

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

In our continued commitment to ensuring access for all, the quantitative aspects have been repeatedly emphasized with the consequence that very often the qualitative aspects were ignored - and this has been true at both the National and International Primary Education scenarios. However, experience has proved that the quantitative aspects although very important should not be the only consideration – the qualitative aspects need serious attention as well.

The entire process of Education enables children to develop creatively and emotionally and acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes necessary for responsible, active and productive citizenship. The instrumental role played by Education namely social, economical, cultural and the corresponding objectives would be better achieved if Education is of an acceptable quality.

It was in keeping with the same i.e. the issue of quality, that the two most recent United Nations international Conference Declarations focusing on Education gave some importance to its qualitative dimension as well. The Jomtien Declaration in 1990 and, more particularly, the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 recognized the quality of Education as a prime determinant of whether *Education for All* is achieved. More specifically than earlier pledges, the second of the six goals set out in the Dakar Framework commits nations to the provision of Primary Education '*of good quality*'. Moreover, the sixth goal includes commitments to improve all aspects of Educational quality so that everyone can achieve better learning outcomes, 'especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills'. In 1990, the World Declaration on Education for All recommended that Education together with being accessible should also be more relevant to the learner and focused on quality as an imperative for achieving the fundamental goals of Education.

The Dakar Framework for Action declared that access to quality Education was the Right of every child. It affirmed that quality was 'at the heart of Education' – a fundamental

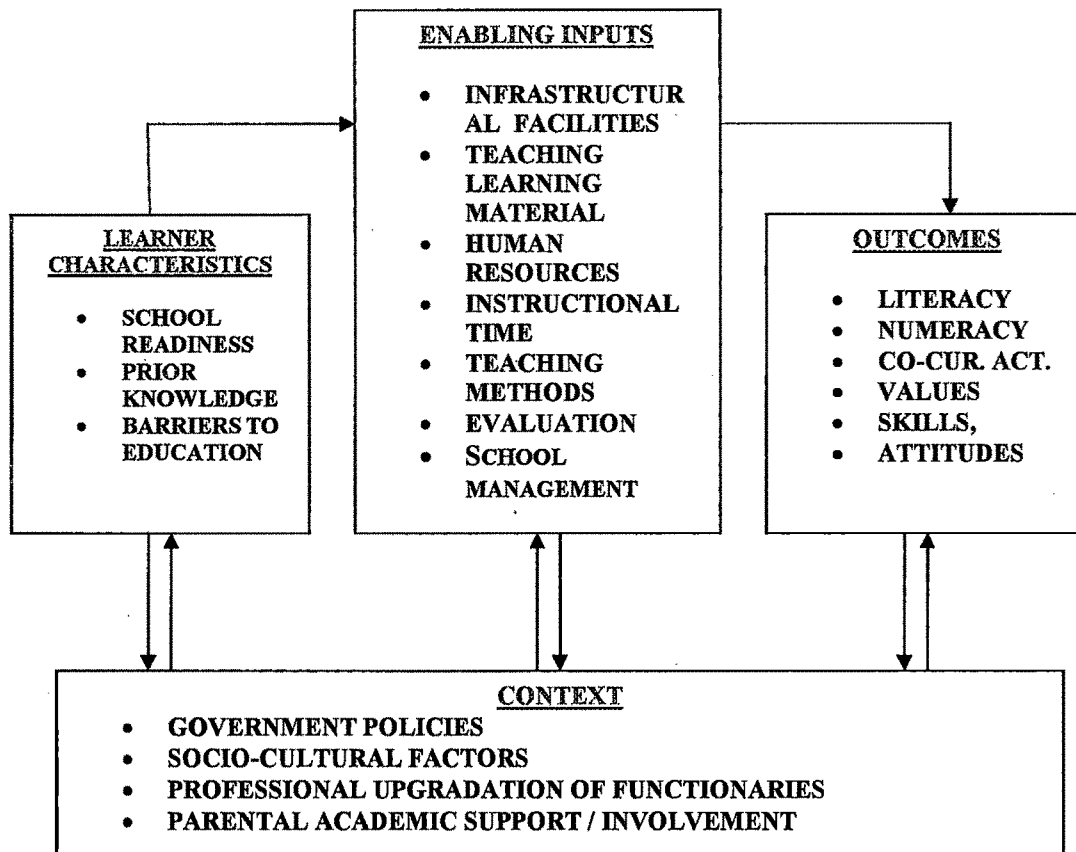
determinant of enrolment, retention and achievement. Its expanded definition of quality set out the desirable characteristics of learners (healthy, motivated students), processes (competent teachers using active pedagogies), content (relevant curricula) and systems (good governance and equitable resource allocation). (UNESCO, 2005).

Thus, the quality of Education provided would be a major determinant in admission, retention, regularity in attendance and Community involvement in any Primary Education program.

6.1 A SYSTEMIC VIEW OF QUALITY

Every educational institution is a dynamic system by itself and may be defined as an organized whole comprising a set of interdependent, interrelated and interacting synergetic elements or sub-systems. These sub-systems work in independence as well as in interdependence to achieve systemic goals. The whole is not merely a sum of its parts but a holistic representation of the characteristics and an outcome of systematic and meaningful functioning of the individual parts. The educational system is one such open system –open and sensitive to environmental influences (here, society) and both deeply influences and is influenced by the same.

Figure 6.1 : A SYSTEMIC VIEW OF QUALITY



Source - (UNESCO,2005).

The present study is, as represented above, a system with the input-process-output interdependence clearly evident. Any judgment regarding the quality of such a system would depend upon the inputs into the system, the effectiveness of the consequent processes and eventually upon the outcomes – here seen exclusively as academic achievement and participation in co-curricular areas. In addition to the learner characteristics, the quality of the ‘enabling inputs’ can play a significant role in the achievement of objectives. A favorable context too has a significant bearing on the entire functioning of the system.

There is surely nothing deterministic in the entire process of functioning simply because the inputs are human and strongly conditioned by environmental factors. Thus, crucial to the effectiveness of the system is the process of education itself wherein the available inputs and the processes meaningfully interact, with the ‘context’, a strong influencing factor!

‘Shortage of funds, the limited capacity of systems and institutions to manage change effectively, the myriad constraints on teacher effectiveness and the absence of a strong political alliance supporting quality in education can constitute major barriers to change. However, much can be achieved by making better use of existing resources and focusing on targeted interventions that respond to specific weaknesses. These factors add up to an ambitious programme for reform, particularly in low-income countries where class sizes are large and teachers often have scarcely more formal education than their pupils. Nevertheless, some countries have put all, or most, into effect, with a significant impact on the quality of learning in their schools. Studies of country experience suggest that common to these successes was the central importance assigned to the quality of the teaching profession— its training, support, recruitment standards and pay – relative to other professional groups. These countries’ experience also suggests that successful qualitative reforms require a strong leading role by the government. Each case showed a continuity of policy over several decades, remaining stable even when regimes changed. Thus, a robust long-term vision for education, with quality as a persistent theme, appears to be a vital ingredient’ (UNESCO, 2005).

The present study revealed an enabling political environment where Universalisation of primary education was a Constitutional promise made to the nation and sustained endeavors made since Independence for realization of the same; not too many constraints with relation to finance and continuous and relevant programs designed for the up gradation of Functionaries.... despite all this, the ‘quality’ of the system was found to be below the mark. A detailed analysis of the situation revealed provision of inputs but lack of a consequent follow-up of utilization and maintenance thereby wasting efforts and no significant outcomes getting realized.

The enrollment data from Vadodara revealed a gradual decrease in numbers as one progressed to the upper primary grades – thereby the need to rethink on the endeavors made to enhance the quality of the system in terms of financial allocations and whether or not these efforts were indeed being wasted. Despite concerted efforts made to increase enrollment and participation through Policies and Community initiatives, why was the system unable to retain the learners? Was this a reflection on the overall quality of the system? This fact of poor retention was also supported by the findings of the PROBE team. Their analysis of the situation revealed that unable to cope with lack of comprehension (due to teacher centric modes of instruction and voluminous and

irrelevant curricula) students finally gave up; parents withdrew their children finding that not much was being achieved anyway and consequently the system gradually 'filtered' out most children as things got harder and harder in higher grades. (PROBE, 1999).

Research studies on student achievement have proved that a certain minimum number of years at school are essential if children are to master basic skills and it must be ensured that children who are once enrolled must continue in school long enough to acquire the basic skills and a 'certain' period in school alone would determine this sustainability. (UNESCO, 2005).

Thus, we cannot afford to overlook the fact of drop-outs not only because basic skills are not being mastered but also because the 'scarce national' resources utilized for the benefit of the learner are being rendered a wasteful expenditure under these circumstances.

However, in the midst of this scenario, a positive trend observed was that of increased girl child enrollment indicating the gradual awareness in society for the education of the 'girl' child.

Research studies have revealed that the overall systemic performance has not significantly increased, despite large increases in real per-pupil spending - particularly in the Indian context, it is important to consider not only the 'physical distance' but also the 'social distance' that the child needs to cross over so that wholehearted participation become a reality. Thus, there are other factors that also play a crucial and determining role – namely school readiness, prior knowledge and above all the barriers that prevent the learner from wholehearted participation and successful completion of education.

In the given context, it was found that monitoring of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was very important. ECCE referred to a wide range of programmes all aimed at the physical, cognitive and social development of children before they entered the primary grades which set the foundation for life-long learning and instilled desirable learning habits, social skills and values (Mandke, 1989 ; Kaul et al, 1992 ; Pattanaik, 1991).

However, it was found that since participation was not yet enforced compulsorily, school readiness was not present in many cases. The Study conducted by Maiyani (1989) on the development of Pre-primary education in Gujarat during the post-independence period

revealed that the present set-up of pre-primary education in the State was not satisfactory; the number of trained teachers at this level should be increased and concluded that the quality of pre-primary education in Gujarat was only average and needed serious attention.

Thus, delayed enrollment accompanied by barriers to the successful completion of the complete cycle of primary education are factors that one needs to contend with and together with making ECCE compulsory, the provision of sufficient number of Balwadis would ensure greater participation and long term benefits.

Once these factors have been resolved the next consideration would be the provision of 'enabling inputs' - these inputs in school play a decisive role in the determination of 'quality'. It has been widely acknowledged that Infrastructural facilities play a contributory role in the entire learning environment – facilitating the teaching-learning processes and thereby indirectly influencing the quality of the system. While these facilities may not be the sole determinants of quality, they provide the atmosphere and conditions necessary for learning to happen and thus indirectly influence the quality of education. Keeping this importance in mind, the National Programme 'Operation Blackboard' was launched in 1987 and under this programme; schools were provided minimum essential facilities so that academic programmes could be carried on effectively.

With respect to provision and status of infrastructural facilities it was found that the schools were of a pucca structure but a large percentage of these schools were in busy localities; in most cases there were sufficient number of classrooms for each grade but these classrooms were not too well ventilated – thus both the classroom and surrounding ambience were not too conducive to learning; while certain essential facilities like Electricity, sanitation and the Mid day meals were provided to most of the schools, there were other facilities which were important but the provision was lacking, namely - the presence of a Library, appropriate storage facilities for scientific apparatus, school playground and sports equipments. In most of the cases the Library was not a very functional one although Teachers did get the benefit of Reference books to aid in their daily teaching.....while scientific apparatus was reported in a large percentage of schools the system of storage and maintenance of these apparatus was questionable and while these very schools reportedly had sufficient number of classes for each grade they

did not have separate Activity rooms for the conducting of the activities listed in the time-table.

From the present investigation it emerged that while funds were being sanctioned and utilized, a regular follow-up is required to ascertain whether or not the facilities provided are being maintained properly or not. In the event of this not happening very regularly, the facilities gradually deteriorate and then become a barrier to the effective conducting of the instructional process. This finding was consistent with similar research findings that most school premises were scarcely stimulating for the purpose of learning and there was widespread failure to create a pleasant and attractive atmosphere at school with the means available. The problem of poor utilization and maintenance had nullified many of the apparent infrastructural gains that had been made in the recent years. (PROBE, 1999).

Also, an unreadable blackboard, non-availability of ready support material for students, inadequacy of appropriate storage facilities for scientific equipment, uncomfortable seating arrangements in poorly ventilated classrooms.....these are surely not conducive factors to learning and may be reflected in the future in the form of poor achievement outcomes as was found to be the case with the prevailing system and situation.

The scenario with respect to Computer training was especially revealing.....it revealed that the schools had been provided with Computers in order that Computer literacy was ensured. Although the schools did have the computers there was a dearth of trained teachers to teach the subject and so these machines were predominantly nonfunctional except for cases where an outside agency offered services such as the NGOs.

However, it was found that this problem was taken care of by training teachers via the In-Service training programmes which attempted to impart functional computer literacy to the teachers so that instruction as well as some of the academic duties could be done with the help of computers. Despite these efforts, the extent of usage was found to be very minimal.

Provision of instructional material is one of the ways of improving the quality of Education. International experience has shown that relatively modest instructional materials actually promote learning. Materials such as textbooks, libraries and classroom instructional materials are significant determinants of achievement in low income and

middle-income countries. This is especially true in the Indian classroom situation where the Textbook is the single most important and widely employed Instructional aid.

With respect to this most widely used instructional material, it was found that the school Textbooks were periodically revised and necessary updations were made, the content was organized systematically with ample examples provided for better understanding. The 'noteworthy' elements were the inclusion of the latest information in connection with some of the topics; the attempts to correlate specific topics with other disciplines and also Life-skills and the attempts at continuous formative evaluation for student self assessment.

Despite the noteworthy attempts made to make the text books relevant, updated, correlated and well presented both with respect to mechanical and content aspects – it was found that these Textbooks were crammed with awesome information, concepts and vocabulary. In this very connection, the PROBE Report *also* concluded that Language teaching in the primary grades focused mainly on the language structures and other mechanical aspects - the nature of the text was far too formal and removed from the spoken form; there was no attempt to include colloquial forms (used in daily conversations) from the different dialects with the assumption that children would learn to communicate only through rote memorization and repetition. What was needed but lacking was an appropriate implementation of this instructional tool and a stimulating environment to promote maximum usage because language cannot be taught otherwise. (PROBE, 1999).

The Maths textbook too revealed excessive accumulation of facts and although examples, applications, teacher activities and student self-assessment exercises were provided, there was lack of correlation with daily life experiences and eventually the subject became irrelevant and meaningless to the learner who failed to find meaning in the topics included. The treatment appeared cut off from daily life and consequently meant little to the confused and intimidated learner.

The issue of poor performance as one of the possible factors for children opting out of schooling was attempted to be rectified by introducing the MLLs in the three subjects i.e. Languages, Mathematics and the Social Sciences. Keeping in view the poor performance of systemic components and consequent poor achievement levels in the students which had adverse effects such as reduced retention levels, the Minimum Levels of Learning

were introduced in order to shift the focus from superficial treatment of textbook based factual content to attainment in terms of actual learning behaviors.

In this approach, the competencies are broken down into detailed sub-competencies assuming that the sum of these sub-skills would be the competency itself. Frequently, with the focus on behaviors and performance, concepts may not even feature in the assessment. 'This logical yet mechanical listing of sub-skills and rigid timetables for their achievement does not reflect either the concern that learning and use of the competency may itself be more flexible, or, that the cycle over which competencies are learnt need not follow the timing or pace described, or that the whole may be greater than the sum of the parts. Designing learning and test items for these detailed lists, and teaching to these learning outcomes, is impractical and pedagogically unsound' (NCF, 2005). Yet another disadvantage would be the restriction on more creative activities which may arise in certain typical contexts.

The studies conducted by Govinda and Varghese (1993) and Saxena, Singh and Gupta (1995) clearly highlight the significance of Text book in enhancing students' learning. But, any effective tool also demands thoughtful implementation and the subsequent analyses i.e. classroom observations, interviews with the Practitioners themselves and finally the student learning outcomes found this aspect of effective implementation lacking!

Another important 'enabling input' in the educational system is the Teacher and her years of experience, qualifications and content mastery are indeed significant factors for school quality. (UNESCO, 2005).

The study revealed that the Teachers' educational qualifications were indeed in need of attention – there was a very large population of Teachers who were Secondary school certificate holders after which the required P.T.C. certification had been attained ; a very small percentage of graduate teachers with an advanced professional training i.e. B.Ed and a miniscule percentage of teachers with a post-graduate qualification. Research studies in countries still endeavoring for Universalisation of Elementary education have shown one of the major constraints towards achievement of Universalisation is the fact that in these countries, the teachers themselves often have scarcely more formal education than their pupils (UNESCO, 2005). This eventually reflects on the quality of the Instructional processes. Research also proves that Teacher education and particularly

the number of years of pretraining general education are related to student achievement (Saxena, Singh and Gupta, 1995).

Thus, if there is evidence of student achievement being linked with teacher qualification there is an urgent need to raise the minimum qualifications of teachers and especially the appointment of qualified subject teachers. These findings are in consistence with the study by Ramkumar (1998) which also revealed that a majority of Teachers possessed just the minimum general and professional qualifications, the standards for which were fixed long ago.

What emerges is an urgent need to upgrade the general educational qualifications of the Teachers and for this to happen all new entrants should possess advanced educational qualifications - this would be in the interest of the students – the direct beneficiaries of this system.

In the words of Krishna Kumar ‘.....while the efforts and gains made by students and teachers over time are essential components of any assessment, a system’s capacity to reform itself by encouraging new practices must also figure in any comprehensive framework of the assessment of quality.....’ (Krishna Kumar, 2006). It is in this context that Teacher training assumes significance keeping in mind the fact that the scenario with respect to general educational qualification was not very encouraging and hence in service training must be strengthened in order to remedy this (Ramkumar, 1998).

In addition to qualifications, Teacher’s training does make considerable difference to the instructional processes...hence, training of teachers was necessary to improve the academic performance of primary grade children. (Govinda and Varghese, 1991).

The present study revealed that regular updations of skills was given importance and in keeping with this, Training programs were conducted to attend to both academic and academic related areas. Skills expected of Teachers in contemporary times; issues of concern to Officials and Teachers in this system specifically (namely, effective teaching methodologies, preparation of support learning material, social issues such as Gender sensitization, etc.) and issues of future relevance to students were all taken up periodically and attended to. The study indicated the conscious efforts made by the concerned Authorities to provide rich inputs to the Functionaries as well as the students thereby continuously ushering in meaningful and desirable changes to enhance the overall quality of the system.

The extensive research study conducted by the PROBE team concluded that In-service training of Government school teachers was indeed beneficial as it was more in line with current school developments in the field as well as with the ground realities faced by these teachers, however, in-service training was too short to impact teaching methods and affected instructional time because teachers were not willing to come after school hours and during vacation times.

The study revealed that indeed the training programs were for a short duration of a few days only and conducted during the ongoing academic session.

Thus, it is necessary to devise mechanisms whereby these training modules can be conducted over extended periods of time so that their impact translates into more effective instructional processes. Such training programs need to be conducted at the very beginning of the year so that the learning finds ample opportunity for expression during the academic year and also because teachers are relatively less burdened during the initial stages. In the later stages, they may possibly be arranged so that the training period coincides with the internship phase of the P.T.C. student-teachers and valuable instructional time is not completely lost.

The data analysis of the status of learning resources in the schools under study revealed an organized functioning with a pre-drawn schedule i.e. a time table; teachers planning their annual, monthly and daily academic activities for meaningful and effective classroom instruction and also a supervision mechanism that inspected the above mentioned on a daily basis. There was provision for extra reference material for the Teachers to refer in order to enrich their instruction.

However, the speculation was whether these were done on a notional basis or were the plans actually implemented thoughtfully during the teaching-learning process?

....how did these compulsory and regular pre-planned activities translate into quality inputs and ultimately impact the quality of the teaching-learning process. Did they finally enable a more systematic and efficiently functioning system?

Research evidences show that the instructional time and the quality of instructional time spent has a significant effect on learning outcomes. Research evidence from 'instructional effectiveness' research confirms these results. It suggests that structured teaching methods, bringing a strongly ordered approach to learning tasks – with clear

learning goals, sequenced introduction to new material, clear explanations, regular checking of understanding, time for pupils to practice new skills, completion of learning tasks and frequent testing and feedback – are helpful ingredients in strategies for quality improvement and reform (UNESCO,2005).

In contrast to the above, the study revealed that the practices inside the classrooms were predominantly teacher-centric with little scope for active participation by students in the learning process. The classroom observations revealed a classroom atmosphere wherein the most pre-dominantly used methodology was the lecture method and the teaching aid was the blackboard; students mostly wrote down facts from the blackboard with very little participation in the ongoing instructional processes. These findings were supported by the findings of the PROBE team – they too concluded that the child's natural curiosity and propensity to constantly ask questions are all silenced by the school environment and gradually they assumed the role of passive listeners. (PROBE, 1999).

A significant observation was that the same class teachers taught the different subjects and very often had no subject specialization in these subjects .The P.T.C. qualification was considered sufficient to make them eligible to teach all the subjects without any apparent content or methodological difficulty. It was here that the in-service training programs were considered useful because these programs attempted to provide inputs in the areas found to need specific attention.

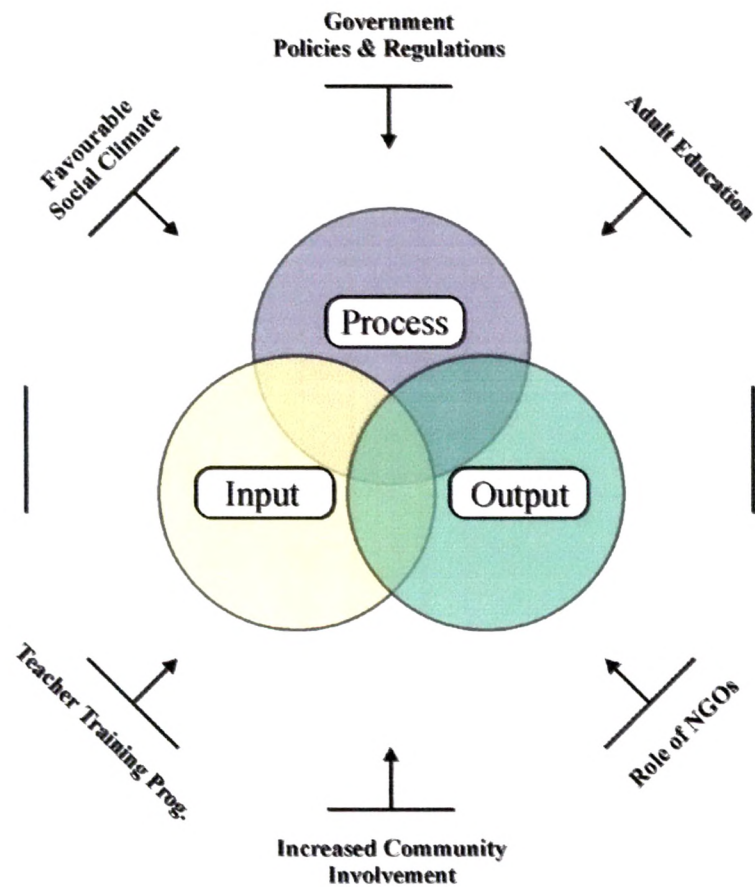
The study also revealed that the Teachers were expected to perform duties other than their regular academic duties and a large population of Teachers found these to be a disturbance to the conducting of their regular school activities. Such additional duties are detrimental to the 'quality' of elementary education. (Bhattacharya and Dave, 1991) however shortage of staff made the performing of these additional duties imperative – often at the cost of academic duties which should have been the prime concern !

Among the beneficiaries of the education system, Parents are a significant component and their contribution cannot be ignored. Research has established the fact that pupil achievements are higher in schools with active parent-teacher association and lack of active parent participation is a serious shortcoming of the system today (PROBE, 1999). However, despite the significant role they played, their involvement was found to be less than what was needed. Teachers and Administrators alike commented on this lack of involvement and wished it would have been increased in the interest of the learner.

A noteworthy fact was that despite their poor involvement in the conductings of the school, overall their attitude towards education for their children was favorable – this finding was supported by other research findings as well - 80% parents wanted Primary Education to be made compulsory for all children and 89% parents gave importance to education of the girl child. (PROBE, 1999).

But, if the data shows that indeed they are keen that their children should receive Primary Education, what is that which prevents their wholehearted participation? Was it that Parents lacked faith in the system and hence their efforts were half-hearted? The real challenge in future would be to devise means whereby parental involvement may increase as it would increase accountability on part of the Functionaries. The real challenge in future would also be not just to activate Parent Teacher Associations but also to achieve greater popular involvement through all available channels – the parents, Government and finally, the community at large(educational institutions and private agencies) emphasizing the complementary role of all these different participants .

Figure 6.2 : Education - A n Open System



The system as could be seen was being impacted by several components all making their significant individual contributions – those which may be deemed positive were a certain regularity and organization in the daily working schedules of the Teachers, a supervision mechanism that ensured that this systematic and well organized set-up was adhered to and the recognition that parental involvement was crucial in the achievement of system objectives and then devising ways to facilitate parent-teacher interactions.

However, while on the one hand regularity and systematization was being attempted, on the other hand teachers were assigned duties which they themselves professed as being a disturbance in the conducting of their academic duties; while parental involvement was considered crucial, attempts at involving the parents were often unsuccessful and finally there were also societal perceptions and realities which determined and influenced the functioning of the system.

The fact remains that for the system to function effectively all components should function in an integrated and interdependent manner eventually enabling the realization of objectives and not that these influences cancel out one another thereby negating all the well thought efforts put in for the benefit of the Learner. Thus, interdependence needs to be mutually supportive and oriented towards the overall systemic goals.

With all these varied inputs – some beneficial and some detrimental; it now remained to be seen as to what were the outcomes in terms of curricular and co-curricular achievements of the students.

The Evaluation pattern was indicative of a comprehensive evaluation pattern which took into account all aspects of the student's development. While giving importance to academic areas, it also gave importance to non-academic areas and there were activities designed meaningfully in accordance with the respective grades. However, the evaluation pattern was not a formative one with regular evaluation not being done to ascertain student progress in different learning areas on a periodic basis. The case of poor performance can be taken care of by periodic diagnosis of learning difficulties and conducting remedial classes thereafter. Regular monitoring of student progress and according feedback are all significant factors related to school quality.

The results of the achievement test conducted for Std.V, VI, and VII for Mathematics and Language revealed an overall academic performance which was dismal and certain sections of the student population had fared very poorly - it may be indicative of lack of proper instructional inputs at the school which impacted their overall understanding of the subject ; lack of additional academic support from home keeping in mind their disadvantaged background; the difficulty of finding teachers to teach certain subjects, as well as the difficulty of obtaining additional reference material for certain subjects. Certain Subjects are not very common in usage but their inclusion is necessary keeping in mind the fact that primary education needs to be imparted in the child's own mother-tongue and hence the inclusion of such subjects. The presence of only 'one' such school in the city is indicative of the very small population it was catering to and explains why not too much of reference material was readily available.

Among students of all the mediums, the overall performance of girls was better than that of boys and the percentage of failures was found to be higher among boys in almost the grades and subjects.

It was also found that the percentage of failures in Maths was lesser in the lower grades and as the students went to the higher grades i.e. Grades VI and VII, their performance in Mathematics became poorer with the number of failures increasing. The performance in Language also showed that majority of students did not score above the fifty percent mark indicating that the written skill needed further attention. Also, Maths is a scoring subject with the possibility of scoring full marks also – however, the analysis of scores revealed that among students who had fared well, the maximum scores were in the 60-70 % range, with very few students scoring more than 70% in this subject. Analysis of percentage of failures in each Subject, Grade and Sex also revealed that the percentage of failures was very high in each subject and grade.

Thus, fundamental concepts need to be attended to as these were linked to other more complex concepts in the future grades and only the understanding of these would ensure a good performance in the future. The Mathematics curriculum is organized in such a manner that concepts keep recurring and also concepts are linked to one another – the knowledge of one enables the learning of many other related concepts, and so it is very important that elementary concepts and misunderstandings be clarified to ensure future understanding.

Regarding Language, it was revealed that elementary knowledge was lacking and without a sound knowledge of the basics, how could these students be expected to perform well? Also, the written expression was found to be poor and so while they comprehended and answered the questions correctly in a given comprehension, these students were unable to express themselves in questions like paraphrasing, story constructing and essay and letter writing. The problem may be related both to the knowledge of appropriate vocabulary as well as to lack of proficiency in written expression. Also, the problem may lie in the transaction of the language classes - research studies have proved that language teaching is not focused on activities which develop skills in using language but on correct spelling, neat writing and rote memorization with very less focus on application of the knowledge thereby reducing its applicability and relevance (PROBE,1999).

Particularly in the Indian context, examinations become the major referral system and ultimately shapes the patterns of teaching, textbook writing and classroom interaction and if exams expect children to reproduce and memorize, there is little hope of expecting the scenario in the classrooms to change. In this context, the PROBE (1999) concluded that the ability to express independently, reason logically is given little importance in the classrooms as ultimately students will not be evaluated in any of these. There is an urgent need to revisit our objectives and re-examine our examination patterns if the classroom scenario and the quality of transactions therein are to be changed accordingly.

Finally, pupil achievement reflects all of these - family background (parental education and social factors) and school characteristics (infrastructure, teacher attributes, teaching-learning processes, examinations (PROBE,1999) and consequently the role played by each and every systemic subcomponent is complementary and significant.

The analysis of data in relation to participation in different co-curricular activities revealed that the academic planning did take into account the importance of co-curricular activities and both the time-table and the co-curricular organization revealed that such activities were indeed incorporated on a regular basis. However, not all activities could be conducted sometimes due to lack of trained staff and at other times due to the unavailability of related material. Also, for the Competitions, participation was limited to only a few students ultimately as the requirements stated that only a few students per

school could participate in these competitions and so a majority of students were unable to participate in these competitions.

Thus, the need to devise mechanisms where all may get opportunity to participate.

6.2 EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS .

The findings of the study revealed that the endeavors made for the Universalisation for Elementary education are indeed appreciable – despite these efforts, the goal was not being achieved although efforts for the same were being made since Independence. Hence, the need to identify areas that needed attention and remedy them.

- To begin with, Secondary education needs to be universalized so that students need not leave the education system after completion of upper primary schooling and are absorbed into the senior grades within the same institution; many a student becomes a drop-out due to lack of facility of secondary schooling and Universalisation of the same may be a strong motivation to continue with schooling;
- Balwadis need to be increased in number and enrollment in the same a compulsory pre-requisite before entering the primary section;
- The mandatory teacher qualifications need to be upgraded so that new entrants to the system have advanced general educational qualifications and bring with them greater content knowledge and know-how ; also the subjects allocation should then be done in accordance with the specialization so that the quality of the instructional processes are qualitatively enhanced ; this ought to be done especially for language and mathematics subjects because both these subjects have great significance for future learning and need to be emphasized in the formative years;
- Teaching-learning processes need to be reviewed particularly keeping in mind the poor performance shown by the students. Instructional patterns especially in the lower grades need to be given greater emphasis as these lay the foundation for future learning to happen and thus the focus ought to be more on 'learning by doing' and conducting of relevant and meaningful activities. The study shows the need for more fluency in language, increased vocabulary, writing fluency and consequently the need for activities such as oral reading practice, guided reading,

word study, reading self selected books independently. Also, in order to make the curriculum more meaningful to the learner, the activities should focus on genuine and meaningful real life situations. Formative assessments to identify student strengths and difficulties would enable educators to modify instruction to Learner needs, give timely guidance and design useful interventions to help treat any future learning difficulty.

- School facilities like the Library need to be utilized to greater extent to assist in the development of reading competencies and increased reading habits would be beneficial to the learner in terms of vocabulary enhancement, reading and speaking skills which would culminate into appropriate writing skills. Thus, the Library needs to be utilized on a daily basis with provision of interesting and relevant reading material for students to improve their language skills and other areas too such as a general knowledge of their subjects and surroundings;
- Teachers play a crucial role in the schooling system and consequently their inputs are very important. Classroom instruction constitutes the bedrock of the schooling process and its quality should be given due importance. In order to achieve this, teachers should be given ample time to focus on their academic duties and very little additional and administrative work should be allocated to them during the ongoing academic year. Only then can the recommendations of activity based instruction, regular assessment of homework and formative assessments become a possibility.
- The Training modules need to be conducted preferably at the very beginning of the year so that the learning finds ample opportunity for expression during the academic year and also because teachers are relatively less burdened during the initial stages. In the later stages, they may be arranged so that the training period coincides with the internship phase of the P.T.C. student-teachers and valuable instructional time is not completely lost.
- Particularly in the Indian context, examinations become the major referral system and ultimately shapes the patterns of teaching, textbook writing and classroom interaction and if exams expect children to reproduce and memorize there is little hope of expecting the scenario in the classrooms to change. Thus, the need to

rethink on our objectives and then revise the existing examination patterns – only then, consequent modifications in transaction and instructional materials will follow;

- Although examinations are centralized, the answer sheets are evaluated by the school teachers themselves and the good efforts are thus nullified. The evaluation should be taken up by teachers other than the respective school teachers so that the focus would be more on student learning and less on teacher teaching ;this would have a positive impact on classroom transaction and greater involvement on part of the teachers to ensure better learning ;
- In the Indian context, what needs to be considered is not only ‘physical distance’ but also ‘social distance’ i.e. identifying social barriers to education and increased parental educational levels would go a long way in tackling this issue. Although there is parental cooperation, in order to increase their involvement Adult Education programmes should be a parallel priority so that increased education brings about increased awareness and also that accountability of the Functionaries towards the learners would increase with increased parental awareness. This would also give students academic support from home which so long they were unfortunately missing.
- Teacher Education Institutions need to make brief periods of Internship in Government schools compulsory so that trainee teachers are sensitized to this reality as well and the school students get the benefit of their expertise.....these may be done especially for areas where both staff and resources are lacking namely Computer training ;
- According to the PROBE Report ‘Primary schooling may not be actually free as projected – the minimal expenditure too may be difficult to bear’ this is one of the reasons why continued efforts for increased retention at the Upper primary school levels are still far from expectations. Thus, Community initiatives are necessary and Community adoption of schools would enable partaking and sharing in a national responsibility so long only undertaken via Government Policies and regulations; eventually, societal pressure alone will help change the present scenario.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This study was conducted within a specific frame determined by the objectives laid down for the study. However, the study may serve as a useful springboard for the conducting of future related research.

The study did reveal poor achievement outcomes and the causes for this could be many – namely ineffective teaching methods, voluminous instructional material, lack of parental academic support or even regular student absenteeism.

- Since Private educational Institutions (Primary and Upper Primary sections) are functioning comparatively better with their students recording better outcomes both in curricular as well as extra-curricular areas, a Comparative study of teaching practices in Government and Private Institutions would give an insight into practices which are necessary, could be imbibed as also those which may need consideration or modification. Also, Case studies would enable the deeper understanding of successful institutional functioning.
- There are instances of States having achieved 100 % literacy with Community based initiatives and with the same financial allocations and thus these examples may be replicated in other States as well. Case studies of successful experiments in the area of primary education namely Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, may be educative examples.
- Since PTC is considered to be the requisite qualification for the teachers of Municipal Corporation Primary schools, their curriculum needs to be reviewed for relevance and appropriateness. Along with the academic requirements, the trainee teachers need to be sensitized to new and relevant methodologies as well as the social issues that need to be understood and then empathetically dealt with. Thus, the need for researching into comprehensive training modules and studying the value components in these training programs.
- The content mastery of school teachers themselves need to be looked into. Research studies in countries still endeavoring for Universalisation of Elementary education have shown one of the major constraints towards achievement of Universalisation is the fact that in these countries, the teachers themselves often have scarcely more

formal education than their pupils. This would eventually reflect on the quality of the Instructional processes.

- Studies need to be conducted focusing on such areas as close observation of classroom practices and the quality of instruction therein - especially in the lower primary grades, since understanding at this level would definitely affect future understanding be it numeracy or literacy. The curriculum at the pre-primary stage i.e. the Balwadi needs to be reviewed because this formative stage enables the inculcation of many learning and social skills which would lay a strong foundation for future learning to happen successfully.
- Studies need to be conducted on academic areas such as - Innovative practices in the transaction of Primary curriculum ; Effectiveness of activity based approaches; Evolving modules based on child centered approaches and studying their effectiveness; Designing primary education curricula through child inspired education.
- *Education plays a significant role in encouraging learners' creative and emotional development, in supporting objectives of peace, citizenship and security, in promoting equality and in passing global and local cultural values down to future generations. Many of these objectives are defined and approached in diverse ways around the world. Compared with cognitive development, the extent to which they are achieved is harder to determine (UNESCO, 2005).* The present study too focused on academic areas and conducting of co-curricular activities in its determination of quality and future studies may be taken up wherein the non-academic aspects may be critically reviewed namely the skills and values developed in students as a result of the ongoing programmes in schools.
- Research needs to be done to evaluate the impact of the training programs keeping in mind the resources which are periodically being expended i.e. studies related to the relevance of the training programs and how far they enable the realization of objectives. It needs to be determined whether or not the quality of the instructional processes is indeed being improved qualitatively or do the previous conditions continue? Thus, studies need to focus on classroom practices in the post training periods.

- Para-teachers have been appointed for the primary education system and the educational qualifications of these teachers need to be reviewed critically – also, are these teachers indeed assisting in the endeavor for primary education or is their employment yet another financial implication only ?
- Studies need to be conducted to ascertain the perception of community members regarding the quality of the programs under SSA. These studies would help devise increased Community participation mechanisms because their active involvement would definitely increase accountability and ensure more quality measures in future;
- A study of the remedial programs need to be conducted and their utility or usefulness in assisting students to achieve better learning outcomes.
- The extensive use of ICT as a possible and alternative instructional tool to improve achievement levels would be another necessary area of investigation.

6.4 CONCLUSION

When we, India, started out on this journey of according equality of educational opportunity through the Universalisation of Education programme it seemed a task which would be easily achievable and hence the deadline of a decade to achieve the final goals. The sheer scale and enormity of the task however slowly dawned on us that together with the tremendously large and diverse population that had to be brought within the fold of education, there were also accompanying social issues which needed to be addressed parallelly so as to enable the enrollment of disadvantaged sections and enable Universalisation to become a possibility.

The assignment was in no way a singular one ; it entailed taking into account a multitude of associated issues - inaccessibility of large numbers of student population, physical and social barriers due to a strongly stratified and structured society which was resistant to the according of education perceiving it as a threat to their very existence , a society that placed social values above all else with consequent subjugation of the girl child - all these barriers were tremendous challenges to contend with. The inequalities existing in the education system today are largely the result of the larger social inequality that prevails in society today and while the endeavor has been for achievement of social equality through education, this goal has remained largely unrealized.

Education is perceived as a significant tool to bring about social equality but the emphasis has been restricted to official documents and policies ...'there are amazing contradictions between official rhetoric and practical action' (PROBE, 1999).

Despite these awesome challenges and inequalities , certain Indian States have come very close to universal elementary education and examples of these are Himachal Pradesh and Kerala and their success underlines 'the virtuous cycle of State initiative

and public response'(PROBE, 1999). While Himachal Pradesh has benefited from favorable social conditions, Kerala started of with a highly inegalitarian and oppressive social structure but it was political action that made it possible to overcome the initial obstacle against mass education (PROBE, 1999).

Thus, although external assistance can help in achieving appropriate resource levels and managing school systems, it cannot make up for the absence of a societal project for improving education. That must come from within each society and cannot be engineered by outsiders (UNESCO, 2005).

What emerges is that with a thoughtful re-orientation of our financial allocations, our priorities and increased Community initiatives it may still be possible to achieve Universalisation of Primary education through self-sustaining mechanisms.