

## CHAPTER 1

### PRIMARY EDUCATION - A PERSPECTIVE

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## CHAPTER 1

### PRIMARY EDUCATION - A PERSPECTIVE

#### 1.1 NATURE OF EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

After independence, India is facing number of problems in socio-economic and political fields. If we wish to make our country a powerful independent and sovereign state, we must trace out their roots and solve these problems without any delay. All these problems, by and large have so far been overlooked by the political leaders and social reformers.

Progressive and dynamic people accelerate the growth of the country and progressive community is the backbone of nation's political, industrial and scientific development. It is the knowledge and the scientific temper of the people which makes them dynamic and progressive. Hence, education must reach the grassroots of the community. Education creates awareness among people and builds up their characters too. The report of Kothari Commission (National Education Commission) rightly pointed out that the future of the nation is nursed and built up in the classrooms of the schools.

However, it is not sufficient to say that education is the most important need, but it is also necessary to see that it gets the

expected motion and makes its way in the right direction. In order to achieve this, all the factors in the field of education, teachers, educationists, the government officials must sacrifice their personal interest. It is only possible after studying various social, economic, religious and political problems coming in the way of education.

The following factors must be well organised for bringing about the spread of education. If any one of these falls short or becomes inactive, it results in some or the other problems. The following problems should be looked after carefully in drafting any educational policy.

- 1) Tradition
- 2) Public will
- 3) Government policy
- 4) Personnel
- 5) Finance

Education must have its base in the tradition. The nature of education invariably changes with time and circumstances. Mahatma Gandhi put forth his idea of action oriented education, based on eternal values. Education in India must be Indian. Lal Bahadur Shastri once said, " I see education everywhere in India, but nowhere I see India in education ". Do these words not suggest that education in India is aimless or directionless?

Education should not be based only on tradition and must be backed by powerful public will for its success. If public does not spontaneously support tradition based education, a great number of problems would arise. Gandhi's policy of Basic Education failed only because it could not get adequate support of public will. It is true that undue importance to English language is educationally unscientific, still the powerful public will gave rise to a number of convent schools. The number of such schools is growing day by day and English language has become a status symbol.

If the Government policy is favourable to the traditional and the public will, there would be fast development in education. But unfortunately, the Government policy is often observed to be flexible giving rise in turn to a number of problems. Still the Government has not taken a clear stand on the position of Hindi and English languages in education. The steps taken to make education job-oriented were also half-hearted. The Government decided to start multi-purpose schools however, this decision was not implemented. A large number of examples could be quoted in support of flexible Government policy.

Taking for granted that tradition, public will and Government policy are united and are well ordered, still education will not become fruitful unless those who implement educational policies are quite efficient. These include Government personnel, head-masters, teachers, guardians and society.

The demand for education is growing day by day. But the Government does not increase the number of schools and make available other infrastructural facilities in the requisite proportion. Furthermore, the knowledge explosion, techno-economic advancement and overall human development over generations make it imperative to change syllabi. The fast changing curriculum necessitate teachers and head masters to be dynamic, which in fact is a rarity.

In the absence of adequate finance all the aforementioned factors prove to be ineffective. Sufficient financial support makes any work complete and successful. There is a Sanskrit saying which states that *कार्यरंजे नकुलः प्रसूयते*: Most of the problems can be easily solved if education has firm financial foundation.

Only strong financial support will make the following things available namely, schools, classrooms, infrastructural facilities, libraries, laboratories, educated and experienced teachers, playgrounds, hostels, etc. In practice we see totally opposite picture. This is well highlighted by the Kothari Commission.

The various issues arising in the field of education at primary level in particular, based on the above mentioned factors are discussed in the following sub-sections.

## 1.2 IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Education is important and essential for a democratic republic and the future of democracy lies in the hands of the masses. India is an agricultural country and most of people live in villages. Therefore, primary education, in particular should reach to every village. It is a basic need of every human being, in the absence of which the villagers will not be aware of the situation in and around the country. The primary education would make the individual capable of economic, social and cultural development. The spread of education and lowering illiteracy level are burning national issues. It is necessary therefore to trace the steps taken from time to time for compulsory primary education by the Government.

## 1.3 BACKGROUND OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Before the famous Wood's Bill of 1854, there were schools of so called "Tatya Pantoji" (private schools) type in the then Bombay State. There were about 1500 schools in 1823. The education Department started modern education management in 1855. The local schools were subsequently neglected. As a result, there remained only 542 schools by 1936 - 37. The Hunter Commission (Indian Education Commission) clearly recommended that the Government should discard the policy of running schools on behalf of its education department and should support the private schools. However, this recommendation was then disregarded.

The Hunter Commission suggested 'Grants as per results' system for releasing grants to the native private schools. The implementation of this system seriously affected the spread of primary education. Local self-Governments were soon established, which shouldered the responsibility of primary education. These Governments were supposed to collect money for primary education in the form of local taxes. However, this policy resulted in lack of funds for primary schools, which inhibited establishment of new schools.

William Adams put forth the idea of Compulsory Primary Education in 1838. He suggested to make it a rule to establish a school in every village. In 1870, it was accepted in England that local taxes for education should be collected and the primary education should be given. But this idea did not bear expected results. After this decision in England, there was favourable atmosphere for compulsory primary education in India. Educational institutes like the Deccan Education Society and Shikshan Prasarak Mandals entered in the education field. The leaders started mission of creating 'public awareness' of need of primary education. Various noted personalities have consistently pressed the demand for educational facilities at different times. These include the Hunter Commission recommendations in 1882, the Late Sayajirao Gaikwad, the Maharaja of Baroda in 1893, the Late Namdar Gokhale in 1910 and the Late Vithalbhai Patel in 1917. But the British Government was shrewd and adamant. The primary education in India got

real thrust only after 1947, although the Sargeant Law recommended free and compulsory primary education for masses in 1945. This is because this law was 'under consideration' until 1947 and was not brought into force.

#### 1.4 COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION

During the pre-independence period, the national leader Late Vithalbhai Patel struggled hard to get the Bill of Compulsory Education passed. He introduced the Bill in the Bombay Legislative Assembly very emphatically. The Bill was planned to absorb all the children from municipal area. This was turned into a law in 1918 and was known as the Patel Act. By passing the Bill, the Government admitted the necessity of compulsory education for the first time. In fact the period from 1918 to 1950 was the period for making compulsory primary education a legal necessity.

After the Patel Act of 1918, Bombay Primary Education Act was passed in 1921. The responsibility of implementation of this act went to the Indian Minister in the Government, who was supposed to safeguard the interest of the subjects. There were two major difficulties in the implementation of this law, first economic and the second management. As the financial management was with the Reserved Department, the education suffered owing to the lack of funds. A number of



administrative difficulties cropped up. Education made a limping walk owing to the flexible attitude of the members of municipality and the local self-Government, insufficient funds, immature and selfish personnel, lack of trained teachers, social tradition, beliefs and superstitions. The spread of education however, was accelerated in 1937, when education became a regional autonomy plans for "compulsory primary education for all in the Bombay State" were drafted. Education was thus, given top priority. Unfortunately World War II brought political crisis. The Ministry surrendered its resignation and the limping horse of primary education stumbled more than ever before.

After independence, the scenario was changed substantially. Education then became the responsibility of the State Governments. The State Governments formed their own policies regarding education and the primary education once again made its headway.

According to the 45th Clause of Indian Penal Code, the State Governments were ordered to bring all children between the age limit of 7 and 14 years to school within a span of 10 years.

Primary education was not made compulsory through out Maharashtra at once. The Western Maharashtra passed the Act of Compulsory Education in 1947 - 48, Vidarbha in 1950 and Marathwada in 1952.

Primary education has been viewed as basic education from two angles. The first as the basis of higher education and the other as a pre-requisite to make the citizens literate, well equipped and self-sufficient. A minimum of seven years of primary education is essential. However, some educationists feel that four years of primary education is also sufficient. Modern research in education asserts that a man with four years of primary education often does not get an opportunity to read or write. He can be considered literate except for the fact that he can sign his name. In order to make a citizen well aware of his surroundings, he must make some progress in the world of thoughts. There can not be a material revolution unless there is revolution in thoughts, and this is possible only through education. Therefore, primary education should comprise at least seven years of school.

### **1.5 GROWTH OF PRIMARY EDUCATION**

Before independence, the literacy level in our country was 17 percent. Later primary education was given top priority and basic education for the development of a child's personality was considered a fundamental principle. Primary education was therefore, considered as a national goal. The nature of primary schools was changed according to the needs of changing circumstances. The courses of the study were re-oriented. In this re-orientation, the educationists, thinkers and

statesmen faced the following problems :

- a) Lack of trained teachers
- b) Insufficient funds
- c) School buildings
- d) Public disbelief in basic education
- e) Scar-city of efficient Government officials for the spread of education

Inspite of tremendous financial problems, the compulsory primary education made its progress. The figures mentioned below are self-explanatory.

- I) There were 28,500 primary schools in the Bombay State when the First Five Year Plan was launched.
- II) At the beginning of the Second Five Year Plan, the Bombay State was divided. The Bombay State consisted of 60,000 schools (1960) and the rest of the Maharashtra State comprised of 30,153 schools (1961).
- III) The Third Five Year Plan envisaged compulsory primary education to all children between 6 and 11 years of age. The educational institute of Maharashtra State has published in 1982, the progress of primary education which can be stated as follows.

Pupils	41,78,000 (1960-61)	83,92,000 (1980-81)
Schools	34,594 (1960-61)	51,045 (1980-81)

Soon afterwards the Government of Maharashtra made an announcement to give free education to the children whose parents' annual income was below Rs. 1200. The Government report states that 2,42,000 students are benefitted by this resolution. This has resulted in additional burden of Rs. 1,52,95,076 per annum. Recently, Government of Maharashtra has added to its financial burden by making girl's education free.

In spite of all these measures taken by the Government, it is surprising that there is not much progress in overall literacy. Primary education has not reached the expected goals. It is extremely necessary to see where the shoe pinches. In order to see this it is essential to consider various problems one by one.

#### 1.6 ROLE OF TEACHER

After the birth of a child, the mother is its very first teacher, and the home is the very first school and the foundation of education is laid there. What the child learns here has a lasting impression on the development of its personality. However, this is a very short period and once the child is admitted to the school, it is the teacher who has to accept the responsibility of teaching, not only to read and write but also so to culminate suitable environment for child's allround development. In India since ancient times, the teacher

has assumed honoured place in the society. The then prevailing "Gurukul" system comprised of children staying with Guru for a long period. In recent times the teacher tries to maintain the internal cultural and moral values alongwith development of scientific temperament on which our Indian society is built. In short, the building up of society and the nation rests entirely in the hands of teachers.

Students, teachers and the curriculum are the most important components of any educational system. Among these three, teacher is unavoidable, without teacher the process of education can not be complete. In spite of the innumerable audio-visual aids available today, it is still not possible to replace the place of teacher in the education process, who not only teaches the child various subjects but motivates to learn. The child learns how to behave by imitating teacher who is conscious of the student's psychology.

### **1.7 NEEDS OF THE TEACHER**

If one compares the role and importance of teacher in society, it is observed that they are not adequately paid. Besides this several environmental constraints compel teachers to be unenthusiastic in their profession.

A primary teacher is an instrument responsible for the spread of education in various strata of society. He is the backbone of the education system. Millions of teachers have been performing the task of preparing future generations in cities, villages, hilly and remote backward regions. They have been trying to execute all the educational plans.

Though all the sections of society recognise the importance of teachers, their welfare has not been adequately looked after or cared for. They have been deprived of comforts and facilities which are easily accessible and available to others. Nobody looks after into the personal, social, financial or domestic difficulties of teachers. Every day begins with new and unforeseen problems. For instance, several unacademic duties, political pressures, unjustifiable transfers, insufficient financial aid, lack of teaching tools, social non-co-operation, etc. Nobody has ever looked into these difficulties seriously and thought of finding proper solutions.

The Minister of Education of Government of Maharashtra while producing a white paper has said, "The society of any nation can not be better than its educational system and the educational system of any nation can not be better than the teacher in the nation". This statement shows how the place of teachers is the topmost in improving educational standards. Hence, at every level of education, it is

*necessary to attract efficient and dedicated persons in education field. If we want the spread of education and educational programmes to reach the grassroots of the society and if we want brilliant, expert and qualified teachers, their basic needs must be satisfied first. Politics and variety of non-educational work should be put to bare minimum. This will enable them to put all efforts and work in free atmosphere.*

*The present dissertation has been undertaken to throw light on the problems of primary teachers from Satara district and attract the attention of all the concerned to their plight. An attempt is made to put forth the problems and difficulties of these teachers.*