I. Introduction

Education is the soul of a society and is the key of transformation of civilization. A grass-root level education is not only a prerequisite for building a strong base, needed for development of one’s own personality, but also is indispensable for scientific, technological, social and economic advancement of a country. “Primary education provides the foundation for all subsequent advancement in the education system. The most formative years in a young person’s development are spent at primary school” (Aibhistin, 2006) Education is now widely valued not only for its intrinsic value in enriching the lives of individuals but also for its functional value in the development of the human capital of a nation. Educational investments in children have been shown to have high private and social returns (Bhalotra and Zamora, 2006).

Primary education refers to 7-year of schooling from the age of six years (India 2009, Blackwell, 2004). In fact, making primary education in India accessible, universal and relevant to all has been a goal since country’s eighth five-year plan (GOM, 1992). Apart from providing the primary education to masses, its quality in India has been a major cause of concern for the government.

As per the union budget of the country, in the budget allocated for education in Eleventh Plan is double of what was spent in the Tenth Plan, as a proportion of the total budgetary support to Central Ministries. Though, India has made considerable progress in providing access to primary education but there are quality issues that need to be addressed (Planning Commission–GOI, 2008). In order to provide more funds for education, an education cess of 2 per cent has been imposed on all direct and indirect central taxes through the Finance (No. 2) Act, 2004. The government set up committees from time to time to assess the quality of primary education, which suggested measures of improvement. Since education is the state subject, the implementation of recommendations of various committees was the responsibility of respective state
governments (Mohan, 2008). This is perhaps the main reason for existing disparities in the quality of primary education among the states and union territories.

The Maharashtra state government right from its formation on 1st May 1960 committed itself to planned development of primary education (Planning Commission–GOI, 1992). As is rightly said, Education is one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality. It is the key to enhance India’s competitiveness in the global economy (Krishnan, 2011). The state of Maharashtra is one of the most progressive, technologically advanced and rich state of India. A prominent section of the state also displays entrepreneurial skills and talents due to which Maharashtra is also the most industrially and commercially advanced state in the country. Mumbai – the state capital is known as the financial hub of India. Navi Mumbai – the satellite town of Mumbai has been developed to ease population pressure on the primate city. Its township is only 41 years old (CIDCO 2010). Its infrastructure is still developing. The present study is undertaken with the view to assess the quality of primary education and identify factors affecting it, in the schools of the newly developed planned township – Navi Mumbai, which is comprised of the parts of Thane and Raigadh districts of Maharashtra.

**Need of the study**

Navi Mumbai, a satellite town of Mumbai - the financial hub of India, is only 41 years old. It is the largest planned township in the world. The city comprises of 14 nodes, Panvel and Uran municipalities, MIDC area and 95 villages. About 100 Schools existed in the area prior to the birth of the new city in 1970. Most of them were Zilla Parishad Schools and a few were under the administrative control of Panvel and Uran municipalities. Presently, there are 431 Schools in Navi Mumbai (CIDCO 2010); the majority of which was set-up during the last two decades to meet the school needs of rapidly growing population of the city. These Schools are under three types of management, namely, (i) Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC); (ii) Private; and (iii) Zilla Parishad (ZP)
Unfortunately, little is known about the quality of education in these schools. Seemingly, there are differences in quality of education. What is, therefore, intriguing is to know the factors responsible for these differentials. Apart from the selected determinants of the quality of education, equally important is to know the role of different types of management of schools on the quality of their education. The need of the study that answers the above questions particularly in the backdrop of the fact that the majority of primary schools in the new city came into existence during last two decade or so, cannot be underestimated.

Although, several studies have been done on the educational performance of primary schools in different parts of the country, the present study is novel in two aspects. First, through the application of statistical tools developed for this specific purpose it attempts to capture the quality of education on its multidimensional aspects right from infrastructure facilities of the schools, class results, dropouts, grade-retention ratios, and student teacher ratio, sports, recreational and other facilities available for overall development of the personality of students. Second, the study focuses on the mechanism through which the administrative set-up affects the quality of primary education.

From the following literature, it has been found that majority of studies undertaken so far, in this field, has emphasized the need of finding out differentials in dropout rates and failures by taking into account the socioeconomic characteristics of households, and woman ‘s education, gender disparity and performance of teachers, head teachers. None of these studies have attempted to find the relationship between educational performance of students and administrative system of the schools. Keeping this in view, a detailed study of educational performance of students studying in municipal, public and private schools has been undertaken in Navi Mumbai by the researcher.