

Unit 19

Universalization of Elementary Education

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the need and importance of universalization of elementary education in India;
- describe the structure of elementary education;
- describe various developments that took place for universalization of elementary education during pre and post independence periods;
- discuss the present scenario of elementary education in India;
- discuss various innovations, initiatives and strategies taken for universalization of elementary education; and
- explain the role of distance education in teacher training at elementary level.

19.1 Introduction

After India attained independence, elementary education became one of the most important item on the agenda of successive governments at the centre. This is because the makers of Indian Constitution had made a provision that within a period of ten years from 1950, free and compulsory elementary education would be provided to all children up to 14 years of age. The rationale behind such a provision was to make all the citizens of the country literate so that they could become productive members of society. Elementary education is provided to the children in the age group 6-14 years. This is the most important and formative period in a child's life. Apart from imparting a child the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, necessary care is taken to foster all round development of the personality through curricular and co-curricular activities. A person with elementary education can become a self-reliant, sensible and productive citizen of the country. Research has shown that increasing the average primary schooling of the labor force even by one year can increase output substantially (World Bank). The Social benefits of elementary education are immense. Educated parents send their children to school. Elementary education leads to perpetuation of benefits from one generation to another (Sinha 2000). The importance of elementary education is very crucial not only for the country but also for all the citizens of the country. The concept of elementary education in its structural sense varies from state to state. However, there is a common structure of education, which has been accepted as the national system of education. Let us examine the structure of elementary education in the national system of education.

19.2 Structure of Elementary Education

The national system of education was enunciated by the National Policy on Education (1968) in the form of 10+2+3. The National Policy on Education (1986) defined that the structure of elementary education would consist of 5 years of primary education and 3 years of upper primary education. But there are variations in the states with regard to organization of elementary education. For example, some states have 4 years of primary and 3 years of upper primary structure. Some states have 5 years of primary and 2 years of upper primary structure. In spite of these variations, elementary education structure is understood as defined by the National Policy on Education (1986) as presented in Figure 1.1.

Age 4-6	Pre-Primary	Elementary Education
Class I-V Age 6-11	Primary	
Class VI-VIII Age 12-14	Upper Primary	
Class IX-X Age 15-16	Secondary	
Class XI-XIII Age 17-18	Senior Secondary	

Fig.1.1: National System of Education

Although serious concerns for elementary education to all were expressed during the post-independence period, one can also find similar concerns before the country became independent. Let us look at the concern for elementary education from a historical perspective.

19.3 Historical Perspective

During Vedic times, elementary education was imparted through *Guru-Shishya Parampara* (teacher-taught tradition). The children went to the Ashram (School) of the Guru where they were taught religious texts. With the rise of Buddhism children were taught through the monastic system of education. By the tenth century, there were *pathshalas* and tolls, which provided primary education to children. During the medieval period, *Maktabs* attached to mosques used to impart elementary education. The *Maktabs* were concerned with teaching children how to read and write and special emphasis was given on how to read the Quran.

The Pre-Independence Period

Serious concern for education among Indians during the pre-Independence period, i.e., the British period, started with the Macaulay's Minutes. The main purpose of Macaulay's Minutes was to spread western education among the masses. During that time, there were indigenous elementary schools, providing for the teaching of the three Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic – to a few categories of people like priests, business community and rich farmers. The British government introduced elementary education to educate Indians to help it in administrative work. The content of education was mostly western ideas, concepts, history of England, mathematics and science, etc. But the system of elementary education was not suitable for the local community. Hence, the Indian Education Commission of 1882 which emphasized elementary education suggested transfer of elementary education to the local community. With awakening among the masses for education, there was a great demand for elementary education.

The first ever demand for compulsory primary education was made by Gokhale. But his resolution was these a Parliament in India in 1910? was unfortunately defeated. During 1921-37, elementary education came under Indian control and made remarkable progress. But the large-scale expansion got a setback with the Hartog Committee Report in 1928. However, the committee emphasized improving retention, reducing wastage and stagnation and improvement of elementary education. Another landmark during the pre-independence period was that of the Basic Education Programme of Gandhiji. Popularly known as the Wardha scheme of education, it advocated a system of elementary education, which emphasized earning while learning. Teaching of craft, child-centredness, activity-based, close interface between school and community were some of the features of the basic education programme.

Post-Independence Period

The post-independence period witnessed a series of committees, commission and constitutional amendments recommending for free and compulsory elementary education. In 1947, the Kher Committee was set up to explore means to promote universal elementary education and it made recommendations on the association of local bodies with the administration of primary education and the creation of education bodies.

But the first milestone to universalize elementary education was laid by the Constitution of India, adopted in 1950. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy says: "The state shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete 14 years."

Following the constitutional directives, the Five-Year Plans allocated large finance for elementary education. There was an attempt to adopt Basic Education of Gandhiji as the national pattern of elementary education. However, the attempt did not get support. The Education Commission (1964-66) recommended the 10+2+3 pattern of education, which was accepted by the first ever National Policy on Education (NPE 1968). But the most comprehensive policy on education was the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986), which was reviewed and revised in its Plan of Action (POA 1992). Both NPE (1986) and POA (1992) took universalisation of elementary education with serious concern and emphasized universal access, universal enrolment and universal retention. In 1990, Acharya Rammurthy Committee also recommended for compulsory primary education. In 1992, India signed 'UN Convention on Right of the Child' and committed itself to providing compulsory elementary education. In 1993, the Supreme Court upheld elementary education as a fundamental right. The Saikia Committee also recommended making elementary education a fundamental right in 1997. In 2001, the 93rd Amendment Bill was introduced to make free and compulsory elementary education a fundamental right. The 93rd Amendment Bill was passed (renumbered as 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002) by the Parliament in December 2002 and free and compulsory elementary education became a fundamental right of every citizen.

Reflection and Action 19.1

Trace the development of Elementary education in India.

19.4 The Present Scenario

Table 19.1: Literacy Rate

Year	Persons	Literacy rate %	
		Males	Females
1951	18.33		
1961	28.31	27.16	8.86
1971	34.45	40.40	15.34
1981	43.56	45.95	21.97
1991	52.21	56.37	29.75
2001	65.38	64.13	39.29
		75.85	54.16

Source: Selected Educational Statistics (2000-2001), MHRD, Government of India New Delhi, 2002

From the Table 19.1, we find that the literacy rate has significantly increased from 18.33 in 1951 to 65.38 in 2001. Although literacy rates of males and females have increased since 1951, the literacy rate of females is still far behind that of males.

Table 19.2: Number of Primary and Upper Primary School in India

Year	Primary Schools	Upper Primary Schools	Ratio of Primary to Upper Primary Schools
1950-51	2,09,671	13,596	15.4
1960-61	3,30,399	49,663	6.7
1970-71	4,08,378	90,621	4.5
1980-81	4,94,503	1,18,855	4.2
1990-91	5,60,935	1,51,456	3.7
1995-96	5,90,421	1,71,216	3.4
1998-99*	6,26,737	1,90,166	3.3
1999-2000*	6,41,695	1,98,004	3.2

* Provisional

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, 1990-2000, MHRD, Government of India 2001.

From the Table 19.2, it is evident that the number of primary and upper primary schools has significantly increased since 1950-51. Now let us look at the Gross Enrolment Ratio, All India Level, 1950-51 to 1999-2000.

Table 19.3 : Gross Enrolment Ratio, All India Level

Year	Primary Level			Upper Primary Level		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	60.6	24.8	42.6	20.6	4.6	12.7
1960-61	82.6	41.4	62.4	33.2	11.3	22.5
1970-71	95.5	60.5	78.6	46.5	20.8	33.4
1980-81	95.8	64.1	78.6	54.3	28.6	41.9
1990-91*	98.1	75.9	80.5	79.8	54.6	62.1

From Table 3, it is clear that enrolment figures in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at primary and upper primary levels have improved from 1950-51 to 1999-2000. Moreover, the differences in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) have also reduced. But, the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at Primary level for boys was 78 per cent and for girls 64 per cent in 1997-98. The overall NER was 71 per cent suggesting that 29 per cent of children at primary level in 6-11 age group continued to remain out of school. Educationally backward states have even lower NER than the national average of 71 per cent. (Sinha 2004). Moreover, dropout rates continue to be high, retention of children in schools is poor, achievement levels are low, and wastage is considerable. Despite increased participation of girls, disparity still exists, more particularly among scheduled castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (Gopalan 1998).

The National Policy on Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992) took up the challenge of universalization of elementary education seriously. The following three are the main points of emphasis of these policy documents.

- Universal access
- Universal enrolment
- Universal retention

Apart from emphasizing these three aspects, the documents advocated:

- decentralized participative planning with community involvement;
- infrastructure support provision in terms of improved school environment; satisfactory condition of school buildings, provision of teaching and learning materials;
- qualitative improvement in elementary education through child-centred, activity based teaching learning process;
- Restructuring of pre-service and in-service training;
- addressing the issues of access and quality.

The concern of the NPE and POA got further strengthened by the international efforts made by UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank. The World Conference on Education for All (EFA), held on March 5-9, 1990 in (Thailand), organized by UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank, adopted a Declaration calling upon 155 member states and international agencies to take effective steps for achieving EFA by the year 2000. It emphasized basic learning needs of all children like literacy, oral expression, numeracy, problem solving and basic learning contents such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

For fulfillment of these learning needs, the Declaration of EFA took a broadened vision of basic education as consisting of formal schooling, non-formal education programmes as well as open learning systems which together attempt to provide basic-education to all children as well as adults (DEP-DPEP 2003). As a follow-up to the Conference, the World Education Forum of Education for All met at Dakar, Senegal, during April 26-28, 2000. The six goals adopted by the forum are:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early education care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections.
- Ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girl children, in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skill programmes.
- Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

- Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- Improving every aspect of the quality of education and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and life skills.

Box 19.1: National and International Level Initiatives for achieving Universal Elementary Education

The national/international level initiatives like, the resolution of the National Policy on Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992) to ensure free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality to all children upto 14 years of age by 2000, the Education for All (EFA) Summit of the nine high-population (E-9) countries held in New Delhi in December 1993, the World Conference on Education for all in Jomiten, in March 1990 and subsequent Dakar Framework for Education for All (2000) emphasizing on E-9 countries to generate their own approach towards achieving EFA, have resulted in a number of innovations, initiatives and strategies being implemented in India to achieve universalisation of elementary education.

19.5 Initiatives, Innovations and Strategies

Although the government of India has recently made concerted efforts to universalize elementary education several initiatives were taken right after NPE (1986). Let us discuss the initiatives taken after 1986.

Operation Blackboard: The scheme of Operation Blackboard was launched in 1987. The basic aim was to improve the school environment and enhance retention and learning achievement of children by providing minimum essential facilities in all primary schools. According to this scheme, the following are provided to each school.

- i) At least two reasonably larger all-weather rooms, with a veranda and separate toilet facilities for boys and girls;
- ii) At least two teachers – one of them a female – for each school; and
- iii) Essential teaching-learning materials including blackboards, maps, charts, toys and equipment for work experience.

As part of this scheme, some 523,000 primary schools have been covered as originally envisaged with central government assistance.

Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project: The Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project (APPEP) was initiated with the assistance of Overseas Development Agency (ODA) with an estimated outlay of Rs.1000 million during the 8th Plan. It adopted a two-pronged strategy of improving classroom transaction by training teachers and giving a fillip to school construction activities.

Bihar Education Project: The Bihar Education Project (BEP) was launched in 1991. The main aim of the project was to bring about quantitative and qualitative improvement in the elementary system, with emphasis on the education of deprived sections of society, such as SCs, STs and Women. The project emphasized participatory planning and implementation. The total project outlay was Rs.3600 million, which included the total outlay for the second phase (1996-98) i.e. Rs.613 million which was shared by the UNICEF, Government of India and Government of Bihar.

Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Programme: The Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Programme (UPBEP) was launched in 1993 with the assistance of the World

Bank, through its International Development Agency (IDA). It had an outlay of Rs.7,288 million spread over seven years. The UP Government had to share 13 per cent of the total project cost. The project emphasized construction work of schools, Block Resource Centres (BRCs), preparation of training materials for teacher trainers and training of in-service teachers.

Reflection and Action 19.2

Why do you think it is essential to reach elementary education to every one in the society?

Non-Formal Education (NFE): The scheme of Non-Formal Education was introduced by the Government of India in 1979-80 with the objective of supporting the formal system in providing education to all children upto the age of 14 years . Initially, it targeted 10 educationally backward states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. But the NPE (1986) reviewed the scheme and concluded that it was not catering to the children from habitations without schools, working children, and girls. Hence, the Policy suggested that apart from focusing on 10 educationally backward states, the scheme needed to be extended to urban slums, hilly, tribal and desert areas and working children in other states and UTs as well. It also recommended central grants to Voluntary Agencies (VAs) for running NFE centers. The Programme of Action (POA) 1992 further suggested some strategies for strengthening of the NFE scheme as mentioned below:

- i) Setting up NFE centers based on micro-planning exercise carried out for UEE.
- ii) Central role for community by involving them in setting up of the centre, identification of the instructor and supervision of the NFE centre.
- iii) Efforts to evolve different models of NFE programme for different target groups.
- iv) Adequate training and orientation of NFE instructors (30 days initial training of instructors and 20 days in subsequent years etc.).
- v) Linkage with the formal school to facilitate lateral entry of the learners from the NFE stream.
- vi) Efforts to link non-formal courses with formal schools.
- vii) Adoption of learner-centred approach. The learning levels for the learners to be equivalent to the formal system.

The NFE scheme had certain shortcomings in terms of very low investments; poor community involvement; problems in release of funds; several quality issues including training of instructors, and number of hours of teaching per day. Evaluation studies on the scheme of NFE were carried out by Parliamentary Standing Committees on Human Resource Development and on the dropout problem. Similarly, another study was conducted by the Planning Commission. Based on the findings of the studies, the scheme of NFE was restructured and renamed as Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative Innovation Education (EGS and AIE). The new scheme was introduced with effect from April 1, 2001. According to MHRD (2001-2002), "EGS and AIE envisages flexible strategies including schools in unserved habitations, seasonal hostels or condensed courses for migrating children, bridge courses, residential camps, drop-in centers for street and slum children, remedial coaching for children enrolled in formal schools and short-duration summer camps".

The scheme would support the following broad strategies:

- i) Setting up of schools in school-less habitations
- ii) Interventions for mainstreaming of 'out of school' children viz. through bridge courses, back to school camps, etc.

- iii) Strategies for very specific, difficult groups of children who cannot be mainstreamed.

These schemes became, later on, a part of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) the overall programme for Universalisation of Elementary Education.

National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal-Scheme), 1995: The scheme was launched on 15th August, 1995 to give a boost to Universalisation of Elementary Education. It emphasized increasing enrolment, retention and attendance in primary classes by supplementing nutritional requirements of children attending primary schools. The scheme was implemented in 2408 Blocks in the first year, and covered the whole country in a phased manner by 1997-98. The programme originally covered children of primary stage (Classes 1 to V) in government, local body and government aided schools. It was extended to cover children studying in Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative Innovation Education (AIE) Centres in October 2002.

National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL): NPEGEL aims at providing education to under privileged/disadvantaged girls from class I to VIII as a separate and distinct gender component plan of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The programme is necessary to achieve UEE for girls in educationally backward areas.

The objectives of NPEGEL are:

- a) To develop and promote facilities to provide access and to facilitate retention of girls and to ensure greater participation of women and girls in the field of education.
- b) To improve the quality of education through various interventions and to stress upon the relevance and quality of girls' education for their empowerment.

The scheme would be applicable in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) where the level of rural female literacy is less than the national average and the gender gap is above the national average, blocks of districts which have at least 5% SC/ST population and SC/ST female literacy rate below 10%, and selected urban slums. The target groups under this scheme are out of school girls, dropout girls, over-age girls who have not completed elementary education, working girls, girls from marginalized social groups, girls with low attendance and girls with low levels of achievement. The programme aims at development of teaching learning material CDs, films, guidelines for gender concerns, compilation of supplementary reading material, etc.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV): The scheme called Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) has been approved by the Government of India to set up upto 750 residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level for girls belonging to SC, ST, OBC and minorities in difficult areas. The scheme will be coordinated with the existing schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Mahila Samakhya (MS). The objective of KGBV is to ensure access and quality education to the girls of disadvantaged groups of society by setting up residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level. The scheme will be operational in these Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBS) where, as per Census data of 2001, rural female literacy is below the national average and gender gap in literacy is more than the national average. Among these blocks, schools may be set up in areas with:

- Concentration of tribal population, with low female literacy and/or a large number of girls out of school;

- Concentration of SC, OBC and minority population, with low female literacy and/or a large number of girls out of school;
- Areas with low female literacy; and
- Areas with a large number of small-scattered habitations that do not qualify for a school.

The scheme will be implemented by the State Government through the Mahila Samakhya (MS) Society in MS states and through the SSA in case of other states. Training for teachers and staff at the residential schools will be coordinated by the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Block Resource Centres and the Mahila Samakhya Resource Groups.

Lok Jumbish Project: Lok Jumbish Project was initiated in Rajasthan during 1992-94 in the first phase and extended upto 1998 in the second phase. The expenditure in the project was shared between Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA), Government of India and Government of Rajasthan. It is a unique project in which government agencies, teachers, NGO elected representatives and the people worked together to promote universalisation of primary education. The allocation for the project was Rs.1100 million for Phases I and II and Rs.4000 million for Phase-III. The seven guiding principles of Lok Jumbish are:

- A process rather than a product approach;
- Partnerships;
- Decentralized functioning;
- Participatory learning;
- Integration with the mainstream education system;
- Flexibility of management; and
- Creating multiple levels of leadership committed to quality and mission mode.

Janshala Programme: The Janshala Programme aimed at supporting ongoing efforts of the Government of India towards UEE. The programme was a joint effort of five UN agencies - UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA to universalise primary education. These agencies provided financial and technical support to the Government of India for a community-based primary education programme called the Joint Government of India-UN System Education Programme, the Janshala Programme. Special focus was given to the problems of girls and marginalized children. Though the programme was initiated in March 1997, the implementation was carried out in August 1998. Nine states were covered under this programme. In these states, the districts and blocks, which were not covered under DPEP, were taken into account by identifying blocks with low female literacy, high concentration of SCs, STs and high incidence of child labour. The main objectives of the programme were:

- To enhance and sustain community participation in effective school management;
- To improve performance of teachers in the use of interactive child-centred and gender-sensitive methods of teaching, especially in multi-grade classrooms;
- To improve performance of teachers in the use of interactive child-centred and gender sensitive methods of teaching, especially in multi-grade classrooms; and
- To redress social constraints which affect attendance and performance of children (Mainly girls).

The project period was for five year (1998-2002). The total project outlay was Rs.1031 million. The states covered under the programme were Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh.

Free and Compulsory Education as a Fundamental Right: The Constitution (86th Amendment) Act 2002, enacted in December 2002 sought to make free and compulsory education a Fundamental Right for all children in the age-group 6-14 years by inserting a new Article 21A in Part III (Fundamental Right) of the Constitution.

The new Article 21A reads as follows: "21A. Right to Education - The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP): The DPEP was launched in November 1994 to achieve universalisation of elementary education through district-specific planning and disaggregated target setting. The programme as conceptualized based on the experiences of APBEP, BEP and UPBEP. Unlike the earlier programmes, which had schematic piecemeal approach, the DPEP took a holistic view of primary education. The major features of DPEP were decentralized management, community mobilization, and district specific planning based on contextuality and research-based inputs.

While 85% of the cost involved in the programme was borne by the Central Government, the rest of the cost was the responsibility of the State Governments. The Central Government managed the fund with external funding. IDA provided \$260 million and \$425 million under Phase-I and Phase-II respectively. The European Union (EU) provided 150 Million ECU. The ODA (UK) extended a grant of \$80.21 million. The grant from the Netherlands amounted to \$25.8 million. The first phase of the programme covered 42 districts in the states of Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu and Madhya Pradesh. The second phase covered 80 districts of Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat and all the states of Phase-I. The districts were selected on the basis of female literacy below national average and (Total Literacy Campaign) TLCs have made a demand for elementary education in these districts.

Box 19.2 : Objectives and Achievements of DPEP

The main objectives of DPEP are:

- To provide all children with access to primary education either in the formal system or through the non-formal education (NFE) programme.
- To reduce differences in enrolment, dropout rates and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than 5%.
- To reduce overall primary dropout rates for all students to less than 10%.
- To raise average achievement levels by at least 25% over measured base line levels and ensuring achievements of basic literacy and numeracy competencies and a minimum of 40% achievement levels in other competencies by all primary school children.

The achievement under DPEP obtained so far is as below:

- Opening of new schools numbered 0.160 million of which 0.084 million were alternative schools.
 - Creation of additional schooling facilities.
 - 45,900 new school buildings
 - 46,800 additional classrooms
 - 15,302 resource centers
 - 46,500 toilets
 - 16,700 drinking water facilities
- Appointment of para teachers/shiksha karmis (0.177 million)

Source: MHRD Annual Report (2002-2003)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): The scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was approved by the Government of India in November 16, 2000. It would subsume all existing programmes of UEE except Mahila Samakhya and Mid-day Meal Scheme. The districts would be units of programme implementation. Apart from improving the efficiency of the delivery system for quality-based education up to Class VIII, it would bridge the gender gap by involving the community in school management. The broad objectives of the scheme are:

- All children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, Back-to-School Camp or bridge course by 2003;
- All children in the 6th age group complete five years of primary schooling by 2007;
- All children in the 6-14 age group complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010;
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life;
- Bridging of all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010; and
- Universal retention 2010.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a massive mission-mode campaign which covers the entire country and seeks to address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations. Nearly 0.85 million existing primary and upper-primary schools and 33 million existing teachers would be covered under the Abhiyan (MHRD, Annual Report 2002-2003).

Reflection and Action 19.3

Critically evaluate attempts of government of India for the universalisation of elementary education

19.6 Innovative Intervention in Teacher Education for Universalization of Elementary Education

Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP)

The project was initiated in Rajasthan in 1987 with assistance from the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA). The project aims at UEE in socio-economic remote backward villages in Rajasthan with emphasis on girls' education. It identified teacher absenteeism as the main cause of high dropout rates. Under this project, regular teachers are replaced by local teachers who are less qualified, but specially trained. The Shiksha Karmi is a local person with a minimum qualification of Class VIII for men and Class V for women. She is given both induction training programme as well as periodic refresher courses. One of the outstanding achievements of SKP was 100% enrolment of children in 576 villages i.e. more than one fourth of the project villages.

MV Foundation Programme

This programme is implemented in the Ranga Reddy district of Andhra Pradesh to achieve universalisation of elementary education. The main concern of this programme is to eradicate child labour and put children into regular government schools by releasing them from child labour. Under this programme, the para teachers are appointed:

- To campaign against child labour;
- To mobilize children, parents and the community in favour of schooling;

- To run bridge courses for children released from labour for giving them basic literacy and numeracy skill and getting them used to school life; and
- To assist the government teachers in teaching, and to retain the new entrants recently released from labour and put into school after an intense campaign.

The programme started in 1991 and had been successful in putting children back into schools.

Himachal Pradesh Volunteer Teacher Scheme (HPVTS)

The scheme was introduced by the State Government in 1984. Under this scheme, an additional volunteer teacher was provided to single teacher primary school. This was done as there was increase in the enrolment in government schools. Another objective of this scheme was to provide unemployed youth job in schools. These volunteer teachers after serving for 10 years got permanent employment as Junior Basic Teacher in Schools.

19.7 Role of Distance Education in Teacher Training at Primary Level

With a well-established distance education system fully equipped with latest communication and information technology, teacher training at primary level has received focused attention from all national and state level institutions and agencies. The role of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and National Council of Educational Research and Training is noteworthy.

IGNOU in collaboration with NCERT launched a Certificate Programme in Guidance (CIG) in 1993 for primary school teachers and parents. A similar kind of collaborative effort between the two organizations culminated in the development of a comprehensive programme titled “Diploma in Primary Education (DPE)”, which was launched for training of untrained primary school teachers in North-Eastern States, Sikkim and Jammu and Kashmir. The programme broadly emphasizes developing knowledge and understanding of primary school curriculum, factors affecting child development and role of teacher in the socio-cultural and political context of the country in general and in the primary education system in particular. The programme is conducted through print material, audio-visual aids, conduct of practicals, handbooks, teleconferencing and evaluation.

The NCERT also made use of interactive video technology in 1996 to train primary school teachers of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka under its “Special Orientation Programme for Primary School Teachers (SOPT)”. It was a seven day training programme covering topics such as Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL), Teaching Aids, Multi-grade Teaching, and Strategies for Teaching Mathematics, Environmental Studies and Languages.

Distance Education Programme Under IGNOU in Collaboration with NCERT

IGNOU in collaboration with NCERT launched Distance Education Programme (DEP) as part of DPEP in 1996. The project was financed by MHRD through a loan from the International Development Association (World Bank) towards the cost of second phase of DPEP. The broad goal of DEP-DPEP was to strengthen the ongoing training programme of primary education personnel by using distance learning inputs and materials. This was to help evolve a sustainable system of in-service training linked to improving effectiveness of the teaching-learning process in primary schools (DEP-DPEP, IGNOU, 2003).

Distance Education Programme Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (DEP-SSA)

The DEP-SSA was created by the MHRD as a national centre for distance education activities under SSA on July 1, 2003. The implementation of the project in states and UTs has been entrusted to IGNOU. The main aim of the project is to support the states and UTs to achieve the objectives of SSA.

It covers 28 States and 7 UTs for elementary school stage. It caters to the needs of elementary teachers, BRC/CRC coordinators, VEC members, community leaders and parents, alternative school functionaries/para teachers, faculty of Distance Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), State Institutes of Education (SIEs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (IGNOU Profile 2006). It provides printed self-learning materials, audio-video programmes and organizes teleconferences.

Reflection and Action 19.4

Do you think appropriate teacher training will facilitate spreading the elementary education. What are the requirements for such teacher training programmes?

19.8 Conclusion

Through this unit we made an attempt to present to you in a synoptic manner the concept, history and the present scenario of universalization of elementary education and the initiatives and strategies taken by both central and state governments to achieve universalisation of elementary education. Elementary education is very crucial not only for the country but also for all the citizens of the country. The makers of the Constitution had made a provision that within a period of ten years from 1950, free and compulsory elementary education would be provided to all children up to 14 years of age. Before independence the demand for compulsory primary education was proposed by Gokhale. After independence, the first milestone to universalize elementary education was laid by the Constitution of India in 1950, but, the serious concerns to universalize elementary education were shown by the National Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1992). The concerns of the NPE and POA got further strengthened by the international efforts made by UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank through the Declaration of Education for all (EFA). Several initiatives innovations and strategies have been taken by both central and state governments towards universalisation of elementary education. Some of them are Operation Blackboard, APPEP, BEP, UPBEP, NFE, Mid-Day Meal scheme, Lok Jumbish Project, Janshala Programme, Free and Compulsory Education as a Fundamental Right, District Primary Education Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Several initiatives in teacher education have also been taken for universalization of elementary education. Some of them are Shiksha Karmi Project, MV Foundation Programme, HPVTS, etc. Distance and Open Learning have also played a part in universalization of elementary education. IGNOU offers academic programmes for training of primary school teachers. Distance Education Programme (DEP-SSA) is also supporting the states and UTs to achieve the objectives of SSA.

19.9 Further Reading

Gopalan, K. 1998 *Indian Strategies to Achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education*. Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts: New Delhi

Sinha Shabnam 2004, "Elementary Education in India". in J.S. Rajput (Ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Indian Education*. National Council of Educational Research and Training: New Delhi

