CHAPTER II
TYPES OF PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Conceptually, there is no difference between pre-primary and pre-school or early childhood education and all these define a process the chief purpose of which is to facilitate the all-round development of the child's personality and promote his education. Although the terms Pre-primary education, 'Pre-school education' and 'Early childhood education' have come to be accepted internationally, the diversity of the pre-school educational institutions is rather striking. For the most part, the successive stages of compulsory schooling in different countries, after making necessary allowances for local variations, tend to be similar. But, even in the same country, a careful observer will find a variety of apppellations, statutes and systems of operations at the pre-school level. A Day-nursery, a children's sanatorium or a destitute children's home can not be called a pre-primary or a pre-school educational institution even if there are some elements relating to pre-primary education. An institution to be called a pre-school educational institution its dominant feature must be educational, that is, every opportunity, every situation must be utilised to educate the young child through proper planning. The unity underlying all stages of education has been clearly brought out by Ruth Kohn in the following passages:

"Just by living, all people go through millions of experiences, pick up information as they go along. The special job of the school is to focus these experiences, by its syllabus and teaching methods, forcing a more careful look at certain types of things. It helps to organise and structure
information by providing certain types of experiences planned to clarify feeling, thinking and judgement. It expands knowledge by exposure to experiences and materials which have never been encountered before and which are not likely to be encountered without attendance at school. It helps to acquire the tools to continue learning, to search out information, reason out concepts, express thoughts and feelings, each person for himself.

There are also other functions of the school, which it shares with other institutions like the family. Most importantly, these include the transmission of cultural heritage, adoption of customs and values for personal life and for social living.

These functions of the school are as true for the pre-primary level as for the university. The manner and content are of course, different, appropriate to the abilities of the students. (1)

Certain educational attitudes need to be adopted by all those involved in pre-primary education to maintain this unity.

A close look at the organisation and functioning of a pre-primary educational institution would reveal differences not only in method and content but also in its very premises which are basic and have the moral force to make the modern society attach so much importance to pre-primary education. It is the pre-primary educational institution that has taken upon itself the responsibility of creating and environment which

would be as similar or very near to the home environment of the child yet conducive to proper initiation which would be pleasing to the child, forceful enough to carry on the memory to look forward eagerly for formal schooling. This implies handling by the teacher, through checks and balances, every situation in a pre-primary institution so as to enable the child to develop the habits of mind and work, developing a disposition to live a corporate life based on mutual understanding, sympathy and compassion and to look forward and enjoy all schooling by being ready for it emotionally, intellectually and physically.

We need to have some idea in respect of the goals of pre-school education. Goals would decidedly vary from country to country depending upon the philosophy of education pursued by different countries with reference to the social and the national ideology; but the general goals of pre-school education would have a common bearing—only the emphasis and the approach would be different.

The principal goals of pre-school education:

Social goals: Chronologically, the social function of the nursery school was certainly the first to attract attention. The purpose of Nursery schools and Kindergartens was to attend to the children while their mothers were at work. In some countries pre-school education still serves this purpose. However, we must go beyond this aspect to find the true social dimensions of pre-school education. To revert to the psychological development of the child, a hospitable family circle in which he lives since birth is essential to his progress. The richness and coherence of his personality depend on the quality of the home environment, and above all, of the social relations established between the child and his
parents. The child's ego can only develop in relation to that of some one else and so to allow opportunity to get the child develop his ego, companionship of his peer group beyond his family circle is essential. The development of various forms of sociability is, therefore, an important goal of pre-school education. If this goal is to be reached, children from all social classes must, of course, be able to come together within this educational community. Pre-school education must not unintentionally become another means of social segregation, with the children of poor family in one type of institution and those of wealthy families in another. The acquisition of language skill is facilitated most by allowing the child to come in contact with the children of different castes, classes and religions in the society. The importance of language in social life of a person can very easily be understood. Environmental differences lead to differences in intellectual level. Language is the most essential means of communication. Pre-school education must take care of this important aspect of development of the child. The pre-school education must also prepare the child for further stages of education by developing in him all the social habits and attitudes so as to enable him to adapt quickly to school life that follows.

The social goals of pre-school education, therefore, go beyond mere child-minding. The pre-school teachers to be really successful must understand this and act accordingly.

Educational Goals: A normal human baby as a physical entity is born into this physical world equipped with different sense organs and continues to grow under favourable conditions along with the passage of time. These sense organs take certain time to be capable of functioning. As soon as these organs are ready for functioning they go on communicating
with the external world and the baby starts reacting in accordance with the messages received that produce the perceptions of objects and happenings around it. The capability of the sense organs to distinguish different signals from different sources or from the same source to produce correct perception of the sources to be reacted upon correctly by the baby to its best advantage is not inherent in the organs themselves. Hence, for the best survival of the baby and for subsequent success in life, all the lines of communication relating to proper functioning of both its body and mind need to be developed. The child must also learn to use all these different channels of communication to express himself correctly and develop his creative abilities.

In consideration of the rapid changes taking place in the modern world, it has become difficult to foresee the situation in which a child will find himself in a few years' time. The child must learn, therefore, at an early stage to find an individual solution to his problems on his own with the psycho-physical resources available to him. Thus one of the goals of pre-school education must be to develop initiative, imagination and the spirit of enquiry and discovery which will gradually lead to child to assume responsibility for himself.

Development goals: The period of free, spontaneous activities of the early childhood is the ideal period for observing the child both in his individual and group activities. To help the child develop fully as an individual, the pre-school teacher must carefully watch the child’s physical, motor, intellectual, emotional and social developments so as to notice anything that seems to depart from normal. During pre-school period arrangement may be made to set right the defects early. In most cases this may be difficult at later
stages. Physical difficulties may, in particular, come on the way of reaching other social or educational goals as well. This implies the need for teamwork on the part of the adults who have to do with the child and are involved in his education.

With these general goals of pre-school education in the background and on studying the situation obtaining in the state of Assam, the pre-primary institutions of the state may be classified either on the basis of external organisation or internal functioning. In consideration of the external organisation, that is, on financing, supervision and control, these educational institutions may be classified into three broad categories:

1) Government Institutions;
2) Semi-Government Institutions;
3) Private Institutions.

This classification would require some explanation to give a clear picture of the prevailing situation. Prior to the sixties of this century, there were very few institutions in the state of Assam which could be called pre-school educational institutions. In the schools run by the Christian Missionaries in different parts of this state a class or two were attached to the Primary section which were meant for the children below the school age. These classes were variously termed as Nursery classes, Kindergartens I and II or simply classes A and B. Children were mostly enrolled in these classes at the age of 3+. The significant feature of these Missionary schools at that time was that English was the sole medium of instruction. Even today, English is still the primary medium of instruction with parallel sections where the medium of instruction is either Hindi or the Regional language in most of the educational institutions run by the Christian Missionaries. Naturally, the medium of instruction of the infant classes added subsequently to these institutions was also English.
Traditionally, in the North-Eastern Region classes A and B to which children below the school age were normally admitted formed part of the Lower Primary (vernacular) schools run by the local authorities (Municipal Board, Local Boards, Tea and Oil Co. Forest Department of the Government, etc.). In all cases, these classes were merely the extension of the primary education downward or rather preparatory to entry into the primary classes and not at all meant for pre-school education except those in the Missionary schools where the infants were better looked after. This was the situation prior to the implementation of the Kothari Commission recommendations (1964-66).

Following the enactment of the Assam Elementary Education Act, 1968, the Government of Assam constituted the State Board for Elementary Education for management, improvement and expansion of Elementary Education in the State and to advise the Government on matters relating to elementary education, in 1969. On the formation of the State Board for Elementary Education most of the Lower Primary Schools of the State run by different local authorities were brought under the management and control of the Board.

The Assam Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Act, 1974 has been promulgated to provincialise the elementary school services in the state and to take over the management and control of elementary education which till then was vested in the authority under the provision of the Assam Elementary Education Act, 1968. The Assam Elementary Education Act (Provincialisation), 1974 came into force in August, 1975 and is still in force.
In the hill areas, the Autonomous District Councils have been authorised to manage and maintain the elementary schools for which funds have been placed at their disposal by the State Government.

The Government of Assam have accepted, in the meantime, most of the recommendations of the Kothari Commission and started implementing them through phases introducing the new 10 + 2 pattern of schooling since 1973 (a chart showing the educational ladder in Assam is enclosed). This has resulted in doing away with classes 'A' and 'B' from the bottom of the Lower Primary school and adding class IV to its top with redistribution of the content, since by definition, the period of pre-school education is outside the purview of the relevant Acts in force. This has necessitated establishing pre-school educational institutions as the minimum of the school age has been specifically fixed at 6+. On public demands, the Government have subsequently been compelled to add a pre-primary class to a few primary schools (in 112 L.P. schools out of a total of 19579 L.P. schools in the state as on 1974-75 academic session; a chart showing the growth is attached). This has been taken advantage of by the Private agencies to establish pre-school educational institutions in the urban and suburban areas.

Thus, the first category of the pre-primary educational institutions organised, financed and controlled by the Government came into being. Each of these pre-school educational institutions consists of a group of about 35 children below the school age under the care of a teacher designated as the pre-primary teacher, and housed and attached to a Lower Primary school. There are 441 such pre-primary educational institutions in the state at present (as on 31st March, 1980). The 'Balwadis' organised and supervised by the Department of Panchayat and Community Development
fall under this category besides the 'Anganwadies' organised and managed under the 'Integrated Child Development Scheme'. The second category of the pre-school educational institutions, that is, the Semi-Government institutions are organised and managed by private agencies and voluntary social welfare or philanthropic organisations on their own. These institutions are also lower primary schools mostly and variously named Montessori Schools, Nursery Schools, Shishu Bhawan, etc. to which two or three infant classes of children below school age admitted to the school are maintained. These institutions are located mostly in the urban or suburban areas and receive recurring or non-recurring grant-in-aid from the Govt. besides fees in various forms from the children admitted and donations from the public. 'Balwadis' falling under this category and organised by the voluntary social welfare or philanthropic organisations render free services to the children in these institutions.

The third category, the private pre-school educational institutions are organised, managed and controlled by private bodies or individuals collecting funds from the guardians or parents of the children who are admitted into these institutions in the form of various kinds of fees or donations on different occasions. These institutions are also located mostly in the urban areas.

An important point to be noted in this connection is that while almost all the voluntary social welfare or philanthropic organisations are officially...
registered organisations, if only to permit inspection by proper authorities, none of the private agencies is registered and, they give the impression that anyone may open a pre-school educational institution the way one likes it and collect funds for its organisation and management.

The types of pre-school educational institutions can better be determined on the basis of the patterns of internal organisation which in turn depend mostly on the nature of functioning of the institutions. Although the general goals of pre-primary institutions are common, institutions vary in their working patterns creating differences in their internal organisations. This would lead us to the great philosophers, social thinkers and the educationalists with reference to the particular kind of institutions evolved after their thinking. We may also be required to make passing references to the present shapes and functioning of such institutions in the developed countries of the world for comparison of the broader outlines.

Philosophers are keen upon bringing forth new thoughts and ideas and creating institutions through which human beings can work for the upliftment of the society. Human beings, particularly the young ones, have been the main point of focus in the thinking of some of the great philosophers. Thus we find philosophers like Rousseau, Froebel and Pestalozzi from early part of the 18th century have presented their ideas on infant care and education. Other thinkers like Maria Montessori, Ovide Decroly and Mc Millan sisters - Rachel and Margaret - and also Freidrich Froebel have contributed their mite for establishing new institutions for
realising their ideologies of educating the infants and toddlers. The pre-school educational institutions that we find today are the results of the great efforts of these philosophers and their thinkings.

The creche though a child caring institution for very young children of working mothers can not be taken as a pre-school educational institution as it is not concerned itself with meeting the educational needs of the young children.

Nursery, Day Nursery, Nursery classes and Nursery Schools:

The idea of care or welfare of the children aging from two years to primary school admission age has led to the establishment of these institutions. The first two types, the Nursery and the Day Nursery, have very little educational functions. Nursery classes are special classes attached to the infant schools where children of pre-school age are introduced to the existing educational environment. Nursery schools are fundamentally centres for three to five year olds with no formal lessons but where children are supervised by trained staff and given an educationally stimulating environment in which, through a mixture of 'self-discovery' and socialising with other children and adults, they can broaden their range of experiences and develop their skills. Strictly speaking, the word 'school' is misleading here.

Kindergartens: "The creation of Friedrich Froebel, it originally was a place which embodied his mystic philosophy that childhood is not simply a
preparation for adulthood but an essential aspect of Divine Unity. Now commonly used as a generic term for any school taking pre-school children and giving them 'child-oriented' learning environment.

Montessori Schools are pre-school institutions organised on particular pattern designed by Dr. Maria Montessori. A Montessori school demands on a particular method of handling children and the use of special equipments through prescribed activities with less stress on physical care of the child.

Most of the educational institutions for young children in urban areas with English as the medium of instruction are associated with the name of Montessori like 'Montessori Shishu Bhawan', 'Model Montessori', 'South-point Montessori', etc. The name 'Montessori' can only be associated with any institution for children when it is certified by the Association Montessori International. But strict adherence to such restrictions is sadly lacking in the case of most of these institutions.

Balwadis:— Under the auspices of the Central Social Welfare Board, pre-school educational institutions suited to the rural conditions of India have been established. These institutions are named 'Balwadis'. In it are combined the functions of welfare and education of the young children. The aims of these institutions are to promote the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of the child and prepare him for compulsory schooling. Balwadis encourage community participation in their functioning.
With the introduction of the Integrated Child Development Schemes, non-formal education centres for pre-school age children provide care for health and nutrition and play-activity in the 'Anganwadi'. These institutions are meant for children belonging to the age group 3 to 6. In principle, the Anganwadis resemble the Pre-School play group Centres where the community also gets involved through the participation of mothers in various activities.

This much about the special kinds of pre-school educational institutions evolved after the great thinkers and, the variety of institutions one finds in the state of Assam at present meant for the care and education of children below the school age would fall under one or other of these special kinds regardless of the pattern of organisation and nature of functioning. Since we are going to devote a full chapter on the methods and materials used in the pre-primary institutions of the state, it would suffice here to say something about the two opposing theories of pre-school education emerged through the course of its development as guidelines for internal organisation and functioning. *Willem Van Der Eyken* points out in the following passage the direction, nature or kind and manner of functioning of a pre-school educational institution depending on which of these two theories it follows, "The first theory is 'institution-and-profession-centred', the second is 'house-and-community-centred'. 
The first asks parents to come and talk to the teacher; the second involves the teacher in going to the homes. The first sees children being brought to the school; the second considers how education might be brought into the family. The first places emphasis on the proper running, tidiness, organisation and stability of the school unit; the second has its centre of gravity in community involvement." (2)

Before passing on to the next chapter, let us consider about the pre-school educational institutions in the Developed (selected) countries.

International Comparision:

In the U.S.A., England and Wales and West Germany as in Japan, pre-school education is provided in two types of functionally different institutions, i.e. kindergartens and nursery schools (In England and Wales institutions usually called kindergartens are called nursery schools). In France, kindergartens perform the functions of both types of institutions. In the U.S.S.R., nursery schools designed for children between two months and three years of age and kindergartens designed for children of three to six years of age from unified pre-school educational institutions called 'nursery school kindergartens.'

Institutions of pre-school education are under the supervision of two kinds of authorities in the U.S.A. and England and Wales: State Education authorities in the former, and the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health in the latter. On the other hand, in the Federal Republic of Germany supervision is under one authority, the Department of Social Welfare. In the U.S.S.R. also, one authority, the Ministry of Education, supervises the instructional activities in pre-school educational institutions. In the United Kingdom, however, there is a movement towards shifting the supervision of education for children of three years of age and over to the Department of Education and Science. Moreover, in West Germany, where pre-school education has been provided as part of social welfare services, efforts have recently been made to treat kindergartens as educational institutions.

A comparison of enrolment ratios of kindergartens of various major countries shows that the enrolment ratio of five year old children is highest in France followed by the U.S.A. and Japan. (In England and Wales, compulsory education starts from five years old.) However, ratios are generally high in all the countries and they are on the increase. In France, the enrolment ratio is as high as 99%, although pre-school education is not compulsory. This high ratio may be attributable to the fact that the Government pays 100% of teachers' salaries and takes measures to assist in the provisions of facilities and equipment so as to enroll all children who so desire.
Next, it is to be noted that in Japan approximately three-fourths of the total enrolment in kindergartens are in private kindergartens, whereas in the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. and France, the proportions of enrolment in public kindergartens are very high, being 90%, 70% and 60% respectively. However, in the Federal Republic of Germany, private kindergartens enroll 80% of all kindergarten children.

In addition to the pre-school programs described above, attempts have recently been made to improve the educational environment of pre-school children in the U.S.A., England and Wales and the Federal Republic of Germany, aiming at equal educational opportunity. In the U.S.A. at the pre-school level, early childhood programs called "Head Start" have been in practice since 1965, for the purpose of giving a head start on education to children who, coming from poor families, are educationally disadvantaged. In this way they may start their elementary education at the same level as children from normal families. As of 1968, more than 2,000,000 pre-school children were participating in these programs.

In England and Wales, nursery facilities are being expanded as part of the urban program, for the purpose of extending education to pre-school children from poor families in urban slum areas.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, special institutions called "Schulkindergarten" (school kindergarten) aim at enrolling children who are intellectually backward due to their families' income situation, etc., one year earlier than ordinary children."
Table No. 1

No. of Pre-Primary classes with enrolment therein attached to Primary Schools in the district of Kamrup against the state of Assam during the academic years shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>No. of Pre-Primary classes</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>Assam</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>285</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>307</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
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<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>123</td>
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* Source: Office of the Director of Public Instruction, Assam.