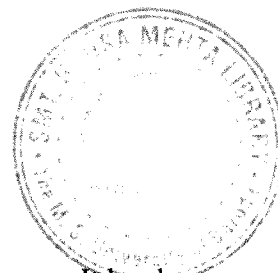# CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0.0 Introduction

Education is a process, a long drawn out one, indeed a lifelong process. It has long been recognized as one of the corner stone of social and economic development. More recently with technological development and the changes in the methods of production, it has become even more important because the new technologies and production methods depend upon the human resource that is well trained and intellectually flexible. More than ever before, the development of the nation today hinges on its capacity to acquire, adapt and then to advance knowledge. This capacity depends largely upon the extent to which the country's population has attained literacy, numeracy, communication and problem solving skills.

For the achievement of human security, it is essential to uphold and respect the dignity of human beings and the same is possible, only if one understands about the human rights of every other human being. This is only possible when one is literate enough. Education comprises not only higher and technical education but also primary education. It is only with good primary education that, one can have the edge to go in for higher education. It is the backbone of education system of any country and India is no exception. Good primary education means not only universal education but also education in its entirety which includes value based quality education. The task of execution of primary education is non-negotiable and resolute efforts are necessary to solve the emerging challenges affecting the accomplishment of primary education. Providing education for all is thus a challenge for the developing countries. Even, advanced education and training needs to rest on a solid foundation, which is essentially the product of primary education system. In India, this need was recognized long back and universal education for all children in the age group of 6-14 was given due consideration in the constitution as well as in various five year plans.

National Policy of Education (NPE, 1986) strongly advocated for new thrusts in elementary education with strong emphasis on universal enrolment, retention and access. The NPE (1986) and its Programme of Action (POA) updated in 1992 reaffirmed the national commitment towards Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) and put forth several concrete strategies for the pursuit of UEE.

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These strategies revolved around micro-planning, decentralization of planning, administration and management, an active involvement in planning by communities and Non-Governmental Organizations as well as Non-Formal Education Programme aimed to meet the needs of millions of out of school children.

A concerted effort has been made in the past two decades through a number of governmental and non-governmental schemes and programmes such as the Shiksha Karmi Project (1987), Operation Black Board (1987), Bihar Education Project (1991), Lok Jumbish (1992), Minimum Level of Learning (1992), District Primary Education Programmes (DPEP,1994), National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (1995), Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Programme (1995), Janshala (1998), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA, 2000) and Vidya Laxmi Yojna (2003). Despite strong policy directives and launching of all the above mentioned schemes and programmes, to achieve the goal of UEE; the fact is UEE is still a distant dream.

Indian education system is largely concerned with the existing formal structure of education and the institutionalized methodology of imparting knowledge to individuals. Within this very system exist many sub-groups of individuals with specific needs and tribals are one of them. In fact, tribal form a large group of individuals in Indian Society. For several historical, economic and social reasons the scheduled groups have remained economically backward and socially retarded even to this day. This is true with respect to their educational levels also. India has the second largest tribal population in the world. This Scheduled Tribes (STs) population is 8.08% of the total population of India and about 10% of all rural people. Twenty two of the twenty six states of the country have considerable ST population. There are 573 STs living in different parts of the country, having their own languages different from the one mostly spoken in the states where they live. There are more than 270 such languages in India (Indian Education Report, 2002).

1.1.0   Meaning of Tribe or Tribal

The term tribe is derived from the Latin word 'tribus'. Originally it was used to imply three divisions among the early Romans. Later on, it was used to mean the poor or the masses. In English language, the word appeared in the sixteen century and denoted a community of persons claiming descent from a common ancestor. The term tribe or tribal is not defined anywhere in the Constitution of India

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although according to the Article 342, STs represents the tribe or tribal communities that are notified by the President. Tribes are not part of the traditional Hindu caste structure. STs in India are more like the "indigenous" or "native people" in other parts of the world. Mishra (2002) defines scheduled tribes as people who (i) claim themselves as indigenous to the soil (ii) generally inhabit forest and hilly regions (iii) largely pursue a subsistence level economy (iv) have grate regard for traditional religious and cultural practices (v) believe in common ancestry and (vi) have strong group ties. However, all characteristics do not apply to all tribal communities. While, the Concise Oxford Dictionary define tribe as a group of (esp. primitive) families or communities, linked by social, economic, religious or blood ties and usually having a common culture and dialect and a recognised leader or any similar natural or political division.

1.1.1 Distribution of Tribal

Broadly, the anthropologists have divided the country in to three tribal zones:

❑ **North-Eastern Zone**: This zone includes the tribes such as Nagas, Charsi, Limbu, Kachari, Kululashaya, Rabha, Left, Gurung, Mishmi, Michar, Gorochakum, Bhohiya, Dalfa, Ahoramiri etc., in East Punjab, East Kashir, Himachal Pradesh, Northern Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur.

❑ **Central Zone**: This zone includes the tribes such as Baiga, Gond, Ho, Bhil, Bhoomij, Kharia, Birhor, Bhooyeyan, Kandh, Maria, Koli, etc., in Southern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

❑ **Southern Zone**: This zone includes the tribes such as Toda, Badaga, Chenchu, Irula, Soliga, Kadmuruba, Jenu, Kuruba, Mithuvan, Karikar, Chetti, Gadabha, Kadar, Yarana, Kudiyu, Pardhi, Advichencha, Hornashikari, etc., in Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.

Mostly these tribes live in forests in harmony with nature. They vary widely in their level of socio-economic development, cultural background and heritage, traits, psyche and so on and constitute perhaps, the least economically developed segments of the country's population.

1.1.2 Constitutional provisions for Tribal

The constitution has devoted more than 20 articles on the redressal and upliftment of underprivileged following the policy of positive discrimination and affirmative

action, particularly with reference to the ST. Recognizing the special needs of ST, the Constitution of India made certain special safeguards to protect these communities from all the possible exploitation and thus ensure social justice. While Article 14 confers equal rights and opportunities to all, Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste etc; Article15(4) enjoins upon the state to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes; Article 16(4) empowers the state to make provisions for reservation in appointments or posts in favor of any backward class of citizens, which in the opinion of state, is not adequately represented in the services under the state; Article 46 enjoins upon the state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, the ST and promises to protect them from social injustice and all form of exploitation. Further, Article 275 promises grant-in-aid for promoting the welfare of ST and for raising the level of administration of scheduled areas, Articles 330, 332, and 335 stipulates reservation of seats for ST in the Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assemblies and in services. Finally, the constitution also empowers the state to appoint a commission to investigate the conditions of the socially and educationally backward classes (Article 340) and to specify those Tribes or Tribal Communities deemed to be as ST (Article 342).The Fifth Scheduled to the Constitution lays down certain perceptions about the Scheduled Areas as well as the Scheduled Tribes in state other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram by ensuring submission of Annual Reports by Governors to the President of India regarding the Administration of the scheduled areas and setting up of Tribal Advisory Councils to advise on matters pertaining to the welfare and advancement of the ST (Article 244(1)). Likewise, the Sixth Schedule to the constitution also refers to the administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram by designing certain tribal areas as Autonomous districts and Autonomous Regions and also by constituting District Councils (Article 244(2)). To ensure effective participation of tribal in the process of planning and decision making, the 73rd and 74th Amendments of Constitution are extended to the Scheduled Areas through the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.

1.1.3 Tribal Education

A tribe may be seen as a sub group of the society. The members of a tribe live in a common territory and have a common dialect, which is the prime means of communication. Each tribe has a uniform social organization and possesses cultural homogeneity. The tribal population is characterized by a heterogeneous cultural pattern with variegated economic conditions and activities depending largely on ecology. There are also wide variations in psychological, cultural, social, economic and political background of various tribal groups. In a country like India there are large numbers of tribals, who because of historical and sociological reasons have strayed away from the main stream.

Education of tribals is an important task before the Government of India. Article 46 of the constitution talks about promotion of educational and economic interests of Schedule Castes (SCs), STs and other weaker sections. To quote "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of weaker sections of the people and in particular of SCs and STs and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations." About 8.08 % of this vast country is the tribal (scheduled) population. Many more other constitutional rights are available for tribal people but they fail to utilize these benefits because of their educational backwardness (Ekka, 1990).

Unfortunately the literacy rate of this tribal population is very low. The literacy rate, of scheduled tribes according to 2001 census is 47.10 %, which is much lower than national literacy rate i.e. 64.80 %. In tribal population the female literacy rate is 34.76 % while the male literacy rate is 59.71 % (Annual Report 2004-05). While literacy is only means to education and not an end in itself, education tends to lead to economic benefits, which are the result of the increased ability of the individual to utilize the information acquired through the process of learning. Therefore, any educational planning for such a vast group of individuals should aim at educating all its members in the school going age group. Education is in fact, an input not only for economic development of tribals but also for inner strength of the tribal communities, it also helps them in meeting the new challenges of life. Out of the ST child population of 16 million in the age group of 6-14 years, more than 87.5 % ST children were attending schools during 2000-01 (Selected Educational Statistics, 2001-02). This means about 12.5 % ST children were not attending school during 2001-02.

One of the reasons for poor access to schooling in tribal areas before 1980s was the high norm on population, number of children and distance for opening new schools. Most of the states have relaxed these norms to enable setting up schools even in small tribal hamlets. The Sixth All India Educational Survey (1993) shows that 78 % of tribal population and 56% of tribal habitations have been provided primary schools within the habitation. In addition, 11% of tribal population and 20% of tribal habitations have schools within less than 1 Km radius. About 65% of rural habitations covering 86% of the total rural population have primary schools within the habitations or within a distance of a half Kilometer, as against 56% of tribal population.

The disparity among various states in terms of tribal literacy is high ranging from 82% in Mizorum to 17% in Andhra Pradesh (Indian Education Report, 2002). As many as 174 districts (out of 418 districts in the country in 1991) have ST literacy rate below the national average literacy rate (29.6 %). Tribal literacy in 17 districts (7 in Uttar Pradesh, 4 in Madhya Pradesh, 3 in Rajasthan, 2 in Assam and 1 in Orissa) is below 10 %; while in 3 districts, it is more than 90 % (2 Himachal Pradesh and 1 in Bihar). Data reveal that states, which are low in general and tribal literacy are also states with higher gender disparity (Sujatha, 2000). Not only in literacy rate but variation do exist in the administration of primary education. For example, the administration of primary education under Panchayati Raj leadership in Gujarat was found to be effective whereas in Rajasthan and Bihar, irregularities of various kinds were noticed (Sathyabalan, 1993).

The operation and development of primary education is not uniform across all regions. Among districts and talukas 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 taluka or village is dependent on the social experiences, which determine the character of local contexts (Sathyabalan, 1993). In spite of availability of various facilities like hostels, free textbooks, uniforms etc. these schools are not able to maintain high retention rate and reduce dropout rate. The instructional activities in schools were monotonous and teacher centered, which leads to students poor performance. Even parents responses to the functioning of the schools and relevance to the community were not positive.

The educational facilities for schedule tribe habitations are poor in comparisons to other habitations (Bhargava, 1989). On the other hand, varieties of educational facilities were available for the tribal people but they failed to utilize them effectively (Panigrahi, 1992). This indicates that along with providing educational facilities, other problems need to be tackled through researches and then it can be solved by designing and implementing need based programmes (Ekka 1990).

Another special educational input for tribal education is residential schools widely known as ashram schools in India. These institutions are very special efforts in the direction of tribal education. Still the infrastructure in ashram schools in terms of buildings, teaching aids, hostel facilities etc were found to be poor. The teaching learning process in these schools was not found to be satisfactory. Absenteeism, stagnation and wastage were high in the ashram schools (Raman, 1989).

Convergence between the tribal welfare department and the education department is also critical for enhancing and ensuring school participation of ST. In many states schools in tribal areas are run by the tribal welfare department or tribal development authorities, while the curriculum, textbooks, school calendar, examination are set by the education department. Moreover, synergy of replication, opening of new schools, residential camps etc leads to larger coverage and outreach of tribal communities.

Various tribal groups in India have different culture. Therefore "an educational system" which is common to all the tribes will not be suitable for them because various tribes within one state differ so much from each other in terms of ethnographic features that it is impossible to develop a learning system common for them. Poverty, deprivation, poor economic condition, low earning, struggle for survival, dependence on forest products, seasonal migration, negative parental attitude are some of other roadblocks in providing universal education to scheduled tribes.

1.1.4 Tribal of the Gujarat

Gujarat has well developed agricultural sector as well as fairly developed industrial base. In fact, along with Maharashtra its neighboring state, Gujarat is one of the frontline states in matter of industrial development and capital investment. The educational growth in Gujarat is also steady. Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Kheda, Rajkot and Jamnagar are some of the places where economic and educational growth has taken place. But at the same time, it has been noted that Gujarat does

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have considerable size of STs and other backward castes in total population. Out of the total population of Gujarat, the population of tribal is almost 14%. About 10 percent of the total tribal population of the country is accounted by Gujarat state alone (Sahastrabudhe, 1995). SCs and other backward castes are spread over almost whole state, while tribal are more concentrated in districts like Sabarkantha, Panchmahals, Vadodara, Bharuch, Surat, Dang and Valsad. Among these Dang is the only districts having 98 % of tribal population. Even when DPEP was implemented in Gujarat in 1997, the most backward districts selected were Banaskantha, Dang and Panchmahals. The criteria followed for the selection of these districts were (1) educationally backward districts with female literacy below the national average and (2) the districts where Total Literacy Campaigns have been successfully leading to an enhanced demand for elementary education.

Even, Government of India has already identified districts that require special attention under SSA. The criteria for selection were (1) Special focus districts (Ministry of Human Resource Development) (2) Districts having > 50000 out of school children (3) Districts with Scheduled Caste population more than 25% (4) Districts with ST population more than 50% (5) Minority concentrated districts and (6) Special focus districts (Tribal Welfare Department). In Gujarat, Dang is the only district, which fall under (1), (4) and (6) criteria (Annual Work Plan and Budget Dang 2009-10). This demands high priority needs to be given to take definite actions to improve elementary education in Dang districts.

1.1.5 Tribals of the Dangs

The Dangs is a tribal district, with the Bhil, Konkana (Kunvi), Varli, Kotwalia, Kathodi and Gamit being the major tribal groups. The Bhils have historically been residing in the Dangs whereas the other tribes came to the Dangs in search of a livelihood. The Konkanas have migrated to this area from a coastal region in the south-west, the Konkan. The name, *Konkanas* and their dialect (Marathi dialect with certain North Konkani elements) derive from their place of origin. According to an oral tradition the community migrated north because of the terrible Durgadev famine of 1396-1408. The Varlis have also migrated to south Gujarat from the Konkan area but in a later phase due to the pressure of the British. The Varlis speak their own dialect, which is a mixture of Khandeshi, Bhili and Marathi.

Plate 1.1: Tribals of the Dangs

Historically, the Dangs have always had considerable social stratification, also in the pre-colonial period. Prior to the advent of British rule the Bhil ruled the Dangs (4 chiefs and 10 Naiks). In the first census of 1872, 7,426 Bhil, 6517 Konkana, 2491 Varli and 302 Gamit were counted. After independence the situation of the Konkanas improved, whereas the situation of the Bhils declined. The Konkanas were in a better position to take benefit of education and other welfare schemes; they dominated the forest labour cooperatives and could also make use of political reservations. In this way the division of power between Konkanas and Bhils shifted.

The stratification of society can also be perceived in the livelihood patterns of the different tribal communities. For Bhils forest resources have been their primary source of livelihood: hunting, gathering and the trade in timber. Revenue from cutting wood, for which the British gave permission, was the major source of income for Bhil chiefs. Bhils also started cultivating, mostly practicing slash and burn techniques. The Konkani rely on agriculture for subsistence without the necessity of hunting and gathering, despite the fact that they had to pay land taxes to the Bhil chiefs. British rulers demarcated the forest but allowed the Konkani to carry on with agriculture. The cultivation practices of the Varlis and Bhils on the other hand provided grain for only two or three months after harvest. During the rest of the year they depended very much on other sources of subsistence i.e. forest

fruits, mahuda (*Madhuca indica*) flowers, grains from wild grasses and roots. The Kotwalias are known to always have been landless and some of the Kotwalias have no experience with cultivation. They are entirely dependent on their occupation of collecting and processing bamboo, for example basket making. To supplement their income and also their food supply, they gather a number of minor forest products, such as timru leaves (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), mahuda flowers, mahuda seeds (*doli*), edible roots etc. The Kathodi tribe in Gujarat survived once upon time by the collection of katha from khair (*Acacia catechu*) trees, a non timber forest produce used for medical purposes. They now rarely pursue this traditional occupation because the possibilities for dwelling in the forest are limited and because non-tribals traders are switching to the industrial manufacturing of katha. The Kathodi have the lowest socio-economic position in the Dangs. Tribals in Dangs are acquainted with various languages however they speak Dangi, the local dialect. The different dialects spoken by tribals are considered unscheduled languages. Dangi is a mix of Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi languages. There are two reasons for the large Marathi influence. Firstly the region borders Maharashtra so there is much contact with Marathi speaking people and secondly the area was under Maharashtra jurisdiction before the formation of the separate state of Gujarat. During these times the education was also in Marathi. Not only the language but also the culture and for example the dressing pattern has Marathi influences. Given the fact that the Dangis are getting more formal education in Gujarati, the tribal languages and dialects are facing the threat of extinction. The loss of language is affecting tribal culture, especially their folklore.

The Dangs district bordering Maharastra state covered with high hills and rich forest. Dangs is southern most districts in Gujarat, which starts from the rugged mountain chains of the Sahyadri range of Western Ghats in the southwest and descends on the western side of extending undulating tract. The name Dangs is also associated with mythology. It is related to the Dandakaranya of Ramayan period. It is said that during the exile, Rama passed through this area en route to Nasik. Dangs district is situated between the parallels of latitude 20 33'40" and 21 5'10" and the meridians of longitude 73 27' 58" and 73 56' 36". The district is bounded in the North by Vyara and Songadh Taluka of Surat district of Gujarat and Navapur Taluka of Dhulia district of Maharashtra, on the east by Sakri taluka of Maharashtra and on the West by Vansda taluka of Navsari district and Vyara of

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Surat district of Gujarat State. The Dangs consists of a series of foothills between the flat alluvial plains of south Gujarat and the high mountains of Sahyadris, the range which divides the costal belt from the rugged plateau of Maharastrian Deccan. It used to be a country of thick and moist forest and deep seven river valleys, which in medieval times was considered almost impenetrable by armies from outside state. The Dangs is located between 105 and 1317 meter above sea level. Most of the villages are situated in forest areas and there is hardly any urbanization in the Dangs. The life style and means of existence of the tribal population are strongly influenced by this. However the natural resource base i.e. land, water and forest is degrading fast and this poses a great threat on the livelihoods of the population. Most of the land is situated on slopes and there is hardly any plain land available for agriculture. The four major rivers in the Dangs are the Gira, Purna, Ambika and Khapri. The Gira and Khapri are major tributaries of Purna and Ambika respectively. All the rivers originate from the north-eastern side of the Dangs and flow towards the south-western part. The drainage of the rivers mostly follows the south western direction. Most of the rivers basins are situated in the south western part of the district. The rivers have a high density of drainage and steeper gradient resulting into quick run off during monsoon. This causes a higher rate of land erosion and the transport of silt load. It is famously said that the flood of the Dangs is the blood of the Dangs as it carries the all important topsoil used for agriculture. The gradient is generally the major limiting factor for deposition of silt on the riverbanks and check dams. A special feature of the Dangs is the fact that the watershed limits coincide with the administrative boundaries. There is hardly any rainfall runoff entering from any adjoining areas to the Dangs. Further there is no transfer possible for groundwater from one basin to another. The entire rainfall receipt is drained out of the district only from two exit points: one near Waghai for the Ambika-Khapri rivers and one near Bhenskhatri for the Purna-Gira rivers. The district receives an annual average rainfall of about 2373 mm. The actual rainfall for the district during 2002 was 2537 mm. The rainfall is spread over a period of about 90 days.

The district comprises of 311 villages, 70 Panchayats and one taluka. The total population of the Dangs as per 2001 census is 186,729, divided in 36,498 households. The villages are small in size. The average population of the villages is 600 persons and the village consists on an average of 117 households.

Table 1.1 Details of Demography of the Dangs district

1	Total Population	186,729 (36,498 households)
2	Males	94356
3	Females	93264
4	Sex Ratio	(Number of females per 1000 males) 987
5	BPL Population	73.84 (%)
6	Tribal population	98 (%)

Ahwa, the district headquarters has total population of 13,722 while Waghai the important commercial centre has population of 6,020. Some other villages with a population of above 1,000 are Subir, Gadhvi, Pimpri, Hanvatchond, Samgahan, Malegam, Saputara, Taklipada, Sakarpatal, Gadad, Jakhana, Chikar, and Don. The entire district is tribal dominated with 98 % of the population comprised of tribals. Of the total population 73.84 % falls in the Below Poverty Level category. Although the district is mainly inhabited by 13 different tribes, about two third of the tribal population consist of Konkana and Bhils. There are three ethnic tribes identified as primitive tribe group also residing in the district: the Kotwalia, Kathodi and Kolcha.

Dang is smallest district on southern fringes of Gujarat State, comprises mainly of a single rural hilly forested taluka at the edge of Sahyadries. The total area is 1,778 Sq. Km. Ahwa is headquarter of the Dang district covering extreme length of 59 Km from North to South and 50 Km from East to West. Scheduled tribes called 'Dangies' predominantly inhabit Dang. According to the 2001 census, the total population of the district was reported to be 1, 86, 729 out of which males were 50.35 % and females were 49.65 %. 98 % of the total population of the district is tribal. There are 311 villages in the district and 70 group panchayats functioning in the district. The total number of literate reported as per 2001 census was 91, 275, out of which males were 59.56 % and females were 40.44 %. Dang district consist of only rural schools with single block. The female literacy rate is the third lowest from amongst all the districts in the state of Gujarat.

Since tribal lag behind socially and educationally, a special focus was given to them in approaches adopted like decentralization and community participation and programmes implemented like DPEP and Sharva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) at

national level for Universalization of Elementary Education. By doing this, efforts have been made to provide voice to tribal along with other disadvantaged groups.

1.2.0 Elementary Education

Elementary education is the most vital period of education in the life of an individual. According to the structure of educational pattern in India, the elementary education covers the primary (6-11 years) education and upper primary (11-14 years) education. Most of the states in India follow this pattern, which translate, in to the successful completion of prescribed educational requirements till class VIII. During this period the child has to acquire foundation skills in every aspect of education to prepare him/her for secondary education. Thus the child develops an ability to read and write with fluency, have numerical perception, power of reasoning and various other skills.

Since independence, both the central and state governments have been expanding the provision for elementary education to realize the aim of the directive principles of state policy as proclaimed in our constitution. The different articles of the Indian constitution states:

❑ "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6 – 14 years in such a manner as the state may, by law, determine". – Article 21 A

❑ "The State shall endeavour to provide, early childhood care and education to all children until they complete the age of 6 years". – Article 45

❑ "Who is a Parent/Guardian should provide opportunities for education to his/her child or as the case may be, ward between the age group of 6–14 years". – Article 51 A (Clause K)

The constitutional directive has been spelt out clearly and emphatically in the NPE, 1986 and POA, 1992. They emphasize the need for educational opportunities to all the children up to a given level irrespective of any discrimination with regard gender, caste, creed, religion etc. The Indian Education Commission (1882-83), the commission on education in India, made the principal objective of its enquiry 'the present state of elementary education throughout the empire and the means by which it can everywhere be extended and improved.' Therefore, the commission emphasized that state should be directed to extend elementary education to the masses. Thereafter the Sargeant Report (1944) was the first comprehensive educational plan formulated by the Central Advisory Board of Education with an

aim to tackle the problems of education as a whole. For the first time it was found that the report recommended universal compulsory and free education for all children between ages of 6-14. Thereafter the Kothari Commission (1964-66) on education, after taking the stock of existing educational situation called for universalization of elementary education. The Ninth Five Year Plan envisaged universal elementary education to access retention and achievement in relation to the qualitative aspects rather than mechanical expansion for universalization to be meaningful and fruitful. Consequent to several efforts, India has made enormous progress in terms of increase in institutions, teachers and students in elementary education. The number of schools in the country has increased fourfold while enrolment in primary schools has jumped by about six times as shown in the table.

Table 1.2 Growth of Elementary Education in India

Year	Number of Schools		Number of students in million			
			Primary		Upper Primary	
	Primary	Upper Primary	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1950-51	2,09,671	13,596	13.8	5.4	2.6	0.5
2001-01	6,38,738	2,06,269	64	49.8	25.3	17.5

Source: Encyclopedia of Indian Education

Access to schools is no longer a major problem. At the primary stage, 94 % of the country's need population has schooling facilities within one kilometer and at the upper primary stage it is 84 %. Thus the country has made impressive achievement in the elementary education sector. But the flip side is that even after sixty two years of independence the goal supported by the constitutional mandate continues to be elusive despite all the efforts. The proportion of illiterates in absolute number continues to increase from 294 million in 1950 to 850 millions in 2000 A.D. which means we still harbor the largest number of illiterates in the world. Millions of children still labor the livelong day for their own survival and of their own families. Child labor still defies a viable solution.

Education despite being promoted on a grand scale by government, struggles to survive. Increase in dropout rate, lack of infrastructural facilities, indifferent attitude of teachers towards students and vague understanding of the benefits of education among the parents are some of the major ills plaguing educational scenario.

The goal of UEE was to be achieved by 1960 as committed by the constitution. But universalisation could not be achieved even at the primary stage (classes 1-5) by then. So, Education Commission (1964-66) which went in to the whole gamut of education in the country recommended that the goal be achieved in a phased manner. Thus the revised targets were 1975-76 for universalisation of primary education and 1985-86 for UEE. But these targets were also not achieved. Later NPE (1986) committed to achieve not only universal enrolment but also universal retention by 1990 at primary stage and by 1995 at upper primary stage.

Major milestone events for free and compulsory education:

❑ 1995 - Article 45 of directive principles provides for free and compulsory elementary education.

❑ 1990 - Ramachary Committee strongly recommends compulsory elementary education.

❑ 1992 - India signs 'UN convention on right of the child' commits itself to providing compulsory primary education.

❑ 1993 - Supreme court judgement on Unnikrishnan case upholding elementary education as a fundamental right.

❑ 1997 - Saikia committee recommends free and compulsory elementary education as a fundamental right by constitution.

❑ 2001 - 93rd amendment bill for making free and compulsory elementary education as a fundamental right tabled in parliament.

❑ 2002 – The 93rd amendment is passed, making free and compulsory elementary education a fundamental right of every citizen of India now the Article-21 A.

The recommendations no doubt, indicate the commitment of the nation to the goal of UEE. But it could not be achieved due to various factors such as inter-state disparities in the expansion of facilities, insufficient allocation of financial resources, poor receptivity in communities and lack of community involvement (Satyabalan, 1993). Thus it is disconcerting to note that in 2001 also the pool of illiterates continues to be formidable as before. There is a common agreement among scholars that the performance of Indian education in case of all three dimensions of UEE i.e. universal enrolment, universal retention and universal achievement is not satisfactory. The performance is poor in case of enrolment, poorer in case of retention and poorest in case of achievement levels. There are problems relating to dropout rate, low levels of achievement and low participation

girls, tribal and other disadvantaged groups. Compiled with it are various systemic issues like poorly functioning schools, high teacher absenteeism, large number of teacher vacancies, poor quality of education and nearly one lakh habitations in the country without schooling facility. In short the country is yet to achieve the elusive target of UEE which means hundred percent enrolment and retention of children with quality education. To achieve this goal community involvement has been visualized as an important thrust area in various intervention programmes. It is realized that the village based education programme can sustain for a larger period of time only if the village community is able to take over its running. Community participation in education not only ensures physical and human facilities at schools but also motivates the teachers to achieve higher quality of education.

Decentralized planning and management of elementary education is a goal set by the NPE, 1986. The policy visualizes direct community involvement in the form of Village Education Committee (VEC) for management of elementary education. The POA, 1992, emphasized micro planning as a process of designing a family-wise and child-wise plan of action by which every child regularly attends school or Non Formal Education centre, continues his or her education at the place suitable to him/her and completes at least eight years of schooling or its equivalent at the Non-Formal Education centre.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments provide for decentralization of the activities and facilitate transfer of power and participation of the local self-government institutions or the Panchayati Raj Institutions. It has created a congenial ambience for the PRIs to play a more dynamic and proactive role. States are expected to evolve institutional arrangements both in rural and urban areas for undertaking these activities. These structures have been providing voice to women, scheduled caste and tribes, minorities, parents and educational functionaries. They have also, been delegated with responsibilities with regard to location and relocation of existing primary and upper primary schools on the basis of micro planning and school mapping. In this regard decentralization level bodies are an important policy initiative. Thus people's participation in the overall development of the nation has been recognized as a vital process since independence. Among the many centrally sponsored schemes aiming at achieving UEE, the DPEP and SSA stand out for its innovative design features and the emphasis that is laid on community participation.

1.3.0 District Primary Education Programme

DPEP launched in India in November, 1994, to achieve Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) through district specific planning with emphasis on decentralized management, participatory processes, empowerment and capacity building at all levels. DPEP has been able to set up project management structures at district levels, create the environment and capacity for micro-planning, take up the challenge of pedagogical innovation, create a responsive institutional base which includes both government and non-government institutions, community participation and strengthen the process of catering to special focus groups such as tribal, scheduled castes and other marginalized sections. The program takes a holistic view of elementary education development in the country through district specific planning with emphasis on decentralized management participatory process, empowerment and capacity building at all levels.

The most extensive external partnership, involving the World Bank, the United Kingdom, the European Commission, the Netherlands and UNICEF, was the DPEP in eighteen large states, covering about half of India's 600 districts with low female literacy rates. The programme created active partnerships between the government and civil society organizations and strengthened coordination in the areas of planning, training and research.

DPEP was built upon the accumulated national experiences from such projects as Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project, Bihar Education Project, Uttar Pradesh Primary Education Project and Lok Jumbish. DPEP aimed at restructuring primary education so as to enhance enrolment, retention, achievement and school effectiveness.

Objectives of District Primary Education Programme:

❑ To ensure equity and access to primary education to all the children between 6-11 years.

❑ To ensure 100% enrolment and retention by 2001 AD.

❑ To reduce difference in enrolment, dropout and learning achievement among gender and social group to less than 5%.

❑ To improve the quality of education.

DPEP seeks to provide access to elementary education for all children. A district was chosen as a unit for its program implementation. The criteria for selection of district were educationally backward districts with female literacy below the

national average and districts where the Total Literacy Campaign has been conducted successfully leading to increase in demand for elementary education. DPEP emphasized on contextuality i.e. giving primacy to local needs, reduction of existing gender and social disparities in educational access, provision of alternative schooling of comparable standards to the disadvantaged groups, obtaining genuine community involvement in the running of schools, empowerment and capacity building at the local level, addressing access, retention quality issues etc. and devising an appropriate fund flow mechanism from centre to the states. Community participation was the corner stone of DPEP. The programme intended to elicit active participation of the community in general and of the socially and economically disadvantaged groups in particular. In order to elicit and promote community participation DPEP created structures at the community level for participation. These are Village Education Committee, Mother Teacher Association, Parent Teacher Association and Village Civil Work Committee. It also devised context specific community mobilization. After DPEP, a nationwide programme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched to provide useful and relevant elementary education.

1.4.0 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a comprehensive and integrated flagship programme of Government of India to attain UEE, covering the entire country in a mission mode. SSA has been launched in 2001-2002 in partnership with the State Governments and Local self Governments. The programme aims to provide useful and relevant, elementary education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010. It is an initiative to universalize and improve quality of education through decentralized and context specific planning and a process based, time bound implementation strategy. The programme lays emphasis on bridging all gender and social category gaps at elementary education level with time bound objectives. On one hand, SSA is a programme with its own targets, norms and processes and on the other it is an umbrella programme covering other programmes like District Primary Education Programme. The gigantic dimensions of the programme and the financial implications call for a meticulous planning and a rigorous appraisal. It is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system.

The main objectives of SSA:

❑ All children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate school, back to school camp by 2003.

❑ All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007.

❑ All children complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010.

❑ Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.

❑ Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and elementary education level by 2010.

❑ Universal retention by 2010.

Basic Features of SSA:

❑ Institutional reforms in states.

❑ Sustainable financing in partnership with states.

❑ Community ownership of school based interventions through effective decentralization.

❑ Institutional capacity building for improvement in quality.

❑ Community based monitoring with full transparency in all aspects of implementation.

❑ Community based approach to planning with a habitation as a unit of planning.

❑ A mainstreaming gender approach.

❑ Focus on the educational participation of children from the SC/ST, religious and linguistic minorities etc.

❑ Thrust on quality and making education relevant.

❑ Recognition of critical role of teacher and focus on the human resource development needs of teachers.

❑ Preparation of District Elementary Education Plans reflecting all governmental and non-governmental investments.

The National Programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, which aims to achieve Universal Elementary Education, has a special focus on education of the tribal children. Tribal children are an important constituent of the Special Focus Group under SSA; other focus groups include girls, SCs, working children, urban deprived children, children with special needs, children below poverty line and migrating children. These groups are not mutually exclusive and they overlap. One of the goals of SSA is to "bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary

stage by 2007 and at elementary stage by 2010". The broad strategies under SSA reiterate that there will be a focus on participation of children from SC/ST and minorities, urban deprived children, children with special needs, working children and children in the hardest to reach groups.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan recognizes the varied issues and challenges in tribal education in view of the heterogeneous structure of tribal population in the country. The issues and challenges in tribal education can be categorized as external, internal, socio-economic and psychological. The external constraints are related to issues at levels of policy, planning and implementation while internal constraints are with respect to school system, content, curriculum, pedagogy, medium of instruction etc. The third set of problems relates to social economic and cultural background of tribals and psychological aspects of first generation learners. STs are at different levels of socio-economic and educational development. STs in North Eastern States and those settled in urban and semi-urban areas are comparatively better placed. The problems of education of the ST children vary from area to area and tribe to tribe. Therefore, SSA emphases on area specific and tribe specific planning and implementation of interventions, which could meet the learning needs of ST children. The planning teams at the state and district levels under SSA have been sensitized about the approach adopted and provisions made in the SSA framework for the education of ST children. The assessment of the problems issues and challenges relating to/of tribal education is made through the household surveys and micro planning exercise. The plans are developed by the districts based on the findings as well as the secondary data.

Some of the interventions being promoted in states under SSA include:

❏ Setting up schools, education guarantee centres and alternative schools in tribal habitations for non-enrolled and drop out children.

❏ Textbooks in mother tongue for children at the beginning of the primary education cycle, where they do not understand the regional language. Suitably adapt the curriculum and make available locally relevant teaching learning materials for tribal students.

❏ Special training for non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of tribal dialect.

❏ Special support to teachers as per need.

❏ Deploying community teachers.
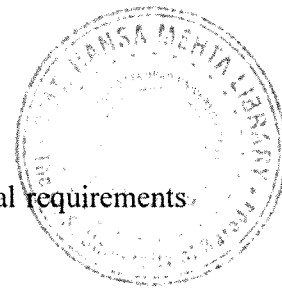
- Bridge Language Inventory for use of teachers.
- The school calendar in tribal areas may be prepared as per local requirements and festivals.
- Anganwadis and Balwadis or creches in each school in tribal areas so that the girls are relieved from sibling care responsibilities.
- Special plan for nomadic and migrant workers.
- Engagement of community organizers from ST communities with a focus on schooling needs of children from specific households.
- Ensuring sense of ownership of school communities by ST communities by increasing representatives of STs in VECs / PTAs etc. Involving community leaders in school management.
- Monitoring attendance and retention of children.
- Providing context specific interventions e.g. Ashram school, hostel, incentives etc.

The other components under the broad framework of SSA which have an impact on the education of tribal education are:

- School/Education Guarantee Scheme like alternative facility to be set up within one kilometre of all habitations.
- Up gradation of EGS to regular schools after two years.
- Mainstreaming camps, bridge courses/residential camps for out of school girls SC/ST children under the alternative and innovative education component.
- Provision of process based community participation with a focus on the participation of women and SC/ST.
- Free Mid Day Meal to all children at primary stage.
- Interventions for Early Childhood Care and Education.

Keeping with the vision of the Constitution (seventy-third and seventy fourth amendment) Act, 1992, SSA has made adequate provision for community involvement in facilitating the implementation of various aspects of the programme. Experiences of earlier programmes like Lok Jumbish and DPEP have also reinforced the role of community in education. It has been envisaged under SSA that the panchayats, VECs/School Committees, PTAs/MTAs and other community forums – both in rural and urban areas, would complement each other by creating a strong base at the grassroots level for community participation in the educational scenario.

1.5.0 Community Participation

Education policy makers all over the world have come to view community participation as an effective means of promoting elementary education, both in terms of quantity and quality. Further, community participation and empowerment in decision making has commonly been understood and propagated as an attempt to counteract centralized actions. It is assumed that community participation and empowerment has the potential to make a major health and living conditions as well as enriching their life styles. The literacy campaigns in different parts of India have also, though not uniformly in all cases, demonstrated the potential role that community member can play for their own betterment.

A community is a group of people, who live in a geographical area and have an interest in each other for the purpose of making a living; it is a form of social organization existing between the family and state. It is locus for social systems of a particular kind composed of interacting social institutions which meet the basic human needs, through the function of which people have developed a sense of belongingness and a potential ability to act together as an entity. Community, while in itself consists of several parts (there are communities existing within a community), is also a part of larger social system. It is a dynamic social unit which is subject to change of internal or external origin. Some of the important characteristics of community are: communities are close-knit entities, their customs are interrelated, these communities are complexes of sub-group relationship and there is discernible leadership within the community (Dhuma and Bhatnagar, 1980). Communities can be defined by characteristics that the member share, such as culture, language, tradition, law, geography, class and race. There are in fact several conceptual uses of the term community in social sciences. The Anthropological Survey of India in its ethnographic mapping of communities in India defines community not only in territorial but sociological terms. It is conceptually used "as in ethnography, which is marked by endogamy, occupation and perception". Zenter (1964) points out three aspects of communities. First, community is a group structure, whether formally or informally organized, in which members play roles which are integrated around goals associated with the problems from collective occupation and habitational space. Second, members of the community have some degree of collective identification with the occupied space members. Lastly, the communities have some degree of local autonomy and

responsibility. Shaeffer (1992) argues, some communities are homogeneous while others are heterogeneous; and some united while others conflictive. Some communities are governed and managed by leaders chosen democratically who act relatively autonomously from other levels of government, and some are governed by leaders imposed from above and represent central authorities. The concept of community thus, has been changing as per the needs of development and administration where by the communities had been reduced to groups of beneficiaries, stake holders or target populations in the framework of their projects. Therefore the understanding of community is essential to identify the context in which it is to be analyzed. It must be observed, however, that the concept of community defined in terms of face-to-face interaction in a spatio-temporal context is neverhless meaningful in village India. Perhaps, it is with reference to school in villages that one can speak of school-community relations as per the conventional paradigm. It is in this context that the debate on community participation in primary education becomes important and meaningful.

Community participation is not a new concept in India. In the early years after independence, it was viewed and promoted as a part of the liberation rhetoric. In Gandhi's scheme of education a school was an integral part of community. Therefore the question of community participation in school affairs was not to be a matter of debate and discourse. However, the post independence years witnessed an altogether different phenomenon on the ground. With the virtual govermentalisation of primary education, schools became totally alienated from the community they served. Then again community participation became a major agenda of discussion in the country in the mind 1980 when decentralization began to be recognized as an important component of the educational reform and change process. It was realized that responsibility should be devolved as far as possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of pupil whom they taught. The move however appears to have been prompted essentially by the utilitarian value of involving the community, which could possibly improve the deteriorating efficiency and effectiveness of the school system.

The National Policy of Education (1986) and its Programme of Action (1992) recommended not only promoting participation of community in elementary education but also a move towards empowering the local community to make

major management decisions in this regard. The NPE and POA suggested decentralized management of education at all levels (district, sub-district and panchayat levels) and involvement of people in decision making process. It proposed adopting, the eleventh schedule of the constitution which provides, among other things, for entrusting with Panchayati Raj bodies, "education including primary education and secondary schools, teachers training and vocational education adult and non-formal education, literacy and cultural activities". The subsequent 72nd and 73rd constitutional amendment passed in both the houses of the parliament gave further fillip to the move towards decentralization and community empowerment in the management of education. It recommended the delegation of authority related to education, including primary and secondary schools, technical training and vocational education, adult education and non formal education, and spread of literacy and cultural activities to Panchayati Raj bodies (Article 243 G of the 11th schedule). The eight plan document clearly enunciated that "in the process of development people must operate and government must cooperate". Thus community participation over the past decade has been appropriated by almost any group working for change, be it in agriculture, welfare or education. The government therefore emphasized on involvement of community through number of committees (B.G. Kher Committee 1953, Balwant Rai Mehta Committee 1957, Sadiq Ali Committee 1964, Bhandari Committee 1969, Bongirwar Committee 1971 and Ashok Mehta Committee 1978) and almost all the successive schemes and programmes like Bihar Education Programme, Lok Jumbish and Shiksha Karmi. It is a matter of grave concern, that despite strong policy directives the community's role remained peripheral. In order to address this issue, the government launched in 1995 the DPEP in few educationally backward districts and through its experience in 2000 the 'SSA' in the entire nation that once again called for community ownership of schools through decentralized participatory approach. These programmes have the promotion of community participation as a major thrust area in their activities; they have tried to evolve special strategies for bringing community and school closer, and also to involve community members in a significant manner for development of primary education.

Community participation is one of the major strengths of SSA. Community Participation is interwoven in planning, implementation and monitoring of

educational activities and hence, it is not to be viewed as a separate component. Participation of community by way of involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions, voluntary organizations, local level cultural and social organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, parents and individuals is crucial to the success of educational programmes, especially at the elementary stage of education. The underlying rationale is that education must have local support and community ownership in order to meet the educational needs of the children from the community. Strategies envisage a central role for the local community by way of involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the VEC in opening new schools, establishing non-formal education centers, holding literacy classes, identifying workforce from within community, providing land and buildings for educational programmes and indeed accepting overall responsibility related to all aspects of educational development, namely, planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation.

Specifically, a variety of informal and formal structures have come in to existence such as Mother Teacher Associations under the DPEP, core team and women's group under Lok Jumbish in Rajastahn, apart from Village Education Committees and Parent Teacher Association in many states. Community participation and empowerment for primary education is gradually acquiring a place of importance not only in education but also in public administration.

Alongside these developments at policy level, the country has also witnessed major programmes of primary education in different states, particularly during the last decade. These programmes also have the promotion of community participation as a major thrust area in their activities: some of them have tried to evolve special strategies for bringing community and school closer and also to involve community members in a significant manner for elementary education development.

1.5.1 Programmes having community participation as thrust area

Many educational innovations of the recent years are based on the strong foundation of community support and participation. When progress is discussed and analyzed at different levels within the project, "people's acceptance and participation" is used as an indicator, mobilizing the village community to take responsibility to ensure quality education for every child was the core strategy for both Lok Jumbish (LJ) and Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) in their efforts to

universalize primary education and deliver quality education. It would not be far removed from truth if we say that community involvement has been the key factor for the success of the two projects.

LJ has had a positive impact on the empowerment of locally elected people, especially on female representatives at village level, who are often active members of the LJ core teams or women's groups. The village education committees carefully formed and trained through environmental building activities in the LJ programme are actively involved in school matters.

SKP has constituted VECs in 2000 villages to promote community involvement in primary education and encourage village level planning. The role of the VEC as defined by SKP was to mobilize resources for maintenance, repair and construction of school infrastructure and also in determining the school calendar and school timings in consultation with the local community and Shiksha Karmis (educational workers).

The positive impact of the LJ and SKP was focusing on supporting the teachers and the students by involving, the village community in taking responsibility for all educational activities of the village school, in serving as a demonstration of how deeply rooted problems of education in India can be addressed.

The Mahila Samkhya Programme (MSP) was designed to mobilize the organize women for education through creating an environment for learning. MSP was being implemented in seven states in the country (Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Assam) and covered over 5000 villages, had been recognized as an effective and successful mobilization strategy. The diverse impact of this learning process is discernible in all the MSP states. Women were addressing issues of access and improvement of civic amenities, problems of drinking water, wages, housing, ensuring education for girls, making schools and the health system more accountable, bravely confronting violence against women and social practices like child marriage and the devadasi system, confidently interacting and negotiating with power structures and are effectively participating in Panchayati Raj Institutions. While the direct impact of the MSP educational strategy is yet to be fully felt, its impact is most visible in the confidence with which 'Sanghas' are taking an active role in Village Education Committees, making schools work, ensuring that the teachers come regularly and

in many instances, ensuring that in their villages, children, particularly girl children, have access to formal education.

1.5.2 Steps and activities considered for involving the community at grassroots level

In SSA, the community is expected to play a key role in micro-planning, especially in the development of Village/Ward Education Plan and School Improvement Plans. Community based monitoring in specific issues like enrolment, retention, education of girl child and other disadvantaged groups, utilization of various grants and construction of school building is important to ensure attainment of the programme objectives.

The following steps and activities were considered for involving the community at grassroots level:

☐ **Empowerment of community:** The first step towards involving the local community is to build the capacity of community based institutions. Education has already been decentralized to panchayat level. SSA envisages constitution of local committees like the Village Education Committee, School Management Committee, Mother Teacher Association, Parent Teacher Association, and Village Civil Works Committee to look after educational issues. Appropriate capacity building measures for these institutions would go a long way in empowering the community to effectively discharge their statutory and community responsibilities towards schools and education in general.

☐ **Generate community awareness towards education:** A variety of activities such as enrolment drive, awareness generation, children fair, participation in community fair, cultural program etc. had taken up under SSA. Campaigns and mobilization initiatives were organized focusing on specific issues like enrolment, retention, education of girl child and other disadvantaged group. Campaign to mobilize the special groups like girl child (mothers also), SC/ST/other backward classes, tribal and other disadvantaged groups to ensure their participation in the primary schools or alternative centers, were organized. Along with these campaigns, specific activities like meena campaign, maa-beti mela, mahila sanmelan, kishori mela, shishu mela, prabhat pheri etc. were conducted to ensure increased enrolment and reduce drop out.

❏ **Involvement of community in micro level planning:** SSA envisages involvement of VEC and other community level organizations in habitation level planning and micro-planning exercises. Such involvement will further ensure their participation in the formulation of village education plan and school improvement plans. A core planning team had ideally be constituted in each village at the habitation level, including VECs, selected community leaders, NGO representatives, headmasters, teachers, parents, women, SC/ST/MTA/PTA/SMC representatives etc. Data generated through household survey should be the basis of such habitation level planning. The VECs/SMCs also has a significant role in the preparation and regular updation of the village education registers.

❏ **Involvement of community in monitoring and supervision:** SSA provides a major role of the community in monitoring and supervision of school and other educational facilities. The community should ensure that all children come to school regularly and receive quality education. In many states the local community and panchayat has been empowered to recruit local level teachers, sanction teacher's leaves, decide on school timings and arrange for school infrastructure. Alternative schooling centers are mostly set up and managed by the local community. VECs/WECs along with the panchayat level monitoring committees can also monitor all the activities of school including academic activities. PTAs meeting can be held to discuss the progress of children. Help of PTAs can also be sought in preparation of TLM. VECs can also be trained to manage schools and monitor indicators like access, enrolment and retention.

❏ **Construction and maintenance of school infrastructure:** Under SSA, it is also mandatory for involving the community in construction and maintenance of school infrastructure. All civil work funds under the programme are routed through the community. The VEC or a sub-committee is entrusted with all aspects of construction, including arranging for materials, keeping accounts and ensuring quality. The maintenance and repair grant of schools is also passed on to the VEC. The VEC is also entrusted with school improvement grant. This empowerment, in physical and financial terms, is expected to increase the stake of the community in the school building. The programmes also encourage community contribution in the construction of the school infrastructure, both financial as well as labour.

For the community to perform all the above roles, their capacity needs to be substantially improved. The community bodies viz. VEC/SMC/Panchayat and community leaders need to be trained on their role in planning and monitoring. The various aspects of quality education also need to be explained to the local community in a simple way. As they are involved in construction, the community would also need to be trained on various technical aspects of construction. It is also important to train the community on various managerial and account keeping aspects.

Village Education Committee (VEC), Mother/Parents Teacher Associations (MTA/PTA) and Women Motivator Groups are the grass root level bodies which play a pivotal role in enlisting community participation for education and bringing the community and schools closer to establish an interactive and effective school management system. These bodies are expected to assume leadership to influence community thinking and guide their decisions in favor of their children, particularly girls. These organizations are also envisaged to motivate the spirit of community ownership of schools and the education system to the extent of mobilizing community resources for school improvement.

Involvement of functionaries, PTA/MTA and VEC members in school activities like schooling process of children, attending school events, attending meeting/ trainng, ensuring distribution of incentives, school mapping/ micro planning, stay arrangements for teachers, school planning and development had positive impact on improving elementary education (Sahoo, 2004). Therefore, unless the PRIs, local bodies, parents and community are involved in school activities, in all aspects of educational development, the goal of UEE may still remain a distant dream.

1.5.3 Different Committees at grass root level

1) **Village Education Committee (VEC) in villages and Ward Education committee (WEC) in municipal corporation:**

VEC/WEC is constituted for the management of education at village level. The problems at the village level can be better understood by members of the village and they can think of some viable solution. Considering this factor VEC is constituted and is deputed with powers to carry on the management of school. This would generate interest amongst the community members and more and more people would get involved in promoting education. Thus VEC is established to universalize and ensure quality education at elementary level. It maintains village

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education register or ward education register, which keeps record of out of school children, irregular children and dropouts and then their responsibility will be given to the member of mother teacher association and parent teacher association. Concept behind this is teacher will teach and community will bring children to schools.

VEC-according to Gujarat Government Education Department Letter no. PRE/1295-1419 V (99) dt- 20/9/99 persons to be involved are given below.

1) Sarpanch
2) Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator
3) Talati
4) Two women from panchayat
5) School Head Master
6) Aganwadi Karyakar
7) Mid Day Meal Sanchalak
8) Retired Teacher
9) Secondary school Headmaster
10) Parents of disabled children (presently)
11) Parents of SC/ST children

Functions: The VEC or a sub-committee is entrusted with all aspects of

❑ Identifying needs of the schools.

❑ Conducting periodical meetings to ensure co-operation of the community, community mobilization.

❑ Assisting the headmaster in transparent utilization of grants released to schools and effective utilization of the funds.

❑ To manage the joint account of the VEC.

❑ Undertaking civil construction and maintenance works wherever assigned or needed.

❑ Enrolment of all school age children and ensuring cent percent completion of elementary education of all children.

❑ Conducting campaigns and melas for UEE.

❑ Monitoring the academic performance of children, achievement levels, attendance and quality of education.

❑ Organizing functions and celebrations of school and public events, which showcase the skills of the students.

- Effective co-ordination of the community with implementing agencies.
- Displaying school data and receipts and expenditure of grants in the school public notice board.
- Involvement in teacher training.
- Involvement in appointment of educational volunteers for Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative Innovative Education centers as per guidelines and direction.
- Monitoring the functioning of Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative Innovative Education centers.

2) **Village Civil Works Committee (VCWC):** its main work is building repairing and Technical Resource Persons gives guidance to them

3) **Mother Teacher Association (MTA) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA):**

To get maximum cooperation from parents and other members of the community in district primary education programmes MTA and PTA are constituted. The framework of SSA envisages that the constitution of different members in these committees be on democratic grounds providing opportunity to people from all sections of the society. It is constituted based on their participation, awareness and readiness to contribute services. A meeting of all parents is to be conducted and then from it a five member working committee of PTA and MTA is formed, amongst whom one will be the head, if the principal of the primary school is women, she becomes the head of MTA.

Functions: The functions of PTA and MTA are not different from VEC except that they do not have any financial power.

Thus SSA has very clearly demarcated the roles and responsibilities of each committee and empowered the members of community for effective supervision and monitoring. It has not only been one of the most comprehensive but also appropriate programmes for a country with such wide disparities. It has made maximum attempts to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children through provision of community owned quality education in mission mode.

1.5.4 Responsibilities of constituted school committees under SSA

- Assessment of the educational needs of the village population through a process of micro-planning exercise every year.

- Maintaining micro level database for the children through a child register.
- Building of awareness of the community and mobilizing parents and community for ensuring enrolment and retention of children.
- Making recommendations/suggestions to the teacher for better performance of the school.
- To receive and utilize fund and maintain proper bank account. VEC/Ward Education Committee (WEC) is primarily responsible for sending utilization certificate of funds placed at its disposal to the higher authority. Fund which will be collected from the community/any person (donor) will be deposited in the same bank account and maintain expenditure statement separately.
- Identifying drop out children and ensuring their enrolment in different school set up.
- Arranging remedial teaching/alternative education, bridge course etc. by engaging community volunteers.
- Ensuring convergence of different rural/urban services (with the help of panchayat samiti/municipality) for building of school infrastructure/school beautification.
- Sending monthly report to CRC from VEC/WEC. Head teacher as secretary and panchayat member/council or as chairman of VEC/WEC will keep all records, reports etc. in their custody. VEC/WEC will maintain accounts, preserve all vouchers, cashbooks, reports etc. and place before the parents and community time to time for ensuring transparency.
- Establishing Education Guarantee Scheme/Alternative Inclusive Education in unserved habitations.
- Ensuring enrolment and retention of the children of SC/ST and minority groups, other categories of special focus group namely, hardest to reach children/ Deprived Urban children etc.
- Organizing parents meeting in the form of PTA/MTA on quarterly basis.

### 1.6.0 Importance of participation of Tribals in Elementary education

Tribal education is an important task before government of India. In the light of the constitutional commitments and considering the importance of education among the tribals, attempts have been made since independence for educating the tribals, along with other sections of the society. Large numbers of educational institutions have been opened in tribal areas; special educational facilities like ashram schools,

scholarships and reservation of seats in higher, technical and professional education have also been provided to them.

In spite of the great strides taken by the government, both centre and state, for the development of tribals, the results has fallen short of expectations. However, the studies conducted by Das (1991), Sathyabalan (1993), Banwasi Seva Ashram (1994), Ambasht and Rath (1995), Panda (1995), Roy (1995), Wilson (1997), Gandhi Vidyapeeth (2004) and Sahoo (2004) revealed that tribal community participation was found to be essential to sustain quality education in schools. Further, the study by Ambasht and Rath (1995) suggested that Village Education Committees need to be given special boost to increase the participation of tribals in school activities. Even functionaries emphasized that the success of their work depended solely on the partnership with local community (Sathyabalan, 1993 and Banwasi Seva Ashram, 1994) therefore, functionaries at all levels should make genuine attempts to involve the local people in all matters concerning the operation and development of primary schools. The role of panchayat in increasing retention was further realized and greater emphasis was recommended (Ambasht and Rath, 1995). It was also found that the accountability of teachers increased substantially due to decentralisation of management. Further, the community participation increased substantially as a result of the transfer of power from the state to the local body and administrative decentralisation included the sense of hygiene, pride and belongingness to the school (Roy, 1995). The study by Sahoo (2004) revealed that most of the parents keep interest but do not manifest due to lack of encouragement from outside or from teacher, they are few who keep on enthusiasm and interest in providing encouragement and facilities for child's study at home, teachers are normally observed reluctant to stay in interior tribal pockets. Das (1991) suggested that co-curricular activities had a lot of impact in ensuring community participation and student attendance. Teachers from the village where the centre is located were found to be more effective than non tribal outsiders. Skills like song; dance and acting were found to be important assets to help the teacher not only to convey the message, but also to improve the self expression and creative abilities of the students. Community involvement was found to be essential; otherwise the qualitative performance of the schools could not be sustained. Therefore, participation of tribals in elementary education could be strengthened and boost up through decentralized management at grassroots level

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for the upliftment of tribals in terms of not only overall development but freeing them from social and political exploitation and superstitious beliefs.

Figure 1.1   Figure depicting relationship between elementary education, community participation and tribal education
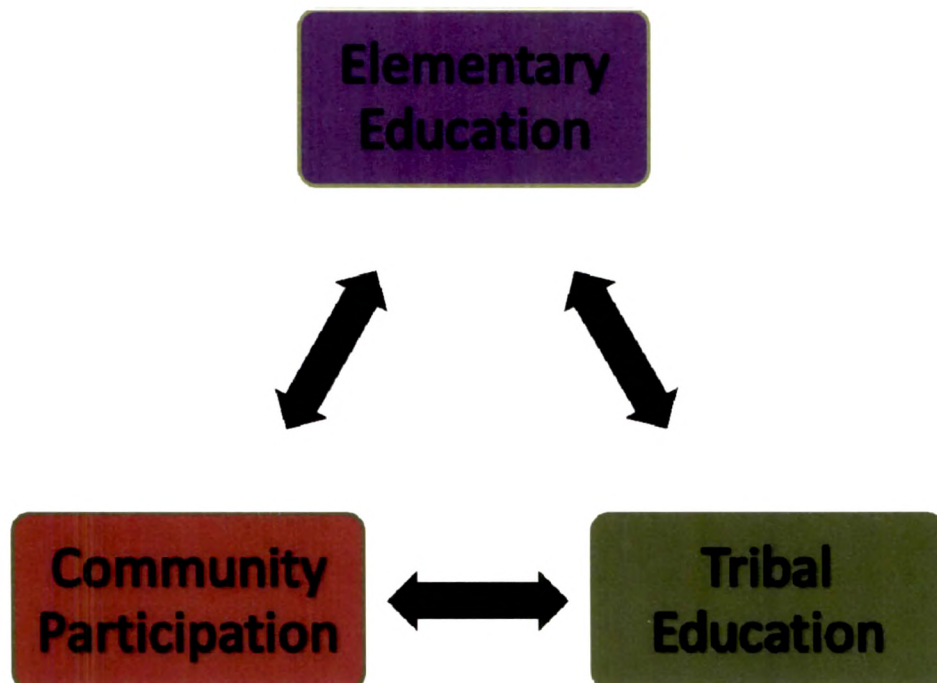
In the light of the above mentioned facts, this study attempts to survey the status of participation of tribal of the Dangs in elementary school activities. Further, general enumeration and some discussion of relevant and related research are presented in the following chapter.