

Comprehensive Study Notes: Elementary Education in India - Contemporary Context II

These notes are designed for students of the Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) program, covering key concepts from Block 3 (Units 8, 9, and 10) of the course *Elementary Education in India: A Socio-Cultural Perspective* (Course-501). They are structured to provide a clear, concise tool for effective exam preparation and revision.

1.0 Unit 8: Preparing Teachers for Elementary Education

1.1 Pedagogical Issues and Concerns in Elementary Education

Teacher education programs must address several key pedagogical issues to prepare effective elementary educators. These concerns shape the curriculum, teaching methods, and overall approach to schooling.

- **Inclusivity and Equity:** Teacher education must directly address disadvantages that arise from inequalities of gender, caste, language, culture, religion, or disabilities. This requires designing learning tasks and pedagogic practices that value each child and enable them to learn with dignity and confidence.
- **Systemic Reforms:** There is a need for reforms that shift the education system away from rote memorization and towards creative, application-based learning. The involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) is seen as a key systemic reform to make schools more autonomous, responsive to local needs, and less bureaucratic. This decentralization helps teachers connect the curriculum to the local environment and culture, facilitating principles like moving from 'known to the unknown'.
- **Critical Pedagogy:** This is an educational movement guided by the principle of helping students develop a consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power to facilitate progressive social change. It focuses on the relationships between teaching and learning as a continuous process of reflection and action.
- **Key Curricular Concerns:**
 - **Environmental Protection:** The curriculum must create awareness of environmental concerns and integrate the need for its protection into the educational process at all stages.
 - **Peace Education:** In an age of widespread violence, education must empower individuals to choose peace as a way of life and enable them to manage, rather than just witness, conflict.
 - **Democracy:** Education should function as an instrument for social transformation, creating citizens who are conscious of their constitutional rights and duties and are committed to the principles of justice, equality, and liberty.
- **Core Pedagogical Principles:**
 - Connecting classroom knowledge to the life experiences of children.
 - Shifting learning away from rote memorization methods.

- Enriching the curriculum to provide for the overall development of children, moving beyond a textbook-centric approach.
- Making examinations more flexible and integrating them into classroom life.
- Nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country.

1.2 National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005: Thrusts for Elementary Education

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 provides the foundational structure for creating syllabi, textbooks, and teaching practices within India's school education system. It is organized into five main areas: **Perspective, Learning and Knowledge, Curriculum Areas, School Stages and Assessment, School and Classroom Environment, and Systemic Reforms.**

The NCF provides the following guidelines for teacher training.

1.2.1 Pre-Service Teacher Training

- Pre-service training is organized at three levels: pre-school, elementary, and secondary.
- The minimum qualification for admission into an elementary teacher education program is typically 12 years of schooling, though some states still accept 10 years.
- The program duration is generally two years.
- District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) have been established in all states to provide both pre-service and in-service education for teachers.

1.2.2 In-Service Teacher Training

- **Program of Mass Orientation of School Teachers (PMOST):** This program (1986-1990) aimed to mass-orient teachers to the thrust areas of the 1986 National Policy on Education, such as UEE and learner-centered approaches.
- **Special Orientation Program for Primary School Teachers (SOPT):** Launched in 1993-94, this program was a follow-up focused on improving classroom quality by training teachers in competency-based learning (MLLs) and the effective use of Operation Blackboard materials.

1.2.3 Teacher Training for Special Needs

- NCERT incorporates a component on special needs in all major in-service training programs to orient teachers and education officers towards creating inclusive schools.
- General teachers are supported by multi-category trained teachers who receive training from the Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs).
- Teachers in special schools are trained under the guidance of National Institutes for the Handicapped and accredited NGOs.

1.2.4 Institutional Infrastructure for Training

A robust infrastructure supports teacher training at various levels:

- **National:** NCERT, NUEPA.

- **Regional:** Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs).
- **State:** SCERTs, State Institutes of Education (SIEs), Institutes of Advanced Study in Education (IASEs).
- **District/Sub-District:** DIETs, Block Resource Centres (BRCs), and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs).

1.3 National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), 2009-10

The NCFTE 2009-10 provides a framework for teacher education, proposing a two-stage approach for the elementary level to address the specific needs of different age groups. Understanding the distinction between these two stages is crucial for exam questions related to curriculum design and teacher training priorities.

Table: Comparison of NCFTE 2009-10 Stages for Elementary Teachers | Feature | Stage 1: Primary (Classes I-V) | Stage 2: Elementary (Classes I-VIII) | | :--- | :--- | :--- | | **Rationale** | This stage requires teachers to gain insights into the complexities of society and adapt to a flexible framework suited to the local environment, moving from a role of "teacher" to "facilitator of learning." | The age range of 6-14 years covers a gradual transition from concrete to abstract reasoning. This demands a corresponding transition in teaching-learning strategies that match the learners' increasing maturity. | | **Course Content** | Key courses include: Emerging Indian Society, Psychology of Teaching and Learning, Health and Physical Education, Education of Children with Special Needs, and School Organization. | In addition to the primary stage courses, this level adds a course on 'Elementary Education in India - status, problems and issues' and includes 'counseling and guidance' to help teachers address student problems. | | **Training Focus** | The training focuses on integrating theory and practice, correlating curricular areas with the external environment, and using Action Research to solve professional problems. | Training focuses on preparing teachers for pre-instructional, instructional, and post-instructional phases. It includes internship for varied school experiences and school-community interaction to develop suitable pedagogy. | | **Evaluation** | Emphasizes an internal, continuous, and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) system to replace external examinations. The goal is to assess theory, practice teaching, and practicum throughout the training process. | The evaluation principles are similar to the primary stage, emphasizing that assessment must be continuous, formative, and comprehensive to improve the teaching-learning process. |

1.4 Models of Elementary Teacher Education

Various models and initiatives are shaping the field of elementary teacher education.

- **Current Status:** The primary qualification is the Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.), a two-year program for students who have completed 12 years of schooling. It comprises three components: Theory (nine papers in the first year, eight in the second), Practical work (microteaching, social service), and a six-month Internship.
- **Upgrading Teacher Education:** There is a recognized need to upgrade the D.El.Ed. curriculum to incorporate recent initiatives like NCF 2005 and the Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009. The four core components of an upgraded curriculum are:
 1. Foundation course
 2. Content-cum-methodology in different subjects

3. School Experience programme
 4. Practical work
- **New Initiatives:** New models are emerging to professionalize and upgrade elementary teacher education.
 - Jamia Millia Islamia and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) offer an M.Ed. in Elementary Education.
 - The University of Delhi offers a 4-year integrated Bachelor of Elementary Education (B.El.Ed.) program after Class XII. It integrates subject knowledge, human development, and pedagogy, and graduates have career options in teaching, research, and as teacher-educators.
 - "Bridge courses" are used in states like Uttar Pradesh to make B.Ed. graduates eligible for primary school teaching jobs.

1.5 The Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner

Reflective Practice refers to the intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences, leading to new understanding and appreciation. A **Reflective Practitioner** is a teacher who learns from experience by critically reviewing their actions and using that knowledge to improve future practice.

- **Key Theorists and Concepts:**
 - **John Dewey:** He identified three key components of the reflective process:
 - **Open-mindedness:** The ability to look at every aspect of teaching critically and be willing to incorporate new ideas.
 - **Responsibility:** Understanding the effect that one's teaching has on students.
 - **Whole-heartedness:** Approaching the work with enthusiasm and continuous effort.
 - **Donald Schon:** He defined three key aspects of the reflective process:
 - **Reflection-in-action:** Thinking *while* acting (e.g., adjusting a lesson mid-flow based on student confusion).
 - **Reflection-on-action:** Thinking *after* the action is complete (e.g., reviewing why a lesson succeeded or failed).
 - **Reflection-for-action:** Using insights from past reflection to plan *future* actions.
- **Zeichner and Liston's Model:** According to this model, a reflective practitioner:
 1. Examines and tries to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice.
 2. Is aware of the assumptions and values they bring to teaching.
 3. Is attentive to the institutional and cultural context.

4. Takes part in curriculum development.
5. Takes responsibility for their own professional development. In essence, this model portrays the reflective practitioner as an autonomous professional who is not merely a classroom technician but an active agent in curriculum development and their own lifelong learning.

- **Methods of Reflection:**

- **A Narrative:** A story of an experience written in the first person.
- **A Reflective Journal:** A reaction to an event that links the experience to other experiences and identifies learning goals.

2.0 Unit 9: Education of Disadvantaged Students

2.1 Issues of Access and Retention for Disadvantaged Groups

2.1.1 Scheduled Caste (SC) Children

- **Problems:** SC children often face various forms of discrimination in schools, which can include:
 - Segregated seating arrangements in the classroom.
 - Undue harshness in reprimands compared to upper-caste children.
 - Exclusion from school functions and public events like morning assembly.
 - Being assigned menial tasks such as sweeping school premises or toilets.
- **Key Policy Interventions and Strategies:**
 - Establishing clear norms of behavior for teachers and students to prevent discrimination.
 - Setting up complaint boxes for timely redressal of discriminatory practices.
 - Using non-segregated classroom models like 'Nali-Kali', where children sit in groups based on learning levels.
 - Encouraging co-curricular activities like sports and drama to break social barriers.
 - Sensitizing teachers through pre-service and in-service training.

2.1.2 Scheduled Tribe (ST) Children

- **Problems:** ST children face significant barriers to education due to:
 - Geographical isolation and residence in remote, inaccessible areas.
 - Low economic status, forcing children to work.
 - Use of local dialects, which can differ from the medium of instruction.
 - Nomadic lifestyles that disrupt continuous schooling.

- **Key Policy Interventions and Strategies:**

- Providing textbooks in their mother tongue at the beginning of primary education.
- Establishing Anganwadis and crèches in schools to free older girls from sibling care duties.
- Providing special training for non-tribal teachers, including knowledge of tribal dialects.
- Implementing the Quality Improvement Programme for Ashram Schools, which focuses on:
 - **Capacity Building:** Strengthening libraries and laboratories.
 - **Teacher Training:** Acquainting teachers with the specific learning difficulties of tribal students.
 - **Child-child Interaction:** Using group activities during leisure time to enhance scholastic attainment.

2.1.3 Children with Special Needs (CWSN)

- **Policy:** The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has a "zero rejection policy," meaning no child with special needs should be deprived of the right to education.
- **Key Policy Interventions and Strategies:**
 - Providing education in a varied range of environments suited to the child's needs, including special schools, Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE), and home-based education.
 - Ensuring resource support, including special teacher training.
 - Providing necessary aids and appliances.
 - Removing architectural barriers in schools (e.g., adding ramps and handrails) to make them disabled-friendly.

2.1.4 Geographically Remote and Urban Deprived Children

- **Challenges:** The group of 'out of school children' is highly heterogeneous. Children in remote areas lack access, while those in urban areas include street children, rag pickers, and working children facing unique problems.
- **Key Policy Interventions and Strategies:**
 - Using Education Guarantee Schools (EGS) to provide schooling in unserved habitations.
 - Implementing Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) programs, which include bridge courses to help children mainstream.
 - Developing specific strategies for difficult-to-reach groups in urban areas, often in partnership with NGOs and municipal bodies.

2.1.5 Working and Minority Children

- **Working Children:** Although child labor is banned, many children work due to poverty. Night schools are a potential solution but require a different curriculum that is flexible and focuses on life skills and trade-based training rather than the formal day-school curriculum.
- **Minority Children:** Children from minority communities may feel excluded in the school environment due to differences in language, cultural background, and unfamiliar content in textbooks.

2.2 The Role of Academic Support Systems

Teachers have access to both institutional and technological support systems.

- **Institutional Support:** District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), Block Resource Centres (BRCs), and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) provide academic support and training to practising teachers.
- **Technological Support:** Technology plays a growing role in teacher empowerment.
 - The **EDUSAT satellite**, launched in 2004, provides a dedicated platform for educational activities, including video conferencing for teacher collaboration.
 - **Open Educational Resources (OER)** provide free access to a wealth of information for both teachers and students. The **OER4S (Open Educational Resource for Schools)** project is a case study of developing free, localized knowledge resources for schools in India.

2.3 Inclusive Education

According to UNESCO, inclusive education is "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion from education and from within education." Its core philosophy is to ensure that every student feels welcome, valued, and supported. In simple terms, this means the system adapts to the student, not the other way around, focusing on removing barriers to participation for all learners.

- **Advantages of Inclusive Education:**
 - **Efficient use of resources:** It avoids the need to set up separate schools for different groups, making the most of limited educational funding.
 - **Cost-effectiveness:** Inclusion is not only cost-efficient but also enhances learning for all students, both with and without disabilities.
 - **Encouragement of decentralization:** It promotes local decision-making to better meet the needs of the community.
- **The Inclusive School and Classroom:** The most essential aspect of an inclusive classroom is the teacher's attitude. A teacher must believe in the potential of every child and create a conducive psychological and physical environment. The SSA framework provides a budget of Rs. 1200 per disabled child per year for activities that support inclusion.

2.4 Protecting Child Rights in Schools

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was established to ensure that all laws and policies are in line with child rights. The Constitution of India guarantees several key rights for children:

- **Article 21A:** Right to free and compulsory elementary education for all children aged 6-14.
- **Article 24:** Right to be protected from hazardous employment until the age of 14.
- **Article 39(e):** Right to be protected from abuse and occupations unsuited to their age or strength.
- **Article 39(f):** Right to opportunities to develop in a healthy manner with freedom and dignity.

It is the responsibility of every teacher to protect these rights and prevent issues such as discrimination, examination pressure, and corporal punishment within the school.

3.0 Unit 10: International Scenarios in Elementary Education

3.1 The Jomtien Conference (1990)

The World Conference on "Education for All" was held in Jomtien, Thailand, from March 5-9, 1990. The 155 participating member states reaffirmed the right of all people to education and committed to achieving this goal.

3.1.1 Major Thrusts and Principles

The conference outlined nine major thrusts for achieving Education for All (EFA):

1. Meeting basic learning needs.
2. Shaping the vision.
3. Universalizing access and promoting equity.
4. Focusing on learning.
5. Broadening the means and scope of basic education.
6. Enhancing the environment for learning.
7. Strengthening partnerships.
8. Developing a supportive policy context.
9. Mobilizing resources.

The EFA declaration was based on **Five basic principles**:

- Equity: Universalizing access and promotion of equity.
- Emphasis on learning.
- Broadening of the meaning and scope of basic education.

- Improvement in the learning environment.
- Strengthening of partnerships.

3.1.2 Framework for Action and Goals

The framework for action adopted at Jomtien focused on six main areas:

1. Expansion of early childhood care and development.
2. Universal access to and completion of primary education.
3. Improvement in learning achievement.
4. Reduction in adult illiteracy.
5. Expansion of basic education and skill training for youth and adults.
6. Increased acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values for better living.

Major goals and targets were set to be achieved by the year 2000, including universal access to primary education with an 80% completion rate and a reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to half its 1990 level.

3.1.3 Impact of the Jomtien Conference

- **On National Governments:** The conference influenced governments to broaden the scope of 'basic education', give priority to EFA in development plans, formulate specific policies, and mobilize additional resources for education.
- **On E-9 Countries:** The E-9 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Pakistan)—a group of high-population nations collectively accounting for over half the world's population—saw significant breakthroughs, including a massive reduction in adult illiteracy, improved gender equity in school access, and decentralization of educational services.
- **On the South Asian Region:** Achievements included an increase in primary school enrolment, a higher priority given to quality education, increased national budgets for basic education, and more innovative initiatives and partnerships.

3.2 The World Education Forum, Dakar (2000)

This forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, reviewed the progress made since the Jomtien conference. It was guided by the four "pillars" of education promoted by UNESCO: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together.

3.2.1 The Six EFA Goals

The Dakar Forum established six new EFA goals to be achieved by all citizens and societies:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs.

4. Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality by 2015.
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring measurable learning outcomes for all.

3.3 Role of International Agencies in Universal Elementary Education (UEE)

Several international agencies play a crucial role in supporting the goal of Universal Elementary Education.

- **UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization):** UNESCO's mission is to further peace by increasing understanding among nations through education. It supports countries in implementing EFA, developing educational policies, building capacity, and mobilizing resources for basic education.
- **UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund):** UNICEF works to protect the rights of every child to health, nutrition, and education. It focuses on gender equality and targets the world's most disadvantaged children to ensure they have access to quality learning.
- **World Bank:** The World Bank supports EFA by funding operations in nearly 90 countries. Its multidimensional efforts focus on improving primary school access, equity, educational quality, and learning outcomes, specifically by helping to improve the dropout and retention rates of girls and providing education to HIV affected pupils.
- **DFID (Department for International Development - UK):** DFID is a UK government agency that partners with developing countries to reduce poverty. It supports long-term programs in poorer states in India to help the poor access education, health, and other essential services.
- **SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency):** SIDA is a Swedish government agency that provides technical assistance and funding worldwide. In India, it has supported programs like the Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) in Rajasthan, which aims to universalize and improve primary education in remote and backward villages, with a focus on girls.