CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Disparity brings division…. A greater concentration of wealth could — if unchecked — even undermine the principles of meritocracy and democracy. It could undermine the principle of equal rights proclaimed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights." ~
Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund, May 2014

1.1 Background

A significant progress in India is noticeable through increasing enrolment and school completion over the past decades (Kingdon, 2007). This enrolment in primary schools has onward from 19.2 million in 1950 - 51 to 137.1 million in 2011-12. Gross primary school enrolment is about 100%. Overall student's enrolment in all stages of education in India has lifted over the years. Such increase in school participation made a significant jump in the literacy rate which rose from 18% in 1951 to 65% in 2001 (Dougherty and Herd, 2008) and 72.99% in 2011.

On the one hand, the growth in enrolment takes place in the backdrop of introduction as well as various centrally sponsored educational interventions. Such schemes are Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Non-formal Education Program (1979-90), Operation Blackboard for small rural schools (1986), Total Literacy Campaigns (1988), District Primary School Education Program (1994-2002) and more recently the Mid-day Meal schemes. Between 1950 and 1990, the number of schools increased more than three – fold, outpacing the growth

of the school age population. School participation may have responded to these supply-side changes.

On the other hand, the era of economic reform and liberalization has been coincided to the growth of the school participation by historical standards. According to Lanjouw and Murgai, (2009), rural poverty declined from 46.9% to 28.4%, at a rate of one percentage point a year on and from 1983 to 2004. It is previously reported that economic growth enabled poorer families just to enroll children in school so that they can reduce the inequalities of educational opportunities. Indeed the post-reform era of the nineties has been a period of rapidly increasing literacy and school participation (Dougherty and Herd, 2008).

According to Wu, Goldschmidt, Azam and Boscardin (2006), substantial gaps remain in educational outcomes across gender, caste, religion and between urban and rural inhabitants. It is a larger part of educational inequality in India which is not only one of the highest in the world, but has not declined much in the last three decades also. (Thomas *et al.*, 2000). Recent research uses multiple rounds of national representative data documents and also the persistence of gender, caste and religion gaps in school participation and attainment. So a comparative data from 1980s to 2000s reveals to the social gaps in schooling and an important premarket factor (Desai and Kulkarni, 2008; Asadullah, Kambhampati and Lopez-Boo, 2009).

Overall, these inequality trends are not conclusive of educational opportunities. For example, "circumstance factors" such as parental wealth and education, which are suggestive of persistent inequality in educational opportunities. However, India, a large part of the world's out-of -school children, mostly belongs to poor households (Filmer and Pritchett, 1999).

Whilst the large–scale progress is made in the country just to bring these children to school, striking contrasts are reflected in educational achievements at the state level. Overall, considerable educational investment has been made in past decades by state governments. In some *states*, there exist large disparities in educational achievement across states in India – about two-thirds of the children who do not attend school are in five of the poorest states: Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan (Dougherty and Herd, 2008). Even in some *states,* educational investment has translated into greater equality of educational opportunities. According to Dreze and Sen (1995), existing inequality in educational achievement is varied in efforts to expand basic education in different states. If inequality in the access to education is restricted the benefit of investment in education to children from higher social class and the majority (religious) group, educational opportunities are unlikely to equalize.

1.2 Education System in India

1.2.1 A Historical Perspective

The importance of education was well recognized in India since ancient times. *'Swadeshe pujyate raja, vidwan sarvatra pujyate'* – A king is honored only in his own country, but a learned person is honored throughout the world. The ultimate aim of education in ancient India was complete realization of 'self'. Teacher - centric system was launched with the introduction of the Gurukul system with a bond between Guru and Shishya. In 700 B.C. the Takshila University popularly known as world's first university was set up and the Nalanda University was built in the 4th century B.C. Both were a great achievement and contribution of ancient India in the field of education. During the freedom struggle, several leaders like

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Thakur and Mahatma Gandhi worked for better education of Indians, particularly women. Despite their efforts, India's literacy rate at the time of Independence was 12 per cent [Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD), 2016].

After Independence, Govt. of India took various steps for the transformation of education in the wake of socialand economic reconstruction. The first step taken in this direction was the introduction of Free and Compulsory Education into the Constitution as a Directive Principle of State Policy under Article 45. However, this goal had not been achieved until 2009. For this reason, the Government of India finally gave its students the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) in 2009 and was effective from 2010. The national leaders also agreed that there was an urgent need to improve the educational infrastructure of the nation in order to both encourage economic development and to value the constitutional aspect of equity and equality.

Beside the constitutional requirements, further liability to the universalization of education as well as legal, administrative and financial frameworks for the state –funded system are found in two main sources. These are -a) the on-going series of five year plans for national development, and b) three national policies (1968, 1986 and 1992) on education.

Beginning in 1951, a succession of Five Years Plans for national development allocated specific funding and resources for improvement of all levels of education throughout the nation. The first Plan focused mainly on the establishment of more schools as a means to assure universal provision, and this remained the key preoccupation of policy makers throughout the 1950s. By the mid-1960s, this attention to primary school provision was

further supplemented by alternative schooling arrangements and adult education programmes. A series of national reviews in the early 1960s, however, revealed that the opening of more schools and programmes had not improved the central problems of high drop-out repetition rates (Govinda & Varghese, 1993). As a result, a number of other measures including 'no detention' policy and various incentive schemes were put into place.

The first comprehensive National Policy on Education was passed in 1968, and was based on the recommendations of the Education Commission (also known as the Kothari Commission 1964-66). The recommendation of the commission set up a general structure for the formal education and paved the way for the National Curriculum Framework. The 'National Policy on Education (NPE), 1968' marked a significant step in the history of education in India. The recommendations included in NPE 1968 could not be implemented in detail as the strategy was not got translated. Consequently many problems of accessing quality, quantity, utility and financial outlet etc. came out for years (MoHRD, 1968).

A survey on the education conducted by all India survey incorporated all inhabitants irrespective of the population size. Based on the findings of the survey, distance norms – requiring a school within 1 k.m. of each habitation with a population of 300 or more were taken up by national government. This is continued as the guiding framework for expansion of the school system in the present day.

The National Policy of education (NPE) in 1986 focused not only on universalizing education but also on achieving essential levels of learning. To fullfill this goal the policy demanded for different factors like teacher recruitment, expansion of scholarship, emphasis on Adult Education, financial help for the poor and needy families so that the children belonging to

those families send their children to school without any hesitation. They also gave emphasis on the establishment of new institutions and providing basic facilities.

According to the report of All India Educational Survey, it has been evident that 94% people of our country have their access to the primary education if the school is available within 1 k.m. of their residence (NCERT 1990). In the meantime, concern for the infrastructure and quality of education in primary schools had increased. The report also revealed that the condition of the primary schools giving a huge hint to the fact that most of the children most significantly half of the enrolled children cannot complete the five years of schooling (NCERT, 1990).

The National Policy of education (NPE), 1986 launched *"Operation Blackboard"*. Operation Blackboard was aimed specifically at providing minimum resource levels in elementary schools across the nation – defined as two teachers, two class rooms and a set of teaching and learning materials (Dyer, 2000). It aimed at improving the classroom environment by providing infrastructural facilities, additional teachers and teaching-learning materials to primary schools, the availability of drinking water and toilet facilities for both girls and boys, instructional materials, and teacher training. The externally aided *Mahila Samakhya Programme* was launched in 1988 in pursuance of the goals of the new Education Policy (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992) as a concrete Programme for women empowerment particularly to educate them and standardize them socially, emotionally and also economically. These concerns were also highlighted in the Fifth Five year plan (2002-2007) which outlines a series of ambitious goals for education.

In administrative terms, the infrastructure of the government school system should be similarly distributed over the national, state, regional and local levels. At the national level are a series of apex institutions which include NUEPA, The National council for Teacher Education (NCTE), the National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS), the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the University Grants Commission (UGC) and NCERT. States, in turn, may have their own State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT), and State Universities. Different institutions like District Institutes of Education and training (DIET) are prevailed which holds the responsibility for pre-service teachers and also in-service teachers training as well as block and cluster level resource centres which were established to provide teachers with support and opportunities for exchange of information and experiences, These state, district, block and cluster level institutions were established in the early 1990s as part of the District Primary Education Programme or DPEP.

In addition to these movements towards administrative decentralization, a number of other types of attempts have been done to work out the problems within the system of elementary Education. Launched in 1994, DPEP was an externally aided project and the programme components included construction of classrooms and new schools, opening up of non-formal schooling centres, appointment of teachers, and setting up of early childhood education centres, strengthening of SCERTs and DIETs, and setting up of Block Resource Centres (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centres(CRC). The programme became successful to increase the number of schools and teachers in the targeted districts. Of these programmes, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is currently operating an umbrella structure which oversees all aspects of elementary education in the country and is responsible for all quality improvements. Other, even more narrowly targeted, national projects include the Mid-day

Meal programme initiated in 1995 and an extended series of Mass Literacy Campaigns which began in 1989 and continue in the present day have positive impact. Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is an extension of SSA in the sense that it promises universal access to education to all.

1.2.2 Public expenditure on education in India

Government of India has direct involvement in the financing of schooling at various levels. The pattern of Government expenditure on a particular sector reflects the priority for the sector in public policies. In 2004, total public spending on education as a percentage of GDP was 3.1 per cent. In order to accelerate public expenditure, the Central Budget (2004) introduced a cess of two per cent on major central taxes/duties for elementary education. Total spending increased to 4 per cent of GDP in 2011-12, but the figure falls much short of the 6 percent of GDP (recommended by the Kothari Commission,1966 and the Central Advisory Board of Education Committee, 2006.

During the eleventh, Plan the aggregate (Central and States) public spending on education was Rs. 12, 44,797 Crore of which 35 per cent was plan expenditure while 65 per cent was accounted for non-plan expenditure. Of the total public expenditure, 43 per cent was incurred for elementary education (Planning Commission, 2013). The bulk of public spending on education is incurred by the State Governments. Their expenditure mainly consisted of salaries of teacher, establishment of infrastructure etc. Central government spends on education through centrally sponsored schemes like *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meal,* various scholarships, etc.

In the 2016-17 Union Budget Rs.151581 crore has been allocated for social sector including health and education. It states that *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* will focus on improving the quality of education. However, it does not mention how millions of government schools will be improved to provide quality education. The expenditure on social services (Education, Social Infrastructure, Employment and Human Development) by Centre and States as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by 1.5 percentage points from 6.2 to 7.7 per cent, during the period 2014-15 to 2019-20 (Budget Estimates-BE). An increase was witnessed across all social sectors during this period. But the country requires much more than six per cent of GDP on education spending in India.

1.3 Primary education in West Bengal

Since independence, the educational landscape in India has changed enormously. This change was brought about in various forms and levels, impacting the scope and quality of both demand and supply sides of public primary education in India. Abysmally low levels of achievements for India in the field of education were shown from the educational surveys from the 1990s. Giving emphasis to Universalization of education with a special emphasis on the enrolment in primary schools, Government was focussing on different issues. Different International and National authorities helped the Indian government with financial support for the development of education. In addition to this the introduction of Rights to Education Act (2009), brings a major change to the system making education compulsory for all belonging to age the age group (6-14). This gives a big hit to the age old traditional system of giving preference to the merit and separating children on the basis of merit, status and social background.

This last decade has seen enormous investment in the field of elementary education. However, with the prevailing inadequacy of finance there is also a mixed problem of different factors in the development of education. The education sector in India has made a sudden and immense progress in enabling almost universal access to primary schooling. However, the development in quality aspects of schooling has not kept pace with access. This widening gap between access and quality, if not filled in time, can possibly reverse the developments made so far.

There is extensive variation among states in achieving the standard quality indicators – both tangible (infrastructure, student-teacher ratios and student-classroom ratios, teaching-learning materials, etc.) and intangible (relevance of curriculum, interpretation of curriculum, quality of teacher, etc.). The following sections narrating the educational setting of West Bengal, District Paschim Medinipur and town Midnapur are reflective of many such disparities in educational achievement.

1.3.1 The State of West Bengal

As per 2001census data, West Bengal extending over 88,752 sq.kms had a total population of 80,176,197. Total male and female population are 41,465,985 and total female population is 38,710,212. The provisional census data of 2011showed that the total population in West Bengal now stands at 91,347,736 comprising of 46,927,389 male and 44,420,347 female. The sex ratio has slightly improved to 947 in 2011 compare to 934 in 2001. In respect of total population the rank of West Bengal is fourth among the states in India. The population density is the highest among all states in India 2001 census and second highest in 2011 census. As per census data 2001 Scheduled Cast constituted approximately 23 percentage

(total SC population is 18,452,555) of total population and in the case of Scheduled Tribe, this figure is approximately 5.5 percentage (total ST population is 4,406,794) of total population.

West Bengal shares its boundary with Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, Nepal in the West, Sikkim in the North, Assam, Bhutan and Bangladesh in the East and Bay of Bengal in the South. Because of better job opportunities and better standard of living, a large migrating population from the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa come into this state. West Bengal still holds its position as an important commercial hub for the whole eastern and north-eastern region of the country. This state also plays a crucial role in business and trade for neighbouring country with neighbouring states and also from neighbouring countries(for example-Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh), particularly from Bangladesh. Economic, social and cultural bodings are still strong with Bangladesh and their mother tongue is also Bengali so they have a natural tendency as well as advantage to migrate this state. The average annual exponential growth rate in West Bengal is 1.31% which is less than all-India figure of 1.64% and decadal growth rate is 13.93% (all-India figure 17.64%) as per provisional census data 2011. 99.39% of total population in West Bengal speak in scheduled languages. However, 85.34% of total population speak in Bengali.

The urban population in West Bengal of 22,427,251, is about 27.97% of total population. It is higher than all India average of 27.81% of total population. According to census 2001 the total number of villages in the state is 40,783. The number of class I cities with population 100,000 and above rose from 42 in 1991 to 58 in 2001 and number of class II cities with population between 50,000 to 100,000 decreases from 30 in 1991 to 19 in 2001. This indicates a rapid urbanization across India.

West Bengal is one of the five states which has shown maximum decline in absolute number of child population in 2011 in comparison with figures of census 2001. As per provisional census data 2011, child population in West Bengal now stands at 10,112,599 comprising of 5,187,264 male and 4,925,335 female. West Bengal has been witnessing a negative change in population in age group 0-6 years since 1991. This was a decadal change in child population (age group 0-6 years). This was -148,075 in 2001 and -1,301,623 in 2011. Percentage of children (age group 0-6 years) of total population is 11.07 in 2011 as compare to around 14% in 2001. In the age group 0-6 years the child population has profound implications as per RTE norms.

Administratively, the state of West Bengal is partitioned into 23 districts. They are different in economically, politically, and culturally. The undivided Bengal province remains leading place in the country. But its prominent place began to decline since the 1940s. First, there was the World War II which in its wake brought the infamous Bengal famine of 1943. The famine took a toll of millions of lives. This was followed by the communal riots in 1946 and partition in 1947, violently shaking the whole social foundation of the Bengali community. Waves after waves of refugees migrated from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to West Bengal, a process which continued till 1971 stretching the resources of the new state to its limits. The unresolved conditions are aided and aggravated by many other complex politico-economic factors.

The last fifty years may be conveniently divided into two periods. From 1947 to 1967, the Congress government which was in power had to face the crisis emerging from partition and consequent social unrest, shortages of food and agricultural commodities, and very high

incidences of underemployment and unemployment. There had been recurring political unrest culminating into the now famous Naxal Bari movement. The decade between 1967 and 1977 witnessed severe competition for political power which brought in its wake governmental fragility, administrative uncertainties and a lack of direction of public policy. Against this background, the emergence of Left Front in 1977, and more than three decades of stable rule in the state has imparted a degree of stability to public organizations and provided a scope for meaningful and development oriented public policy and their implementation. Now, the state is under the Trinamul Congress Government leaded by Ms. Mamta Banerjee which came into force from 20-th may, 2011.

Pressures at the national level and the international consensus on the need to eradicate illiteracy, led the Government at the Centre to draft a Bill in 1997, namely the Constitutional 83rd Amendment Bill, 1997. The Central Government has passed "Right to Education Act" in 2009. It ensures the right to get free and compulsory education for all the children age between six to fourteen years.

Following the recommendations of the Kothari Commission, the Government of West Bengal restructured the educational pattern to 10+2+3 system of which the stage of Primary Education consists of the first half of the ten years of schooling. More specifically, it consists of the classes I to IV. It is followed by the Junior High or Upper Primary level from class V to VIII. A child entering the system at the completed age of 5 years should continue without interruption at the age of 9 (If the constitutional mandate is followed, the child is to be retained in school till the individual has at least crossed the upper primary stage.). But that is not all. What is more important to ensure is that during this period the child should at least attain the Minimum Level of Learning (MLL) prescribed for the primary stage. There are

three parameters to measure the efficacy of the primary education system. The first is quantitative in which all children have been enrolled in primary schools. According to census 2001, children in the age group 5 to 9 in West Bengal is near about 94.91 lakhs which is roughly about 11.84 % of the total population. The male population in the age group 5 to 9 is 4851125 and female population is 4639483. To ensure their total enrolment, it is necessary to have, apart from generation of a demand for education, the required number of schools with adequate class rooms and adequate number of teachers so as to ensure a favourable teacher-student ratio which as per the norms accepted by the state should be between 1:40. Secondly, it is necessary to make the school environment attractive both mentally as well as physically. It ensures a stimulating atmosphere in the class room and outside. The participants and their guardians must feel that the time spent by their wards in the school is not a waste of time which could be fruitfully utilized otherwise. Here the infrastructure of the schools, the incentives provided as well as the quality of inputs and the agents providing them play a major role. Lastly, there is the crucial issue of the attainment of level of learning which is a function of the motivation and quality of teachers, their training and the nature of interaction between the teacher and the students and the number of working days in the school.

In all these aspects, and particularly in the first and the second, the community is very much involved in the sense of assertion of the stake of community in creating the atmosphere of a learning society and planning and management of education. For the efficiency of the administrative structure and the monitoring process, the Government of West Bengal established a registered organization named 'Paschim Bangla Rajya Prathimik Siksha Unnayan Sansita' as an autonomous and independent body for implementation of elementary education project in West Bengal and it functions as a societal mission for bringing about a

foundational change in the elementary education system and from 2006, this name was again changed to 'Paschim Banga Sarva Siksha Mission'.

Education is a multi-faceted programme. Any education system involves not just the teachers and the students but the society as a whole. Universalization of primary education would depend on three main attributes - universal facilities, universal enrolment and universal retention. The first really means the delivery system which includes provision of primary education, supply of teaching-learning materials and the desired quality of teaching-learning in schools. These may be regarded as the major prerequisites for universal enrolment and retention. But enrolment and retention also depend on structural and attitudinal factors. These include both social and economic constraints. Thus, an evaluation of the existing status of primary education in the state involves not just evaluating the school system but also its relation with the socio-economic conditions of the population. To elaborate, the delivery system involves directly the policy makers, the bureaucracy, and the teachers creating proper motivation and also in providing the right guidance, necessary infrastructure, development of the proper objective and subjective environment to impart knowledge to the recipients.

TABLE-1.1

Progress of Literacy in West Bengal and India (1901-2011)

(Figure in %)

Year	Male	Decadal Percent Point	Female	Decadal Percent Point Change In Female Literacy	Male-Female Gap (WB)	WB Aggre-Gate	Decadal Percent Point Change In WB	Indian Agree-Gate	Decadal Percent Point Change In India	WB – India Gap In Agree-Gate
1901	17.9		1.2		16.7	9.8		5.35		4.45
1911	19.1	6.70	1.7	41.67	17.4	10.8	10.2	5.92	10.7	4.88
1921	21	9.95	2.5	47.06	18.5	12.3	13.9	7.16	20.9	5.14
1931	20.4	2.86	3.8	52.00	16.6	12.4	0.8	9.5	32.7	2.9
1941	29.3	43.63	8.3	118.42	21	19.7	58.9	16.1	69.5	3.6
1951	34.1	16.38	12.7	53.01	21.4	24.6	24.9	16.67	3.5	7.94
1961	46.6	36.66	20.3	59.84	26.3	34.46	40.1	24.02	44.1	10.44
1971	49.6	6.44	26.6	31.03	23	38.86	12.8	29.45	22.6	9.41
1981	56.9	14.72	34.4	29.32	22.5	48.65	25.2	36.23	23	12.42
1991	67.8	19.16	46.6	35.47	21.2	57.7	18.6	42.84	18.2	14.86
2001	77	13.57	59.6	27.90	17.46	68.64	19	64.84	51.4	3.81
2011	82.67	7.36	71.16	19.40	11.51	77.08	12.3	74.04	14.2	3.04
MAX		43.63		118.42	26.3		58.87		69.47	14.9
MEAN		17.94		52.79	19.5		21.5		28.25	6.9
SD		13.60		26.80	3.89		15.99		19.58	4.03
CV		75.81		50.76	19.97		74.35		69.3	58.28

Source: Census reports

From the above Table 1.1, it is observed that the level of literacy in West Bengal was as low as 9.8% in 1901 and West Bengal –India gap was 4.45%. This literacy rate gap between West Bengal and India was 3.04%.

TABLE-1.2

Rural-Urban Literacy Gap

	Total		Rural		Urban		Gap (%)	
	1ndia	West Bengal	1ndia	West Bengal	1ndia	West Bengal	1ndia	West Bengal
1991	52.2	57.70	44.7	50.50	73.1	75.27	63.53	49.05
2001	64.8	68.64	58.7	63.42	79.9	81.25	36.12	28.11
2011	74.04	77.08	68.9	72.13	85.0	84.78	23.37	17.54

Source: Census reports

From the above Table 1.2, it is seen that in West Bengal, though the literacy rate is marginally higher than the national level, the growth rate shows a similar trend.

According to the DISE Flash Statistics data for the year 2009-10, the number of primary schools in the state is 74,678 (and it was 51,021 in 1995-96) and the enrolment of students upto class V is 10,545,319 (Which was 8,500,000 in 1995-96).

As per DISE data, on an average, each primary school in the state has 3.4 teachers for the year 2009-10. The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) at primary school is around 34. In this same time frame, the percentage of trained teachers is 53.21% and the figure for teachers having received in-service training is about 42.12%. These figures are for all the schools.

An efficient delivery system also depends, to a large extent, on proper mobilization of resources and the development of a well structured management and administration. The resource includes both physical and human. Adequate allocation of fund is a precondition for developing the delivery system for UPE (upper primary education).The minimum level of learning (MLL) of the students depends, among other things, largely on the teachers' ability to impart knowledge. This, in its turn, depends heavily on the teachers' knowledge, skills and motivation all of which are linked to a great degree of functions of proper training of the teachers.

The West Bengal Board of Primary Education is aware of the problems and has taken a number of steps for the quality improvement of the teaching-learning process in the schools. A special programme called Joyful Learning (*Ananda Path)* has already been launched in a number of districts in the state with the help of UNICEF. It is primarily aimed at improving the quality of teaching at the primary level through special training of teachers and by improving the teaching aids and other materials and the physical infrastructure of the schools under the programme. Base-line studies are also being conducted in these districts to keep track of the development of the students brought under the programme. The present framework of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) lays more emphasis on teaching-learning process through improvement of quality of text books and the use of teaching-learning materials.

The incidence of literacy, enrolment or retention/drop-out, education as such, is dependent not only on the delivery system but also upon the societal factors. Thus gender, caste/community, and occupational and rural-urban inequalities all affect education. Moreover, West Bengal has some specific features not common with most of the other states

in the country. It spreads longitudinally from the mountains of Darjeeling to the Bay of Bengal washing its southern shores.

The primary education system at the all India level, and in most of the provinces, has five classes class I to class V. Thus a child is expected to join formal education at the age five at class I and complete the primary education in five years time, *i.e.*, by the time the child completes nine years of age, she/he should be able to join the post primary level. Thus the target population age group for the primary level in West Bengal is five years and above but less than ten years. However, most of the primary schools in West Bengal have only four classes - Class I to Class IV. According to provisional DISE Data (2010-11), there are 51016 schools offering Primary Education and 10574 schools offering Upper Primary Education in West Bengal. Total 8901 and 8822 schools are offering Secondary and Higher Secondary Education in West Bengal respectively. Thus, most of the children who desire to continue to study beyond class IV have to change schools. This very fact affects all the variables related to enrolment and drop-out of the primary school goers.

1.3.2 The District of Paschim Medinipur

A major vexing phenomenon observed mainly in the low literacy regions, in the country and elsewhere, is the high rate of dropouts at a very early stage of education. In fact, the primary education policies in different parts of the world are aimed at reducing this high dropout rate by creating incentives to the students and the parents to keep the children in the school till they complete the desired level of education. The present study particularly looks primary education in Midnapur threshold .

TABLE-1.3

District-wise literacy rate (2001-2011) and Decadal present change

Rank	District	2001	2011	Decadal Change (%)
0	West Bengal	68.64	77.08	8.77
1	PurbaMedinipur	80.16	87.66	9.36
2	Kolkata	80.86	87.14	7.77
3	North 24 Porgona	78.07	84.95	8.81
4	Howrah	77.01	83.85	8.88
5	Hooghly	75.11	82.55	9.91
6	Darjeeling	71.79	79.92	11.32
7	PaschimMedinipur	70.41	79.04	12.26
8	South 24 Parganas	69.45	78.57	13.13
9	Bardhaman	70.18	77.15	9.93
10	Nadia	66.14	75.58	14.27
11	Cooch Behar	66.30	75.49	14.27
12	DakshinDinajpur	63.69	73.86	16.15
13	Jalpaiguri	62.85	73.79	17.41
14	Bankura	63.44	70.95	11.84
15	Birbhum	61.48	70.9	15.32
16	Murshidabad	54.35	67.53	24.25
17	Purulia	55.57	65.38	17.65
18	Maldah	50.28	62.71	24.72
19	Uttar Dinajpur	47.89	60.13	25.56
	Max			25.56
	Mean			14.34
	SD			5.5
	CV			260.07

Source : Census 2011

The above table 1.3 highlights the position of district-wise literacy rate and decadal change in West Bengal and it also shows seventh position in the literacy rate in Paschim Medinipur District.

TABLE – 1.4

Literacy rate and gap in rural and urban in Paschim Medinipur and West Bengal (1951-2011)

District	1951			2011		
	Urban	Rural	Gap	Urban	Rural	Gap
Paschim Medinipur	32.9	20.6	12.3	87.0	77.9	9.1
West Bengal	45.7	18.18	26.9	85.5	73.0	12.5

Source : Census, 2011

TABLE - 1.5

Number of Schools (2007 – 2013)

Year	Govt. &Govt Aided	Including Pvt. School
2007-08	56989	72657
2008-09	56907	73769
2009-10	58158	88663
2010-11	77761	89906
2011-12	79258	92066
2012-13	79962	94683

Source : Census, 2011 and J. B. Tilak

TABLE – 1.6

Pupil Teacher Ratio (2007 – 2013)

Year	Primary	Upper Primary
2007-08	46	57
2008-09	40	55
2009-10	39	56
2010-11	32	51
2011-12	30	47
2012-13	26	49

Source : Census, 2011 and J. B. Tilak

TABLE -1.7

Enrolment ratio of Scheduled Caste children (2007-13)

Year	Primary	Upper Primary
2007-08	28.38	26.69
2008-09	28.39	27.57
2009-10	28.51	27.97
2010-11	28.10	27.90
2011-12	28.93	28.80
2012-13	29.23	29.08

Source : Census, 2011and J. B. Tilak

TABLE 1.8

Enrolment ratio of Scheduled Tribe children (2007-13)

Year	Primary	Upper Primary
2007-08	7.38	5.28
2008-09	7.27	5.33
2009-10	7.15	5.35
2010-11	8.30	5.90
2011-12	7.70	5.84
2012-13	8.55	6.32

Source : Census, 2011and J. B. Tilak

TABLE -1.9

Enrolment ratio of Muslim children in W.B. (2007-13)

Year	Primary	Upper Primary
2007-08	30.29	22.42
2008-09	30.03	23.49
2009-10	32.56	26.29
2010-11	32.87	27.26
2011-12	31.89	28.01
2012-13	33.69	28.11

Source : Census,2011and J. B. Tilak

TABLE 1.10

Dropout Rates at Primary (I-V) Levels

Year	2000-01	2005-06	2009-10	2013-14
Boys	39.7	28.7	30.3	21.2
Girls	41.9	21.8	27.3	18.3
Total	40.7	25.7	28.9	19.8

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2011 and School Education in India 2014, MHRD

TABLE 1.11

Out of School Children (2007-2013)

Year	Primary	Upper Primary
2007-08	545677	747058
2008-09	124124	332091
2009-10	75390	207136
2010-11	80658	159583
2011-12	76549	141601
2012-13	44412	92025

Source: Census, 2011and J. B. Tilak

TABLE 1.12

State-wise difference in primary level

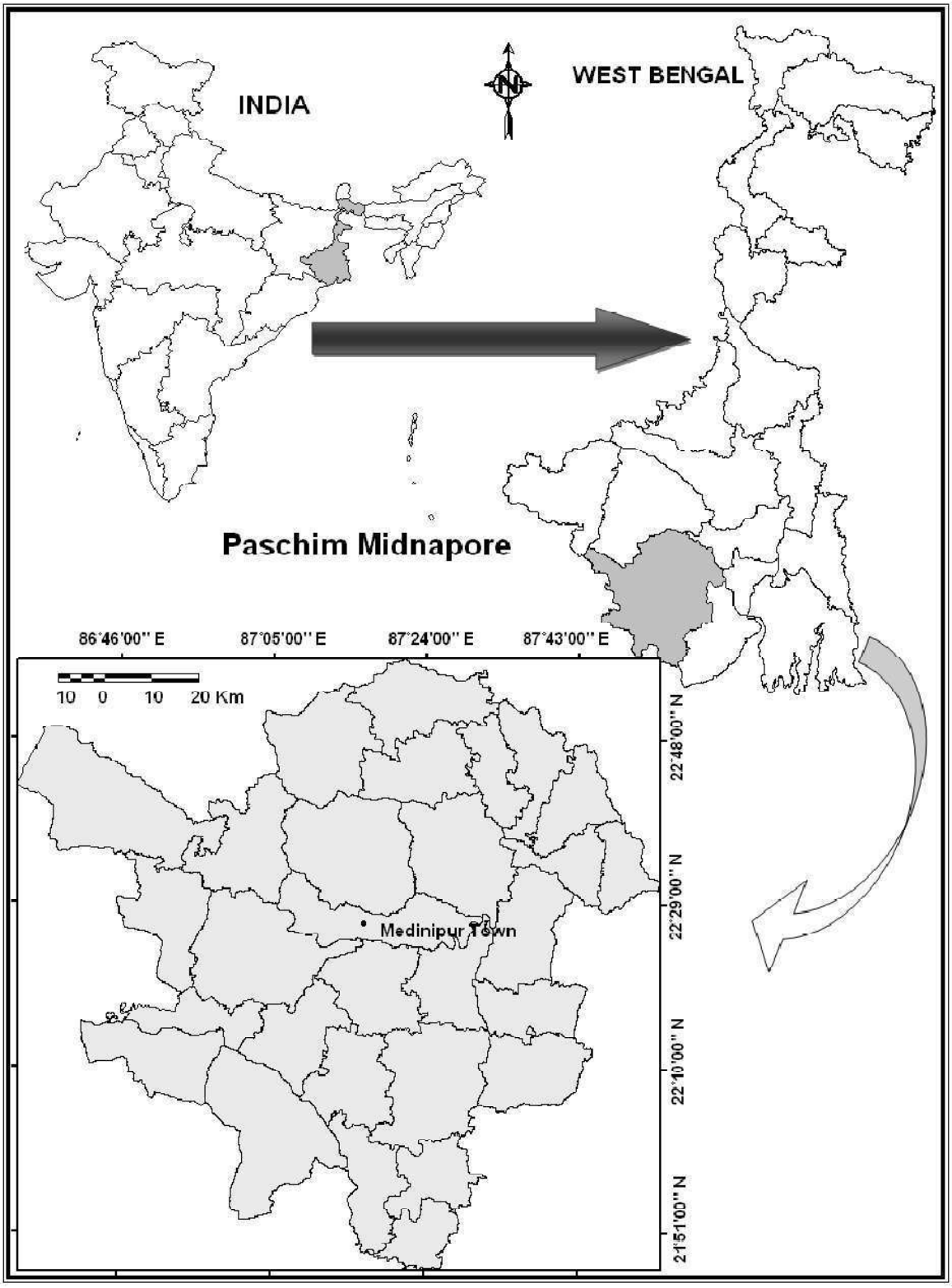
State	Read	Subtraction	English
Madhya Pradesh	87.5	81.9	18.5
Uttar Pradesh	48.6	35.7	19.0
Tamil Nadu	53.0	39.7	14.9
West Bengal	64.2	56.3	16.7

Source ; J. B. Tilak (2011)

The above tables from 1.4 to 1.12 highlight the picture of primary education in West Bengal which has an indication for Paschim Medinipur District also. In the initial stage, the education system in Medinipur was superior and Sanskrit Tole (an educational Institute) was basic education as ancient educational system.

The ancient educational system of Medinipur was teacher and tole-centric education. At the end of 19th century, Mukhopaddhya, Mahesh Chandra Nayaratna (1872-95), contemporary principal of Kolkata Sanskrit college, visitor the tole educational centres of Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Assam as per the direction of British Government . After his visiting, he composed a book –"A report on the toles of Bengal , Bihar and Orissa'' about their tole educational system including the name of professors of tole education in Midnapur District. In 1933, British Government published the Book- "List of toles in Bengal presidency" which mentioned 336 professors name of tole education in Midnapur District. The Government helped these professors for their lectureship on tole education for the management of tole

education in Bengali .West Bengal government published a list of professors name in "Bengiya Sanskrit Shiskha Parishad" in 1963.The book also included the professors name and their tole's name in undivided Midnapur district.


INDIA
WEST BENGAL
Paschim Midnapore
86°46'00" E
87°05'00" E
87°24'00" E
87°43'00" E
10 0 10 20 Km
22°48'00" N
22°29'00" N
22°10'00" N
21°51'00" N
Medinipur Town

The district Paschim Medinipur is situated in the south western side of West Bengal, extended between 21°47‘ N - 23°00‘ N latitude and 86°40‘ E - 87°52‘ E longitude (Figure 1). It was formed on 1st January, 2002. The geographical area of this district is 6,308 km^2 and it has a population of 5,913,457 with a population density of 940 inhabitants per square kilometer as per 2011 census. The district is primarily agricultural in nature, with cultivation being the chief livelihood of a majority of the people.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Education is viewed as that generates and transmits knowledge [Tilak, 2005; Schultz, 1961, 1972, 1988]; an instrument of social engineering [Durkheim, 1952]; human capital formation [Becker, 1985; Amsden, 1989; Wade, 1990; World Bank, 1993]; producing a wide variety and huge magnitude of externalities [Schultz, 1988; Romer, 1986, 1990; Lucas, 1988]. Recently, gender and social disparity marked out as a crucial category that deserves special attention in the education-equality paradigm [Abu-Ghaida and Klasen, 2004; World Bank, 2001; UNESCO, 2003; Muller, 2005]. Gender parity is a core principle of human development. To cite the loquacious words of Mahbubul Haq, “Development, if not engendered, is endangered.” The propagated gap in education is more important in poorer countries like South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Forty percent of the global gender lag in education remains in India.

In India, it is historical that the education of girls has lagged behind than the boys (Aggarwal 1987; Agrawal and Aggarwal 1994). It is certain that communities and classes fare much worse than the others. It is recently observed that lay down the determinants of the inequality in educational attainment for boys and girls, only a handful of these (Bandopadhyay and

Subrahmaniam 2008; Das and Mukherjee 2007, 2008; Sengupta and Guha 2002; Raju 1991; Burney and Irfan 1991). They explicitly explain at the factors responsible for the relative inequality in educational attainment.

The literature on socio-economic determinants, enrolment and educational attainments has been clearly focused on factors like household wealth and income, education of parents, child's age, family size and number of siblings, caste affiliations, place of residence and educational infrastructure as determinants of enrolment and primary school completion rates (Akhtar 1996; Deolalikar 1997; Tansel 1998; Brown and Park 2002; Connelly and Zheng 2003; Boissiere 2004; Desai and Kulkarni 2008; SIS/DPP 2005; Okumu et al 2008; Husain and Chatterjee 2009).

Another disparity in education is found in public and private schools. Private schools are emerged in different parts of India as an alternative to the government schools, particularly in the urban areas. It becomes a phenomenon. An NCAER study (collected data across the country) found that 30 percent of the urban poor and non-poor enrolled their children in private schools, while the figures for rural poor and non-poor were much lower, at 7.8 percent and 9.3 percent respectively. It is observed that private schools are choice able for the urban poor, such as Biharand Andhra Pradesh (Tooley, 2002). However, private schooling is not a universal trait across the country. For example, the mushrooming of private schools in the towns and rural areas is seen in Bihar and Jharkhand, but it is not applied to West Bengal. For instance, a study on the Delivery of Primary Education done by the Pratichi (India) Trust found only 1.5 percent children of the sample to be enrolled in private schools. On the contrary, a similar study in Dumka district of Jharkhand 14 percent children from the sample was found to be enrolled in private schools. There are intra-state variations too. When this

enrolment is compared to private schools in the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) area of West Bengal, it is much higher than the other parts of West Bengal [Rana et al (2002, 2003, 2004)].

As mentioned above, the growing of private schooling is often attributed to the poor quality of education which is also delivered in the government schools due to factors such as poor infrastructure and pupil-teacher ratio, teachers' unionism leading to absenteeism etc. Even it is contrasted with the better infrastructure and pupil-teacher ratio and higher accountability of the teachers in the private schools (Pritichi, 2009). The quality of education is delivered in the primary schooling system. It is an important factor from a class point of view, and the complex nature of Indian society where "class is not the source of inequality, that includes other divisive influences: gender, caste, religion, community, and so on" [Sen 2001].

The complex interrelationships remain between issues of class, caste, gender, ethnicity, religious orientation, and other discriminatory factors where the primary education system really free for all children. It eradicates both illiteracy and social discrimination. The dialectical relationship between educational progress and social change and the spread of education help to overcome the traditional inequalities of caste, class and gender [Dreze and Sen 2002]. Education not only helps to overcome the inequalities between the castes, or gender or ethnic groups, but also has the potential to remove the inequalities within them.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Keeping in view the rationale of the study the problem is stated as- "DISPARITIES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL STUDY IN PASCHIM MEDINIPUR DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL"

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To get an idea about the present status of primary education in the schools in Midnapore town and its' surrounding rural areas in terms of educational environments of the schools, school enrolment of students and students' performances.

2. To measure the disparities in respect of students' enrolment and their learning achievement score in schools between two classes-in special reference to gender (male and female) and caste (general and others) of the students, school management(private and public) and location(urban and rural) of the schools.

3. To identify the factors that play significant role in determining the students' enrolments and their learning scores. The social, locational and economic factors are considered as the determining factors.

1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

Disparity: is the quantity that separates a group from a reference point on a particular measure of Education that is expressed in terms of a rate, proportion, mean, or some other quantitative.

Primary education: is typically the first stage of formal education, coming after preschool. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) definition in 2011 posited that primary education normally started between the ages of 5– 8 years, and was designed to give a sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics in favour of "*to establish a solid foundation for learning*".

Multidimensional: A multidimensional is an extended form of a two-dimensional data array. Dimensions are composed of values called members, which are arranged in a hierarchical structure. A *dimension* is a perspective or view of a specific dataset. A system that supports simultaneous, alternate views of datasets is *multidimensional*. Dimensions are categories such as gender, location, caste and organisation and quality of educational index and so on. Each dimension contains additional categories that have various relationships one to another. Members are the names of the elements within a dimension. A dimension can contain an unlimited number of members.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The present study has been divided into seven chapters. The *first* chapter-INTRODUCTION-introduces the main objectives of the study and highlights the education scenario in India in general and West Bengal in particular .The *second* chapter- REVIEW OF LITERATURE-is a review of the previous studies that have been carried out to evaluate the differences in learning achievements and the determinants of educational achievements not only in India but the world over and to point out also the research gaps. The *third* chapter- DATABASE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY-attempts to examine the source and methodology of the entire study. The *fourth* Chapter-PRESENT STATUS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE AREA UNDER STUDY-highlights the present status of primary education in Paschim Medinipur district in West Bengal. The *fifth* Chapter-FACTORS EXPLAINING THE VARIATIONS IN THE SCHOOL ENROLMENT OF THE STUDENTS- identifies and measures the factors accountable for variations in students' enrolment in schools. The *sixth* Chapter-FACTORS DETERMINING THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT SCORE OF THE STUDENTS-identifies and measures the factors important for the learning achievements of

the students. The *last* chapter- SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS- summaries the conclusions of the entire study and indicate the policy suggestions.