CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
This chapter attempts to discuss the findings with regard to possible influence of pre-school educational programmes on cognitive, social and emotional development of children in Dimapur, Nagaland. There is a general assumption that attendance at a nursery school or kindergarten or exposure to same similar planned pre-school programme would influence positively a child’s cognitive ability, emotional behaviour and socially desirable behaviour, and would also help in preparing the child for formal education in subsequent years at school.

The early childhood years represent the best period for the child’s physical, emotional, social and intellectual development, when the child is without any inhibition and external control. It is also a period that paves the way for effective learning from schooling.

Early childhood education is a form of social intervention that helps in meeting the social and physiological needs of parents and children since it provides for looking after the children of working mothers in suitable environments normally not available to children from urban areas, whose small flats or tenements are hardly appropriate for their proper growth. These schools also, attempt to compensate for children, especially from unsatisfactory home environments, from slum areas or poor families. Moreover, modern researches have shown that the years between 3 and 10 are of great importance in the child’s physical, motor, social, emotional, language, intellectual and aesthetic development. Evidences also show that children who have been to a pre-primary school, progress better at primary stage, show higher achievement in cognitive work as well as in social and emotional adjustments, as compared to those who have had no pre-school education.
The present study showed significant gain score between pre- and post-stage on overall cognitive, social and emotional domains of development for the total sample of children covered in the study. This shows that, children receiving pre-school experiences showed gains in their overall development and particularly in respect of these three dimensions in the cognitive, social and emotional domains. These findings are similar to the conclusions drawn by Umrajvala (1977), Saint (1980) on the effects of pre-school education in educational growth, scholastic achievement, reading readiness, cognitive skills and social maturity. The study also showed that, children attending pre-schools have shown positive gains in their cognitive development inferred from their achievement levels in language skills, numerical skills and general knowledge. The study seems to support the conclusions drawn earlier by Wellman (1932); Skeels, Updegraff, Wellman and Williams (1932); Karnes, Teska and Hodigans (1969); Woolley (1925); Strakweather and Rober (1940) that a positive gain in mean I.Q. is found in children attending nursery school. These results, however, are contrary to the findings of Olsen and Hughes (1940), Goodenough and Maurer (1940), who reported that the increased I.Q. scores could have resulted from an exposure to a variety of non-intellective factors. Another study conducted by Jenks and associates (1972) also reported that gains in I.Q. resulting from pre-school experiences are temporary.

On social development, the result showed significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the whole sample, with post-test stage showing a higher mean score. This implied that pre-school experiences contributed to the development of social attitudes, co-operative behaviour and also helped to learn to conform, to be assertive without being aggressive, to show independence, to be affectionate and also other
socially acceptable roles. This finding seems to support the conclusion of Clarke-Stewart and Feina (1983), that children receiving day care or attending nursery schools were more co-operative and more assertive with peers, more co-operative and also competent with adults, than children being raised exclusively at home. It also supports the line of Walsh (1931) who observed that nursery school children become more confident, more spontaneous, less inhibited, more independent, more self-reliant, and more interested in their environments than comparable pre-schoolers who did not attend nursery schools.

On emotional development also, the present study showed positive effects resulting from exposure to pre-school programme shown by the level of emotional maturity of such children. This indicates that the children had developed qualities like affective stability, self-reliance, unselfishness, not being jealous, and cooperative and responsible behaviours after attending pre-schools. This finding of the study seems to support the conclusions of an earlier study conducted under the Perry Pre School Project (1962), (Berrueta – Clement et al. 1984) which indicated that children who participated in pre-school programme received better ratings by elementary school teachers in academic, emotional and social development than control group children.

Gender bias in education is quite evident in many social groups in our country. Girls are not provided equal opportunity along with boys to get education at all levels. Boys enjoy special privileges than girls. However, in most tribal societies, a girl child is treated not as a burden, and receives similar treatment like boys. Some of the tribes follow the matrilineal system and show even preference in matters of education of children. The present study showed that both girls and boys gained significantly in terms of their pre- and post-test scores on all the three domains of development – cognitive,
social and emotional. The study found that, irrespective of gender of the children, an exposure to pre-school programme bestowed benefits to both categories of children. The present is similar to the conclusion of Muralidharan and Banerji (1974) who reported that children in pre-school do consistently in all aspects of language development and have a much higher score in intellectual development. In the realm of cognitive development, inferred by the achievement levels in language, numerical and general knowledge, significant gains were shown by both the gender groups. This was true even in terms of the total achievement level as well as their achievement levels in each of the three component areas of achievement.

The result indicated further that, girls benefited more as a result of exposure to pre-school experiences in terms of social attitudes like being co-operative, pleasant, friendly, original, talkative etc. This result appears to be similar to the findings of Saran (1970) who found that girls have a better social adjustment than boys. On the other hand, boys showed higher mean scores on both emotional and cognitive development. This indicates that boys seem to gain more in gaining emotional control and also in academic achievement. The boys also seem to enter pre-school class with a wider range of knowledge and with more emotional maturity, and that they seem to retain the advantage even after going through the pre-school experiences. These findings may even suggest that boys continue to benefit from their traditional favoured position, as the present study was conducted in a patriarchal and a mixed society where, children came from various social backgrounds. There are hunches which have to be confirmed in future researches.

It is generally noted that opportunities for development are not equal in urban and rural areas. Most of the developments usually take place in urban areas, and the rural
areas are deprived of such developments. Even in educational development, most of the educational institutions are located in urban areas and are inaccessible to a majority of the rural children. Schools which exist in rural areas are inadequate, unhygienic and unsuitable for children's growth and learning. However, in the present study a comparison of children attending schools in rural and urban areas showed that children in rural areas gained significantly as a result of pre-school exposure on social development, than their urban counterparts. However, both urban and rural areas, gained significantly in their pre- and post-test levels on emotional and cognitive development. The results further indicated that, on all dimensions children from rural areas showed a higher mean score than their urban counterparts. This shows that children in rural areas having access to pre-school facilities, activities and programmes, gain more significantly and benefit more by exposure to such experiences. When comparison on individual achievement levels – language, numerical and general knowledge was made, children in rural areas continued to show significant gain on general knowledge than their urban counterparts. However, on numerical and language skills, children in urban areas showed significant gains than their rural counterparts. The present findings support the earlier finding by Bevli (1974), who found that urban children showed earlier and better language development than rural and industrial children. The study implies that, children in the urban areas had more opportunity in enhancing their language and numerical skills by participating in various pre-school experiences and activities.

Early childhood education is provided in Dimapur by various organizations – Government, private and voluntary bodies. However, there is a great variation in the standard and emphasis on different aspects of their programmes and activities ranging
from a high qualitative education to a very low quality. Lulla et al (1966) reported that adverse school conditions, poor school administration, poor quality of teachers, unplanned curriculum, and inadequate equipment hindered pupil's performance and school progress. The present findings however, contradicts the conclusion and found that children attending schools under different types of management – Government, private and Anganwadis gained significantly in terms of their pre- and post-test level performance in emotional and cognitive domain behaviours. Further, it showed that children attending private schools made greater gains, perhaps as a result of the quality of educational programmes, environment and facilities provided in such schools. This finding seems to be similar to the conclusion drawn by an earlier study of Walker (1967), who found that, in comparison with traditional schools, high creative schools have psychological environments leading to high aspiration, high intellectual climate and high academic achievement. On social development, no significant difference in gain score was found among children in private schools, but children in Government and Anganwadis gained significantly after going through pre-school experiences. The study also revealed that, though private schools showed no significant difference in terms of their pre- and post-test levels, their mean scores were higher than Government and Anganwadis both at pre- and post-test levels. This may be due to the fact that, children in private schools acquired more social attributes before receiving any formal schooling and they developed further as a result of pre-school experiences.

In the cognitive domain, on scores obtained in the language, numerical and general knowledge components, children in pre-schools under all types of management showed a significant difference in the gain score after going through school programme.
This finding is true with regard to the total achievement score of children. However, in the language component, children in private schools showed a higher mean score than children in Government and Anganwadi institutions; in the numerical part, children in Anganwadis showed a higher mean score, and in general knowledge children in Government schools showed a higher mean score. The result suggests that, in private schools more emphasis is given on language, learning through oral and written exercises. The Anganwadis through their non-formal method of education seem to help children to learn numerical work rather faster and more effectively. Government schools with full fledged school setting seem to help the pre schools in acquiring awareness of their surroundings. Further researches may look for factors that characterize schools under different management. This may help to pinpoint determinants of performance behaviour of pre-school children attending them.

The socio-economic status of children is a factor known to be affecting achievement in schools directly or indirectly in schools. A comparison was made of children attending pre-primary schools with regard to their social, emotional and cognitive development after grouping them into high, middle and low SES groups. The result of the present study showed a significant gain score between pre- and post-test stages on overall achievement and also on social and emotional development of children from high, middle and low SES background. This shows that, pre-school experiences has had a demonstrable affect on these variables irrespective of their SES background. An earlier study conducted by Muralidharan and Kaur (1987) showed similar results that no matter how disadvantaged the children were, well planned early childhood education strategies did make an impact and faster development of children. It also supported the
finding of Stephans (1958) who reported that economic factors have very little to do with the performance of the child in the school. However, the result of the present study is contradictory to the findings of Whiteman and Deutsche (1968) that children from poorer environments, have lower self-esteem, and children with low self-esteem do less well in school. Rosen's (1956) findings on achievement motivation also seem to contradict the finding. However, on social development significantly greater gain was found in the present study among middle and low SES groups. No significant difference was found among high SES groups after attending pre-school programme. However, the mean score of the high SES group was higher than the middle and low SES groups at both the pre- and post stages. This may be due to the fact that, children from high SES background have had a wider and favourable environment for social development than the middle and low SES groups. But, more significant gains were shown by children of middle and low SES, as a result of pre-school experience.

A comparison of achievement levels on language, numerical and general knowledge of children in the three SES groups also showed significant gain scores among each of the three classes of children, indicating a positive influence of pre-school experience on such learning of children irrespective of their SES background. The result contradicts the findings of Hill and Giammates (1963) that children from middle class families were ahead in vocabulary, reading comprehension, arithmetic skills and ahead in problem solving. However, the results showed that the mean score of high SES was higher than the middle and low SES on all three dimensions of achievement, language, numerical and general knowledge. These findings support the study by Golden and co-workers (1973) who reported that children from the highest social class group scored
higher on I.Q. tests than children from the lowest social class group, and that disparity existed for all types of tasks. Earlier studies by Mathur and Hundal (1972) on relationship between achievement and socio-economic background found a direct influence on achievement of the child. Siddique et al (1983) also found socio-economic conditions of the family affecting academic performance.

Thus, the findings of the present study revealed that, educational facilities and programmes, at the pre-primary stage have a positive influence on the achievement levels as well as on the social and emotional development of the children. The benefit is more for children from the middle and lower strata of society. Pre-school education, if planned well and executed effectively may act as a leveler of differences existing prior to school entry of children. The desirability of introducing an efficient system of pre-primary education as part of universal compulsory education for all children is indicated by the findings of the present study.