

CONCLUSION

The entire exercise so far as made reflects necessarily the concern that the task of building of an enlightened, strong and prosperous nation rests on the shoulders of its children who are to be cherished, nurtured and developed with tenderness and care. Education has always played this important role and has thereby emerged as a natural characteristic of human societies. It has contributed to the shaping of the destinies of societies in all the phases of their development and has itself never ceased to develop. It has been the torch bearer of humanity's most noble ideas. In this sense, as an agent for social change, education necessarily reflects its main ethos, aspirations and concerns.

The history of Indian education shows that encouraged by her great tradition of diversity, tolerance and humanism, various cultural and religious groups established their own educational institutions to suit their specific requirements. While some of these were of religious nature, the others imparted some kind of vocational education. The religious institutions provided for the development of the whole individual - body, mind and spirit, infusion of a spirit of piety and religiousness, formation of character, development of personality, inculcation of respect for civic and social duties, production of social efficiency and preservation and spread of national culture. As per the British documents, even the early nineteenth century India had an extensive education system, free from caste and religious discrimination, and almost all the villages had schools. Then the British introduced their educational system based on grant-in-aid to institutions to impart their kind of education to absorb the products in the civil services. In this scheme, very little of knowledge, attitudes and skills that the local people possessed was considered fit for educational use and was therefore totally discarded. Thus, indigenous educational system suffered a set back, and the new system alienated Indian education from the wisdom, the belief and the value system of the people who were uprooted from their tradition. School education in recent times has emerged as an important segment of the total educational system expected to contribute significantly to the individual as well as the national development processes. In order to do that effectively, it needs to be continuously reviewed and updated. In fact, curriculum development which is at the root of this renewal process, has to be seen as a permanent search for qualitative improvement of education in response to various changes in the society.

Keeping the above concerns into consideration, extensive efforts have been put in to bring forth changes in each and every tier of education in India. Needless to mention that elementary or primary education has been the principle bench mark which has to be given weightage and importance. Unfortunately, Primary education in India had been and still has been suffering from many deficiencies. Keeping in consonance with the argument of Professor Amartya Sen, it can be put that, the paucity of financial resources is obviously a principal problem : there are not enough schools and the facilities available in the ones that exist are often very limited. But there are several other problems as well. A major difficulty lies in the weak institutional system of primary schools, which are often inefficiently run. Efficiency of school management is a major issue to be addressed. A further problem concerns equity of schooling arrangements, and the challenge of bringing first generation school attainers into a sympathetic and just system of primary education.

Not only in West Bengal but also the country as whole, the picture of the primary schools remain^s unsatisfactory even after crossing 56 years of independence. The fact that class-wise primary teacher cannot be recruited in 80 per cent of the primary schools of the country mainly due to primary difficulties. There is no cause to think that the said problem can be solved easily. The growth of population, attraction towards education, various educational welfare activities of the government, all these factors may cause to the growth of enrolment of primary children but number of classrooms as well as teachers can not increase accordingly. In the situation, UPE can only be achieved by adopting a new technique called multigrade teaching by which teacher can teach more than single class at a time. Children are interested in making their own writing which they want to follow. They must be given opportunity to develop their own style and rules through experimentation. Reading is mostly a prediction. A child is reading as per his assumption that this may be idea contained in the words and sentences. Multiple shifts of schooling in a same premises both increase enrolment and reduce unit costs. Also these multiple shifts increase more working hours available to child labour. DPEP has also given emphasis on Women education specially women consciousness, women freedom, equity in respect as well as shaving of powers. Reducing fertility rates must therefore be an important part of any development programme and reduce fertility depends heavily on educating women.

It has been very much in order to mention that during 1990, under the initiative of World Bank, international seminar in Education was held in Jontiem, Thailand where the declaration of universalisation of education within 2000 AD was made with much fanfare. Keeping in pace with the Universal Declaration the Government of India has brought major changes in the National Education Policy and adopted a concrete Programme of Action named District Primary Education Programme. Despite being a centrally sponsored scheme, the DPEP is activated with the assistance of external international funding agencies. The Department for International Development and British Overseas Development Administration have been the funding agencies assigned with the responsibility of implementing Universalisation of Primary Education Programme in South Asia on behalf of World Bank. The Government of India signed Memorandum of Understanding with Agencies on January 2, 1994. It is to be borne in mind that DPEP fundings are not grant but a long term loan taken for forty years and repayment for which is to be made with interest. In the first phase (1994) the Government of India has brought fourteen states under DPEP, in the second phase (1996), seven states were brought under this programme. Under third phase (1998) three more states have brought under DPEP.

The District Primary Education Programme, since beginning, has not been treated as an enclave project. The DPEP is multifaceted project seeking to overhaul primary education system in India. It is, although not a finance driven programme, however, it seeks to build a kind of system that is cost effective, replicable and sustainable. The context of DPEP has to be viewed in the face of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. DPEP has been conceived to bring forth reforms both in structure and content in the primary education system of the developing countries in fulfillment of needs of new world order. District Primary Education Programme has been so designed that if properly implemented, it will shift the responsibility of Primary education which until now was with the government, to the people's shoulders. In order to enhance the physical quality of life indexes and human development indexes, the developing countries have been under compulsion to adopt the Universalisation of Elementary Education Programme with a view to reshape education to meet the demands of new economic system. Critics of DPEP have been of the view that workers and farmers with basic primary education are physically more productive than those with minimum or no education. It is said that the international community should

expertise and finance such a source of potentially high quality technical expertise i.e. neither political nor beholden to any particular international donor or government. It is also argued since reproductive decisions are generally left to parents, the primary responsibility for child rearing and education must remain with them.

It has been observed in our study that primary objectives of District Primary Education Programme is to create resources at the local level and to make best use of them so that universalisation of education can be optimally fulfilled. Planning for education and its implementation should begin from village level to the consecutive higher planes. Village Panchayats should be given the primary responsibility by way of financial and legislative devolution for Universalising Primary Education Programme. Augmentation of financial resources can best be mobilized by imposing taxes at the local Panchayat level or through other local means of resource mobilisation. Funding can be diversified in two ways : (a) by targeting new taxes for education; (b) by strengthening local taxes. This, in fact, is a kind of economic decentralization which implies absence of subsidies in education and fixing the cost bearer of education. The making of syllabus, identification of text books should be at the hand of local committee and by providing importance to the local priorities, such curriculum will have to be developed. It should also be emphasised that importance be given on the distinctive socio-economic and cultural traits of the local and demand generation for education should have to be moulded accordingly. By assimilating the micro level local planning, a district education planning may be evolved out and such district level planning can well be integrated with the national planning for primary education.

Another important area of District Primary Education Programme is the agenda^{um} to withdraw the provision of pass and fail in the examination. The DPEP has evolved an automatic promotion and continuous evaluation system. Such a practice might have evolved a student friendly atmosphere without fear or anxiety but would have ultimately brought us to the question that such a system would endanger quality of education. The DPEP has definite agenda^{um} of withdrawal of pass-fail system which satisfies the economy besides education. To the DPEP, failing students in the classes will always add financial loss. Thus, it is a kind of device to reduce per head expenses of the child on education. Another unique teaching method has been adopted by DPEP what is termed as multigrade teaching. Such a new innovation has been introduced to bring balance between teacher-student ratio and teacher-class room ratio. Such an

innovation may be unique of its kind, however, is questioned in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Such a cost effective method may prove costly for the future of the younger generation. The DPEP directive is that primary school teaching should not be either school-centric or teacher-centric rather it should be student-centric. It is said that child should learn in his own way and experience. The basic premises of new primary education is based on this so called imposed-value free education. Such a system never hampers the natural development of human personality. A teacher is supposed to know the student psyche and has to play the role of philosopher and guide. The student should be given the opportunity to develop their own style and rules through experimentation. Not only multigrade teaching, multiple shifts have been introduced to increase enrolment and to reduce infrastructural cost. The other important dimension of DPEP is to give adequate weightage on women's education taking women as backward compared with male. The consideration has been to have more educated women who can well be used as an internal resource of a family to educate the children. The level of basic education for women will balance the fertility rate which would ultimately help population control. Educated women in the developing democracy can be well used as potential resource in the productive system of the society.

Needless to mention that District Primary Education Programme can not be taken as a panacea to address multifaceted problems involved in universalising basic education through state action. Despite limitations, our study has ample probes to suggests that there has been changes in expanding education at the primary level after the implementation of District Primary Education Programme. Even though the coverage of our present study is restricted, however, suggests that the administration of DPEP and schooling system in West Bengal may well be ready for some radical reforms. The personnel involved in operationalizing the education programme has to be sensitised and to be made more responsible to the cause of universalising education.

- The principal findings of the study may be, thus, summerised.

Enrolment of the students has been satisfactory and in some cases much higher than the target set by the DPEP guideline. While retentivity of the children is not satisfactory, the rate of drop-out is less than 8 per cent. Such a paradoxical situation clearly indicate the non-reliability of information collected from the schools during survey. Drop-out rate is within 8 per cent i.e., higher than the stipulation marked by

the DPEP guideline where it is stipulated that efforts would be their to lower down the drop-out tendency at least 10 per cent. Despite inadequacy in infrastructural provisions, the student-school ratio in the district of Cooch Behar has been satisfactory. On the other hand, student-teacher ratio in the district is far from district related ratio provided by the guideline of DPEP. The DPEP intervention has created infrastructural provision which is also far short of the target. There has been hardly any attempt to improve the school environment and teaching learning materials which should be congenial to the local ethos. Students' perception of learning, teacher's perception on teaching, guardians perception on both students' learning and as well as the perception of the member of VEC have not been developed in such a manner from which demand for generation of education could have been highlighted.

The District of Cooch Behar is having with 1806 Primary schools 564 child learning centres which enroll altogether 378297 children that is nearly 88 per cent of the child population (below the age group of 9 age) of the district. The status of retention of the student at school, drop-out, quality of learning, applicability of new teaching learning materials and infra-structural provisions at the school has been far short of the target. The trend in most of the blocks is either almost equal or far below the quality. The reasons are many which include :

(a) there are accessless habitations only in two senses - one, the distance between the two existing primary schools is such that there are children in two habitations who are not getting schools within 1 kilo meter radius of their place of living; and two, there are schools which are overcrowded having more than 80 children per class in an average. The reason of such overcrowded schools. The reason of such overcrowded schools is two-fold-one, absence of another school within $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 kilo meter radius of the school and the intrinsic quality of the school which attracts guardians to admit their children in the school. But the second reason does not constitute the reason for the majority of such schools;

(b) there are certain serious weaknesses of the school system of the district - one high repetition rate, and two, low transition rate, the only redeeming feature is that drop-out rate is within 8 per cent, stagnation is bigger a problem than wastage. But such high rate of stagnation leads to big wastage. It has been seen that there are certain common trends in all the blocks of the district - transition rate from class I ranging in

average between 50 per cent and 60 per cent, then from classes II to III is the highest, by and large ranging in an average between 80 percent and 90 per cent; and that from III to IV is intermediate, by and large ranging between 60 per cent and 70 per cent.

(c) There are many children who are though enrolled in schools do not attend classes regularly. Average attendance rate, if extensive data could be collected, would perhaps have indicated much below 80 per cent. There are ample reasons for the low attendance rate but one of the results for this low attendance rate is weak internal efficiency - high repetition - low transition. From various parts of the district, particularly from most parts of many blocks a sizeable section of the families migrate from the district seasonally for three to four months at least every year during which period their children cannot attend schools;

(d) the survey results of the studies indicate very low achievements rate and serious lack of acquisition of the fundamental competencies among the children;

(e) data do not indicate any significant numbers of child labourers in the district. General experience does not agree this. One reason of the probable discrepancy might be reservation among the guardians in supplying correct information about the labouring child. But the bigger problem than child labour is child work which cannot be ascertained by any hard data;

(f) it reveals that the demand that has been generated in the district in the community in general is largely the demand for enrolment only. In enrolment whereas grossness of the order of 12 per cent is causing concern enrolment not backed up by regulating of attendance and low key general demand for quality education are the major areas causing the highest concern,

(g) VECs though have been active in most cases and realise the nature of the problem, ascribe the problems almost invariably to poverty of the people. It has been possible in many ways to convey to them meaningfully that poverty does not causes all the problems; it is actually demands for quality education and for learning gains of children which have to be generated.

(h) Census work, electoral works regarding inclusion and exclusion of voters before Parliamentary, Assembly, Panchayat and Municipality election have been occurring in every year and primary teachers have been deputed in those functions on an urgent

basis. As a result, primary schools who are already facing a short of class-teacher, have been dragged into a big problem.

(i) Due to strategic decision of the State Government that the second language like English that had been hijacked from primary classes for a period of nearly two decades, has been re-instituted again. Accordingly, primary teachers those who have already forgotten the subject, may create the incongenialities at the class-room environment.

The State has so far undertaken a number of policy decisions and adopted programme for achievement of total literacy and UEE, removal of disparity in enrolment, retention and achievement level as well as spread of education at the secondary, higher secondary, and higher levels of education. Vocationalisation of education has also received due importance in the government policy framework. But an attempt to transform the education system on the part of the authorities requires attention on the following areas :

- i) Strengthening the planning process, with better mobilisation and more effective utilisation of resource.
- ii) Strengthening of the information base for decision-making.
- iii) Strengthening and professionalisation of education administration.

An analysis of the outcome of survey and data collected from different source lead to the tasks that ought to be taken up by the state government. These tasks may be enumerated as follows :

1. The achievements of the universalization of elementary education is dependent on decentralised planning and management. As such, these process should be decentralised as early as possible.
2. In view of insufficient resources, the government's effort at achieving the goal of UFE need be augmented by arranging involvement of community and non-governmental organizations.
3. The emphasis should be on improved teacher competence and motivation through in-service training to check high drop-out rate and improvement in the quality of education. Teacher-training institutes including DIETs need to be strengthened for this purpose.

4. Provision for regular and recurrent training of educational administrators need to be made in the state; appropriate institutional arrangement for training of administrators at different levels has to be organised.
5. The policies with respect to the personnel of academic support organisations like SCERT, DIETs, PTTIs etc. should be reviewed in order to ensure appointment of qualified and competent persons in these organisations.
6. A computerised management information system should be established, in each and every district of the state, to meet the requirements of educational administrators and planners. Each place should be manned by duly trained professionals in the field. Co-ordination with DPEP will ensure reduction in government expenditure and cutting down duplication of effort.
7. A group of strategies are required to make the programme of girls' education and women literacy widespread and more effective. Higher priority has to be on education of the girl child to ensure literacy of the future generation.

One of the principal findings of our study is that primary school students of the rural areas of the district of Cooch Behar do well in comparison to their urban counterpart. However, girls children in the rural areas have done much better scores in mathematics and language subjects than that of their male counterparts. The reason is obvious. The socio psychological frame presupposes that girls are much more sincere and discipline than that of their male counterpart. The bad results of the school children of the urban areas in the assessment test do not make any qualitative difference because children reading in the urban primary schools are mostly drawn from families of urban poor. The urban dwellers even the people of the economically lower rung prefer not to send their children to the government aided primary schools but to send them to privatised English language oriented primary schools. The attitude of rejection of urban people is so high that the primary schools in urban area have lost their relevance in most of the cases. The parallel private schooling system has been both a concern and a hope for the future. Both the teacher and the school administration of the Government aided primary schools have been playing an indirect unfortunate role in destroying whatever meagre fare Government Primary Schools could dispense.

Primary education through state resource support has never been student centric or knowledge-centric. It has always been administration and teacher-centric. Thus, in the donor-recipient continuum, the children belonging to the poor classes are always at the receiving end. Scholars like Professor Paramesh Acharya of Indian Institute of Management and Professor Amartya Sen have been of the view that lower the social order higher is the disenchantment with school education due mainly to the discriminatory treatment of the teachers to low born poor first generation learners. It is a fact established by their study that backward class student unable to cope with badly taught lesson either drop-out or are pushed out by the hostile attitude of the teachers. The major deficiencies noted by these two eminent scholars are found even in Cooch Behar despite tall-claims by the Government. It has been observed in our study that poorest of the poor in remotest part of the district of Cooch Behar have not been attracted in the primary school education movement sponsored by the state through DPEP. The Kulaks or the land owning class, socially and politically advantageous groups have become the beneficiaries of primary education. Drop-out rate although less in comparison to the state average cannot be ignored for the district of Cooch Behar. Most of the drop-outs are from poor families and girls drop-out are much more higher than that of boys drop-out. Until and unless the fruits of land reforms are percolated down to the poorest of the poor and Panchayats at the lowest rung are properly committed to the cause of education and until the Panchayats are empowered to that direction, universalisation of basic education would never transformed into a prudent reality. Over and above the perception of both teachers and educational administration of the district on primary education at large has been the principal resistance to gear up primary education programme of the district. Social hiatus between the teacher and students belonging to the poorest rung has also had a telling effect on the student - teacher relationship. The primary school teachers in West Bengal do no longer belong to poorest class and they have developed a kind of belief system that the children belonging to socially disadvantaged community are less intelligent and motivated than their upper community counterparts. However, our study negates such a perception, the mid term assessment results have proved beyond doubt that if the students belonging to socially disadvantaged community are taught in a proper manner, they can well compete their upper community counterparts. Thus, it is suggested that taking given conditions into consideration if the educational administration and the teachers are geared up and disciplined with a commitment, the

picture of primary education could have been a different story. The local Panchayat leaders should play a vigilant role to bring system of primary education at the lowest rung into order. There has been no doubt of the fact that efforts are many but fruits become minimum due to so many interrelated issues both in material and immaterial terms. In a nutshell, attitude towards primary education has to be reconstructed. The social and psychological resistance of the society putting hindrances on the path of expansion of primary education has to be uprooted by the efforts of continuous awareness programmes both for the teachers, students, parents and administrators assigned with the responsibility to operationalise primary education at the grass-roots. The principal bottlenecks which have been identified during survey may be put as under :

a) In comparison to the high schools and Jr. High Schools, approved posts of teachers in primary schools have been bare minimum. While for six classes in high schools, 12 posts of teachers are approved in an average and while for four classes Jr. High Schools 6 posts are approved, for 4 classes primary schools 3 posts of approved teachers have been found. For some primary schools there is a 4th posts designated as an additional post. Imbalanced student-teacher ratio in primary education has been a concern which warrants attention of the policy makers.

b) The curriculum of primary schools is recommended by West Bengal Primary School Council. It has been recommended that for class I, students are exposed to study 2 (two) subjects - mother tongue and mathematics. The syllabus for mother language is devoid of any complex sentence. For Mathematics, very simple sums of plus and minus have been recommended. Such a weak syllabus simply corroborates the fact that little attention has been paid to the curriculum structure.

c) The working hours of primary school have been too short which is stipulated for five hours i.e. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Such a stipulated working hours does not corroborate the work culture of working eight hours per-day for the other service. Concerned policy makers should pay immediate attention to enhance the working hours of the teachers.

d) Thanks to the Left-Front Government in view of its material support provided to the primary teachers. Primary teachers at present are paid 6,000 to 8,000 rupees per month. Such a considerable good amount paid to the teacher is a praise-worthy task for the Government but unfortunately, primary teachers; if not most of the teachers,

are not worthy to be paid of such a good amount. Keeping in pace with the enhancement of salary, accountability has not been enhanced and job responsibility has not been fixed. Such a hike in pay without responsibility has created a social and economic hiatus between the teacher and primary school student who are mostly living below poverty line. Another important area is private tuition which in a large manner has attracted attention of teachers and has become the cause of negligence in teaching in the schools. Private tuition has been a compulsion for the students. Parents who are unable to pay private tuition fees are compelled to drop-out their students from schools. Attention to this area is an important task for the decision maker.

e) Methods of teaching in primary school in most of the cases is full of errors. Inadequacy of qualified teachers and ill-conceived syllabus structure, weak examination system, inadequate infrastructural facility, non-attractive teaching are some of the weakest areas of primary education in our state.

f) Inadequacy of education of the educators and school administrators is also an important areas to be immediately called for.

g) The multi-pronged structure of education and multi-functional agencies of education are to be made simple for proper administration of primary schools.

h) Panchayats at the rural level have not been playing a pro-active role for the expansion of education or for up-keeping of existing primary educational structure.

Despite the apparent concern for primary education of the policy planners and decision makers since independence, universalisation of primary education has remained still a far cry. Much band-beatings have so far been made expressing tremendous concern for primary education both by the national and state level committees and commissions, but little progress is seen observable in the field of primary education. The primary reasons behind this bleak situation is the inability to address the issue of primary education in a serious manner. Both the centrally sponsored schemes and state sponsored schemes undertaken so far for expansion of education at the primary level and different kinds of literacy schemes in the name of mission or movements have not been able to prove to be a success in totality. The obvious reasons are lack of sincerity on the part of the implementors, inadequate infra-structure to attract the issue, inter-organisational and intra-organisational non-cooperation, multi-structural coordination problem, lack of commitment and motivation, tremendous gap

between donors and recipients, inadequate direction, political compulsions and such other negative factors and forces.

It is a common sense argument that education, Constitutionally speaking is a subject under Concurrent List. The 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts have assigned Panchayats and the Municipalities with the responsibilities of operationalising primary education in the rural and urban areas respectively. Both the central and state Governments have been contributing to the field of primary education by occasionally launching such major and minor schemes. However, these are essentially patchworks never able to touch the crux of the problems of education at the primary level. Unfortunately, the local governments like the Panchayats, the Municipalities are not in a position to perform seriously the role of catalysts for spreading primary education due to inadequacies in every field. The local governments be it Panchayat or Municipality are administratively inefficient, technically inadequate and financially insolvent. Thus they are not in a position to deliver goods. The paradox is that both the centre and the state cannot touch the problem because of their physical hiatus with the grassroots and the local governments are not in a position to provide good. In such a situation, a thorough overhauling of the situation has been the need of the hours.

Some scholars argued that in the given situation the district is the most viable agency to foster primary education on the one hand and to make a linkage between the centre and the state on the other. The district level primary education administrative structure as it exists right now in West Bengal need to be thoroughly re-structured and modified to avoid problems of multi-structuralism and multi-authorities to operationalise primary education. Prevailing socio-economic and cultural issues of a district have to be kept into considerations while making a district plan for primary education. The possible resistances are to be identified and are to be addressed in a proper manner so that complexities can be overcome. Not only the governmental organisations at the district level need to be revitalised but also all the stake-holders of the primary education are to be sensitised and re-activated for the total expansion of primary education of a district. A simple well-knit development structure with clear-cut authority, responsibility and accountability. Such a simplified organically linked hierarchical structure can well provide necessary impetus to the expansion of higher education. Political parties be it in power structure or not should have to play a positive social role with emphasis on the primary education. Our study has amply proved

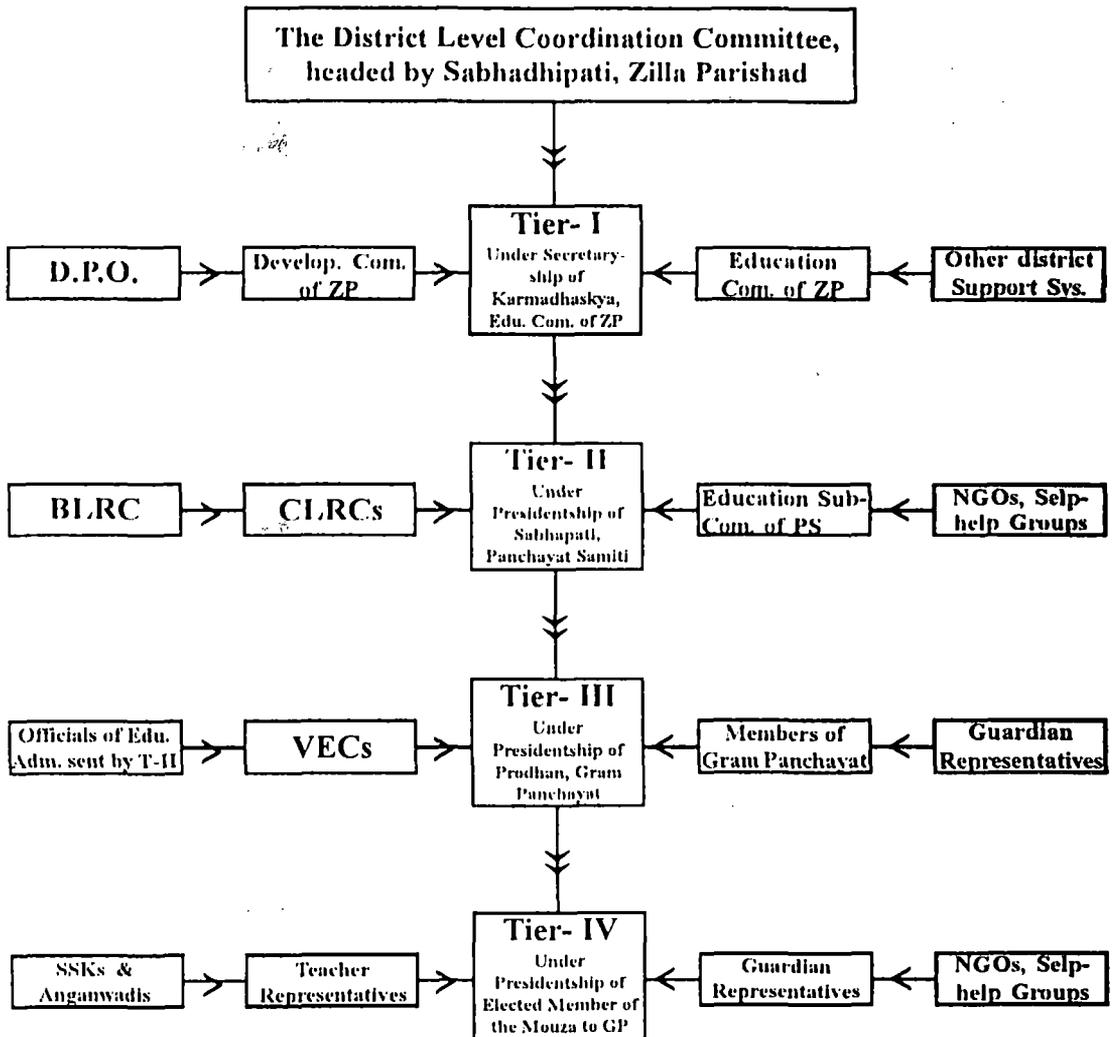
that the DPEP organisational structure has been an additional structure with or without relationship with the existing educational structure of the district for primary education. The grey areas like weak coordination and cooperation are the principal resistances to operationalise DPEP at the grass roots. While administering District Primary Education Programme, Panchayats are to be given adequate weightage simply because of the fact that they are the people's representative at the grass-roots. The district level DPEP administrative structure should immediately be merged with the existing Panchayati Raj structure of the district to avoid multi-structuralism and multi-functionalism. Concerned Act and Rules are to be framed and modified to accommodate the new organically linked structure for operationalisation of primary education in the district. To be precise, DPEP cannot sustain in isolation with a different structure and authority completely alien to the district even just few years back. The plausible administrative structure with defined function and authorities for operationalising programmes of grass-root level primary education may be suggested.

There should be four tiers structure for operationalising primary education programmes at the district. Tier-I should be constituted by including Zilla Parishad. The education and development committee of the Zilla Parishad should adequately be empowered to monitor the primary education programme. The District Project Officer should be included in the committee as the working secretary, the Karmadhaskya of the education committee of the Zilla Parishad should be the Secretary. The members of the education committee will be the automatic choice as members of the committee. The Sabhadhipati of the Zilla Parishad acts as Chairman of the committee. Such education committee will make necessary liaison with the state office and with the other external funding agencies. The committee will formulate a component plan for education of the district which is to be duly approved by district level coordination council where Sabhadhipati of Zilla Parishad is the Chairman

Tier-II of the structure should include the Panchayat Samiti. The Panchayat Samiti level committee on education should be assigned with responsibility of expansion of primary education. The Karmadhaskya of the education sub committee of Panchayat Samiti will act as Secretary and Additional Inspector or Sub Inspector of Schools may be appointed as the working secretary, the members of the education sub-committee of the Panchayat Samiti are the automatic choice as members of the committee. The Sabhapati of Panchayat Samiti will act as President of the committee.

The entire BLRC/CLRCs of existing DPEP structure should be merged with Panchayat Samiti level education committee. Since the Panchayat Samiti is the viable most structure in the three tier panchayati raj system, the education committees of Panchayat Samiti should play the most pro-active role in the expansion of primary education. Such education committee may well take help of the non-governmental organisations and other self-help groups to operationalise the education programmes. Tier-III of such structure should include the Gram Panchayat. The existing village level committee should be merged with Panchayats. The Pradhan of the Panchayat should be President of the committee. Three other elected representatives of the Gram Panchayat may be included in the education committee at the Gram Panchayat level. The Panchayat Samiti level education committee should send officials of education administration to help and support the education committee at 3rd tier. Tier 4 includes the Mouza (small hamlet). In fact, primary schools are situated in different mouzas of Gram (village) Panchayat. Mouza level action committee for Primary Education should be constituted with help and support of the government which will include the elected representative of the mouza to the Gram Panchayat, members of different self-help groups including women self-help groups, members of NGO working at the mouza level, teachers representatives of primary schools at the mouza, representatives from the guardians of students reading in primary school of the mouza, representatives of Srihu Siksha Karmasuchi (Child Education Programme) and Anganwadis operating at the mouzas. The suggested alternative administrative structure of District Primary Education Programme may be presented in the next page.

The Suggested Alternative Administrative Structure of DPEP at the District Level



Abbreviations used :

DPEP	=	District Primary Education Programme
DPO	=	District Project Officer
ZP	=	Zilla Parishad
BLRC	=	Block Level Resource Centre
CLRC	=	Circle Level Resource Centre
PS	=	Panchayat Samiti
NGO	=	Non-government Organisation
VEC	=	Village Education Committee
SSK	=	Sishu Siksha Karmasuchi
GP	=	Gram Panchayat

Since the District Primary Education Programme is an action oriented, goal oriented, people oriented mass development programme, it has to be viewed from an integrated perspective. There is the urgent need of spatial, functional and structural integration to make the programme effectively viable and successful. The existing organisational structure of the District Primary Education Programme at the district level should immediately be merged with the suggested functionally linked and hierarchically structured 3-tier Panchayat system with an extended arm of mouza (small hamlet) level action oriented committee on education. To provide the DPEP a shape of a mass-level people oriented programme, participation and involvement of people at each organically linked tier of Panchayat system of the district has been extremely important. The existing colleges the higher secondary schools and socially committed voluntary organisations are to be made involved in the greater task of expanding primary education at the district. Students of these higher institutions may best be used as teacher-tutor during vacations. Volunteers of National Social Service Scheme of the Colleges can also take active part in this process. A continuous awareness programme has to be launched to make the people aware of the urgency of education for self respect, self reliance and self sufficiency. Such an alternative model of administrative structure directly linked with the Panchayat for operationalising District Primary Education Programme has been suggested in view of the fact that in West Bengal, the democratically elected Panchayat structure has been proved to be the most viable political and social development agency which has been constitutionally recognised and socio-politically legitimized. While some scholars would argue that the existing Panchayat system have been so political and corrupt that it would have been an impossibility for the Panchayat to deliver good to the society. To these scholars, non-government organisations, voluntary organisations and some reputed philanthropic social organisations like Ramkrishna Mission may be given the responsibility to operationalise primary education programme of the district. Acceptance of such a suggestion would simple mean the non-recognition of the reality of serving a huge geography and people with basic education. Keeping reality into consideration, it may be counter-argued that neither the existing non-government organisations nor the voluntary agencies, nor the reputed philanthropic social organisations do have the capacity to operationlise DPEP in mass scale. These organisations may well be able to develop education of a village or a cluster of vilfages but never be able to perform the holistic role what a programme like DPEP claims. Thus, it is suggested that the Pan-

chayats be moved accordingly to perform this holistic role of spreading education through different tiers. The fear of over politicisation of Panchayats can well be monitored and controlled by an honest political will of the political party in state power. At the same time the possible corruption can well be resisted by the existing intra organisational and inter-organisational control mechanism. Since Panchayats have been treated to be the popular peoples government at the third stratum of Indian federation, this government at the grass-root has to be made more pro-active, vibrant and people-friendly. Empowering the Panchayat through administrative decentralisation, legislative and financial devolution will ultimately mean empowerment of people at the grass-root. Such an empowered organisation would have been the best alternative administrative structure for operationalising District Primary Education Programme after replacing the existing DPEP organisational structure which is nothing but an administrative adroit devoid of any social root.

Finally, a holistic approach can be taken for universalisation of elementary education. Most of the strategies and programme are being adopted and implemented to address individual issues in respect of education at this stage. There is no doubt that these efforts have produced some results. But UEE is still a far cry. It is high time that the all issues in respect of UEE should now be looked as a non-discrete whole which will ensure universalisation in enrolment level and remove disparities of girls and other social groups in all the above stated activities. The intensification of efforts by functionaries and stake-holders at the all levels of the system with this holistic approach is an urgent necessity to meet challenges of providing quality education to all by the end of the first decade of the new millennium. Solidarity is partly a matter of political and moral commitment, but also a correlate of institutional arrangements, and we must look at both. Our findings, preliminary as they are, point firmly to some central issues that need to be addressed with some urgency for the delivery of educational administration in primary section in the DPEP districts of the country. All rivulets converge to form a river and so may happen while all tiny efforts are cascadingly converged to make a grand course of endeavours towards new horizons.