CHAPTER IV

Supervision and Inspection of Pre-primary Establishments.

School inspection is intended to check, guide and evaluate the process of education and to assess whether the goals of education are being realised or not. In India, evaluation done by the Head of an institution or a senior teacher is generally termed "supervision" and that carried on by the inspectors of schools is termed "inspection". While supervision is mainly academic in nature, the inspection is saddled with a host of activities mostly administrative and of routine nature.

As in general administration, so in the administration of education in free India, we have hardly been able to work out and establish a sound rationale of supervision and inspection other than what the colonial powers had introduced in British India and, as a result, the idea of Social reconstruction through education after the Constitution of India is still in the offing.

It is one of the many responsibilities of the Government to make adequate provisions for the right type of education for the people. The Government is also answerable to the Legislature for the money it spends on education and the working of the institutions that receive and spend
such money. It becomes necessary, therefore, for the Government to see that the money it spends on education is properly utilised for the purpose, and that efficient instruction is being imparted. The inspectors of schools are the trusted agents of the Government to visit the schools to evaluate their working and also to administer the control on behalf of the Government.

During the pre-independence period, the British Parliament was not obliged to provide for either adequately or the right type of education to the Indians, its subject people, even though it had swung authority over British India. Whatever amount was then spent on education in India for running the bureaucratic machinery of the imperial power, it was on the principle of "payment by results" only. It was necessarily interested, therefore, to see that the money it spent on education was properly being utilised, and for that purpose to entrust some one to see on the spot that the work is being satisfactorily done. Thus came the Inspectorate with the inspectors into being in British India. Of necessity, it caused artificial stimulation of the products and a sort of window dressing on the part of the institutions. Further, the attitude of evaluating and finding faults with the working of an institution has created an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion between the teaching and the inspecting staff.
Moreover, the term 'Inspector' seems to be closely associated with the corresponding rank in the police service which has to deal with the criminals. In England where for a long time, the police had been and still is looked upon as the servant and the friend of the people at the same time, the term did not cause much harm there. But conditions in India were very different, the police had been the agent of foreign imperialism, and as such, was dreaded and equally hated by the people. The police, on the other hand, worked with a certain amount of suspicion and their attitude towards the public was anything but that of service. The inspectors of schools have been associated with this connotation and the attitude with which the teachers looked upon them was closely akin to that of the people towards the police of those days.

Further, during the early part of the twentieth century, to curb the rising spirit of nationalism, the inspectors of schools were given more powers and administrative authority by the imperial Government. They became, in a greater sense, the inevitable part of the bureaucracy rather than academic officers out to find real difficulties in the working of the schools and suggest ways and means to overcome such difficulties. The Saddler Commission, in order to abolish the dual authority that
existed, one for setting up courses of studies and of evaluation by the University, and the other for carrying on internal evaluation coupled with administration by the inspectorate, suggested that the inspectorate instead of remaining a part of the government machinery should be made subordinate to the Boards of Secondary Education. But the government was not willing to make the inspectorate a subordinate agency under the Boards. Thus a wide gulf had been created which still continues to exist among the three wings, the evaluating agency that sets up the standard and conducts the public examinations, the teaching staff and the inspectorate. This was not a happy state of affairs, mistrust in place of frankness and co-operation continued.

The Wood-Abbott Report during the thirties of this century stated, "The chief duty of the inspector is to inspect the schools. He must do this sympathetically and tactfully and give advice based on his own knowledge and experience. He should feel free and, of course, be qualified to praise or to criticise, but his criticism should be calculated to encourage and not to intitate." The function of the inspector of schools has been very clearly defined by the statements both in terms of its content

and method. There is also an undertone of these functions being not performed the way these ought to have been performed. The First Marendra Deo Report of U.P. had noticed the multifarious functions that the inspector had to perform and felt that perhaps many functions of a more routine nature may be taken away from him. The report says, "The educational Codes make the inspector's work too mechanical and too much occupied with routine. The office swallows up the man." The Madaliar Commission Report of 1952-53 remarks, "In our view the true role of an inspector, for whom we would prefer the term Educational Adviser, is to study the problems of each school, to take a comprehensive view of all its functions and to help the teachers to carry out his advice and recommendations." And finally, the Education Commission (1964-66) has admitted that the programme of supervision of schools has largely broken down.

From a careful study of the observations referred to above, Prof. S.N. Mukerji has attributed the ineffectiveness of inspection of our schools to the following factors:

1) Dearth of properly trained and well qualified staff;
2) Inadequacy of existing staff;
3) The use of the inspectorial staff for non-educational work;
4) Pressure of administrative duties on the inspectors; and
5) Lack of adequate guidance to teachers.

Insofar as supervision and inspection of the pre-school institutions in the state of Assam are concerned, the situation is still worse. Unless a systematic and sustained effort is made to involve and introduce a healthy system of supervision and inspection of pre-school institutions, the preschool education, whatever semblance of it is there, is likely to assume a form which it would be difficult to recognize subsequently to be remodelled, and will thus be out as a mockery.

The educational policy of a country is defined by the State. It also prescribes regulations for educational institutions and their employees. The responsibilities of implementing the policy and enforcing the regulations rest on the State Department of Education. In India, even though 'Education' is in the Concurrent List, school education is conventionally looked after by the state governments of the Union within their respective territorial jurisdictions. Almost every state of the Union has an Education Code (including rules and regulations) and a Directorate under the Department of Education, the Directorate being the machinery set up for implementing the decisions of the government of the state concerned.

It has been indicated in the previous chapter that the government of Assam has not yet issued any policy statement on education in the state. It,
however, follows the national policy statement on education issued in 1968. Supervision and inspection which are considered to be the major planks of any strategy to improve the quality and standard of school education are carried on by the heads/senior members of the teaching staff of the concerned institutions and the inspecting staff of the directorate as required under the Education Code.

Assam has been divided into ten educational districts for the purpose of supervision and inspection of schools for general education in the state. Each district is under the charge of an inspector of schools. There are two assistant inspectors of schools, one of them being invariably a lady, to help the inspector of schools of a district. There are deputy inspectors of schools also, each in charge of an educational sub-division which is coterminous with a revenue (civil or administrative) sub-division and additional deputy inspectors of schools who help the deputy inspectors of schools. There are, further, sub inspectors of schools, each in charge of an educational circle, and assistant sub-inspectors of schools to assist the sub inspectors of schools.

The district inspector of schools is responsible for efficient inspection of all government and aided schools including the board vernacular
schools in his jurisdiction. The inspection of high and higher secondary schools is, however, his special responsibility. The assistant inspector of schools is required to carry out such duties as may be assigned to him by the inspector of schools of the district concerned. He is empowered to visit all the schools visited by the inspector; but he is to pay greater attention to the inspection and organisation of the middle English schools including the board vernacular schools.

The assistant inspector of schools is responsible for the inspection and administration of the girls' schools of her district. She is entitled to inspect all educational institutions for girls up to secondary stage including those managed by the local government agencies. She is consulted by the Department of education of the state in matters relating to education of girls in her district. She is also authorised to correspond direct with the director of Public Instruction. The deputy inspectors and the sub-inspectors of schools, when directed by the district inspector of schools, are required to assist the assistant inspector of schools for efficient discharge of her duties.

Each deputy inspector of schools is in charge of inspection and organisation of middle and primary schools including board vernacular
schools in his sub-division. He also functions as an adviser to the various local government agencies in his sub-division in educational matters and he is responsible for the preparation of their educational budget estimates.

All inspectors and inspectresses of schools are required to submit monthly tour diaries to the director of public instruction. While the deputy inspectors and the sub-inspectors submit their diaries to the inspector of schools of the district concerned, the sub-inspectors are required to route their diaries through the deputy inspectors of schools. Both the deputy inspectors and the sub-inspectors are required to submit copies of their diaries to the chairman of the local government agencies also.

According to the prescribed norms, every inspector of schools in Assam is required to visit each government and aided high and higher secondary school as well as teacher training institution in his district twice a year and to carry on the rough inspection of each educational institution in any one of such visits. He is required to visit all schools at the headquarters at least once in a year. He is also required to inspect, with the help of his
assistant inspectors of schools, all the middle English schools in his district once in a year. Besides, the inspector of schools in a district should visit as many vernacular schools including boards vernacular schools in charge of each of his deputy inspectors of schools.

Each deputy inspector of schools should inspect every middle school and government aided school including the board vernacular schools within his jurisdiction at least once a year with the help of his sub-inspectors and in so doing he is required to spend not less than 200 days on tour in a year.

Every elementary school must be inspected at least once a year by the sub-inspector of schools of the concerned circle. A sub-inspector is also required to help his deputy inspector of schools in the inspection of the vernacular schools and thus to spend not less than 210 days on tour in a year.

Every school in Assam is required to maintain an inspection book wherein the advice and the criticism of the inspecting officers are systematically recorded for necessary follow up actions. The inspecting officers, particularly the
deputy inspectors and the sub-inspectors of schools, have to maintain log-books to record the programmes of improvement in schools under their in charge.

The inspecting officers in Assam have to report in a prescribed proforma furnishing a number of administrative rather than academic details of every school inspected to the appropriate authorities. The inspectors of schools are also required to hold periodic conferences of their deputy inspectors of schools as well as headmasters and principals of high and higher secondary schools in their respective districts in order to exchange views and to discuss policy and other matters for general improvement of educational institution and the quality of work done. The deputy inspectors and the sub-inspectors of schools are also required to organise similar conferences with the headmasters and the teachers of elementary schools in their jurisdictions.

In Assam, the Director of Public Instruction also occasionally inspects high, higher secondary, teacher training and other educational institutions in the state. Senior officers of other department of the state government may also formally visit any educational institution in the state and record their comments and suggestions. Certain procedures and practices have also been laid down by the government in respect of remarks given by visitors like the Governor, and Ministers.
The headmaster of every school in Assam is also required to maintain a register in which he records the classroom performance of every teacher of his school. The inspecting officer visiting a school looks into the register maintained by the headmaster and then records his opinion in the inspection report.

It is clear from the above that there is no specific machinery, statutory or otherwise, set up for supervision and inspection of the pre-school institutions in the state of Assam. The situation, for that matter, is not better elsewhere in the country as a whole. Prof. D.S. Rawat of the department of preprimary and primary education of the National Council for Educational Research and Training, New Delhi has rightly observed in his 'Foreword' to 'Pre-Primary Institutions - their Supervision', "However, it may be pointed out that one of the missing links of preprimary education programmes would appear to be the absence of trained supervisory staff who are able to provide effective guidance to the pre-school teachers regarding the proper maintenance of the pre-primary institutions. Usually the supervisory staff of the secondary and the primary institutions are entrusted with the responsibility of the supervision of the pre-primary institution as well."
But the atmosphere in a preprimary school is informal, characterised by different activities and programmes suited to the preschool children, and therefore the supervisory staff generally find it difficult to supervise the preprimary institutions in an effective way.³

The members of the inspecting staff down to the assistant sub-inspectors of schools of the department of education of the state of Assam are hardly well informed of the peculiar needs of preschool children without any special training and, as such, they are at a disadvantage to provide the pre-primary teachers with necessary guidance and leadership. As a matter of fact, the few sub-inspectors of schools admitted frankly, on being contacted, their inability to help the preprimary teachers in handling and proper use of tools and equipments meant for preprimary children and available in some of the schools and, also in organising and conducting suitable programmes for these children. Under the circumstances they avoid, in general, to inspect the preprimary classes as such. Even though a good number of preprimary teachers have some sort

³Rawat, D.S. - Pre-Primary Institutions - their Supervision (Forward) N.O.R.T., New Delhi 1972.
of training in preprimary education, they are handicapped by lack of suitable physical facilities for their preprimary programmes to run on being housed in and attached to a primary school and its administration to lose all enthusiasm and initiatives. Coupled with the lack of proper supervision and inspection, this has led the formal schooling in the primary school to extend downwards gradually to cover the preprimary classes also.

The conditions in the privately managed preprimary institutions are no better. These institutions are mostly organised and run on commercial lines rather than motivated on a genuine interest in and love for the child and the society. There is no supervision and inspection by any outside authority, educational or any other, even though most of these institutions receive government grants almost regularly.

There is provision for the supervision and inspection of the 'balwadis' and the 'anganwadis', but so far as the supervision and inspection of the balwadis are concerned, they are neither adequate nor sufficient. The only four welfare officers of the State Social Welfare Advisory board of Assam, who are without any training in pre-school
education, are hardly capable of supervising and inspecting a large number of balwadis adequately and sufficiently besides performing their normal routine duties as these institutions are scattered all over the state.

Although the anganwadi has all the ingredients of preschool education incorporated in its different programmes, it is, by definition, the focal point for delivery of the entire package of child development services under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme originally mooted in a suggestion by the Minister of Planning in 1972 for working out a scheme for integrated child care services and it does not have either the specific or the original feature of a preschool institution. The dull uniformity of the programmes refusing to admit specific treatment as demanded by circumstances only accentuates the conspicuous absence of certain academic attitude which is at the core of the concept of preschool education. It appears that the anganwadi embodies a preschool institution without its soul; it may supplement, but it fails to supplant it. So, in all appearances, the supervisory staff of the anganwadis under the ICDS scheme, trained otherwise though, have failed to knit together the different programmes and activities to make the anganwadi a precursor of a preschool in stitution proper.
To sum up, it needs to be pointed out that the supervision and inspection of the preprimary institutions in the state is in a very bad shape; it is neither adequate nor sufficient to encourage proper growth and development of preschool education in the state. Some efforts at coordination among different agencies organising and running these institutions to establish and maintain a standard and, that among the parents and guardians, the teachers and the managements and the society at large to ensure necessary help and cooperation based on mutual understanding and respect needs to be initiated without delay which has been conspicuous by its very absence.

Status of pre-school education:

It has been stated in the previous chapter that the modern age of education in the history of Assam has begun with the annexation of Assam by the British in 1826. But the condition of education in the state was very deplorable till the last decade of the 19th century. It was mainly through the initiative of the local educationalists and the Christian Missionaries that the percentage of literacy was raised to 12 at the close of the century.

By creating the department of education in the Secretariat in 1905, which was then placed under the charge of a Director of Public Instruction, the provincial government formally introduced the English
System of Education in the Province state. During the last two decades of the first half of the present century education expanded considerably both in quantity and quality to catch up with the growing enthusiasm created by the rising spirit of nationalism throughout the country. There was hardly enough time to be devoted by the people, during this period, to look analytically into the growth-process of early childhood plastic enough to be influenced tremendously by the total environment of the child, both physical and human, and its relation to the emerging personality of manhood. The Wood-Abbott Report of the thirties made a specific point in this regard to be highlighted subsequently in the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on post war Educational Development in India (1944), popularly known as the Sergent Report to draw the national attention. The report recommended that an adequate provision of pre-primary education should be an essential adjunct of a national system of education.

In a vast country like India steeped in poverty tradition and backwardness the problem of implementing such a recommendation was staggering and well nigh impossible. So, what little education and care the government of free India could afford to provide for the preschool children besides meeting the pressing needs of the country, were conceived of being provided through channels other than
that of education as auxiliary services. The Government of India did not as yet accept officially the responsibility of preschool education in the country; and so also the different State Governments.

The first commitment of the governments both at the Centre and the States was to put all children in the age group 6-11 into school, and this the governments have been unable to do and may not be able, perhaps, to achieve even in the next twenty years.

Under the initiative of the Central Social Welfare Board, to provide services for rural children, a number of balwadis were set up in Assam also during the fifties. There are now more than 100 balwadis in the rural and small urban areas of the State run by voluntary agencies with financial support from, or directly run by, the Board and the department of Social Welfare of the state and other administrative departments. The preschool children in the age-group 3-5 are taken care of by the balwadis and no fee is charged for the service these institutions render to the children. A Balsevika is placed in charge of a balwadi and she is assisted by a helper. The number of children in a balwadi should not and normally does not, exceed 30 at any time.

The Education Commission, reporting in 1966, recognised the importance of preschool education in developing the human resources of the country
But it could only suggest a modest target of 5 per-cent of preschool children (3-5) to be covered by 1980 in preschool educational institutions. It also referred to the lowest two classes of the five-class Lower Primary Schools of Assam and some of its neigh-bouring regions as belonging to preschool education and suggested that these classes should be retained in the new pattern of education to be introduced in the country. But the government of Assam did not think it wise to retain these classes while introducing the new 10+2 schooling pattern after the Report of the Education Commission as suggested by the Commission since the government was not committed to shoulder the responsibility of providing preschool education in the state. However, the government decided, under public pressure, to introduce, since 1974, a preprimary class in some of the selected primary schools with the provision for appointing a pre-primary teachers in each of these schools under the same terms and conditions of service for a primary teacher. The Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Act, 1974 also indirectly provides for one year schooling to preschool children of the state in the elementary schools.

The number of children in a preprimary class attached to a primary school has been found to vary from 22 to 56, and no fee is required to be paid by the children in these schools.
On abolishing the classes A and B from the 5 class primary schools to introduce the new 10+2 pattern of schooling after the Education Commission Report, 1966 and on raising the age of admission of a child to a primary school to 6+, the demand for institutions of preschool education increased considerably. This led to the establishment of a good number of institutions under various appellations and purported to be preschool institutions by voluntary organisations and private individuals mostly with commercial motives. These institutions enrol children who have attained the age of 3+, and also offer primary education to these children continuously under the same roof, if desired, charging fees variously by different institutions at different stages and also under different heads. The number of teachers in these establishments vary depending on the number of children enrolled, the average ratio being 1:45. The services of a lady attendant to the pre-school children of these institutions is a general feature. These institutions have been found to flourish in the urban areas of the state where the services of the unemployed, educated persons are readily available on purely temporary basis comparatively at a cheaper monthly salary. As there is no official recognition of pre-primary education nor any minimum standard laid down to which conformity is obligatory, there is no method at present of enforcing any standard in these institutions.
The anganwadis established under the ICDS scheme in the six Development Blocks of Assam, during the seventies, cater to the needs of preschool children proper (0-6) including their mothers. An anganwadi-sevika is in charge of an anganwadi and she is helped by a helper, recruited locally, in rendering services provided under the scheme. Activities of the anganwadis are regularly supervised by the supervisory staff in the administrative setup of the scheme. The total number of children in an anganwadi has been found not to exceed 30.

The approach in these institutions varies between different degrees of education and care. In some cases, they have been found to be no more than a means of getting the children together for feeding programme only.

Similarly, the training and qualification of staff also vary considerably. In balwadis run or assisted by the Central Social Welfare Board, generally a Balsevika who is a multipurpose worker oriented towards education, health and nutrition, and with other responsibilities besides the balwadi is in charge. Salaries and working conditions also vary markedly from area to area depending on the category of institutions served and on the quality and content of training and education possessed by the worker.
It is difficult, therefore, to make a general statement about the quality of education imparted in these institutions. The most important thing is that this network of preschool education reaches out to a good number of preschool children in the state and that it provides an infrastructure which can be strengthened in the future.