CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preliminary

The most stupendous task of India since Independence has been the expansion and reconstruction of our system of education.

While seeking reconstruction of the system of education it has been the policy of the government to have recourse to standing advisory bodies or adhoc commissions and get their advice on the lines to be followed for future development.

1.2 Educational Ladder

The general pattern of education since independence is more or less the same all over the country with variations only in the number of years of the different courses. The pre-primary stage is not well-organised and mostly left to private efforts. The age of admission is between 3 and 5 in Pre-Primary Schools. The next is the primary stage which extends from the age of 5 or 6 to 10 to 11 in most cases. The Higher Elementary consisting of 3 years was popular in rural India, but the number of such schools is on the decline now in Maharashtra.

Secondary Education is of two stages, the Middle School of 3 years and the High School of three years course after the three years study of the Middle School course.
The Higher Secondary is the latest addition to the structure and is of two years with Science/Commerce/Arts streams. The degree course is of three years duration. Some states still have a 2 year degree course and separate Honours Course of three years duration. The Professional Courses after the Higher Secondary are normally for 3 to 5 years depending on the stream of study. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Polytechnics exist in many states almost parallel to the High School and Higher Secondary stage.
The duration of the Educational ladder is shown below for ready reference.

Table 1.

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<tr>
<th>Level of Equivalence</th>
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<td>Lower Secondary</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Higher Secondary</td>
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<td>VII</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Lower Primary</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>III</td>
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<td>School Stage</td>
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\[ \text{AGE: As proposed by the Edn. Commn.} \]

\[ \text{B: Bihar} \quad \text{A: A.P.} \quad \text{J&K: Jammu and Kashmir} \]
\[ \text{A: A.P.} \quad \text{Bihar} \quad \text{Kerala} \]
\[ \text{Orissa} \quad \text{As proposed by the Edn. Commn.} \]
\[ \text{Assam} \quad \text{by the Edn. Commn.} \]
\[ \text{Nagaland} \quad \text{Edn. Commn.} \]
\[ \text{NEFA} \quad \text{Edn. Commn.} \]
\[ \text{Pondicherry} \quad \text{Edn. Commn.} \]

The Education structure in India as given by the National Policy of Education (1986) is similar to that given by the Education Commission of (1964-66). The National Policy on Education 1986 accepts 10+2+3 as the pattern of education but gives specific division of 10 years as 5+3+2 which means till Standard V it will be Lower Primary stage, till Class VIII as Upper Primary and 2 years of Secondary i.e. Standard IX and X. The Education Commission (64-66) considers Standard I to IV as Lower Primary and Standard V to VII as Upper Primary.

The Table below shows the educational ladder as given by the National Policy of Education (1986).

\begin{table}
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\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & I & II & III & IV & V & VI & VII \\
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- & General Education - & & & & & & \\
\hline
Primary & Upper Primary & High School & & & & & \\
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Age & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 & 11 & 12 & 13 & 14 & 15 \\
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(Note: National Policy on Education - 1986, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, P-4, Para 3.3)
The Education Commission (1964-66) placed higher emphasis on the transformation of the educational system, with radical changes in content and structure with a view to making it a powerful instrument of social transformation and for relating it to the needs and aspirations of the people. From this point of view, it recommended - "a package deal, viz., the adoption of the pattern of 10+2+3 for school and college classes, revision and upgrading of curricula, production of better teaching and learning materials, adoption of improved methods of teaching and evaluation, improvement of general education, professional training, remuneration and other conditions of work and service for teachers." (1)

In the new pattern of education, the first ten years of school are treated as an integrated unit of general undifferentiated education, although it may be subdivided in a variety of ways (e.g. 4+3+3, 5+3+2, or 5+2+3) according to local conditions and needs. The object of this stage is to provide that minimum general education which is essential for every individual in the complex and science based modern society. One of the major programmes adopted, therefore, was to initiate a national movement for the formula of revised and upgraded curriculum at this stage which would be adopted with some modifications to suit the local conditions; by all the states and Union Territories.
1.3 **Curriculum:**

The Education Commission (64-66) has outlined the broad features of the curriculum as it should be organised to achieve the objectives of school education. According to it, "in the first seven years of schooling, there will be an undifferentiated course of general education for all. Of those who continue their studies after Class VII, an estimated 20% are expected to be provided with full time or part time vocational education. The remaining 80% of the pupils at school should, in our opinion, continue to receive general education for a further period of three years, without any diversification of studies, but with provision of courses at two levels and of options in creative activities and types of work-experience." (2)

The Commission has also outlined the broad areas of curricular studies for the different sub-stages, as follows.

(1) **Lower Primary Stage (Class I to IV)**

(a) One language (the mother tongue or the Regional Language)

(b) Mathematics.

(c) Study of the environment (covering Science and Social Studies in Class III, IV)

(d) Creative Activities.

(e) Work-experience and social service.

(f) Health Education.
(2) Higher Primary Stage (Classes V - VII)

(a) Two languages -
   (i) the mother tongue or the regional language, and
   (ii) Hindi or English.

(b) Mathematics
(c) Science
(d) Social Studies
(e) Art
(f) Work-experience and social service
(g) Physical Education
(h) Education in spiritual and moral values. (3)

1.4 Qualitative Improvement along with quantitative increases

As per the Education Commission (64-66) "expansion of facilities at the primary stage and the universal enrollment of children and their retention in school till the end of compulsory period is only one aspect of fulfilling the constitutional directive. An equally important aspect is qualitative improvement so that the instruction imparted becomes good education and helps children to grow into useful and responsible citizens." (4)
The National Policy on Education (1986) too has emphasised the above. To quote it - "The new thrust in elementary education will emphasise on two aspects-

(i) Universal enrollment and universal retention of children upto 14 years of age, and
(ii) A substantial improvement in the quality of education." (5)

Further, the National Policy has pointed out that - "A Child-centered and activity-based process of learning should be adopted at the primary stage. First generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and be given elementary remedial instruction.". (6)

(b) 1.5 Documents relating to Primary Education in India:

"The provision of Universal Elementary Education has always been conceived as an integral part of the national system of education in India. Stray references to it occur in the writing of leading non-official and officials very early. But the first effective public statement for it was made by the late Shri Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man of India, in his evidence before the Indian Education Commission (1882).(7)

A short review of the most important documents on primary education and suggestions and findings of the various committees on education is given in the following pages."
The Indian Education Commission (1882-83), the first commission on education in India, made the principal object of its enquiry - 'the state of elementary education through out the Empire and the means by which it could everywhere be extended and improved'. The Commission placed special emphasis on its recommendation. It made the following recommendations - "the strenuous efforts of the state should be directed to the elementary education of the masses in a still larger measure than before; that primary education be regarded as the instruction of the masses through the vernacular in such subjects as will fit them for their position in life, and be not necessarily regarded as a portion of instruction leading up to the university; and that primary education be extended in backward districts." (8)

Another important document relating to the primary education was that of the 'Report of the Hartog Committee (1929)'. It pointed out that "In the primary system, which from our point of view should be designed to produce literacy and the capacity to exercise an intelligent vote, the waste is appalling for only a small proportion of those who are at the primary stage reach Class-IV, in which the attainment of literacy may be expected." (9)

In the year 1937 there were two important documents relating to Primary Education - The Abbot-Wood Report in June and the Zakir Hussain Committee Report in December. The Abbot-Wood
Report emphasised the importance of creating interest at primary level. To quote the Report - "the education of children in the primary level should be based more upon the natural interests and activities of young children and less upon book-learning, that the mother-tongue should be as far as possible the medium of instruction throughout the high school stage, and the pre-service education of teachers of primary and middle schools should be a three year course following the completion of middle-school course. "(10)

The next important document is the Report of the Central Advisory Board on Education on 'Post-War Educational Development in India' (1944). Popularly known as the Sargent Plan. It laid down the course for the educational development of the country and recommended the "system of universal, compulsory and free education for all boys and girls between the ages of six and fourteen should be introduced as speedily as possible. Though, in view of the practical difficulty of recruiting the requisite supply of trained teachers, it may not be possible to complete it in less than 40 years."(11)

Article 45 of the Indian Constitution directed that free compulsory education for all children until the age of 14 years should be provided by 1960. In spite of the unprecedented progress made after independence it has not been possible to realise the goal. The panel appointed by the Planning
Commission examined the situation in 1957 and suggested two phases of the programme; in the first phase ending with the third plan, free and compulsory education should be provided for all children in age-group 6-11, and in the Second Phase ending with 5th Plan, Compulsory Education should cover all children in the age-group 11-14. Even this target was not possible to reach in view of the immense difficulties and handicaps involved in the task, such as lack of adequate resources, tremendous increase in population, poverty and illiteracy of the people, traditional resistance to the education of girls, large number of children of the backward classes, inertia of backward areas, and the apathy of parents.

The next most important document is the Education Commission Report (1964-66). To quote the Commission, "We believe that the provision of free and universal education for every child is an educational objective of the highest priority. We think that the best strategy for fulfilling the Constitutional Directive would be as follows:

"1. Each State, and even each district should prepare a perspective plan for the development of primary education taking into account the stage of development already reached and the local conditions and problems."

1-11
2. Each State and district should be assisted to go ahead at the best pace it can, and the progress in no area should be allowed to be held up merely for want of essential facilities or financial allocations, and,

3. While the Constitutional Directive will be fulfilled in some places such as urban areas or advanced states as early as in 1975-76, all the areas in the country should be able to provide five years of good effective education to all the children by 1975-76 and Seven years of such education by 1985-86." (12)

It is not only the increase of enrollment that satisfies the commission. Two more significant but difficult aspects of primary education have been emphasised. The first is the reduction of wastage and stagnation and secondly, great emphasis was laid on quality. In the words of the Commission, "At present, out of every 100 children who enter Class I, only about half complete Class IV, only 3/4th complete Class VII. The extent of stagnation is extremely large, particularly in Class-I. We shall have to rectify this position and ensure that every child who enters Class I will progress regularly from year to year and reach Class V, and that not less than 80% reach Class VII. Secondly, we must emphasize quality. It is generally
agreed that the standard of education given in the primary school is unsatisfactorily and that it imparts little beyond school; and, literacy and some elementary knowledge in a few academic subjects. What is expected is that primary education should lay the foundation for a child to grow into a responsible and useful citizen of the country. "(13)

The Education Commission of 64-66 went into the problem of low quality of education, particularly at the primary level. In the opinion of the Commission, the four major facts that impeded progress were:

1. The weakness of the average teacher. By and large, the competence of the average teacher is poor; his general education is below standard and his professional preparation unsatisfactory.

2. The failure to develop proper educational research on teaching methods. Little has been done to find out in crucial sectors the methods that are best suited to our conditions and needs.

3. The rigidity of the exiting educational system: Better methods of teaching are discovered, not so much through educational research, as through the adventure of gifted teachers who have courage to get off the beaten path. Our educational system
is not designed to encourage initiative, creativity and experiment on a large scale and is, therefore, not able to keep itself abreast of the times.

4. The failure of the administrative machinery to bring about a dispersion of new and dynamic methods of teaching. Even assuming that a good method of teaching is discovered and is actually introduced in a few progressive schools, the problem still remains of differing it among the other schools so that it becomes the common practice in the educational system as such." (14)

The Commission made the following recommendation to improve the quality of Primary Education and to reduce the wastage and stagnation:

"An effective way in which to reduce the evils of wastage and stagnation is for the State Education Department to treat every school as an individual entity and for every school to give individual attention to every child. The Department should use the techniques which have been developed to measure the extent of wastage and stagnation from year to year in each class and in each school; and on the basis of these data, it should insist on every school making the best efforts possible to
reduce these evils. Similarly, each school should pay adequate attention to individual children. It has been found that wastage is reduced even by a simple act such as a sympathetic enquiry made by a teacher to the parents whenever a child ceases to attend school. What is needed, therefore, is a nation-wide programme of school improvement in which the reduction of wastage and stagnation would figure prominently." (15)

The National Policy on Education - 1986 lays emphasis on two aspects:

(1) Universal enrollment and Universal retention of Children up to 14 years of age, and

(2) A substantial improvement in the quality of Education." (16)

The Policy further went on to point out - "A Child-centered and activity based process of learning should be adopted at the primary stage. First generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and be given supplementary remedial instruction. As the child grows the component of cognitive learning will be increased and skills organised through practice." (17)

The document - "Challenge of Education" published by the Ministry of Education in Aug. '85 has brought out the gravity of
retention and drop-out rate in school. To quote, "Low retention and high drop-out rates continue to erode the gains from educational expansion. The magnitude of wastage in emaciating the educational development in the country." (18)

As per the "Programme of Action, 1986" the thrust in elementary education should emphasise on

(i) Universal enrollment and Universal retention of Children upto 14 years of age and

(ii) A substantial improvement in the quality of education. "(19)

The measures proposed by the 'Programme of Action' for the improvement in quality of elementary education include reform of the content and process of education, improvement in school buildings and other facilities, provision of additional teachers and the comprehensive programme of teacher education.

The other elements of strategy will consist of -

(a) Children of all families in the country will be provided access to elementary education of good quality.
(b) Special measures will be taken to ensure that whatever the socio-economic background of the children, they get opportunity to achieve success of a level which approximates to the level of children from comparatively better-off sections of society.

(c) A nation-wide programme of school improvement with required multi-level and multi-dimensional planning.

The country's faith in its future generations will be exemplified in the system of elementary education, which will get geared around the centrality of the child. (20)

It is observed that all the Committees/Commission Reports before and after Independence have stressed that along with making education Universally available, it is essential to retain pupils in schools for at least 4 years so as to make them literate and hold them back from receding into illiteracy, for the proportion of drop outs is very high, particularly at the stage of primary education. This can be achieved only by improving the quality of education, making it more relevant and by increasing the achievement level of children.
As the researcher was in-charge of a small English medium primary school and had found children weak in English and Mathematics she decided to undertake research to improve quality of education in English and Mathematics. She therefore decided to work in this area.


(18) Challenge of Education - A Policy perspective, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India, New Delhi, Aug. '85.


(20) Programme of Action - NPE 1986, Govt. of India, New Delhi, Aug. '86