

CHAPTER - V

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Dated collected at the State, District, Taluk and Village levels were analysed and interpreted in the previous chapter. This chapter presents the summary and the major conclusions drawn.

Summary

The need for literate population and universal education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years was recognised as a crucial input and given due consideration in the Constitution as well as in five year plans. This has resulted in the manifold increase of spatial spread, infrastructural facilities, teachers and increased coverage of boys and girls. Besides the quantitative expansions, various supportive schemes have also been launched. But despite these efforts, the goal of Universal Elementary Education continues to be elusive.

Inspite of the impressive quantitative growth, inter-State variations in the development of primary education is quite large. While in States like Goa, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra,

Manipur, West Bengal, Gujarat and Tiripura, primary education has been adequately covered, in a number of States it is less than adequate. Variations are also evident in terms of number of teachers, enrolment and retention. Most of the variations pertaining to the expansion of facilities are due to insufficient allocation of financial resources. Even though the expenditure on elementary education has increased between the period 1950-51 and 1986-87, the amount spent per student today at real prices is the same or lower than the amount spent in the 1950s and 1960s.

On the demand side, neither all children in the age group 6-14 years are enrolled and nor all those enrolled are retained. Wastage in terms of dropout continues to be a major problem at primary stage. This has serious implication for the development of the nation as a whole. Even though the steps taken through various five-year plans have resulted in an overall improvement of all sectors of development, problems such as the high population growth rate, poverty, illiteracy, caste and gender discriminations etc. continue to subdue the results of the developmental initiatives. So, education in general and primary education, in particular has the crucial role of promoting the prospects for development and poverty alleviation. In this process, primary education has to

continuously interact and influence all other elements of development such as economy, polity, health, religion, education, media, etc. Hence the operation of primary education is necessarily an interactive process and the nature and the magnitude of interaction may not be uniform across regions. In India with diversities in terms of agro-climatic conditions, economy, literacy levels political awareness, culture etc., there are bound to be variations in the interaction, influence and the response evoked by primary education in different regions. Moreover, since the influences of primary education are reflected in the social experiences and living conditions of people, those experiences as well as their influences on primary education are too global to be discerned. Understanding of them will also require familiarisation with the distinct cultural context in which they take place. So, in order to understand the interactive process of primary education and its manifestation, the investigation was carried out in the State of Tamilnadu. More specifically the study examined the trend in the development of primary education in terms of need for schooling facilities made available their adequacy, and utilisation in rural areas. The study also examined the nature and extent of the effects of primary education in a sample village.

The related studies reviewed have covered different aspects of elementary education, which were classified into the following categories : Progress of Elementary Education; Wastage and drop-out in Elementary Education; Implementation of Elementary Education and Impact of Elementary Education. From the review it was clear that there had been tremendous growth in schooling facilities since Independence. However, wastage and stagnation continued to be very high in many States due to poor economic conditions of families and domestic work. The studies also pointed out that the implementation of elementary education faced certain limitations such as lack of adequate physical facilities, poor status of teachers, ineffective inspection etc. The review of a number of studies also revealed that education enhanced individual modernity, people's aspiration for education and productivity. The data for many studies were collected from official records or from a samples of teaches, pupils, parents, officials connected with the department of education and Panchayat Raj leaders. The studies reviewed indicated the variations that existed in the development and operation of primary education in different States. however, due to the descriptive nature of the studies they could not

adequately probe the interaction of primary education in local contexts.

The present study investigated the effectiveness of primary education with regard to its development in terms of certain quantitative aspects and its interaction in terms of influence on local contexts and the responsiveness of local contexts. The investigation was carried out at different levels- States, district, taluk and village. At each level data of different nature were collected from multiple sources adopting a combination of techniques and using tools of various kinds. Data of both quantitative and qualitative nature were collected for the study. Quantitative data in the form of numerical information pertaining to number of schools, number of teachers, essential facilities, target population, enrolment and retention were collected at the State, district, taluk and village levels. Qualitative data in terms of reactions of people of local communities and perceptions of functionaries and effects of primary education were collected from the village. The data for the study were collected from various sources - official documents, official of the educational departments at the district and taluk levels, village and school functionaries, members of the local village and eminent persons among the local residents.

As the study required only quantitative data from the State and all its districts and they had to be collected from official documents no sampling procedure was adopted. However, since the interaction of primary education required indepth study and collection of quantitative as well as qualitative data, Dharmapuri, Pennagaram, and Makkanoor were selected as sample district, taluk and village respectively, following certain procedures. The data were gathered using information schedules, interview schedules and field notes on participant observation.

The data collected have been analysed with regard to the need for schooling facilities, availability, adequacy, utilisation of facilities and effects of primary education. The need for facilities such as number of schools, number of teachers and essential facilities have been estimated at the State and district levels in a five year time series from 1950-51 to 1987-88. Talukwise variations across years for the sample district have been compared for the period 1980-81 to 1987-88. The number of schools required has been worked out on the basis of the target population and the norm specified by the State Government for division of standards in primary schools. The need for the number of teachers has been estimated on the basis of the State Government's norms to appoint teachers in

primary schools. The need for essential facilities was identified by taking the Government's specification to provide essential facilities in primary schools into accounts.

A trend analysis of the availability of facilities at the State and district levels for the quinquennia 1950-55, 1955-56, 1960-65, 1980-85 and the year 1987-88. The adequacy of various facilities was analysed on the basis of percentage of availability of facilities in the State and across district and taluk levels and the actual need at each level. The trend in the utilisation of facilities was analysed comparing gross enrolment figures, gross enrolment ratios and retention rates of pupils. The effects of primary education were analysed by categorising the interactions observed in the sample village into different aspects such as environment, economy, socio-cultural and education.

Conclusions

The data analysis on the pattern of development of primary education in Tamil Nadu bring to fore several points.

1. While the target population in rural areas in the age group of 6-11 years has increased in the State,

their proportion to total target population in all areas has decreased from 72 per cent in 1950-51 to 67.08 per cent in 1987-88. In other words, the primary school age population of primary school age girls to total school age population has also decreased from 50.32 per cent in 1950-51 to 49.51 per cent in 1987-88. This decrease is mainly due to the general decreasing trend in the rural population of all ages in the State. The proportion of rural population to total population has decreased from 75.65 per cent in 1951 to 67.04 per cent in 1981. The trends in the districts also confirm this. In the districts, particularly in Coimbatore, The Nilgiris and Chengalpattu districts the decrease in the rural population between 1951 and 1981 is 20 to 30 per cent. On the whole as per the 1981 actual figures the proportion of rural population in the age group 6-11 years to total population in the same age group is below the State average in 5 of the 16 districts in the State, viz., Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, the Nilgiris, Madurai and Tirunelveli. In the case of girls, this picture is altogether different. Except Tirunelveli, in the rest of the five districts the proportion of girls in the age group 6-11 years to total target population is above the State average of 49.45 per cent. South Arcot, Salem, Ramanathapuram and Kanyakumari along with Tirunelveli fall into list of districts, with target

population in rural areas below the State average. The diminution trend in rural population has also resulted in the reduction of the number of habitations with population 400 and below and increase in the number of habitations with population of 500 and above. So the current norm of providing schools in habitations with population 300 needs to be reviewed and facilities in bigger habitations have to be increased.

2. 'The Need' for the number of primary schools, calculated on the basis of target population and attendance norms, has increased steadily in the State. In rural areas the increase in the need between 1950-51 and 1987-88 is more than 70 percent. The need in rural areas when compared with need in all areas has declined from 71 per cent in 1950-51 to 67 per cent in 1987-88. Among the districts, Salem needed more schools continuously until 1970-71. Though 'The Need' generally increased in all districts between 1950-51 and 1987-88, the increase in South Arcot was the highest with 89.7 per cent.

3 As the increase in the need for schools, 'The Need' for the number of teachers has also increased in the State during the period 1950-51 to 1987-88. However, the need in rural areas as a proportion of the number of teachers needed in all areas has fallen

particularly from 1975-76 onwards. Among the districts, wide variations are observed in the need for the number of teachers in rural areas. Until 1970-71 Salem needed the highest number of teachers. However, from 1980-81, this place was taken over by South Arcot district. The Nilgiris district continuously needed the least number of primary teachers.

4. The availability of the number of schools and teachers indicate the consistent increase in their number. But the increase is not commensurable to the actual need. So inadequacies for both schools and teachers continuously exist in almost all the districts in varying degrees. The reduction in the inadequacies over a period is not necessarily due to increase in the provision of facilities but because of the reduction in the proportion of target population in rural areas. Provision of adequate number of schools and teachers is basic for the achievement of the goal of UEE. But in reality, inspite of the reduction in rural population the provision of facilities hardly meet the need. This suggests that while making provision for certain facilities, the entire target population to be covered is not taken into account. Moreover, despite clear norms for provision of schools and teachers, they are not strictly adhered during implementation. Hence inadequacy of schools and short falls of teachers loom

consistently. It is also evident from the district level and taluk level analysis of data on availability and adequacy of facilities, that backward districts and taluks do not receive any preferential treatment while making the facilities available. In fact inadequacies are found to be high in regions which are educationally backward.

5. There is a wide gap between availability and need which causes inadequacies for schools, teachers and essential facilities in rural areas. Furthermore, most facilities available today were provided in the fifties and sixties. What has been added after that is comparatively less. 75 per cent of the existing number of schools and 60 per cent of the existing teaching positions were made available in the fifties and sixties.

6. As far as the auxiliary facilities are concerned, majority of the existing primary schools have pucca buildings and at least two instructional rooms. 95 per cent of the schools have drinking water facilities. But toilets, and play ground are not available in many schools. Instructional materials, play materials and musical instruments as per the specifications of the Directorate of Elementary Education have not been provided. Until 1986 the schools were not provided any

instructional materials. It is only under the scheme, 'Operation Black Board' the schools have received some kits and other basic materials. However, the school improvement conferences organised to encourage the local people to donate to meet the basic requirements of schools have been quite successful. This indicates the local people's willingness to co-operate with the functionaries in improving the schools. But the local people are contacted only at the time of such need, otherwise the functionaries are indifferent and do not make any attempt to involve the local community in running the school. The Parent Teacher Association exists only on paper. The involvement of the local people to a great extent depends upon the attitude of the functionaries and the way they approach the local people. The functionaries, particularly the teachers command poor respect in the communities mainly due to their lack of interest and involvement in helping people solve common problems of the village.

7. Enrolment at primary stage has increased more than 326 per cent between 1950-51 and 1981-88. The enrolment of girls during the same period has increased 481 per cent. The enrolment of girls to total enrolment has increased from 33.28 per cent in 1950-51 to 45.34 per cent in 1987-88. At the district level though all districts have recorded increase, Salem district (Salem

& Dharmapuri districts put together) registered 454 per cent increase. The effect of the noon-meal scheme on enrolments in the quinquennium 1980-81 to 1985-86. From 1985-86 onwards more than 100 per cent gross enrolment has been achieved. Though most districts have also achieved gross enrolment ratio of 100+, in Periyar and Dharmapuri districts it is below 90 per cent. The State has achieved near universal enrolment of girls. However, the gross enrolment ratio of girls in Dharmapuri district is comparatively low at 73.73 per cent in 1987-88.

8. Another important indicator, retention at primary stage shows considerable improvement from 36.85 per cent in 1950-51 to 73.29 per cent in 1987-88. It has particularly increased after 1965-66. The retention of girls has increased considerably in rural areas. Yet large proportion of children of 6-11 years particularly from economically poor families are outside the school system.

9. The increased enrolment with inadequate facilities might bring in completely new set of problems in terms of over crowded class rooms and deteriorating quality of teaching/learning. The teachers are already conscious of the implications and their Unions are fighting for better working conditions.

Many parents of children on the other hand are dissatisfied about the poor learning levels of their children. The inspecting authorities and other officials though aware of the situation are helpless and are concerned about the politicization of the teachers Unions and the insufficient allocation of funds for primary education. The implications of this trend to some extent is already reflected in the functioning of the village school. Despite the increasing enrolment, shortfalls in the average attendance of pupils, rise in dropout rate, poor achievement levels of pupils, and lack of commitment among teachers are experienced in the primary schools.

10. Provision of primary school within the village has created demand for education among the people and contributes towards increasing people's awareness and thereby their aspirations for better living conditions. Among the educated, those have studied beyond primary stage and are successful in getting salaried jobs are economically well off and their ability to influence the local economy as well as decisions is also high. But despite this position they are indifferent to the overall improvement and development of the village and are generally keen to migrate to urban centres.

11. Getting admissions in professional training institutions and later getting a salaried job was comparatively easier some fifteen or twenty years back. To a great extent this was possible with the contacts the villagers maintained with the eminent and influential persons outside the village and those persons willingness to help the village and the people without expecting any personal gain. But now, with high competition for professional training and scarce job opportunities, people are witnessing corrupt practices in all walks of life. So, even though they can accept the importance of basic education, they generally view education, more specifically higher education as a futile exercise.

12. Since educated persons are keen to find salaried jobs and migrate to towns, they are not inclined to look after agriculture, animal husbandry or initiate any venture for self-employment. So agriculture, animal husbandry and other village crafts are continued to be managed by the illiterate persons in the village and these occupations have not undergone any significant change.

13. Primary education exists today as an imposed activity from outside. The management of primary schools was transferred from District Board to Local Bodies in

order to make it more convincing and relevant to local needs. But primary schools in Tamil Nadu are only technically under the management of the Local Body and the actual management and control are with the Directorate of Elementary Education and so the school in the village remains as a mere extension of the Government machinery rather than reaching out to the life and concerns of the community around it.

Major Observations

Certain broad based observations can be made regarding the effectiveness of primary education in the light to the conclusions drawn above. The operation and development of primary education is not uniform across all regions. Among districts and taluks there are variations in all aspects of primary education. These variations are essentially due to the social experiences of individuals living in different regions. The educational backwardness or progress of a particular district or taluk or village is dependent on the social experiences which determine the character of the local contexts.

Primary education along with various supportive schemes in rural areas enable people attain literacy and numeracy skills and increase their aspirations for

better living conditions. However it does not ensure further education of individuals as it depends upon other factors such as economic conditions of families, chances of getting admissions in institutions which offer job oriented courses and the possibility of getting a salaried job.

The programme of Universal Elementary Education is a national priority and it aims at Providing not only the basic skills of 3 Rs to all citizens but also laying foundations for the personality, attitudes, social confidence and habits. But in practice the role of elementary education in shaping the personality and nurturing confidence appears to be highly subdued. This might be due to very little emphasis placed on them and the inappropriate curricular practice. So, the educated persons are least interested in the general welfare of the village. Since there is a mismatch between their outlook of life and the social economic realities of their villages, most educated persons prefer to migrate to urban areas as urban centres match their outlook and expectations in terms of more employment opportunities, better educational and health facilities, improved communication facilities and entertainment facilities. Migration of educated persons to urban centres would turntamount to under development of agriculture and other village based occupations. So

there is an urgent need for UEE to become locally relevant in terms of its operation.

The achievements of the goal of UEE also depends upon the interest and initiatives of the local communities. Even though the local communities are away from the planning and decision making centres - National, State, District and Taluk head quarters, their involvement is influenced by the national climate. For example, during the British era, mobilisation against alien rule was the nations's priority and a sense of unity based on patriotism and national fervour were predominant in the nation as a whole. This was reinforced and channelised by national leaders who enjoyed great respect and reverence among the masses. So, the call and concern of such leaders caught the attention of people even in the remote areas of the country and they were motivated to contribute their might towards nation's priorities. Support and involvement of such nature need to be mobilised from local communities for the achievement of the goal of UEE. It cannot be achieved if people are kept away from the management of primary schools or brought in only when some administrative requirements are to be fulfilled. The functionaries at all levels should make genuine attempts to involve the local people in all matters concerning the operation and development of primary schools.