

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It was unanimously accepted by all the delegates of International Conference on Education, 38th Session at Geneva in November 1981 that education had a decisive contribution to make to the solution of the problem of social and economic disparities through the effects of democratization of education at all levels. Whether these disparities are between countries or between various social categories within individual countries, it was felt that there is an urgent need to promote access to education by socially disadvantaged groups, in both urban and rural areas, with no discrimination of any kind. The worldwide question thus remains to be giving top priority to the promotion of literacy in any country so that people generally could participate in the development process and learn to master modern technology. This calls for the efforts to promote literacy, develop pre-school education, extend primary education and make it universal, promoting adult education so as to provide equal opportunities to all the sections of the society without any reservations.

1.1 IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

In various stages of education primary education is the most crucial stage spanning the first eight years of schooling and laying the foundation for the personality, attitudes, social confidence, habits, learning skills and communicating capabilities of pupils. The basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic are acquired at this stage, values are internalised and environmental consciousness sharpened.

The value of primary education as an instrument of social change, lies in its capacity to contribute towards equalization and expansion of economic opportunities, in promoting educational and social mobility, in creating social concern and civic responsibility and in instilling cultural and moral values. Faure (1972) has rightly stated that primary education helps the child to move into a coherent moral, intellectual and and affective universe, creating an awareness among them about their past and helping in developing a conception of the future.

The psychologist also believe that the primary stage is the most important growing period for academic achievement

and that all subsequent learning in the school is affected, and in large part determined, by what the child has learnt by the age of nine.

Moreover the cost-benefit analysis also indicates that the rate of return of primary education is the highest among all levels of education and it has a significant impact on productivity and general well being of masses. Hence the universalization of primary education and raising the achievement level of primary education are matters of highest priority in the national efforts of any nation for revamping education.

1.2 UNIVERSALIZATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Educational planners throughout the world have been giving a high priority to the achievement of universalization of primary education. This is well in line with the directive Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has been proclaimed in the article that "Every one has the right to education. Education shall be free, atleast in the elementary stage and fundamental stage. Elementary education shall be compulsory".

The International Commission on development of education (1971-72) while analysing the objectives of education and

strategies for the achievement of the objectives, gives a clarion call to all the nations to provide top priority for universal elementary education. It may be observed that most of the developed countries like U.K., U.S.S.R., U.S.A., and Japan have already attained high level of schooling. In developing countries, great efforts are being taken towards achieving universalization of primary education. The objectives of education in developing countries reveal the importance given to universalization and equalization of educational opportunities.

1.3 GENERAL AIMS OF EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

(i) Education should be provided as a human right, equally accessible to all citizens regardless of sex, religious belief, language, racial origin and ability to pay for it.

(ii) The schools should strive to develop the allround potential of individual children by ensuring that attention is paid to the intellectual, moral, physical and personality growth of young children, adolescents and young adults.

(iii) Education should prepare young people to participate in civic affairs, to enter the world of work and to use the leisure time profitably (International Year Book of Education, 1980).

It is evident from the above discussion that the primary aim of education in all the developing countries is to equalize educational opportunity enabling the backward and underprivileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever for the improvement of their condition. Every society that values social justice and is anxious to improve the lot of the Common man and cultivate all available talent, must ensure progressive equality of opportunity to all sections of the population. This is the only guarantee for the building up of an egalitarian and human society in which the exploitation of the weak will be minimized.

1.4 EDUCATIONAL GOALS OF INDIA

The educational goals of ancient India and free India reveal the changing trend towards equalization of educational opportunities.

Ancient Indian education aimed at formation of character, preservation of ancient culture and training of the raising generation in the performance of social and religious duties. Self-reliance and self-restraint were looked upon as ideals. According to Altekar (1934) the preservation of the ancient heritage and culture was the most important aim of the ancient system of education. The higher caste had the sole monopoly in the field of education. But today India backed by the accrued strength of its democratic form of government, huge industrial infrastructure, large technical man power and intellectual sophistication is determined to user into the new century by furhter expansion, dispersion, diversification and modernization of its production, manufacturing and service sectors. As a sequel to this the entire system of education is being geared to develop in its several million boys and girls, youth and adults matching abilities and attitudes required to build a dynamic, vibrant and cohesive nation capable of providing its people with the wherewithall for creating a better, fuller and more purposeful life.

The present aim of Indian education is primarily to equalize educational opportunities. Accordingly priority

is given to the following areas; to universalize primary education by introducing free and compulsory education for all children between 6 and 14 years of age; to eradicate illiteracy through non-formal and adult education programmes; to vocationalize the secondary level curriculum and to improve teacher education. The development of total personality of the individuals and the promotion of social and moral values are guiding principles. Further, education aims to include the national integration of scientific and technological development among the various states and union territories (National Policy of Education, 1986).

1.5 UNIVERSALIZATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

In a caste ridden and hierarchical society like India's, access to educational opportunities is unequal and unjust. The so-called higher caste with better economic power had the sole monopoly in the field of education during ancient days and the lower castes, especially scheduled castes were denied and deprived of any educational facilities. However this situation has changed due to the efforts put forward by the great national leaders of India.

The demand for universalization of primary education was first put forward by Dadabhai Naoroji. He pleaded before

the Indian Education Commission (1882) that steps should be taken to provide primary education to all children. In 1893, the project of free and compulsory education was started in Amreli district of the erstwhile Baroda State which spread throughout Baroda by 1906.

In 1910 Gopalakrishna Gokhale introduced a bill on Primary Education to permit a local body the option to introduce compulsory education in any selected area with some conditions fulfilled, but it was ruled out. His words in the concluding speech that "the bill thrown out to-day will come back again" came true when the Government of India declared her policy of compulsory education and incorporated it in the law in 1921.

Mahatma Gandhi (1937) was even more categorical and emphatic; he desired every child to receive compulsory education of seven years whose content would be equal to that of matriculation minus English plus a craft.

In 1944, Sargent Report recommended the compulsory schooling of 8 years for all children and developed a long term Plan to achieve this within 40 years (1944-1984). With great ambition and zeal the Kher Committee (1951)

reduced the plan period to 16 years to achieve it by 1960. The framers of Indian constitution perhaps wanted to adhere to the period and declared in 1950 when the constitution was framed that the universalization of primary education should be achieved by 1960. Article 45 of our constitution runs thus: "The state shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of fourteen". The constitution also promises equality of opportunity for education at all levels, and special provisions for the educational advancement of some of the weaker sections of society such as, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes traditionally excluded from schooling (Article 46 of the constitution of India). Serious efforts were made by the Government to fulfill the constitutional guarantees.

/ 1.5.1 Efforts made During Different Five Year Plans

In the first five year plan (1951-1956) the provision of free and compulsory education was considered as the first step towards establishing equality of opportunity for every citizen.

In the second five year plan (1956-1961) expansion of facilities and re-orientation of the system of education on basic lines were considered as urgent tasks and vital to social and economic development.

The third five year plan (1961-1966) concentrated on expansion facilities for children in the age group 6-11.

Special attention was given to rural children in the age group 11-14 in the fourth plan (1969-1974).

Very high priority had been given to the programme of elementary education in the fifth plan (1974-1979). In addition to the expansion facilities, provision had been also made for curricular reorientation, work experience and strengthening of educational institutions for teachers.

One of the goals of the sixth five year plan (1980-1985) was to guarantee to all equality of opportunity for education for improving the quality of life and their participation in the tasks of promoting general well-being of the society.

The working group of the seventh Plan (1986-1990) besides suggesting ways and means to achieve targets

relating to universalization of primary education have proposed a number of schemes for promotion of national integration, improving quality of education and its modernisation. Due regard has been given to the coverage of weaker sections.

The Government of India made liberal plan allocations under various five year plans and also introduced a variety of facilities and concessions towards universalization of primary education.

1.5.2 Various Programmes that were implemented to Universalize Primary Education

The different programmes that were implemented in India to universalize primary education are presented below:

- the compulsory education act was enforced in the country.
- more number of schools are being opened including separate schools for girls.
- free boarding and lodging facilities are being provided to the poor students.
- text books, station^earies, school uniform and midday-meals are being provided.

- attendance officers were appointed and scholarships are being provided for regular attendance.
- with a view to increase the enrolment of girls, more number of lady teachers are being appointed and staff quarters were provided for them. Ayas (school mothers) were appointed to escort girls.
- the curriculum was renewed to make it more relevant to local needs.
- mass media are being used for broadcasting lessons and for teacher orientation and attitudinal change.
- new instructional materials were prepared for better learning among pupils and new techniques are being used in teaching.
- pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes were improved and the competencies of the teachers are being upgraded.
- ungraded school system was introduced.
- School time-table was made flexible.
- the examination system was reformed.
- School complexes were setup.
- book banks were established.

- School improvement programmes were introduced and village communities were involved in the developmental programmes.
- non-formal and adult education programmes were introduced.

1.5.3 Achievement of the Different Programmes for Universalization

Inspite of providing all these facilities, India has not achieved all the four goals of universalization of primary education viz., (a) universal enrolment (b) universal provision (c) universal retention and (d) universal successful completion, as can be seen from the discussion below :

(a) Universal Enrolment

Regarding universal enrolment, a steady progress is maintained. The progress of enrolment of children in the age-group 6-11 and 11-14 during different five year plans are shown in Table 1.1.

According to the Expert Committee on Population Projection, set up by the planning commission, the estimated population in 6-11 age group in 1989-90 will be about 9.61

Table No.1.1
Enrolment in Elementary Education in India
During Different Plans (1960-1985)

(Figures in Millions)

| Plan & Year | | Total Enrolment in classes I - V | Percentage of Enrolment in classes I - V | Total Enrolment in classes VI - VIII | Percentage of Enrolment in classes VI - VIII |
|------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1950-51 First Plan | Boys | 13.8 | 60.8 | 2.6 | 20.8 |
| | Girls | 5.4 | 24.9 | 0.5 | 4.3 |
| | Total | 19.2 | 42.6 | 3.1 | 12.9 |
| 1955-56 Second Plan | Boys | 17.5 | 72.2 | 3.4 | 25.4 |
| | Girls | 7.6 | 32.8 | 0.9 | 6.9 |
| | Total | 25.1 | 52.8 | 4.3 | 16.5 |
| 1960-61 Third Plan | Boys | 23.6 | 82.6 | 5.1 | 32.2 |
| | Girls | 11.4 | 41.4 | 1.6 | 11.3 |
| | Total | 35.0 | 62.4 | 6.7 | 22.5 |
| 1969-74 Fourth Plan | Boys | 34.2 | 95.6 | 9.0 | 47.0 |
| | Girls | 20.2 | 59.6 | 3.5 | 19.3 |
| | Total | 54.4 | 78.1 | 12.5 | 33.5 |
| 1974-79 Fifth Plan | Boys | 39.4 | 100.0 | 10.5 | 48.0 |
| | Girls | 24.4 | 66.0 | 4.5 | 22.0 |
| | Total | 63.8 | 84.0 | 15.0 | 36.0 |
| 1980-85 Sixth Plan | Boys | 50.7 | NA | 17.7 | NA |
| | Girls | 33.9 | 74.0 | 9.7 | 37.0 |
| | Total | 84.6 | 91.0 | 27.4 | 51.0 |

crores. The present population estimate for this age group can be taken to be 9.00 crores. Against this, the enrolment figures for 1984-85 are 8.54 crores, the gross enrolment ratio for boys and girls being 110 and 74 per cent (NPE, 1986). This picture reveals that the goal of universal enrolment has been achieved to a satisfactory level with the general population. But if we take the disadvantaged section of the population, the proportion of enrolment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribe children continues to be much less than their population proportion. The all India literacy rates of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are 21.38 and 16.35 per cent respectively as against 41.20 of non-disadvantaged population according to 1981 Census. The National Policy of Education (1986) has developed operational strategies like (i) providing incentives to indigent families to send their children to school regularly till they reach the age of 14 (ii) pre-matric scholarships for children of families engaged in occupations like scavenging, flaying and tanning, (iii) constant micro-planning and verification will be done to ensure that enrolment, retention and successful completion of courses by SC/ST students do not fall at any stage,

(iv) recruitment of teachers from SC/STs etc. to achieve cent per cent enrolment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes children in the age group 6-11 by 1990.

(b) Universal Provision

The objective of universal provision of school facilities at primary stage has almost been reached. There is tremendous increase in the number of primary schools. Between 1950-51 and 1984-85 the number of primary schools increased from approximately 2,10,000 to approximately 5,20,000 and the number of upper primary schools from 30,600 to 1,30,000 (NPE, 1986). According to the fourth all India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1978-79) 93.05 per cent of habitations been provided with a primary school. Now efforts are being taken to ensure that all habitations with a population of 300 (200 in the case of tribal, hilly and desert areas) will be provided a primary school within the seventh plan (NPE, 1986).

For pupils belonging to SC/ST and other deprived sections, residential schools and hostels will be provided on a much large scale. At the same time the scheme of establishing schools providing free education with free residential and other facilities have also been strengthened

under the NAVODAYA VIDYALAYA scheme for the children of rural and interior areas. Such vidyalayas will allow 75 per cent of their students from the rural habitations only (NPE, 1986).

The National Policy of Education 1986 has also envisaged a novel programme of "operation Blackboard" to ensure provision of minimum essential facilities in primary schools. The use of the word operation implies that there is an urgency in this programme, that goals are clear and well defined, and that Government and people are determined to achieve those goals within a pre-determined time frame.

Operation blackboard envisages -

- i) two reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather
- ii) necessary toys and games material
- iii) blackboards
- iv) maps
- v) charts and
- vi) other learning materials.

Procedures for procurement, supply and use of equipment envisaged under operation blackboard will have to be evolved keeping in view the special needs of the primary schools. The funds for the operation blackboard will be provided by the Government of India to the State Governments.

(c) Universal Retention and successful completion

Enrolment figures as well as provision facilities can be of little importance if the children do not continue their education. Among the children who are enrolled at primary stage, some stagnate in the same grade and some dropout at various steps in the educational ladder. Thus wastage and stagnation are the two chronic problems in the field of education especially during primary stage. Wastage here, is the premature withdrawal of a child from school before completing the last grade of the stage of education in which he is studying and stagnation is repeating the same grade for more than one year.

A very high rate of wastage and stagnation was reported among the primary school children. Out of every 100 children enrolled in Class I, only about 50 reach class V and only about 25 reach class VIII. These rates have remained almost constant since 1950 (Naik, 1982). Many indepth

studies have been conducted to identify the causes of wastage and stagnation at primary level. Some of the major factors causing wastage and stagnation are:

- a) Economic factors (poverty)
- b) Communal and sociological (factors Scheduled castes/tribes)
- c) Educational and cultural factors (illiteracy of parents and their cultural background)
- d) Social and religious factors (customs, religious rigidity and taboos)
- e) Geographical and regional factors (Rural, backward regions and hilly area)
- f) Psycho-physical factors (malnutrition, psychological disorders)
- g) Academic factors (unattractive school environment and methods of teaching)
- h) Administrative factors (lack of modern management techniques).

All these multifarious constraints affect the progress of universalization of primary education in India (Venkatasubramanian, 1979; Reddy, 1979; Shah, 1979; Nath, 1979).

These problems of wastage and stagnation and under-achievement are acute when the educational progress of the children from disadvantaged section is seen. It has been clearly explained by Naik (1982) as follows "While there has been considerable expansion in all sectors of education in our country, imbalances and inequalities still persist. Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, landless labourers, backward classes and urban slum poor generally continue to lag behind in education". He also found that that the rate of wastage and stagnation among scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were generally higher and their achievements were generally lower. His finding has been supported by many other researchers who have also reported that the rate of wastage is more among the scheduled castes than among non-scheduled castes which may be due to many reasons including stigma of untouchability (Sharma and Sapra, 1969; Pimpley, 1974; Singh, 1974; Rath and Mishra, 1974; Dubey, 1974; Gore, 1974; Lakshmananna, 1974; Nayer, 1975; Chitnis, 1976; Dantawals, 1976; Mehta, 1976; Chitnis, 1977; and Yadav, 1985).

From the above discussions it is evident that the problems of wastage and illiteracy are the major blocks in achieving universalization of primary education in India.

It is also evident that these problems are more acute with the disadvantaged sections of the population.

1.6 UNIVERSALIZATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu has been one of the progressive states in India especially in the field of education. Primary education in Tamil Nadu is largely provided by the Government and the local bodies, though a sizeable number of private agencies both aided and unaided also provide the same. Actually 82 per cent of the primary schools and 65 per cent of the middle schools are run by either Government or local bodies while the remaining are managed by private bodies. It is relevant to state that the Christian Missionary Institutions are playing significant role in this regard.

1.6.1 Programmes for Achieving Universalization in the State

The State has been consistently attempting to achieve universalization of primary education, towards which several schemes have been introduced to support and strengthen the formal system. The implementation of the noon meal scheme, community assistance as well as ungraded school system have increased the enrolment of children at primary stage to a large extent.

(i) Noon Meal Scheme in Tamil Nadu

Thiru K. Kamaraj, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu started the midday meals scheme in 1954 and 20 lakhs of children were benefitted by that scheme for 200 days in a year. The Government of Tamil Nadu spent ten paise per child and local bodies contributed five paise per child. The drop outs in the schools were minimized and the poor malnourished children were greatly benefitted by the scheme. Looking into the needs of the poor children, Thiru M.G. Ramachandran the Ex-Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu further developed this scheme and started a new scheme known as "the chief minister's nutritious noon meal programme on 15th September 1982. Initially 20,747 noon meal centres were opened all over Tamil Nadu and 55.96 lakhs of children were benefitted by this programme. The Government provides Rice, Dhal and Oil and an outright grant at the rate of forty-five paise per child per day. Noon meals are provided on all the 365 days of the year. The scheme was further extended to 64.4 lakhs of children between the age of 2 to 14 years covering 60 per cent of the children in Tamil Nadu. About Rs.200 crores is allotted in the budget

for this scheme. In the year 1985, the above scheme is further extended by giving free books and uniforms to all the children. This scheme has helped to increase the enrolment rate and minimize the drop out rate in Tamil Nadu.

(ii) School Improvement Programme

It was started in Tamil Nadu in 1956 to promote community self-help and to seek active participation of the community to build better schools with needed equipments. It was decided to tap for this purpose the resources of the local community. The teachers of each school were asked to make informal contacts with the people of that area, explaining the basic needs of the local school. Everywhere the community came forward to assist many of the basic requirements of the schools such as furnitures, teaching aids and books.

(iii) Non-graded School System

In order to combat educational wastage and stagnation in primary schools, this non-graded system was introduced. According to this system, children in standards I to III enjoy automatic promotion.

1.6.2 Programmes for Qualitative Improvement

For improving the quality of education the following schemes were implemented :

- a) Curriculum development
- b) Mobile Laboratories
- c) Improvised Aids
- d) School Complex
- e) Talent Search Programmes
- f) Educational Broadcasting
- g) Work experience
- h) Inservice Training for Teachers etc.

The importance of "Education for All" was recognized as a sound policy by the Government of Tamil Nadu. Education is imparted free upto Higher Secondary stage. The educational plans and syllabi are being constantly revised to suit the changing needs of the state and also the raising expectations of the people. The teacher pupil ratio at the primary level is maintained at less than 1:42. As a result of all the schemes that have been introduced at primary level there has been a consistent increase in the enrolment at primary stage from 90 per cent in 1973-74 to 98.6 per cent in 1984-85. At the middle school level also

there has been a considerable improvement from 52 per cent in 1973-74 to 72 percent in 1984-86. The literacy rate in the state is 46.76 per cent as per Census 1981. In 1980-81, the enrolment in classes I to V of the children from scheduled castes was 20.5 per cent and from scheduled tribes 0.40 per cent. Similarly in classes VI-VIII their enrolment was 15.55 per cent and 0.28 per cent respectively. A vast section of the target groups namely, rural, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is yet beyond the hold of education (Yadav et al., 1986). Chitnis (1985) has identified Tamil Nadu as one of the states with largest percentage of scheduled caste people facing difficult economic circumstances and largest percentage of scheduled caste students with illiterate parents. Thus the scheduled caste students from Tamil Nadu would appear to be the most disadvantaged.

1.7 PROBLEMS WITH DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

In spite of the Government's efforts to equalize educational opportunities by introducing special schemes and incentives to the weaker sections, very slow progress is noticed in the field of education of disadvantaged children. These children somehow or other do not benefit equally as the other children in the primary school. They

face greater disadvantage in understanding the curriculum, in following the classroom instruction, in adjusting to the school or to the teacher and to other children. In classroom interactional situation they may feel inferior and estranged and hence fail to come up to the expected level of performance inspite of the equal input provided. At this point, it would be better to discuss the nature and characteristics of disadvantaged children before investigating into their educational problems.

1.8 "DISADVANTAGED" - DISCUSSION OF THE CONCEPT

The term disadvantaged has acquired a variety of meanings. It is used interchangeably with other terms like deprived, underprivileged, lower class, lower socio-economic groups etc.

The term "socially disadvantaged" was first used by Robert Havighurst (1961) to refer to the bottom 15 to 20 percent of Americans. He speaks about the following characteristics of disadvantaged groups in U.S.A.

- (a) have a low income
- (b) usually of rural background dates back to two generations.

- (c) They suffer from social and economic discrimination.
- (d) They are geographically widely distributed.

C.V. Good in the "Dictionary of Education" defines a socially disadvantaged child as one whose social class background has provided skills, values, outlooks and behaviour patterns significantly different from those reflected by the major institutions of the society; such a child is usually from a lower working class background and is at a disadvantage in competitive social and educational institutions where the experiences of a lower middle class or upper class children constitute the norm.

The nature and dimensions of social disadvantage in India are different from the problem in West. The structure of social disadvantage in India is multifaceted. It is characterised by factors like mal- and under-nutrition due to over population, social network organized around caste, regional differences in agro-economic development with large variations in factors such as distribution of civic and educational facilities, unstimulating environment and schooling (Misra, 1983).

Varma (1984) describes the disadvantaged people as economically deprived and exploited, socially downtrodden

and discriminated against, politically powerless and culturally different category of persons who have been living a poor quality of life characterized by ignorance and obscurant beliefs, etc., for ages. He gives the following stock examples of disadvantaged people viz., the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in India, buraku communities in Japan, the Blacks, the Red Indians, Puerto Ricans and the immigrants in the states.

In India the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are considered as the socially disadvantaged section of the population. The problem of educational backwardness of the scheduled castes has its origin in the traditional varnashram pattern of Hindu society. This pattern practically divided the entire population into four rigid and water-tight compartments, entry into one of which from the other was inconceivable. For, once a person was born in one of the varnas he continued to be its member till his death. According to this pattern the scheduled castes were assigned the menial and unclean occupations and education was denied to them, as it was not considered necessary for performing their caste based occupations. Their professions not being remunerative and as the access to education was denied to them, they became some of the

poorest of the poor and grew as the most underdeveloped communities. This state of affairs continued for long and it was not considered desirable or appropriate to extend the benefit of education to the scheduled castes. Gradually, social and religious reformers began to realize their sad plight and expressed their concern at the miserable position of this class of people in the Hindu society. Voices were raised for improving their lot and extending to them the benefits of education. The Government of India has made all possible efforts to banish the scourge of untouchability from the country and provide educational opportunities to the scheduled castes so that they can come at par with the general population. A number of schemes aiming at their educational development have been launched and millions of rupees spent on these schemes. Considerable attention has been given to their educational development in the five year plans.

The scheduled caste children are intellectually not inferior to those of higher castes. The learning difficulties which they face are generally because of emotional conflict emanating from the practice of untouchability, poor home environment, lack of adequate facilities, lack of motivation, economic hardship and cultural deprivation

(UNESCO Report, 1982). The loss of adequate cultural heritage and good socio-economic conditions adversely affect the disadvantaged children in developing capacities and characteristics essential for good educational attainment. But these difficulties are not such that they ^{not} can_A be overcome. Given a favourable and congenial environment they may come up to the required educational status.

Many researches have been conducted to identify the psychological, social, economic and cultural problems of disadvantaged children that hinder their educational achievement. In most of the studies, poverty and economic backwardness of the family have been found as the most important causes contributing to wastage in education. This specific cause has been interpreted in the form of consequences of poverty, i.e., lack of good clothing, shelter, medical facilities, stationery and cost of education which compelled them to give up their studies (Chandrasekharaiah, 1969; Singh, 1969; Naik, 1971; Shah, 1974; Dubey, 1974; Lakshmanan, 1974; Singh, 1974; Nayer, 1975; Chatterjee, 1975; Mehta, 1976; Santhakumari, 1976; Maurya, 1976; Rastogi, 1976; Chitnis, 1977; and Ramanamma, 1978).

Some studies have pointed out that caste leads to wastage in education. In India, rural communities are not as complex as urban communities. A rural community in India has still not lost its cultural stereotype, thus there are villages which are conspicuous by their caste or occupational character. It is not uncommon to hear in this country that this is a 'Brahmin village' or that this is an 'Ahir village'. This is so not only in rural areas but also in urban areas. Such social stigma results into an indifferent attitude towards the children from this section of society and compels them to dropout from schools (Sharma and Sapra, 1969).

Another important finding was that some of the scheduled caste students were first generation learners and as such parental help and encouragement were lacking for them to continue their education (Bose, 1969). They also do not have conducive home environment which is an important factor for effective learning (Singh, 1974; Lakshmana, 1974; Mehta, 1976).

Many researchers have analysed the effects of deprivations (social, economic, environmental, cultural etc.)

on the cognitive development of disadvantaged children and they have reported differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children on several cognitive measures (Das, 1974; Sinha, 1976; 1977; Panda, 1977 and Ushasri, 1980).

It has also been reported that the differences in performance between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children increases as the children get older. This phenomenon is referred as the "Cumulative deficit phenomenon". The cumulative deficit concept might be very well marked at the terminal stage of the primary school (Rath, Dash and Dash, 1979).

Sinha (1977) in his study has also observed the "broom stick effect" i.e., difference between two caste groups being minimal initially but getting progressively accentuated with advance in age". In performing complex tasks according to Sinha (1977), the underprivileged children were getting increasingly behind the more privileged children with the advancement in age. Research studies analysing the educational backwardness of disadvantaged children indicate a combination of social,

economic, psychological and environmental factors. Poverty emerges as the most important factor. It operates as a handicap to education in many ways. More directly, poverty implies continual hunger, malnutrition, illhealth and illness which interfere with regular attendance at school and with ability to learn. In addition, there are the usual well-known correlates of poverty, such as language or mathematical disability, the inability to deal with abstract concepts and to classify, comprehend and recognize patterns (Chitnis, 1987). The following theories also explain the effect of deprivation on the cognitive development of the children.

1.9 THEORIES WHICH ACCOUNT FOR THE POOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

It has long been known that some general relationship exists between the conditions of social, cultural and economic deprivation and cognitive deficit. A large body of empirical literature supports the assumption that certain environmental conditions may retard psychological processes, including intellectual development. Bruner writes that "exposure to normally enriched environments makes the development of cognitive strategies possible by providing intervening opportunities for trial and error..... that

there is impairment under a deprived regiment..... seems to be fairly evident". Although he does not refer specifically to the lower class child, Bruner's remarks seem especially relevant here. The obvious implication is that disadvantaged children who have a meagre environment basis for developing cognitive skills are often unprepared to cope with the formal intellectual and learning demands of the school.

While discussing about the factors causing the academic dysfunction of disadvantaged children, one must also consider their limited exposure to perceptual, conceptual and verbal experiences in the early formative years which, in the normal middle class environment, prepare the child for the tasks which the school will set him. In discussing these cognitive deficiencies, Ausubel (1963) states, "It is reasonable to assume that whatever the individual's genetic potentialities are, cognitive development occurs largely in response to a variable range of stimulation..... characteristic of the culturally deprived environment, however is a restricted range and a less adequate and systematic ordering of stimulation sequences. The effect of this restricted environment includes poor perceptual

discrimination skills; inability to use adults as sources of information, correction and reality testing and as instruments of satisfying curiosity; an impoverished language system and a paucity of information concepts and relational propositions. His abstract vocabulary is deficient and his language related knowledge such as number concepts, self-identify information and understanding of the physical and geometrical and geographical environments is extremely limited".

A child from any circumstance who has been deprived of substantial portion of the variety of stimuli which he is matured enough to respond is likely to be deficient in the equipment required for learning. According to Piaget "The rate of development is in substantial part, but certainly not wholly, a function of environmental circumstances. Change in circumstances is required to force the accommodative modifications of schemata that constitute development. Thus, the greater the variety of stimulations to which the children must accommodate his behaviour structures, the more differentiated and mobile they become. Thus the more new things a child has seen and the more he has heard, the more things he is interested in seeing and hearing, Moreover, the more variation

in reality with which he has coped, the greater is his capacity for coping". This emphasis on importance of variety in the environment implies the detrimental effects of lack of variety. This in turn leads to the concept of "stimulus deprivation". The disadvantaged children also suffer from stimulus deprivation due to their unstimulating environment which in turn affects their cognitive development.

Many researchers have also reported the fact that the development of perceptual, motor, verbal and conceptual abilities of a child brought up in an enriched environment is much faster compared to a child brought up in an impoverished environment (Hebb, 1947; Piaget, 1952; Skeels, 1966). Pre-school and elementary grade children coming from enriched environments do invariably better in cognitive tasks than children coming from impoverished, non-stimulating environments. (Das, 1970; Sinha, 1975; Sahu, 1979; Rath, Dash and Dash, 1979).

It was also observed that scheduled caste people are more frustrated and feel greater inferiority due to very close socio-cultural proximity with upper caste people. As they come in closer contact with advantaged groups of people in day-to-day life they become aware of their own

inferiority more and more. The traumatic experiences repeatedly experienced by them get accentuated in course of time and may ultimately disorganize their total perception and distort their approach and orientation to healthy social life and adjustment (Rath, Dash and Dash, 1979).

Educational researchers focussing on the family-based determinants of variations in academic performance maintain that poor academic performance of disadvantaged children can be traced "to a basic failure of socialization process in the home..... early childhood experiences in poverty environments create enduring personality formations that are inimical to effective achievement striving not only in the classroom but indeed in virtually all areas of life" (Cummings, 1977). He describes the effect of environment on disadvantaged children as follows, "A victim of his environment, the ghetto child begins his school career, psychologically, socially, physically disadvantaged. He is oriented to the present rather than the future, to immediate needs rather than delayed gratification, to concrete rather than the abstract. He is often handicapped by limited verbal skills, low self-esteem and a stunned drive toward achievement.

Goldberg (1967) describes the educational deficits that disadvantaged children bring with them to the classroom which prevent schools from working with them effectively. At home these children do not get much experience with organized group behaviour or verbally stimulating tasks. Such behavioural assets as obedience, punctuality, cleanliness and care for personal property are not stressed strongly at home as they are at school. They are not given materials to explore, manipulate and discuss, nor do their parents make an active attempt to glorify education as a valued experience. There is no pressure applied to succeed at school, no emphasis on learning tasks at home that might facilitate school achievement and no real orientation to the rules and routines of the school world. These pupils consequently perform poorly on tests of scholastic aptitude which require mastery of a conceptual style of communication. It can be easily inferred that the nature and amount of disadvantage to which an individual is exposed in his life is functionally related to his intellectual growth.

It has been reported by many researchers that disadvantaged children in addition to the cognitive deficits also suffer

from certain psychological deficits. They were found to be characterized by low level of aspiration, lack of future orientation and low degree of achievement motivation, (Sinha and Misra, 1980; Singh and Misra, 1985). They also manifest high degree of anxiety and maladjustment (Misra and Tripathi, 1980). They do not get encouragement and guidance from their parents (Doughlas, 1964) and they do not have positive attitude toward school. The schools with their middle class value, teachers, contents and methods are alien and frightening places for the disadvantaged children, (Varma, 1984). As a result of all these deficits these children achieve less than their non-disadvantaged counterparts. A brief account of these factors is presented in the following pages.

1.9.1 Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation is "th restless driving energy aiming at achieving excellence, getting ahead, improving on past records, doing things better, faster, more efficiently and finding unique solutions to difficult problems". The goal of the motive is defined as success in competition with a standard of excellence (MacClelland et al., 1953).

Psychologists have identified different motives for different actions. White (1959) has suggested the following hierarchy of motives slightly modifying, Maslow's (1955) hypotheses.

- Competence Motives
 - Curiosity
 - Achievement
 - Organization
- Self-esteem Motives
- Affiliation Motives
- Sex, Love, Acceptance
- Survival and Safety Motives
- Homeostatic Drive.

According to Maslow, the motives lowest in hierarchy will be aroused first and must be satisfied or they will be dominant. However, once they are satisfied to a large degree, motives on the next highest level become the primary energizers and directors of behaviour. This implies that the people of lower social classes will not have adequate competence motives such as curiosity, achievement and organization. This aptly describes the social immobility of the lower class people. It is clear therefore the

achievement motivation which is essential to solve problems and bring about concrete changes in any field of human activity is bound to vary from class to class.

1.9.2 Educational Aspiration

Achievement motivation is highly related to the levels of aspirations of the individuals. Although the achievement motive is common throughout culture, we can still find differences in the motives of people of different social classes. It is certainly an undisputed fact that the motivational urges of the scheduled caste children for getting education are very weak. This is an important factor which is related to higher educational aspirations. The latter is also closely linked up with aspirational levels for the future occupation and income. All the aspirations are again functional outcome of the family, educational, economic and occupational background. In several studies the influence of socio-economic status over level of aspiration has been established. The studies of Sewell and Haller (1965), Sewell and Shaw (1967), Gupta (1981), Koul (1983) and Pandey (1985), show that the youth of higher class origins are more likely to aspire for higher educational goals than the youth of lower class origins.

1.9.3 Parental Encouragement

Parents who set high achievement expectations for their children, who encourage their children to be independent, self-reliant and autonomous and who reward and reinforce their children's behaviour in a warm and positive manner, produce high achieving children. On the other hand parents who are harsh and authoritarian with their children, who have low performance expectations and who allow their children little autonomy produce traits in their children which are inimical to effective performance (Rosen and D'Andrade, 1959). It was also stated by Cortes and Flemming (1968) that the interests of the parents and encouragement rendered by them to the children play a vital role in their academic achievement. But it was observed that the parents of disadvantaged children remain so much isolated from the educational institutions that they do not pay heed to the progress of their children (Douglas, 1964).

Moreover the lower class home is characterized by an absence of cultural resources such as books, magazines, Radio and Television and this environmental deficiency

retards the development of important intellectual and verbal skills among the children raised in these homes (Deutsch and Brown, 1964). Hence it can be safely said that the lack of proper environment, guidance and encouragement provided by their parents make these students achieve less than their non-disadvantaged counterparts.

1.9.4 Attitude Towards School

The parents of disadvantaged children regarded schooling as irrelevant and indicative of any immediate or future benefit. They have no aspirations for academic success on the part of their children and are therefore insensitive to both success and failure. They are not interested in education and therefore they do not present their offspring with favourable educational attitudes (Miller, 1967).

1.9.5 Adjustment

Adjustment is the ability to select appropriate and effective measures to meet the demands of the environment, while maintaining a healthy attitude towards the circumstances, (Poduska, 1980). Basically it is a matter of problem solving which entails intellectual processes such

as perception, learning, memory, thinking etc., for getting along and effectively utilizing environmental resources and opportunities. The degree of adjustment depends partly upon the person's self-concept (Sathyan, 1985).

Whereas disadvantaged children were found to have poor self-concepts, high anxiety and emotional problems, (Klausmeier and Ripple, 1971). They also manifest high degree of insecurity and maladjustment (Misra and Tripathi, 1980). Hence it can be concluded that disadvantaged children because of their cognitive and environmental deficits and poor self-concept will have more adjustment problems than the non-disadvantaged children.

1.10 THE RATIONALE AND ASSUMPTIONS

Based on the foregone discussions, the following assumptions were made for the present study. The disadvantaged children having been subjected to cultural and socio-economic deprivations for a long period must be different in many respects from the non-disadvantaged group. The development of personality, cognitive characteristics and academic achievement are a function of the quality of environment. The socio-economic deprivation affects one's development of personality and the process of academic achievement. It is formulated that certain socio-psychological

factors like achievement motivation, adjustment, educational aspiration, attitude toward school and parental encouragement are found to be the important factors associated with academic achievement of disadvantaged children. It is also assumed that disadvantaged children will differ from the non-disadvantaged children in their level of educational aspiration, achievement motivation, adjustment, in their attitude toward school, and parental encouragement because of their socio-economic, cultural and educational deprivations and isolations.

Thus, this study is based on a rationale that academic achievement is determined by several psychological and environmental factors. The disadvantaged children right from their birth, reared up in an impoverished environment will have poor academic achievement.

1.11 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG DISADVANTAGED AND NONDISADVANTAGED CHILDREN AT THE TERMINAL STAGE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLING IN TAMIL NADU".

The major purpose of this investigation is broadly to study the correlates of academic achievement of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children.

1.12 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (1) To identify the factors influencing the academic achievement of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children.
- (2) To determine the relative strength of the selected predictor variables in explaining the variation of academic achievement of the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children.
- (3) To make a comparative study of the factors influencing the high and low achievers among the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups.
- (4) To make an indepth study of the conditions associated with high and low achievers among the disadvantaged children.

1.13 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study deals with one of the most pressing and poignant problems facing our society to-day viz., the

performance of socially disadvantaged children who do poorly in school from the beginning, fall progressively farther behind their middle class peers, and eventually join the ranks of the drop-outs.

While it is known that generally disadvantaged children come from culturally and socio-economically deprived families, it is not reported as how they stand in relation to the non-disadvantaged group with respect to the background variables which are relevant to their education. This study attempts to isolate and identify the factors, both psychological and environmental that are responsible for impediments in the learning process of these children.

It is certainly expected that the non-disadvantaged children would be better in academic achievement than the disadvantaged children, the main purpose of this study is to assess the nature and extent of these differences so that some compensatory educational programmes could be organized systematically for the disadvantaged children. Hence a study was formulated to investigate into the relationship of some selected variables and the academic achievement of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children.

1.14 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study has been conducted in the district of Ramanathapuram which is one of the backward districts in Tamil Nadu. This study covers the children who are socially and economically deprived. The findings of this study will help to solve the educational problems of children who live in remote rural and backward areas.

This study throws light on the population characteristics of children at the terminal stage of the primary school. It probes into the factors influencing the academic achievement of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children at the terminal stage of the primary school. The findings of the study will help to reduce wastage and stagnation at primary stage and to improve the standard of education.

The second chapter deals with the review of researches related to the present study.