic orientation programme. An area of about 25 sq. miles around the Basic Training College, Agartala, was developed as the intensive basic education area during the second Plan. All the schools in this area have been converted to the basic pattern and the enrolment in the 6-11 age group has already reached 97 per cent. About 150, additional schools are proposed to be converted to the basic pattern during the third Plan. It is hoped by the end of the third Plan the basic schools will constitute 50 per cent of the total number of primary schools.

In order to meet the shortage of craft teachers a training institute has been started at Agartala. Craft has also been introduced in 200 non-basic schools. Two guide books for teachers have been brought out by the Education Directorate.

A well-equipped government nursery school was established in the first Plan. During the second Plan, the Central Social Welfare Board started a number of Balwadis in rural areas. These have been very popular and thanks to the collaboration of the Central Social Welfare, the Education Directorate
and the Tribal and Labour Welfare Department, these have already covered 375 villages of this Territory. One-fifth of the population was covered by the end of the third Plan. After the merger of the state with the Indian Union the position of primary schools in the state as in 1950-51 to 2002-2003 and 2007 - 08 -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary Schools</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950 - 51</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 - 03</td>
<td>2059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 - 08</td>
<td>2159</td>
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</tbody>
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Creation of a sound primary education system appears to be a basic component of any strategy for social, political and economic development of a country. In fact, it is primary education which develops the basic innate abilities of a person to live a full personal life as an individual and as a member of a family, and an economically productive life as a worker, and a socially useful life as a citizen (Haq, 1975). Education at this stage moves the children into a coherent moral, intellectual and affective universe (Faure, 1972), creates awareness among them about their past and helps in developing a conception of the future. Education at the primary level acquires special importance as it provides an opportunity for capturing and nurturing talents at the early stage of growth, thereby contributing to the development of a national pool of ability (Islam, 1975).

Many studies regarding the role of schooling in economic development have shown that primary education plays a vital role in national economic development in developed as well as developing countries. Further, Schulte
(1963) points out that primary schooling is perhaps the most profitable of all levels of schooling since it entails the lowest cost per year of schooling. The education at this level has a pervasive value in reducing cost and in improving the productivity of the economy, as the rate of return is higher in this stage than in any alternative investment. It would be more appropriate in the context of the situation in the developing countries to say that more and better elementary schooling should be relevant to the needs and realities of life in the country, where the rate of illiteracy is very high and the per capita income is low. In a country in which the level of economy is low, if the level of schooling is raised substantially and rapidly, it becomes a substantial source of growth, assuming of course, that the education provided is of the type and quality most relevant to development and growth of the nation. It is seen that primary education contributes to the productivity of the labour force, and at the same time it creates in enlightened and responsible citizenry. The value of primary education as an instrument of social change, lies in its capacity to contribute towards equalization and expansion of economic opportunities, in promoting educational and social mobility, in creating social concern and civic responsibility, and in instilling cultural and moral values.

It is in this context that universal primary education is viewed as an imperative factor in preparing the future citizens for the task of national development. So, at least with regard to primary education one can safely say that it should be made universal as early as possible and that no stone should be left unturned to achieve this goal. In fact, at the level of government policy,
educational planners throughout the world have been giving a high priority to the achievement to understand primary education. This is well in line with the directive Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has been proclaimed in the article that “Everyone has the right to education Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory ”

It may be observed that most of the developed countries like, U.K., Russia, U.S.A., Japan have already attained a high level of schooling. It is also true that developing countries, in general have not succeeded in their efforts to bring each and every child to school. However, it is important to mention that most of the countries, irrespective of their economic status and political ideologies, have taken the provision of universal primary education in the form of a constitutional guarantee.

IMPORTANCE OF CURRICULUM FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

It is evident that while the reconstruction of schools, increasing of teachers and equipments are needed for the improvement or enrolment of students, the development of an appropriate curriculum is also indispensable for improving the quality of primary education in Tripura. It is the quality of education that affects the system in the long run. And the quality of education is directly linked with the quality of curriculum. Curriculum is an academic investment made in order to cater for the needs of the society and the individual student. Suitable context experience would make the students who undergo schooling a worthwhile person in the society. If the content
experiences of the teaching learning situation equip the students for adopting
to change, to the unknown, then a majority of the people can contribute to the
development process.

In Tripura, as in most other states of India, it is a crucial task to the
curriculum framers to decide the curriculum for the primary school students
taking into consideration their real life situations and the developmental role of
secondary education. Because, in Tripura, the primary school age students
form nearly ten percent of the total population and seventy per cent of them
are in rural areas. Also, a majority of the students are of poor health.
Furthermore, some of them may have developed less mental capacity because
of severe malnourishment suffered during the first two years of life.

By and large, the students learn their life roles from observation of their
own parents who themselves are in most cases illiterate and fail to realize the
value of formal education. Moreover, in a basically agricultural society such as
Tripura, where the birth rate is high but the per capita income is low, student’s
capacity for manual labour which adds an extra hand in the agricultural task is
valued higher than their capacity for intellectual work and learning. Thus, a
majority of the students in Assam are growing up within such a context of life.

Keeping in view the above considerations, the Government of Tripura
felt the need to improve and revitalize the primary education curriculum and
to make it up-to-date and relevant to the purpose it has to serve. For this
purpose, the Government constituted a State Curriculum and Syllabus
Committee on the basis of the recommendations of the New Education Policy 1986, with a view to improve the curriculum and syllabi at different educational stages. It is necessary to mention that in the educational ladder of Tripura, primary education consists of classes I - V meant for students of the age group of 6 - 11 years. However, there has been considerable criticism regarding the adequacy and appropriateness of the curriculum content prescribed by the State Curriculum and Syllabus Committee. Apart from this, it is needless to say that the real test of a curriculum lies in its successful implementation in the real life settings that prevail in the schools. Regarding implementation of curriculum also, there have been a number of criticism from various corners including teachers and parents. However, there are no factual evidence collected through a systematic study to support or refute the curriculum being implemented at present in the primary schools of Tripura. It should therefore, be worthwhile as well as highly useful in its implications is such an attempt is made for studying the existing curriculum in a scientific manner. The present study is an attempt in this direction. Detailed background and rationale as well as specific objectives of the study are given in the following pages.

RATIONALE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

There is a wide spread belief that quantitative expansion in education inevitably results in deterioration of quality. But, if the conditions necessary for qualitative education are established, quality can be maintained even if quantity increases. Research on Curriculum is one of the necessary conditions.
for maintaining the quality. It is one of the most potent tools for reforming the curriculum also. Although the concept of curriculum is implicit in the earliest educational prescriptions and programmes of all civilized societies, curriculum as a field of systematic inquiry emerged only during the early 1920s.

The school curriculum is in a state of continuous change all over the world today. Even in advanced countries of the world, it is criticized as being inadequate, outmoded and not properly designed to meet the needs of modern society. Against this background, school curriculum reformers in many countries in the Asia and Oceania region have been seriously engaged in reorienting their curricula according to their set national goals of education (UNESCO, 1980), and Tripura is not outside of this process. In this process, the inadequacies of traditional procedures for curriculum formulation through ad-hoc committees have become all too obvious. These procedures tend to cast the curriculum in a rigid and compartmentalized mould, leaving little room for systematic try-outs and for incorporating new insights derived from research or experiences of teachers; and, on the one hand, they delink the formulation of curriculum from the materials and methods in which any curriculum finds its concrete expression, while, on the other, from the evaluation procedures by which the outcomes are adjudged (UNESCO, 1980). Further, curriculum has now a growing corpus of techniques which, in its own right, calls for systematic research, so that revision of curriculum can be worked out. Also, a coordinated programme of improvement can be implemented on the bases of the findings of experts instead of being rushed through haphazardly and in a piecemeal fashion.
It is unfortunate that no systematic research relating to curriculum for primary education has been carried out in Tripura. The curriculum for primary education has been revised from time to time on an ad-hoc basis. It was not preceded by careful research, not based on adequate expertise and not followed by such necessary supporting measures as the preparation of learning materials, the orientation of teachers or provision of the needed physical facilities.

The main reason for this is the lack of realistic, goal-directed and problem-oriented research in the field of education. To meet the needs in the near future, the National Educational Policy strongly recommended conducting or research, undertaking of survey works, and collecting of information pertaining to various aspects of primary education. Different branches of research in this field should include such aspects as curriculum and syllabus, textbook, school building, teaching materials and aids, examination system or evaluation as well as wastage at different levels of education system.

In response to this recommendation, the Government of Tripura brought about a reform in the curriculum and syllabus of primary education through the Curriculum and Syllabus Committee (CSC) which has already been put into practice. At the time of preparing the curriculum, the curriculum and syllabus committee clearly put a set of conditions there, to be fulfilled by the management as priority in creating a favourable environment for implementing the curriculum.
However, no systematic attempt has so far been made to bring qualitative improvement in primary education through curriculum research. In the absence of any empirical study on primary school curriculum in Tripura, it has also not yet been possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing curriculum as prescribed by the Curriculum and Syllabus Committee. Even the facilities for implementing the curriculum in the primary schools of Tripura are not known due to the lack of systematic research. Therefore, a study of the curriculum for primary education in Tripura would be of great value, because, it is on the basis of such a study that an appropriate plan of action may be undertaken for the improvement of the quality of primary education.

Mere change in curriculum and syllabus for the sake of modernization and their revision to make it up-to-date is not enough to achieve the desired goal of primary education in the country. With it, development of the necessary infrastructure at each school for an effective implementation of the curriculum is of equal importance. Otherwise, all the curriculum reform attempts will go in vain, and result into a futile exercise of the experts. Periodical revision and reform of curriculum and syllabus must be carried out to make it fit for the children of the state, fit for the national goal and for the contemporary world; and at the same time all possible measures have also to be taken to develop the resources for their proper implementation. The resources for the implementation of the curriculum of the primary school, includes teachers, textbooks and other materials and equipment, physical facilities, teaching aids along with teaching methods and evaluation
procedures. The quality of primary education also depends on the adequacy of these materials and facilities. Now, the question is to what extent these materials and facilities are available in the primary schools of Tripura. The question is of vital importance in determining the effectiveness of the curriculum and the quality of primary education in the state.

Therefore, a thorough inquiry about the status of the curriculum for the primary schools of the state is necessary to give a satisfactory answer to the above question. The present investigation entitled "Evaluation of the curriculum for primary education in Tripura" is an attempt to answer certain questions relating to Primary Education Curriculum in Tripura. Some of these questions are "How far are the objectives of primary education in Tripura reflected in the prescribed curriculum? To what extent are the specified objectives of curriculum in consonance with the objectives of primary education set by experts from other part of the world? What are the contents needed for achieving such objectives? How far are these objectives reflected in the prescribed curricular content? How far is the content able to bridge the gap between theory and practice? How is primary school curriculum being implemented in the schools? What problems do teachers face in implementing them? How do the teachers assess their pupils' achievement in the schools and in the class-room? The present study is conducted with a view to answering some of these questions which can be presented in terms of the following specific objectives.
OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

1. To evaluate the present Primary Education Curriculum in Tripura in terms of its objectives;
2. To examine whether the textbooks and other curricular materials prescribed are according to the conditions laid down by the Curriculum and Syllabus Committee of Tripura and their appropriateness to achieve the set objectives of Primary Education,
3. To ascertain the status of implementation of the curriculum and instructional materials in the primary schools of Tripura with regard to the following aspects:
   a. Physical facilities,
   b. Time-table,
   c. Teachers' qualifications, professional training, teaching experience, class-load, etc.
   d. Methods of instructions,
   e. Materials and Aids;
4. To study the problems in implementing the curriculum; and
5. To study the assessment procedure followed in schools and by the teachers for measuring the achievement of the students.

DELIMITATION

The study will be delimited only to North Tripura and West Tripura districts so far its implementation is concerned.