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## Educational Development in India with Focus on Elementary Education

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# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA WITH FOCUS ON ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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## *Abstract*

Provision of free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of fourteen, is a directive principle of the Constitution. Despite spectacular quantitative expansion of educational facilities in the country, the goal of 'Education for All' (EFA) still remains elusive and is far out of the sight. Though, educational facilities are now available to a large segment of population both in rural and urban areas, still a large number of institutions do not have minimum infrastructural facilities required for effective functioning. A large number of children enter the education system every year but nearly half the children who enter Grade I drop-out before reaching Grade V, and two-thirds of the children drop-out before they reach Grade VIII which is mainly due to factors relating to poverty and school effectiveness and class-room interactions.

In the present article, the progress of educational development in India with particular reference to objectives of 'Education for All' has been briefly analysed. Growth in enrolment for more than forty years has been critically examined for which publications of the MHRD as well as data generated by the National Sample Survey Organisation have been used and analysed. The results reveal that at all levels of school education, a significant progress in enrolment has taken place but still a large number of children of age-group 6-13 years are out-of-school. The results show that India may attain the status of universal primary education by the year 2004-05 in case of boys and in 2007-08 in case of girls. The trend can be reversed and goal may be achieved earlier than projected, if concerted efforts are made to bring all concerned under the umbrella of education. Besides the Government initiatives, a number of other projects have also been launched in the country to promote primary education amongst which DPEP is one of the biggest projects which is currently under implementation in about 148 districts of 14 states.

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# Educational Development in India with Focus on Elementary Education

Arun C. Mehta

## 1. An Overview

Provision of free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of fourteen, is a directive principle of the Constitution. While adopting the Constitution in 1950, the goal was to provide free and compulsory education to all children upto the age of fourteen, within the next ten years. Keeping in view the educational facilities available at that time in the country, the goal was too ambitious to be achieved within a short period of ten years. Hence, time and again the target date to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) had had to be revised. Over a period of time, the focus was diverted from quantitative expansion of educational facilities to universal enrolment and retention of children upto fourteen years of age with a substantial improvement in the quality of education. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) envisaged that all children who would attain the age of about eleven years by 1990 would have had five years of schooling, or its equivalent through the non-formal stream and by 1995 all children will be provided free and compulsory education upto fourteen years of age. Also, the `World Conference on Education for All' (EFA) held at Jomtien, Thailand (1990) called upon all the countries and agencies of the world to take effective steps for achieving EFA by the turn of the present century. The Revised Programme of Action (1992) further envisaged that `Free and Compulsory' education of satisfactory quality should be provided to all children upto fourteen years of age before the commencement of the twenty-first century by launching a national mission. More recently, Summit of Nine High-Population Developing Countries (1993), in its Delhi Declaration suggested priorities and strategies to achieve goal of EFA by the 2000 AD.

Despite spectacular quantitative expansion of educational facilities in the country, the goal of `Education for All' (EFA) still remains elusive and is far out of the sight.

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Though, educational facilities are now available to a large segment of population both in rural and urban areas, still a large number of institutions do not have minimum infrastructural facilities required for effective functioning which is evident from the findings of the recently conducted base-line studies in the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) states. The available statistics further suggest that a large number of children enter the education system every year but nearly half the children who enter Grade I drop-out before reaching Grade V, and two-thirds of the children drop-out before they reach Grade VIII which is mainly due to factors relating to poverty and school effectiveness and class-room interactions. At the all-India level, about 7.8 per cent boys and 15.1 per cent girls of those who had taken admission in year 1989-90 dropped-out from the system before they reached Grade II. However, boys/girls' differential in drop-out rate noticed in Grade I is not significant. On the other hand, retention rate at the primary level, at present, is about 64.45 per cent for boys and 56.41 per cent for girls, as compared to 41.89 and 34.87 per cent respectively at the elementary level (Mehta, 1995a) which suggests that in the process about 58 per cent boys and 65 per cent girls dropped-out from the system which severely affect the efficiency of education system and is the single largest factor responsible for non-fulfillment of goal of Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE) in the country.

The available statistics further indicate a significant increase in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) which at present is about 115 per cent for boys The available but girls' GER at the primary level is still low at about 80 per cent which also includes children below age `6' and above age `10' (Mehta 1993, MHRD 1993, Kurrian 1983 and World Bank 1997). Even though, over a period of time the share of girls enrolment to total enrolment at the primary level improved significantly from a low 28.1 per cent in 1950-51 to 43.2 per cent in year 1995-96. Enrolment ratio of Scheduled Castes (107.81 per cent) and Scheduled Tribes (106.97 per cent) population also improved significantly and is almost at par with the general population. The entry rate for boys at the all-India level is about 136 per cent but a significant gap in the boys/girls' entry rate has been noticed. In some states, such as, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the differential in entry rate is of

high order, significant and alarming. The available statistics also suggest that as many as 6.68 million boys and 14.28 million girls in the age-group 6-10 years were not enrolled in the year 1993-94 corresponding to which 10.44 million boys and 14.81 million girls in the age-group 11-13 were out-of-school. Altogether, about 46.21 million children in the age-group 6-14 years were out-of-school of which girls constituted about 62.95 per cent or 29.09 million in absolute terms.

Recently, Mehta (1995a and b) used grade-to-grade drop-out rates at the all-India and state level to know efficiency of the education system. One of the important indicators of efficiency, namely, input/output ratio, computed at the primary level comes out to be 1.29 for cohort 1990 which suggests a scope for improvement in the existing education system and the wastage was of the tune of about 29 per cent. However, in a number of states, the wastage is even higher than that of the all-India level. At the current level of drop-out and repetition rate, on an average a student is taking about 6.71 years to become a primary graduate, as against the optimum five years of schooling. Of the total wastage at the all-India level, 83.41 per cent was due to drop-outs and the remaining 16.59 per cent was due to repeaters.

More detailed information on entry, retention and drop-out rate is presented in a separate section.

## 2. Quantitative Expansion

During the last four decades, the progress of education especially in terms of number of institutions and teachers have been quite impressive. The number of primary and middle institutions has increased from 210 and 14 thousand in year 1950-51 to 573 and 156 thousand respectively in year 1993-94 which shows compounded growth of 2.37 and 5.77 per cent respectively. The rate of growth of primary and middle institutions during the period 1980-81 to 1993-94 was 1.13 and 2.03 per cent respectively as compared to 1.06 and 2.10 per cent after the National Policy on Education (1986) was announced. The number of pre-primary schools has also increased from 303 in 1950-51 to 17,172 in the

year 1993-94 which shows sphere of early childhood care and development activities. Yet, as the Sixth All India Educational Survey (1993) revealed. about 526 thousand of the total 1,059 thousand habitations in the country in the year 1993-94 had no primary schooling facilities within the habitation. More than 53 thousand (5.35 per cent) habitations in 1986-87 did not have primary sections even upto a distance of two kilometers and 10.16 per cent habitations without middle school facilities even upto five kilometers. More than 70 thousand primary schools and about 17 thousand middle schools in year 1986-87 were being run in kachha (make-shift) buildings (NCERT, 1992). The number of Non-formal Education centres in the country increased from 126 thousand in 1986 to 215 thousand by March 1994, with girls centres increasing from 21 thousand to 79 thousand. During the same period enrolment in NFE centres rose from 4 million to 5 million (MHRD, Annual Report: 1993-94).

The number of primary teachers has increased from 538 thousand in 1950-51 to 1,703 thousand in 1993-94, showing an annual exponential increase of 2.72 per cent compared to 6.06 per cent for middle level and the percentage of primary schools without a teacher and single-teacher primary schools has declined from 0.62 to 0.43 per cent and from 34.75 to 28.91 per cent during the period 1978 to 1986. About 92 per cent primary teachers were trained but female teachers constitute only 29.76 per cent of the total primary teachers. About 2,274 primary schools were without teachers and 1,52,856 with only one teacher (1986). The same is also evident from the status of 'Operation Blackboard' scheme where in 1992 about 23 per cent schools in 16 per cent community development blocks and 71 per cent municipal areas were not covered under the scheme (NIEPA and DOE, 1992). Only 103 thousand (67.76 per cent) teachers could be appointed as against the target of 152 thousand single teacher schools identified for coverage and only 115 thousand (48.12 per cent) classrooms had been constructed, as against the target of 239 thousand. Also, as against the optimum teacher pupil-ratio of 1:2, at the all-India level, it was 50 in year 1993-94 and teachers salaries constitute more than 90 per cent of the total recurring expenditure on primary education. So far as the share of education to Gross National Product (GNP) is concerned, the increase is not as envisaged in policy document

(6 per cent); however, it has increased from 1.2 per cent in year 1950-51 to currently 3.7 per cent (NIEPA and DOE, 1992). However, recently the Prime Minister announced that education would get an outlay of six per cent of the national income from the Ninth Five Year Plan which amounted to about Rs.53,000 Crore.

Therefore, in the present article, the progress of educational development in India with particular reference to objectives of Education for All in the country has been briefly analysed. Growth in enrolment over forty years has been critically examined for which publications of the MHRD as well as data generated through National Sample Survey Organisation have been used and analysed. Broadly, NSSO data is used to assess the status of free education and MHRD for growth in enrolment. Briefly, entry, retention and drop-out rates have also been computed and results discussed. First, the goals of `Education for All' are briefly presented below (MHRD, Annual Report: 1992-93):

(a) Expansion of early childhood care and development activities;

(b) Universalisation of elementary Education with the following programme components:

* access to elementary education for all children upto 14 years of age;

* universal participation till they complete the elementary stage through formal or non-formal stage through formal or non-formal education programmes; and

* universal achievement atleast of minimum level of learning.

(c) Drastic reduction in illiteracy rate especially in the age-group 15-35 year and to bring literacy level in this age-group to atleast 80 per cent; and

(d) Provision of opportunities to upgrade education, creation of necessary structures and improving the content and process ofeducation to relate it better to environment and working conditions.

**Universal Literacy**

Besides progress at the elementary level, a significant progress is made in the field of literacy and continuing education but like universal enrolment, the goal of universal

literacy also remains elusive. From a low 18.33 per cent in year 1951, it is reported to be 52.21 per cent in the 1991 Census. The female literacy rate is still low which has increased from 8.86 to 39.29 per cent during the same period. However, due to change in definition of literacy in 1991, the real progress made during the decade 1981 to 1991 is not reflected. If a minor adjustment is made in the available data, the corresponding literacy rate comes out to be about 42 per cent in 1991 which was about 36 per cent in year 1981. The same, if computed at the state level, would reveal that in a majority of states it would not be possible to achieve the goal of universal literacy by the stipulated year 2001. Recently, Mehta (1993) projected that the goal of universal literacy in the country is not likely to be achieved even after the year 2027 (HT, 1993).

**Free and Compulsory Education**

As against the constitutional provision of free education, the NSSO 42nd Round survey conducted during 1986-87 shows that out of the poorest children of the 20 per cent households in rural areas, about 22.15 per cent of those in the Government schools were not getting free education as against 40.15 per cent in urban areas and 89.88 and 84.30 per cent respectively in privately managed institutions. In Government schools, the amount of expenditure in rural and urban areas was only Rs.61 and Rs.79 per annum respectively. About 21.30 per cent girls of the poorest of the 20 per cent households in rural areas were not getting free education (general) against 38.57 per cent in urban areas. More than 23.32 and 15.40 per cent children of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in rural areas were not getting free education in Government schools as against 94.31 and 89.45 per cent respectively in Private schools. Compared to this, about 43.96 per cent of Scheduled Caste population and 83.26 per cent of Scheduled Tribe population in urban areas were not getting free education in Government schools as against 87.13 and 85.88 per cent respectively in privately managed institutions. Taking all the levels of education together, more than 72.57 per cent of the children in rural areas and 43.65 per cent in urban area who got free education were in the Government schools, as against 84.62 and 51.05 per cent at the primary stage. About 10.86 and 3.42 per cent children of the poorest of the 20 per cent households in primary and post-primary grades in rural areas were exempted from

paying tuition fee as against 23.44 and 7.60 in urban areas. Taking all the levels of education together, the corresponding figures for the 20 per cent poorest households were only 15.71 per cent in rural areas and 13.85 per cent in urban areas. In the absence of latest data, it is not known how much fee is being paid or primary education is made free, as envisaged in the Constitution. So far as compulsory education is concerned, a number of states have passed ordinances through which primary education is made compulsory. But, the situation in most of the states with particular reference to UPE is far from the satisfactory as a large number of children are still out-of-school.

**Universal Access**

Of those not currently enrolled in the age group 6-11 years, more than 22.39 and 27.24 per cent children in 1986-87 did not attend school because schooling facilities were not available to them and due to lack of interest in studies and/or further studies and 12.83 and 10.66 per cent of them cited `busy in attending domestic chores' and `failures' as reasons for their not being enrolled respectively (NSSO, 1991). In the rural areas about 24.32 per cent children could not attend schools because the schooling facilities were not available to them and 11.67 per cent due to failures and 27.89 per cent due to lack of interest in studies. This is perhaps due to inadequate number of teachers and also absence of teaching aids in schools. Further, the distribution of persons not currently enrolled (drop-outs) in any educational institution showed that in 1986-87, about 6.66 and 19.71 per cent children were self employed (both in agriculture and non-agricultural activities) and had regular wage respectively in the 6-11 and 12-14 age-groups. About 3.59 per cent children in the age-group 6-11 and 14.88 per cent in the age-group 12-14 were the casual labour. In rural areas, out of 18.44 million children, 5.15 million (27.95 per cent) in the age-group 6-11 and 13.76 million (26.95 per cent) in the age-group 12-14 were from the labour force and 20 per cent of the poorest households, as against 0.95 million (42.85 per cnet) and 2.33 million (37.68 per cent) in urban areas. Out of 65.89 million persons below 30 years age and not currently enrolled as students, 14.39 million (21.84 per cent) and 49.34 million (7.49 per cent) were in primary and post-primary grades from the poorest of the 20 per cent households. Approximately 51 per cent of all urban children in the age-

group 6-11 years and 46 per cent of those in the age-group 12-14 were not currently enrolled in primary or post-primary education belonged to the poorest of the 20 per cent of the households.

## 3. Enrolment Analysis

In the present section, growth of school education in India has been analysed for which enrolment data at different levels of education during the period 1950-51 to 1993-94 have been used. Generally, data at five year interval has been presented. For measuring growth, enrolment statistics have been converted into a variety of indicators and results are analysed at the all-India level which is briefly presented below.

### Primary Level

At the time of the adoption of Constitution in year 1950, enrolment at the primary level was 19.16 million of which girls constituted only 5.39 million (28.13 per cent). The gross enrolment ratio at that time was 42.6 (total) and 24.8 (girls) per cent corresponding to which enrolment ratio of boys was 60.6 per cent which shows boys/girls' differential in enrolment ratio to be 35.80 per cent at the primary level compared to 22.40 per cent in 1993-94. During the next five years, enrolment in primary grades was added by another 5.9 million children of which girls contributed 2.2 million (37.29 per cent). Further, it has been observed that enrolment ratio (gross) had improved significantly to 52.8 per cent in year 1955-56 compared to 32.8 per cent of girls. Thereafter, it started a rising trend until the year 1985-86 but slightly declined next year in both absolute and ratio forms. Interestingly, girls' enrolment maintained its upward march but fall in enrolment noticed in year 1986-87 was due to decline in boys' enrolment from 52.25 million in 1985-86 to 51.68 million next year. The corresponding enrolment ratios were 111.08 and 109.99 per cent respectively in years 1985-86 and 1986-87. Despite upward trend in girls' enrolment (in absolute terms), the improvement in GER was not significant. After 1986-87, enrolment at the primary level again started looking up which continued till year 1993-94. Data in year 1986-87 onwards when analysed reveals that enrolment in Grades I-V increased from 87.13 million in year 1986-87 to 92.35 million in year 1989-90 which shows a rate of growth

of 1.96 per cent per annum. During the period 1989-90 to 1993-94, enrolment in primary grades (boys) increased at the rate of 3.30 per cent per annum which is 7.53 million in absolute terms, corresponding to which girls' enrolment increased by about 5.06 per cent i.e. 8.32 million. In ratio form, enrolment over a period of time at the primary level also increased significantly which is at present 115.3 and 92.90 per cent respectively in case of boys and girls.

**Table 1**

**Growth of Enrolment at Primary Level (Grades I-V)**
**All India : 1951-1994**

| Year | Total | Index Numbers | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Boys | Girls |
| 1950-51 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| 1955-56 | 130.73 | 126.81 | 140.74 |
| 1960-61 | 182.29 | 171.01 | 211.11 |
| 1965-66 | 262.86 | 233.19 | 338.70 |
| 1970-71 | 296.87 | 258.70 | 394.44 |
| 1975-76 | 341.98 | 294.57 | 463.15 |
| 1980-81 | 384.22 | 328.19 | 527.41 |
| 1985-86 | 455.42 | 378.62 | 651.67 |
| 1986-87 | 453.80 (100.00) | 374.49 (100.00) | 656.48 (100.00) |
| 1987-88 | 471.15 (103.82) | 387.75 (103.54) | 684.48 (104.28) |
| 1988-89 | 475.36 (104.75) | 390.14 (104.18) | 693.24 (105.64) |
| 1989-90 | 480.99 (105.99) | 393.26 (105.01) | 705.19 (107.45) |
| 1990-91 | 516.25 (113.76) | 421.01 (112.42) | 759.63 (115.74) |
| 1991-92 | 529.06 (116.58) | 429.13 (114.59) | 784.44 (119.53) |
| 1992-93 | 548.80 (120.93) | 438.04 (116.97) | 831.85 (126.75) |
| 1993-94 | 563.54 (124.18) | 447.83 (119.54) | 859.26 (131.07) |

Source: Computed by the author.

As mentioned, index numbers and compound growth rates have been computed to measure the growth in enrolment. Index numbers have been computed by taking 1950-51 enrolment as the base-year and the relative figures are obtained upto the year 1993-94 (Table 1). Since the NPE was announced in year 1986, the same has also been computed by taking enrolment in the year 1986-87 as the base year. Compound growth rates have been computed on quinquennial basis for the period 1950 to 55 to 1985 to 90 (Table 2).

The index numbers at the primary level show a spectacular increase in enrolment throughout the period 1950-51 to 1993-94. It has increased from 100 in year 1950-51 to 564 in year 1993-94 showing an increase of 5.64 times in about 43 years. The break-up of boys' and girls' enrolment further reveals that the increase was more rapid in case of girls (8.59 times) than their boys counterparts (4.48 times). In the initial period, first after the independence, enrolment in the base year was very low. Hence, it shows a spectacular progress at the primary level but in the later years the tempo couldn't be maintained which is evident from the values of index numbers computed (1986-87 to 1993-94) by taking 1986-87 as the base year. Thus, the index number which was 100 in year 1986-87 increased marginally to 104 next year which further improved to 124 in year 1993-94. During the same period, enrolment at the primary level (in absolute terms) increased from 87.13 million to 108.20 million showing compounded growth of 3.14 per cent per annum and the corresponding enrolment ratio was 95.33 and 104.5 per cent respectively in years 1986-87 and 1993-94. Again, it has been observed that the rate of increase in girls' enrolment is higher than the rate of increase in boys' enrolment. Similarly, compound growth rates which have been worked-out in different periods show a declining trend in both boys' and girls' enrolment. However, in some periods, higher growth rates in

**Table 2**

**Growth of Enrolment at Primary Level (Grades I-V)**
**All India : 1950 to 1990**

(In Percentages)

| Period | COMPOUND GROWTH RATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Boys | Girls |
| 1950-55 | 5.51 | 4.87 | 7.07 |
| 1955-60 | 6.88 | 6.16 | 8.45 |
| 1960-65 | **7.60** | **6.39** | **9.92** |
| 1965-70 | 2.46 | 2.10 | 3.09 |
| 1970-75 | 2.87 | 2.63 | 3.26 |
| 1975-80 | 2.36 | 2.19 | 2.64 |
| 1980-85 | 3.46 | 2.90 | 4.31 |
| 1985-90 | 2.54 | 2.15 | 3.11 |

Source: Computed by the author.

case of girls have been noticed than in enrolment of boys. Further, the results reveal that in the initial period inrolment at the primary level increased rapidly from a low 5.51 per cent during the period 1950 to 1955 to 6.60 per cent in the period 1955 to 1960 and to 7.60 per cent in the period 1960 to 1965. However, it started declining throughout the period 1985 to 1990. The average annual increase was only to the tune of 2.15 and 3.11 per cent during the period 1985 to 1990 which has declined from a high 6.39 and 9.92 per cent in the period 1960 to 1965 respectively in case of boys and girls. Further, it has been observed that percentage expenditure on elementary education to total investment on education declined from 55 per cent in the First Plan (1951-56) to 34 per cent in the Seventh Plan. However, in absolute terms, the same has increased from Rs.930 million to Rs.19,630 million showing an increase of Rs.18,700 million which is more than 20 times than in the First Plan. Thus the rapid decline in enrolment at the primary level (in terms of growth rate) noticed above may be due to percentage share of investment on elementary education which in fact declined from 37 per cent in the Third Plan (1961-66) to 31 per cent in the Fourth Plan (1969-74). In fact, investment on elementary education in percentage terms is too erratic to make any further comments.

**Middle Level**

As at primary level, an increasing trend in enrolment at the middle level (Grades VI-VIII) has been noticed throughout the period 1950-51 to 1993-94. However compared to primary level, the growth in enrolment (in terms of ratios) at the middle level is not impressive. From a low 3.12 million enrolment in year 1950-51, it has increased to 46.40 million in year 1993-94 showing more than fourteen fold increase but the corresponding enrolment ratio (gross) improved from 12.70 to only 67.70 per cent in year 1993-94. Further, it has been noticed that growth in enrolment after 1986-87 has become erratic which is quite similar to that of the primary level. From 48.96 per cent enrolment ratio in year 1985-86, the same has declined to 48.19 per cent next year but further improved to 50.21 per cent in 1987-88 but again declined to 48.89 per cent next year which is due to decline in GER of both boys and girls. But in absolute terms, enrolment in Grades VI-VIII which was 27.49 million in year 1986-87 improved to 29.29 million next year and further

improved to 30.88 million in the year 1989-90. The compound growth rates computed in different five year periods (Table 3) reveal that compared to primary level, growth rates are higher in both boys' and girls' enrolment but still a large number of children in the age-group 11-13 years are out-of-school. Further, the growth rates reveal that the increasing trend in enrolment at the middle level continued up to the period 1960 to 1965, after which it started declining which is similar to the situation at the primary level. The decline in growth rates continued till the period 1970 to 1975 after which it started looking up but during the period 1985 to 1990, it again declined to 4.03 per cent. The growth rates over a period of time, further reveal that both at the primary and middle levels of education, a large number of girls joined education system but due to low retention and/or high drop-out rates couldn't remain in the system. Enrolment statistics further reveal that compared to primary level, a large number of children (in terms of percentage) in the age-group 11-13 years are still out-of-school. However, it has been noticed that over a period of time, percentage share of girls' enrolment to total enrolment at the primary and middle levels of education has improved significantly. From a low 28.11 and 16.11 per cent in year 1950-51, it has improved to 42.88 and 39.34 per cent in year 1993-94 respectively at the primary and middle levels of education but disparity between the two is still high and significant.

**Table 3**

**Growth of Enrolment at Middle Level (Grades VI-VIII)**
**All India : 1950 to 1990**

(In Percentage)

| Period | Compound Growth Rate | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Boys | Girls |
| 1950-55 | 6.58 | 5.79 | 10.18 |
| 1955-60 | 9.33 | 8.17 | 13.46 |
| 1960-65 | **9.46** | **8.66** | **11.79** |
| 1965-70 | 4.81 | 4.17 | 6.49 |
| 1970-75 | 3.77 | 3.12 | 5.27 |
| 1975-80 | 5.28 | 4.86 | 6.17 |
| 1980-85 | 5.68 | 4.95 | 7.11 |
| 1985-90 | 4.03 | 3.27 | 5.39 |

Source: Computed by the author.

**Elementary Level**

Just as the increase at the primary and middle levels of education, enrolment at the elementary level has also improved significantly to more than six times in a period of about forty years. However, a marginal decline in enrolment at the elementary level has been noticed, whereas it has declined from 114.75 million in year 1985-86 to 114.62 million next year. The decline in enrolment was due to decline in boys' enrolment but thereafter it again started looking up which continued upto in year 1993-94. The interesting feature of the trend in enrolment at the elementary level is the consistent increase in sex-ratio (enrolment) which has increased from a low 36/100 boys in year 1950-51 to 65/100 boys in year 1986-87 and the same has further improved to 72/100 boys in year 1993-94. At present, enrolment ratio (gross) at the elementary level is about 102.59 (boys) and 79.45 (girls) per cent which also includes over-age and under-age children. At the elementary level also, compound growth rates (Table 4) have been computed which show that enrolment in the initial period increased upto the period 1960 to 1965 and thereafter it suddenly declined during the period 1965 to 1970 which is quite similar to other levels. Thus, it has been noticed that during the last forty years, the maximum growth has taken place during the period 1960 to 1965 which may be due to small base. One of the other interesting features of the trend in growth of enrolment is higher rates of growth for girls in all periods irrespective of educational level. For the same periods, growth rates (compound) in number of institutions and teachers at the primary level have also been computed and presented along with the growth rates in enrolment in Table 5. The table reveals that over a period of time, enrolment, teachers and institutions have increased but at different paces. Again, it has been noticed that after the period 1965 to 1970, the growth throughout the period 1985 to 1990 is erratic.

## 4. Entry, Retention and Drop-Out Rates

In the present article, a detailed analysis is presented with respect to entry. retention and drop-out rates at the primary level of education which are calculated both at the state and the all-India levels. The results are presented below.

**Table 4**

**Growth of Enrolment at Elementary Level (Grades I-VIII)**
**All India : 1950 to 1990**

(In percentage)

| | Compound Growth Rate | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Total** | **Boys** | **Girls** |
| 1950 - 55 | 5.66 | 5.01 | 7.39 |
| 1955 - 60 | 7.25 | 6.50 | 9.00 |
| 1960 - 65 | **7.90** | **6.82** | **10.15** |
| 1965 - 70 | 2.88 | 2.65 | 3.33 |
| 1970 - 75 | 3.04 | 2.60 | 3.83 |
| 1975 - 80 | 2.96 | 2.78 | 3.26 |
| 1980 - 85 | 3.96 | 3.40 | 4.88 |
| 1985 - 90 | 2.90 | 2.44 | 3.62 |

Source: Computed by the author.

**Table 5**

**Growth of Institutions, Enrolment and Teachers at Primary Level**
**All India : 1950 to 1990**

(In Percentages)

| Period | Compound Growth Rate | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Institutions** | **Enrolment** | **Teachers** |
| 1950-55 | **5.81** | 5.51 | 5.14 |
| 1955-60 | 3.50 | 6.88 | 1.41 |
| 1960-65 | **3.43** | **7.60** | **4.96** |
| 1965-70 | 0.87 | 2.46 | 2.34 |
| 1970-75 | 2.15 | 2.87 | 3.31 |
| 1975-80 | 1.72 | 2.36 | 1.79 |
| 1980-85 | 1.35 | 3.46 | 1.87 |
| 1985-90 | 1.09 | 2.54 | 1.82 |

Source: Computed by the author.

**Entry Rate**

The entry rate computed (enrolment in Grade I as percentage to population of age '6') at the all-India level indicates that it varies between 110.53 per cent in year 1989-90 to 134.10 per cent in year 1985-86 (Table 6). A sudden reversal in trend is noticed when entry rate in year 1985-86 declined from 134.10 per cent to 118.00 per cent in 1986-87, the year in which NPE (1986) was announced.

**Table 6**

**Apparent Entry Rate : All India**
**(1984-85 to 1989-90)**

| Year | Apparent Entry Rate(%) | | | Gross Entry Rate (Total)* | New Entrants** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Boys | Girls | Total | | Total | Girls |
| 1984-85 | 145.75 | 106.88 | 126.77 | 32.35 | 22.91 | 9.43 |
| 1985-86 | 154.19 | 113.00 | 134.10 | 140.58 | 24.83 | 10.20 |
| 1986-87 | 132.34 | 102.91 | 118.00 | 123.45 | 22.39 | 9.52 |
| 1987-88 | 133.82 | 104.10 | 119.35 | 124.89 | 23.20 | 9.86 |
| 1988-89 | 140.83 | 106.09 | 123.93 | 129.64 | 24.71 | 10.30 |
| 1989-90 | 123.71 | 96.59 | 110.53 | 115.45 | 22.59 | 9.59 |
| 1990-91 | 136.96 | 108.20 | 123.11 | 128.97 | 25.83 | 10.94 |

Note : The AER comes to more that 100 per cent due to over age and under age children.
* With repeaters
** Figures in Million
Source : Computed by the author.

Again, it jumped to 123.93 per cent in year 1988- 89 but declined to 110.53 per cent next year. In the year 1990-1991, it has again improved to 123.11 per cent. A perusal of state-wise entry rates (Table 7) reveal that in a majority of states, it is very high for both boys and girls. However, compared to boys, entry rates for girls are lower. Further, it has been noticed that entry rates are exorbitantly high in the states where gross enrolment ratio at primary level is also high, such states are, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal but differential in boys/girls' entry rate is still significant in these states. In

educationally backward states, such as, Bihar (86.61 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (102.74 per cent), Rajasthan (86.51 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (62.20 per cent), entry rates especially those of girls are very low compared to their boys counterparts and those in other states. In Kerala, it is only 99.61 per cent for boys which is lowest in the country (except Punjab) which suggests that overage and underage children in Grade I is almost negligible, the entry rate for girls was 98.38 per cent. The corresponding enrolment ratio (gross) at the primary level in Kerala is about 102 per cent which remained almost constant for more than 25 years. The high entry rates (due to overage/underage children), especially those in educationally backward states, suggest that a large number of children join education system every year and if remained in the system, the realisation of goal of UPE may not be a difficult task. But the existing level of enrolment ratio at the primary level suggests that a vast majority of children who take admission in Grade I do not even reach to Grade II and drop-out heavily from the system which significantly affects the efficiency of the education system.

**Retention Rates**

The retention rates at five year interval starting from year 1964-65 to 1990-91 at the all-India level (Table 8) reveals that throughout the period, the percentage of girls who retained up to Grade V was lower than their counterparts. However, the difference between the two is small. Further, it has been observed that over a period of time (1964-65 to 1990-91) percentage of children who reached to Grade V and VIII have gradually improved. However, retention rates for both boys and girls in year 1990-91 improved significantly which is as high as 64.45 per cent (boys) and 56.41 per cent (girls) at primary level. But, retention rate at the middle level (Grade VIII) is still very low. Further, it has been observed that gap between the retention rates at the primary and middle levels of education is wide and significant throughout the period 1964-65 to 1990-91. The boys/girls' differential in retention rate in year 1964-65 was 5.10 per cent which has now significantly improved to 8.04 per cent in year 1990-91 compared to 5.60 per cent in year 1969-70 to 7.02 per cent in year 1990-91 at the middle level.

**Table 7**

**State-wise Entry Rate : 1990-91**

(In Percentages)

| State | Boys | | Girls | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Apparent | Gross | Apparent | Gross |
| Andhra Pradesh | 154.40 | 154.40 | 133.38 | 133.38 |
| Bihar | 142.83 | 155.01 | 86.61 | **93.85** |
| Gujarat | 112.46 | 169.65 | 94.32 | 147.65 |
| Haryana | 102.74 | **102.74** | 94.52 | **94.52** |
| Karnataka | 150.38 | 150.38 | 141.95 | 141.95 |
| Kerala | 99.61 | **99.76** | 98.38 | **98.53** |
| Madhya Pradesh | 123.29 | 123.29 | 102.74 | **102.74** |
| Maharashtra | 140.19 | 140.19 | 133.33 | 133.33 |
| Orissa | 168.59 | 175.39 | 120.66 | 125.26 |
| Punjab | 92.42 | **95.69** | 88.14 | **91.01** |
| Rajasthan | 162.44 | 167.65 | 86.51 | **88.68** |
| Tamil Nadu | 156.29 | 158.09 | 143.83 | 145.20 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 103.22 | **103.22** | 62.20 | **62.20** |
| West Bengal | 163.70 | 163.70 | 155.96 | 155.96 |
| **All India** | **136.96** | **43.40** | **108.20** | **113.43** |

Note : 1. Entry Rate = $\frac{\text{New Entrants}}{\text{Population (Age`6')}} \times 100$

2. New Entrants = Enrolment (I) - Repeaters (I)

Source : Computed by the author.

The state-wise retention rates (Table 9) for year 1990-91 reveal that in a number of states, the retention rates both at the primary and middle levels of education are higher than at the all-India average. However at the primary level, some states, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal had lower retention rates than the all-India average. Similar trend has been observed at the middle level. Further while analysing the state-wise boys/girls' differential in retention rate, it has been observed that in Kerala, Orissa and Punjab, both boys and girls almost equally remained in the system. In Kerala,

Table 8

**Retention Rate at All India Level**
**1964-65 to 1990-91**

(In Percentages)

| Year | Class V | | Class VIII | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| 1964-65 | 37.10 | 32.00 | - | |
| 1969-70 | 33.10 | 28.70 | 22.00 | 16.40 |
| 1974-75 | 36.80 | 33.30 | 21.30 | 16.30 |
| 1979-80 | 40.40 | 36.50 | 24.20 | 19.10 |
| 1984-85 | 50.38 | 47.54 | 35.65 | 29.60 |
| 1985-86 | 54.52 | 51.01 | 36.43 | 30.30 |
| 1986-87 | 49.65 | 47.67 | 36.72 | 30.79 |
| 1987-88 | 51.04 | 49.22 | 36.72 | 31.96 |
| 1988-89 | 54.83 | 52.03 | 38.76 | 32.60 |
| 1989-90+ | 53.50 | 49.65 | 39.00 | 31.24 |
| 1990-91 | 64.45 | 56.41 | 41.89 | 34.87 |

Note : Retention rates have been computed by taking enrolment in Grade V as a percentage to enrolment in Grade I four years back without considering repeaters.

Source: Education for All : A Graphic Presentation (Second Edition), P.N. Tyagi, NIEPA, New Delhi, 1993.

+ : Computed by the author.

more girls remained in the system than their counterparts and retention rates are quite high both at the primary and middle levels of education. Thus, retention rates reveal that a large number of children who take admission in Grade I do not reach Grade V and Grade VIII. Further the results show that out of 100 children enrolled in Grade I in 1986-87, 87 reached to Grade II next year compared to only 72, 63 and 59 to Grade III, Grade IV and Grade V respectively in subsequent years which means about 13 per cent children dropped-out before reaching Grade II and 28, 37 and 41 per cent respectively before reaching Grade III, IV and V.

**Table 9**

**State-wise Retention Rates : 1990-91**

(In Percentages)

| State | Grade V | | | Grade VIII | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total |
| Andhra Pradesh | 51.44 | 43.95 | 48.13 | 30.92 | 21.93 | 27.07 |
| Bihar | 36.75 | 33.12 | 35.52 | 23.15 | 16.10 | 20.85 |
| Gujarat | 61.29 | 51.16 | 56.73 | 47.11 | 35.85 | 42.17 |
| Haryana | 82.03 | 71.30 | 77.33 | 65.91 | 52.21 | 60.31 |
| Karnataka | 58.63 | 48.67 | 53.88 | 45.30 | 29.64 | 37.65 |
| **Kerala** | **99.50** | **99.12** | **99.31** | **96.83** | **95.84** | **96.35** |
| Madhya Pradesh | 70.53 | 61.50 | 66.84 | 45.61 | 29.06 | 39.22 |
| Maharashtra | 70.84 | 61.13 | 66.27 | 52.69 | 38.15 | 45.92 |
| Orissa | 53.45 | 54.38 | 53.83 | 53.93 | 32.21 | 39.54 |
| Punjab | 75.91 | 74.89 | 75.44 | 59.56 | 52.45 | 56.30 |
| **Rajasthan*** | **24.76** | **19.58** | **23.20** | **21.48** | **15.30** | **19.79** |
| Tamil Nadu | 81.73 | 77.32 | 79.68 | 59.83 | 50.57 | 55.52 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 69.33 | 57.58 | 65.18 | 45.03 | 34.39 | 41.68 |
| West Bengal | 6.79 | 43.32 | 50.84 | 44.79 | 39.77 | 42.64 |
| **All India** | **64.45** | **56.41** | **61.04** | **41.89** | **34.87** | **39.08** |

* 1989-90

Source : Computed by the author on the basis of information given in Education in India (different years), MHRD, Government of India, New Delhi.

**Drop-out Rates**

The drop-out rates (Table 10) at the all-India level reveal that over a period of time, it has gradually declined across the grades which is true for both boys and girls. Further, it has been observed that in year 1986-87, a sudden decline in drop-out rate is noticed which again increased significantly next in year. The analysis further indicates that of 24.98 million students admitted to Grade I in the year 1982-83 in the country, only 12.40 and 8.97 million respectively could reach Grade V and VIII in year 1986-87 and 1989-90, which means more than 12.58 million (50.36 per cent) and 16.01 million (64.09 per cent) children dropped-out from the system. For cohort 1989-90, the drop-out rate is higher for girls than those of boys (except in Grade II). However, the difference between

the two is only marginal. Thus at the all-India level, about eight per cent boys dropped-out from the system before they reached Grade II as compared to about 15 per cent from Grade II to III and 8 per cent from Grade III to IV. The corresponding figures for girls are 9, 13 and 12 per cent respectively.

**Table 10(A)**

**Promotion, Repetition and Drop-out Rates**
**Primary Education : Boys**
**All India**

(In Percentages)

| Cohort | Rate | Grades | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | I | II | III | IV | V |
| 1985 | *Promotion* | 72.9 | 77.6 | 84.8 | 85.3 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 5.0 | 3.6 | 4.3 | 4.9 | 4.3 |
| | *Drop-out* | 22.0 | 18.9 | 10.9 | 9.8 | - |
| 1986 | *Promotion* | 76.7 | 88.8 | 82.4 | 83.4 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 3.9 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 4.9 | 4.2 |
| | *Drop-out* | 19.4 | 8.0 | 14.2 | 11.7 | - |
| 1987 | *Promotion* | 89.9 | 80.8 | 85.8 | 88.3 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 4.7 | 3.0 | 3.9 | 5.1 | 5.4 |
| | *Drop-out* | 5.5 | 6.2 | 10.3 | 6.5 | - |
| 1988 | *Promotion* | 80.7 | 79.4 | 83.9 | 85.1 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 4.8 | 2.5 | 3.2 | 4.7 | 5.4 |
| | *Drop-out* | 15.4 | 18.1 | 12.9 | 10.2 | - |
| 1989 | *Promotion* | 83.4 | 86.9 | 85.9 | 87.1 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 3.6 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 4.8 | 5.1 |
| | *Drop-out* | 12.9 | 10.0 | 11.1 | 8.1 | - |
| 1990 | *Promotion* | 87.0 | 82.2 | 88.6 | 90.5 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 5.2 | 2.6 | 3.2 | 4.2 | 4.3 |
| | *Drop-out* | 7.8 | 15.1 | 8.3 | 5.3 | - |

Source: Computed by the author.

**Table 10(B)**

**Promotion, Repetition and Drop-out Rates**
**Primary Education : Girls, All India**

(In Percentages)

| Cohort | Rate | Grades | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | I | II | III | IV | V |
| 1985 | *Promotion* | 74.0 | 79.9 | 84.0 | 83.8 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 5.0 | 4.0 | 4.6 | 5.4 | 5.0 |
| | *Drop-out* | 21.0 | 16.0 | 11.5 | 10.9 | - |
| 1986 | *Promotion* | 72.2 | 85.8 | 81.2 | 80.9 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 4.1 | 3.0 | 3.6 | 4.5 | 4.3 |
| | *Drop-out* | 20.7 | 0.9 | 15.1 | 14.5 | - |
| 1987 | *Promotion* | 83.8 | 82.4 | 83.8 | 84.4 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 4.5 | 2.9 | 3.8 | 4.7 | 5.1 |
| | *Drop-out* | 11.7 | 14.6 | 12.4 | 10.9 | - |
| 1988 | *Promotion* | 77.9 | 82.0 | 81. | 82.1 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 4.6 | 2.7 | 3.1 | 4.3 | 5.0 |
| | *Drop-out* | 17.5 | 15.3 | 15.5 | 13.6 | - |
| 1989 | *Promotion* | 82.0 | 85.3 | 81.7 | 83.7 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 4.2 | 2.9 | 5.7 | 4.3 | 5.1 |
| | *Drop-out* | 13.8 | 11.7 | 12.6 | 12.0 | - |
| 1990 | *Promotion* | 85.7 | 84.3 | 85.0 | 87.1 | - |
| | *Repetition* | 5.3 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 4.0 | 4.2 |
| | *Drop-out* | 9.0 | 12.9 | 11.7 | 8.9 | - |

Source: Computed by the author.

The analysis of state-wise drop-out rates (Table 11) reveal that for cohort 1989-90, Andhra Pradesh (22.60 per cent), Bihar (34.00 per cent), Maharashtra (12.30 per cent), Tamil Nadu (11.50 per cent) and West Bengal (29.70 per cent) had higher drop-out rates (boys) in Grade I than the all-India average (7.80 per cent). Quite similar trend is observed for girls in Grade I. Further in Grade IV, Karnataka (24.50 per cent) had the highest drop-

## Table 11

### Gradewise Drop-out Rates at Primary Level in Different States
### Cohort : 1989-90

(In Percentage)

| State | I | | II | | III | | IV | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| Andhra Pradesh* | 22.60 | 19.20 | 18.10 | 19.40 | 11.0 | 16.70 | 3.20 | 4.30 |
| Bihar | 34.00 | 35.30 | 15.00 | 16.40 | 12.70 | 12.40 | 9.70 | 13.20 |
| Gujarat | 0.80 | 2.50 | 5.00 | 7.00 | 3.80 | 8.90 | 6.80 | 9.80 |
| Haryana | 8.70 | 10.00 | 9.90 | 9.80 | 7.80 | 9.50 | 0.70 | 9.00 |
| Karnataka | 7.90 | 12.40 | 7.40 | 11.00 | 10.60 | 17.30 | 18.50 | 24.50 |
| Kerala | 4.20 | 4.20 | 0.40 | 3.90 | 2.20 | 0.50 | 0.20 | 0.40 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 7.70 | 7.90 | 5.60 | 3.00 | 0.50 | 10.50 | 17.80 | 10.40 |
| Maharashtra | 12.30 | 12.20 | 0.40 | 2.50 | 13.40 | 15.70 | 1.30 | 7.40 |
| Orissa* | 13.50 | 9.50 | 12.70 | 11.60 | 12.10 | 14.40 | 8.40 | 7.60 |
| Punjab | 0.50 | 0.50 | 5.00 | 5.80 | 11.00 | 10.80 | 9.10 | 7.80 |
| Rajasthan* | 34.00 | 32.90 | 29.80 | 37.70 | 3.30 | 11.50 | 8.80 | 10.40 |
| Tamil Nadu | 11.50 | 11.70 | 8.10 | 8.20 | 7.30 | 7.10 | 0.50 | 3.20 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 11.60 | 9.60 | 0.50 | 0.90 | 16.40 | 23.10 | 10.20 | 17.50 |
| West Bengal* | 31.30 | 35.10 | 10.80 | 5.70 | 3.90 | 5.80 | 0.50 | 18.90 |
| **All India** | ***7.80*** | ***9.00*** | ***15.10*** | ***12.90*** | ***8.30*** | ***11.70*** | ***5.30*** | ***8.90*** |

* adjusted data

Source : Mehta 1995a reported in World Bank (1997).

out rate (boys) followed by Madhya Pradesh (17.80 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (10.20 per cent), Bihar (9.70 per cent), Gujarat (6.80 per cent) etc. The lowest drop-out rate in Grade IV (boys) is observed in Kerala (0.20 per cent) which also had the lowest girls drop-out rate (0.40 per cent) followed by Tamil Nadu (0.50 per cent), Haryana (0.70 per cent), Orissa (6.40 per cent), Maharashtra (1.30 per cent) etc. Karnataka (24.50 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (17.50 per cent), Bihar (13.20 per cent) and Madhya Pradesh (10.40 per cent) also had high girls drop-out rates in Grade IV. Similar to the pattern at the primary level, more girls tend to drop-out even at the middle level. In some states, such as, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, the boys/girls' differental in drop-out rate in Grade VII is significant. May be drop-out rate in an individual grade is small, but their joint effect on over-all primary education is severe negating the progress made through enrolment drives and campaigns. The high drop-out rates, especially of girls, suggest that unless it is

checked significantly, the goal of EFA in the country is not likely to be realised in the near future.

## 5. Future Prospects

The enrolment analysis presented above reveals that at all levels of school education, a significant progress in enrolment has taken place which is evident from the values of index number, growth rate and enrolment ratio computed for the purpose but a large number of children of age-group 6-13 years are still out-of-school. Do the quantitative expansion of educational facilities and the recent official pronouncements imply that the target of universal enrolment will be achieved by the turn of the present century? or if the past trend is any indication, will these targets be further revised? The official estimates of enrolments give reasonably sound reasons to believe that the stipulated targets cannot be achieved by the turn of the present century. However, Mehta (1994a and b and 1995a) has recently projected that India may attain the status of universal primary education sometime near the year 2007. The projected enrolment ratio based on the trend analysis in year 2001 is likely to be 116.46 per cent for boys and 90.57 per cent for girls. The refined GER suggest that goal of UPE may be be achieved by the year 2004-05 in case of boys and in year 2007-08 in case of girls. The projected enrolment further reveals that all boys in the age-group 11-13 are likely to be enrolled by the year 2007-08 but universalisation of girls' education would continue to be far out-of-sight. Similarly, additional children need to enrol suggest that 10.44 million boys and 19.73 million girls in the age-group 6-10 years would have to be enrolled from their existing level, as compared to 15.09 million boys and 19.43 million girls of age-group 11-13 years. Thus, rigorous efforts would be needed not only to bring all girl children under the umbrella of education but they would have to be retained in the system. However, disaggregated projections at the state level would present more reliable picture than at the all-India level.

State level projections (Table 12) reveal that except Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, not a single state is likely to achieve the goal of UPE by the targeted year 2001. Tamil Nadu might have already achieved the goal of UPE and Karnataka may achieve the same in year

## Table 12

### State-wise Likely Year of Achievement of Goals of UPE/UEE (Based on Trend Analysis)

| State | Primary Level | | Middle Level | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| Andhra Pradesh | 2004/05 | ** | ** | * |
| Bihar | * | * | * | * |
| Gujarat | 1995/96 | 2006/07 | 2004/05 | * |
| Haryana | ** | ** | ** | * |
| Karnataka | 1996/97 | 1998/99 | *** | ** |
| Kerala+ | - | - | 1999/2000 | 1999/2000 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 2002/03 | ** | * | * |
| Maharashtra | 2000/01 | ** | ** | * |
| Orissa | 2004/05 | * | ** | * |
| Punjab | *** | 2008/09 | * | * |
| Rajasthan | ** | * | ** | * |
| Tamil Nadu++ | Achieved | Achieved | 1994/95 | 1997/98 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 2007/08 | * | * | * |
| West Bengal | 2000/01 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2007/08 |
| All India@ | 2004/05 | 2007/08 | 2007/08 | * |

* - Not in sight
** - Sometime after the year 2008/09
*** - Just after the year 2008/09
\+ - Estimates of over-age/under-age not available
++ - Tamil Nadu perhaps is the only state which might have already achieved goal of UPE.

Note: @ Disaggregated projections at the state level are supposed to produce more reliable projections than at the all-India level.
- Likely years are based on the refined enrolment ratios computed on the basis of 23.71 and 15.78 per cent grossness at Primary and middle levels. The projections are subject to change when more reliable state-specific estimates of over-age and under-age children are available.

Source : Mehta, 1995a.

1998-99. However, few of the fourteen major states, such as, Gujarat and West Bengal, for which enrolment projections are made would be in a position to achieve the goal of UPE by the year 2007-08. Some states, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa would attain status of UPE in case of boys in the near future but girls in these

states would still take a longer period to attain status of UPE. Thus, to achieve UPE by 2001, not only the existing level of entry rate would have to be maintained but at the same time, grade-to-grade promotion and drop-out rates would also need to improve significantly. As mentioned, the NSSO data (1991) reveals that majority of children dropped-out from the system due to repetitive failures and lack of interest in education itself and further studies suggest enforcement of no detention policy up to Grade V across the states may improve promotion rate (Mehta, 1995b). The impact of recently launched mid-day meal scheme on retention of children is of interest to both the policy makers and planners but the same would take a couple of years to judge its impact on drop-out rates. But in a state like Haryana, where the Prime Minister launched this ambitious scheme in August 1995, gives enough indication that the scheme is still facing teething problems and has not taken-off well. More specifically, a majority of states did not show keenness to implement the scheme which is evident from the fact that more than Rs. 300 crore of the total Rs. 1,400 crore identified for the scheme remained unused by the March 1997 (Times of India, 1997).

The trend can be reversed and goal may be achieved earlier than projected, if concerted efforts are made to bring all concerned under the umbrella of education. The Government of India has taken a number of initiatives, such as, Operation Blackboard Scheme, MLL Programme, Mid-day Meal Scheme, TLC programme and DIETs to promote primary education. Besides the Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project with the main objective of enhancing the professional competence of teachers, UNICEF assisted Bihar Education Project, World Bank sponsored UP Basic Education Project in Uttar Pradesh, SIDA assisted Shiksha Karmi project in Rajasthan and IDA assisted DPEP project are some of the programmes which have focus on district planning with emphasis on disaggregated target settings. Among these, the scope and coverage of DPEP project is much more wider than other programmes of the similar nature. The programme was first introduced in the year 1993 in 43 districts of seven states, namely, Assam, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra and later expanded to five districts each of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal in year 1995. In the second phase,

four districts each of Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Orissa were included in the programme. At present, the programme is under implementation in about 148 districts covering fourteen states. Decentralised planning in a project mode, disaggregated target setting, partcipative planning process and autonomy to set targets, priorities and strategies are some of the salient features of the programme.

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