

Introduction

India is committed to the cause of overall human resource development. Education is the key to such development. It is the foundation on which rests an empowered nation. A sound national policy on education may help in removing all barriers in a society and across nations, through understanding and appreciation of one another. The need for a literate population and provision of elementary education has been still recognised as a crucial input for nation building and also the indicator of development for a nation. Unfortunately, however, after 56 years of independence, the Constitutional commitment for the basic elementary education, universalisation of such education has remained far to seek. It is regrettable that India is yet to achieve a considerable position in terms of growth of literacy. However, the 2001 census reveals the literacy rate is 65.38 per cent. The literacy rate for men is 75.85 per cent while that for women is 54.16 per cent. The highest literate state has been declared to Kerala where the literacy rate is 90.92 per cent. While the lowest has been Bihar where the rate of literacy is only 47.53 per cent. In West Bengal, the overall literacy rate is 69.22 per cent where literacy rate for men is 77.58 per cent and that for women is 60.22 per cent.⁽¹⁾ The global imbalance in female-male literacy rate as well as male-female participation in formal education is basically due to imbalances in the less developed regions of the world. As regards of the developing countries, school life expectancies of girls tend to be somewhat lower than those of boys, which is to be expected since in many developing countries, higher proportions of girls than that of boys never get into school at all. Southern Asian region shared equally with Sub-Saharan Africa the largest number of out of school girls in the 6-11 years age group, and in both regions - but more so in Southern. Asia - girls constitute a majority out of school youth in this age group.⁽²⁾

Research on District Primary Education Programme has been scarce. However, a plethora of research studies on elementary education or primary education as well as on related areas has been undertaken so far. Despite different intellectual exercises made by the scholars and practitioners of the field, it is observed that the studies on Primary Education Administration have been minimum if not completely unattempted. In fact, the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration has been keen to devote to the studies of different tiers of education & educational

planning, management and administration. Some important management institutes in India especially some of their social scientists have been working on educational planning and management with reference to different programmes launched in different states.

The recent PROBE (Public Report on Basic Education) survey of 200 villages in the four northern states of Bihar, M. P., Rajasthan and U.P. has interesting findings (PROBE team, 1999). In the rural areas of these four states 86 per cent of boys and 57 per cent of girls in the age group 6-14 were currently enrolled in school.⁽³⁾ There is a large gap between children who enroll in school or who have ever attended, and the number who actually complete school. About two-thirds of the children not in school are girls. In India gender gaps show up in literacy and all education indicators compared with boys, fewer girls enroll in school (though the gap is narrowing) fewer stay in school and those who do stay learn less with lower achievement in language and mathematics in some states.

In the study of Chatterjee Madhusudhan : "Flow of Students and Drop-outs, if any, in Primary Schools of some selected Sub-divisions of West Bengal", SCERT, Calcutta, 1997 has shown that the flow of students towards rural government aided primary schools but the said flow has reduced towards urban government aided primary schools because of mushroom growth of schools run by the Non-Government Organisation and Private Bodies engaged in catering to the need of primary education in the industrial and urban belt through the medium of instruction other than Bengali or Mother Tongue. The study also shows that drop-out rate among schedule castes or Tribes is more than General Castes and it is acute among tribal girls where social taboo plays the lead role.⁽⁴⁾

The MAS (Midterm Assessment Survey 1999) survey in five DPEP districts of West Bengal viz. Bankura, Birbhum, Murshidabad, South-24 Parganas and Cooch Behar has interesting findings on gender issues. The difference of achievements between boys and girls remained very high for urban students but strikingly rural students of Bankura and Cooch Behar did very good results in class III than urban students.⁽⁵⁾

Most analysts and scholars have stressed the out-of-school factors in the family and community are probably more important than in school factors. UNESCO's

World Education Report, 1995 states that in the poorest regions of the world, women and girls are locked into a vicious circle with illiterate mothers bringing up illiterate daughters who are married off too early into yet another cycle of poverty, illiteracy, high fertility and early mortality.⁽⁶⁾ Among in-school factors in a global perspective, the educational participation of girls relative to that of boys certainly is correlated with the presence of female teachers. Female teachers are in the minority in first level education in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, especially the latter. It is in these two regions that the challenge to increase the school attendance of girls is most pronounced.

In his study, Upendranadh, C : Growth of education in Andhra Pradesh : A long Run View, Trivandrum : Centre for Development studies, 1994, pp X1+158, has shown the objectives of universalisation of elementary education which has not yet been solved due to wastage and stagnation, higher drop-out rate in Telangana and among females, financial inability of the parents, less importance given to education in the state budgets and allocation of budgeted expenditure among different levels of education.⁽⁷⁾

Provision of basic education for all continues to be a matter of serious concern in India as in several other developing countries of the world. The World Bank Policy Paper (1990) on primary education, has highlighted that children's learning is a function of family background and school input while the quantitative expansion of the system in India appears to be very impressive, the achievement of the goal of Universalization of Primary Education has still remained elusive.⁽⁸⁾ Non-enrolment, non-attendance, drop-out and stagnation are the major problem areas in primary education. The National Policy on Education (as upgraded in 1992) and Programme of Action (1992) in India emphasized rectification of historical inequalities. This emphasis is reflected in the objectives of primary education. The priorities are to reduce drop-out rates, improve learning achievement and expand access for unserved students. Girls and students from SC and ST are to receive priority attention.⁽⁹⁾

The study of Halder, Kutubuddin : Non-Detention Policy and Drop-out in Primary Education, Calcutta University, West Bengal, 1995 has intended to explore the effect of non-detention policy on drop-outs in primary schools. It was found from the study that mere declaration of non-detention policy is not enough to reduce the root cause of wastage and stagnation. To make the declaration more effective par-

ticularly in the context of universalisation of elementary education, teachers engaged in the primary stage teaching are to be well acquainted and trained on the nature and scope of non-detention policy.⁽¹⁰⁾

Not surprising about 75 per cent of children who are out of school live in six states : Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal are populous states with below average attendance ratio.⁽¹¹⁾ Some time-use studies of children in India suggest that girls have fewer hours available for schooling than do boys. As a result, some observational studies find that girls attend school less than boys. For example, in South Arcot district in Tamil Nadu 41 per cent of registered grade II girls and 22 per cent of registered grade V girls were absent on the day the DPEP base line surveys were carried out, compared with 30 per cent of registered grade II boys and 16 per cent of registered grade V boys (Sharma and Ramakrishnan, 1994). About two-third of the children not in school are girls. According to NFHS, 41 per cent school age girls in India still do not attend school. More than half the school girls in Bihar (62 per cent), Rajasthan (59 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (51 per cent) do not attend school.⁽¹²⁾

The main reasons given in the National Sample Survey 42nd round (1986-87) for girls not enrolling are economic activity and lack of interest.⁽¹³⁾ Also important are parental attitude. In a survey in rural Maharashtra, 50 per cent of mother said that sons should receive as much education as they want, but only 32 per cent gave the same response for daughters (Jeejeebhoy, 1993). These differences are linked to the way of life of parents and value education for their children. In India, families often prefer to invest in the education of sons, since the returns to this investment will remain with the family, while the returns to investment in a daughter's education will typically flow to her husband's family. Nayer and Nuna (1994) report that the principal reasons for girls responsibility for domestic work (75 per cent) including assisting with household economic production and carrying for sibling (42 per cent and 35 per cent respectively). The direct cost of schooling were also identified as a reason for dropping, even though NCAER (1994) shown that the cost of boys. The probability that girls will drop-out is also determined by the social and economic characteristics of the house hold.

In their joint studies Govinda, R. and Varghese, N. V. : Quality of Primary Schooling in India, A case Study of Madhya Pradesh, Paris : IIEP, 1993 have assessed

the following points : (i) The status of primary schools in terms of facilities provided and the local environment in which they function, (ii) making comprehensive analysis of the quality of primary schools functioning in varying conditions ranging from urbanised locality to rural locality, (iii) measure the outcomes of schooling in terms of achievement of levels of the learners with specified reference to literacy and skills and (iv) identify various inputs and process factors associated with students' achievement.⁽¹⁴⁾

Professor Amartya Sen in his study on *The Delivery of Primary Education : Preliminary Findings* has investigated three West Bengal districts such as Birbhum, Midnapur and Purulia. It has been found that 96 per cent of the respondents believed that boys should acquire elementary education, and 82 per cent affirmed their belief that girls too should do the same.⁽¹⁵⁾

In its study undertaken during July 2001 on Impact of Students Attendance, the State Project Office, West Bengal District Primary Education Programme, has identified some major issues :

(a) Majority of students' attendance is found to be between 151-200 days. This accounts for approximately 60% - 80% of the overall attendance for an academic year. Overall students represented in this category is almost 60% who show a promotion rate ranging between 88% to 90% for the different grades. These figures are found to be varying at the district level (represented as > 150) between 87% - 91% for Grade I-II, 83% - 92% for Grade II-III, and 76% - 90% for Grade III-IV.

(b) Lowest representation is found in the more than 200 days. This category has almost 6% of student representation. The attendance category accounts for more than 80% of student attendance in an academic year. The patterns of promotion rates here are 100% for all the grades and similar trends are identified for the categories studied.

(c) A reasonable student representation is found in the 101 - 150 days category. This category accounts for a lower attendance approximately between 40-60%. The promotion rates are lower in this category as compared to 151-200 days category. The overall promotion rates are found to be between 75%-81%. The district figures for this category (studied as < 150) is found to be varying 67%-72% for Grade I-II, 67%-70% for Grade II-II, and 67%-78% for Grade III-IV.

(d) The attendance category < 100 days accounts for less than 40% of the overall

attendance in the school. This group has an overall representation of 20% approximately and accounts for lowest promotion rate varying between 24% to 40% for all grades.

This category shows unique trends for attendance among the scheduled castes. The group exhibits significantly higher promotion rates in the category when compared with the general caste groups and the overall findings.

(e) Gender-wise analysis of the data does not show any significant differences in trends for attendance or promotion. But an overall picture for girls and boys shows that

i) Overall girls representation is lower in the sample studied. When studied attendance category wise their representations are significantly low in all the attendance categories, except in 101-150 attendance days where their representation is higher than the boys.

ii) The overall findings indicate that representations are highest in the 151-200 attendance days category, in the case of the girls and boys similar trends are identified.

iii) The girls show higher promotion rates in all attendance groups for all grades, when compared with the boys.

iv) The higher attendance categories have shown higher promotion rates for both girls and boys, but the promotion rates are higher for girls in the lower attendance groups in comparison with the boys.

Caste-wise analysis for the study has brought out the following findings.

1) Scheduled caste representation is lowest in the >200 attendance days, which is followed by <100 days and 101-151 days, and highest representation is identified in the 151-200 attendance days. This trend in enrolment according to the attendance categories is similar to the trends identified at the state level.

2) Trends in promotion rates are found to vary with reasonably higher promotion rates in the lower attendance categories when compared with the general caste groups. Both social groups other wise show lower promotion rates at the upper primary grades.⁽¹⁶⁾

From the study it is revealed that higher attendance in school ensures higher promotion rates. Higher promotion rates may in return ensure higher retention, emphasizing qualitative retention patterns. After all parents do make reasonable expenditure on a child's primary education which they would not like to waste on additional years in primary education.

In a study undertaken during July, 2001 on Study on School Efficiency, the State Project Officer, West Bengal District Primary Education Programme, has identified some major issues :

(a) The completion rate in four years time (CRF) has an increasing trend from Cohort-I year between 1993-97 to Cohort III year between 1995-2000 ;

(b) With an increasing CRF the ever complete rate of five years (ECR-5) and ever completion rate of six years (ECR-6) show lower rates, which is indicative of lower repetition ;

(c) Increasing CRF and lowered ECR is supported by lowered Dropout (D.O.) rates ;

(d) Gender-wise variations are low, and both girls and boys show similar patterns of increasing CRF and lowering ECR and D.O. rates in the following cohorts ;

(e) Overall, in comparison to the boys the CRF is higher for the girls in all the cohorts ; and

(f) Schedule castes exhibit ECR and CRF rates which are at par with the general caste groups for all the cohorts indicating moderate social equity for the social groups.⁽¹⁷⁾

The District Primary Education Programme interventions have made efforts to strengthen the process of universalisation of primary education. Along with measures to provide universal access to enable a school for every child, efforts have been made to increase retention and reduce the drop-out rates. Special focus has been given to reduce gender and social inequalities to the minimum. Accordingly strategies have been designed to reach the targets. Efforts have been made to monitor progress made over a period of time. Continuous efforts are therefore required to ensure that retention with high learning outcomes for all children in the eligible age group is achieved at the earliest and at the same time the achievements are sustained for times to come. Reviewing of strategies of UPE have indicated that through overall access is increasing, the drop-out and repetition rates continue to be of concern reflecting poor school-efficiency & wastage. With this concern this study has been undertaken to scientifically ascertain the school efficiency through the number of pupil years actually taken by the students to complete primary education.

The development of educational administration to address the above challenges has been the need of the hour. As a separate discipline, educational administra-

tion is of recent origin. It is around 1954 that the theory of educational administration was emerged with the research studies in the field of psychology and other social sciences. It has been recognised that educational administration is not devoid of other forms of administration, and has eschewed research of an empirical type in favour, instead of hypothetical deductive research that is rooted in theory. Broadly speaking, principal four areas of educational administration are : (i) the nature of theory and how it should be applied to research on administration, (ii) Substantive research on administration, (iii) the study of the relationship between verbal and non-verbal behaviour and (iv) reflection upon the nature of scientific inquiry and the pertinence of these ideas for training of research workers in education and behavioural sciences.⁽¹⁸⁾ Before independence the nature of educational administration had a direct bearing with political administration. After independence the nature of educational administration has been changed and it has become more democratic, development oriented and participatory in nature.⁽¹⁹⁾

In fact, District Primary Education Programme has been a recent phenomenon and no researcher has attempt^{ed} till date to analyse in detail the problems and prospects of the programme at the operational level. In this sense, the study would be a maiden attempt to find out the possible answers of the following questions :

- i) Whether DPEP would be able to reduce difference in enrolment, dropout and learning achievement among gender social group to considerable extent ?
- ii) Will DPEP be able to reduce overall primary dropout rate in the district ?
- iii) Can DPEP be able to raise average achievements level ?
- iv) Will DPEP be able to strengthen the District institutions for organising, developing and managing the Primary Education of the district ?
- v) What will be the institutional constraints to implement the DPEP ?
- vi) What will be the possible role of the District Primary School Council (DPSC) and voluntary agencies in implementing DPEP ?
- vii) What are the existing institutional arrangements between Centre, state, funding agencies and the districts in implementing DPEP ?
- viii) What exactly has been the status of community support for Primary Education in the district ?

The study, primarily, has been an honest attempt to answers to the above issues of DPEP with reference to the operational experience of DPEP in Cooch Behar.

The researcher believes that such a study at the micro-level will help augmenting a macro model to understand DPEP as a scheme of U. E. E. both conceptually and operationally. Such a study would be a help to the interested Academicians, Policy Planers, Practitioners and men at work of the operational level of DPEP in Cooch Behar. Such a study with pragmatic and plausible suggestions would help, in general, the other districts already in a take-off stage to laun the District Primary Education Programme.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To be precise, the objective of the study is to review the execution of the whole plan of DPEP undertaken by the District Cooch Behar. More specifically, the proposed study will assess to the inter - organisational and intra - organisational relationship. The study will assess the physical perspective of the beneficiaries, especially, the rural women and girl children. The study will justify and appraise the key elements of DPEP viz Access, Enrolment, Retention and Quality interms of the district perspective and present status of primary education. A thorough probe ^{has been attempted} to understand with an insight the present status of administration and management meant for universalising primary education in the district. The study will assess and examine the impact of management inputs interms of progress and achievements of reaching DPEP objectives. It will also analyse and assess the constraints (socio-psycho-economic and environmental) in achieving the DPEP objectives. An assessment of the inter relationship and inter dependencies of different management components of DPEP emphasising access, enrollment, retention, and quality has been attempted

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

In view of the given deliberation supportive studies and logistics, the researcher intends to go deeper with an conceptual and operational inquiry to throw some lights on the present status of management of DPEP structure and function. DPEP as an additional apparatus, envisages to give a fillip to the present educational management structure and system functioning in achieving the goal of universalisation primary education (UPE). A study of the DPEP has been of high order for certain obvious reasons. It has been universally acknowledged that education is the principal pillar of human resource development. No doubt to mention that Primary Education has been

the principal foundation of the overall educational structure. It is intimately associated with the light of life. The indicators of physical qualities of life index such as Literacy, Health, Family Planning, Sanitation, Environmental awareness, Nutrition, Socio-economic opportunities can best be realised only through the universalisation of Elementary Education. A micro level analysis of the policy planners and administrators to have a continuum such as particular to general and from microcosmos to macro-cosmos is urgently called for. Such a study of a district will help in building a general frame work to understand the problems, if any, both conceptionally and operationally. Such a study at the district scale will provide opportunity to have a comparative estimate of the other districts under DPEP of the State of W.B. and other DPEP States of India.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is definitely having a strong empirical bias. Obviously, the scientific method has strictly been followed to design the whole content of the study. Constraints of doing scientific social research has been strictly adhered to. Both the explanatory variables having dependent and independent quality and extraneous variables having controlled and uncontrolled features have been given due to consideration for analysing the problem. Different testing methods for identifying different sets of relationships have also been executed. The study is both explanatory and experimental. Data have been collected through schedules and a thorough scrutiny of the assembled data has been made. Data have been classified properly through the process of establishment of categories. However, required tools and methodologies have been selected and applied depending on the types and nature of work. Some tools and methods were also needed to devise and develop to cater to the situational development and design as follows :

	Items	Methods / Tools
I.	Selection of local	PRA, Social Maps, Focus Group, School Mapping.

II.	Study of Secondary sources of information	Transit walk etc. Stratified random sampling
III.	Selection of respondents	Semi Structured and structured schedule
IV.	Analytical aspect	Case studies, different statistical methods and tools as applicable. Correlation, Analysis of Variance, Regression, Path Analysis, Discriminatory statistics etc.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study suffers from the following limitations :

1. As the population of this study was confined to primary students, Guardians of the primary students, primary teachers and the DPEP personnel of the Cooch-Bihar district of West Bengal, the generalization of the findings will be limited to this area only.
2. The findings of this study are based on the ability of the respondents to recall and on the verbal opinions expressed by them. Hence, the objectivity of this study is limited to their ability to recall and also to their honesty in furnishing the required information.
3. Due to lack of data, the qualitative analysis could not be associated with the quantitative measurements of the responses of the respondents like primary teachers and DPEP personnels.

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