In India, primary education was assigned to the local bodies quite early in the history of modern education. This was mainly due to the influence of the British system of local Government. In England education was the concern of the local authorities.¹

4.2 Lord Mayo's resolution of 1870 introduced local-self-government but it was nominal, because the local authorities were dominated by the official members. In Assam, the Local Rates Regulation, 1879 was introduced. According to this new Regulation a cess was to be levied on all lands in addition to land tax and local cesses.²

4.3 In 1881, the Government of India suggested the reform of local administration, the reduction of official members in the District Committee from the one-half to one-third, the transfer of grants-in-aid to schools and dispensaries and the transfer of entire local rates together with a large portion of the provincial expenditure to these Committees. The Government of Assam accepted the suggestion of the Government of India and increased the powers of the District Committees. In the educational sphere, the District Committees were entrusted with the sole management of primary education.³ In 1882, two important events occurred which led to several changes and developments. The first was the resolution on Local-Self-Government issued by Lord Ripon and the second was the recommendations of the
Indian Education Commission. 4

Reforms in 1882

Lord Ripon's resolution of 1882 on Local-Self-Government laid down that local bodies should be developed as an instrument of political and popular education by having a non-official chairman and adequate financial resources. As per the resolution, Local Boards and Municipal Boards were established in Assam by abolishing District Committees. The Local Boards were formed in every sub-division of the plains districts of the Province. For greater participation of the people in local administrative activities, attempts were made to increase the non-official members in these bodies. 5

Recommendations of Education Commission, 1882:

The Indian Education Commission of 1882, recommended that the Government should withdraw completely from the administration of primary education and "the general control over primary school expenditure should be vested in the School Boards whether Municipal or Rural which may now exist or may hereafter be created for self-government in each province." The Commission laid great emphasis in the encouragement of private effort through a system of grant-in-aid. Except in the backward areas, the Commission recommended aid to schools on the results of examination. The Commission also recommended that both Municipal and Local Boards should keep a separate school fund consisting of (1) a fair proportion of board revenue to be fixed in each case by the local Government, (b) the fees and (c) any assignment from the Provincial fund, etc. 6 As a result, the Local Boards were made responsible for administration of grant-in-aid to schools, for efficient management of third grade Normal
schools and establishment of scholarships.  

Progress upto 1901

4.6 At the end of 1883-84, the number of primary schools, both boys and girls, under local bodies, stood at 1,119 with 31,666 pupils on rolls. In 1899-1900, the number of schools marginally increased to 1,260. But in 1901-02, the total number of primary schools wholly maintained by Local Boards dropped to 1,230. Besides, Local Boards maintained 4 middle schools. The Local Boards also aided some schools. There were 1,482 schools aided by the Board in 1901-02.

4.7 From the above, it is clear that there was not much expansion after 1891-92. In fact, by 1901-02 the number of schools under the direct management of Local Boards decreased compared to what had been in 1891-92. This was mainly due to the weak financial position of the Boards, decrease of Provincial grants to Local Boards, diversion of finances for purposes other than education, etc. While the receipt by the Local Boards from local rates was about Rs.5 lakh upto 1891-92, the total provincial grant came down to Rs.1.9 lakh in 1891-92 and about Rs.2.5 lakh during the period 1897-1902 against Rs.6 lakh before 1887-88. Thus, there was a decrease in Government grant.

4.8 In 1883-84, the Chief Commissioner directed that the Boards should allot not less than 20 per cent of their ordinary income for education. But in 1887-88, the Local Boards spent 78.1 per cent of the total expenditure on public work and the balance on other services like education, medical, post-office and miscellaneous. In 1900-01, the expenditure on public
work came down considerably, yet it was as high as 63.9 per cent of the total expenditure.  

4.9 In 1887-88, the average expenditure on education by the Boards was 12.91 per cent of their total expenditure. There were no doubt exceptions. The Barpeta Local Board spent 28.15 per cent, followed by Gauhati, Sunamganj, Habiganj and Nowgong. The Local Boards spent Rs.1.53 lakh (12.9 per cent) under education head against total expenditure of Rs.11.81 lakh. In 1891-92, average expenditure on education by the Local Boards was 20.38 per cent of the total expenditure. The Gauhati Local Board came first with 31.68 per cent followed by Habiganj, Barpeta and Nowgong. The Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur Local Boards spent 11.52 per cent each, Jorhat 16.96 per cent, Karimganj 15.79 per cent, Golaghat 16.27 per cent on educational purpose.

4.10 A large portion of the expenditure on education by the Local Boards of Habiganj, Sunamganj, South Sylhet and Barpeta was on high schools. The Chief Commissioner, therefore, asked the Local Boards to devote their attention to middle and primary education leaving to the Government to establish or aid high schools from provincial funds where-ever any real need for such schools existed. The Chief Commissioner had accordingly relieved the Boards from the payment of aid to high schools with effect from April 1893. In 1901-92, the total expenditure on education incurred by the Local Boards was Rs.2.24 lakh, out of which Rs.1.29 lakh was devoted for primary education. On average, 19 Boards spent 24.70 per cent of the local income on education. The highest percentage of expenditure (35.12 per
per cent) was incurred by South Sylhet and the lowest by Sunamganj (13.23 per cent). The Dhubri and Sibsagar Local Boards also failed to devote 20 per cent of their expenditure on primary education.18

4.11 Thus the Local Boards devoted a major portion of their income for civil work with the result that some Local Boards for obvious reasons had failed to devote 20 per cent or more of their local income for education.

Firstly, Local Boards were dominated by urban and rural elite. They were not interested in expanding educational facilities in the rural areas. They were interested in the improvement and development of communication; only. Cotton therefore observed: "The gentlemen who compose these Local Boards belong in many cases to the classes which naturally (with comparatively few exceptions) take little attention in the education of humble classes, in the diffusion of purely primary education."19

Secondly, Local Boards in the tea districts were dominated by Tea Planters who were interested in the development of communications. Large sums of money were spent on communications and less on education.

Thirdly, the educationally advanced districts were not interested in the vernacular education. They preferred English education. The D.P.I. reported about this in 1900 thus:20

"The population of the sub-division of Habiganj, is 5,08,854, its revenue is Rs.91,184. The Local Board of the Habiganj sub-division spends Rs.12,430 or there about, annually on primary education but it spends Rs.4,948 on M.E. or M.V. schools, of this later sum, Rs.583 are spent in the M.V. schools."
These secondary schools are often found maintained for the express convenience and profit of petty Zamindars and other wealthy persons. In fact, it is not unusual to find a secondary aided school close to the bari of a Zaminder in which, it is not unusual for his sons and those of his relatives and retainers obtain an English education at the expenses of public money. The members of the Local Boards appears to me to have exploited successfully the Local Boards funds for the maintenance of schools, designed to suit the members or their friends."

Development between 1904 to 1922

4.12 Government of India Resolution of 1904 and 1913: The Government of India's resolution of 1904 laid down that primary education should have a predominant claim upon the funds devoted by District Boards. It further laid down that District and Municipal Boards should spend their educational funds for primary education alone and not on higher education at all. Curzon also directed that the system of payment by result be abandoned and replaced by simple and better method of grant-in-aid. The Government of India resolution of 1913 laid down that there should be large expansion of lower primary schools which should be secured through Local Boards. Where this was financially impossible, aided schools under recognised management should be encouraged.

4.13 Imperial grants: From 1901-02, the Government of India made available considerable sums of money to the Provincial Government for the educational development in general and primary education in particular. The Assam Government made large financial allotments to Local Boards for extension of primary education and to carry out other reforms. But the primary education did not receive from the Boards the attention it deserved.
1903-04, the expenditure on the primary schools was Rs.214,638 and in 1904-05 Rs.2,23,348 \( ^2 \), although a standard expenditure of Rs.2,31,430 was fixed in 1903. Thus, the orders of the Government were not followed by the Boards. Had the Local Boards acted as per direction of the Government, the expenditure on primary education, taking into account the special grant of Rs.66,210 out of the Imperial grant of Rs.1 lakh for Assam, would have been Rs.2,97,640 in 1905-06 but Rs.2,91,542 was spent. This shows that the Boards did not fully discharge their responsibilities in respect of primary education and proportionately reduced the expenditure from their free income as they were getting allotment from the Government. \( ^{26} \) Thus, additional allotment made out of the Imperial grants was not used by the Local Boards wholly for expansion of educational facilities. The Assam Government, therefore, decided that actual expenditure incurred by each Board during 1904-05 should be accepted as the normal annual expenditure, representing the amount spent on primary education (a) from ordinary provincial grants and (b) from local resources. The year 1904-05 was chosen as the Imperial grant was first utilised by the Local Boards from 1905-06. It was assumed that all additional expenditure subsequent to 1904-05 were from Imperial grants. The Boards were also allowed to devote a fair share of their revenue towards development of primary education. \( ^{27} \) As a result of the measures taken by the Government, the Local Boards responded willingly and did not divert any fund from education for other purposes. Some of the Local Boards, on the other hand, increased expenditure on education, thereby exceeding the minimum standard of expenditure fixed by the Government.
These increases in expenditure led to some apprehensive enquiries by the members of the Legislature in 1907. The members opined that the funds which might have been expanded on communication had been diverted by the order of the Government to educational purpose. Because of this apprehension, the Government conducted an enquiry and found that some Boards had voluntarily exceeded the standard prescribed.28

Because of the receipt of liberal Imperial grants, provincial grant to the Local Boards increased from Rs.2.42 lakh in 1901-02 to Rs.13.51 lakh in 1920-21. During the same period, receipts from local rates increased from Rs.6.62 lakh to Rs.8.65 lakh. Special grants for educational purposes were also given. In 1911-12, the local bodies received Rs.1.5 lakh under this head. This grant increased to about Rs.4.46 lakh in 1920-21. As a result of receipt of increasing provincial grants, expenditure on education by the Local Boards increased from Rs.2.24 lakh in 1901-02 to Rs.8.14 lakh in 1920-21.29 The number of schools under Local Boards had also gone up. During the first two years of the receipt of the first instalment of Imperial grants, 700 new Primary schools were opened and taken over by the Local Boards.30 Against 1230 primary schools in 1901-02,31 the number of primary schools under the management of the Local Boards increased to 2816 in 1910-11, 3332 in 1920-21.32 But these expansions did not meet all the demands of the people. Chairmen of several Local Boards reported that more primary schools were required and complained that they had not the requisite funds for the purpose.33

4.14 Assam Local-Self-Government Act, 1915: The Act gave wide powers to the Local Boards to manage all affairs of a local
nature falling under their responsibility. The Local Boards were made responsible for the establishment, maintenance, management and construction and repair of primary and M.V. school buildings under public management within the sub-division. They were to appoint teachers and pay them salaries. They could give grant-in-aid to schools. Scholarships could be awarded by Local Boards.34

After passing the Act, the Government took a view that the provincial revenue should not be used for raising the pay of the teachers in Local Boards.35 It was only when liberal Imperial grants were received, the salaries of the teachers were increased.

Progress between 1921-41

4.15 Resource and Expenditure: There was gradual decline in the income of the Local Boards. Income fell from Rs.39.14 lakh in 1927-28 to Rs.31.30 lakh in 1933-34.36 In 1934-35, the Boards were on the verge of bankruptcy. No attempt was made by the Board to improve their finances. The collection of dues was also unsatisfactory.37

On the other hand, receipt from local rates increased from Rs. 9.26 lakh in 1921-22 to Rs.15.85 lakh in 1946-47 while provincial grants decreased from Rs.16.70 lakh in 1921-22 to Rs.13.93 lakh in 1922-23 and then gradually increased to Rs.21.88 lakh in 1926-27. Thereafter provincial grant decreased and it was stationary between Rs.15.50 lakh and Rs.14.50 lakh during the period 1931-39. It increased to Rs.26.46 lakh in 1945-46 and Rs.32.20 lakh in 1946-47. The cut in the Government grant was due to financial difficulties of the Provincial Government.
and world-wide economic depression. The Provincial Government also gave special grants to the Local Boards for the development of education which varied from time to time. In 1921-22, contribution of the Government for education purpose increased to Rs.6.37 lakh from Rs.4.46 lakh in 1920-21. This was due to the sanction of Rs.1.80 lakh to various Local Boards for sanctioning to all the teachers of the primary schools an increased pay of 20 per cent in their old rates of pay with effect from March 1921.38 In 1932-33, there was a fall in the Government grant under education owing to the withdrawal of grants for the pay of substitute teachers on the closure of the Guru training classes because of financial difficulties of the Government.39 This grant increased to Rs.20.30 lakh in 1945-46 and Rs.19.87 lakh in 1946-47.

Expenditure on education under the Local Boards increased from Rs.8.90 lakh in 1921-22 to Rs.30.94 lakh in 1946-47. There was a steady increase of expenditure on education up to 1931-32, when the expenditure stood at Rs.12.90 lakh. In 1931-32, expenditure decreased to Rs.12.69 lakh and in 1933-34 to Rs.12.56 lakh. After these fall in expenditure, the same increased at a much faster rate. In 1938-39, expenditure on education was Rs.14.92 lakh, in 1945-46 Rs.26.91 lakh and in 1946-47 Rs.30.94 lakh. The decrease in expenditure in 1932-33 and 1933-34 was due to the temporary cut in the pay of teachers, which almost all Boards imposed.41

During the period 1921-47, the Government expenditure on primary education increased by 223 per cent against an increase of 163 per cent in the case of Local Board's fund.42
There was thus comparatively small increase in local expenditure even though wide powers were given to them to raise resources under the successive Acts. Though it was expected that the Local Boards would find more resources for financing mass education, in practice the Local Boards did little to raise resources and to raise their contribution for primary education. The support given by the Boards to primary education was altogether inadequate. Thus the Boards were hampered by inadequate finance for expansion of facilities for mass education. The state of the provincial finance also did not permit large grants from the Government. During Diarchy, official view was if any development was to be achieved in any direction in the field of Local-Self-Government, the people benefitted must be prepared to meet the cost. As the Boards were unwilling to raise resources through tax, there was no new development. Compulsory education could not be introduced in any area as per the Act of 1926.

4.16 Progress of Education: During 1922-23, there were 3440 schools under the Local Boards with 1,60,817 pupils, out of which 170 were middle schools and the rest primary schools. The number of schools and pupils increased steadily hereafter year by year and the number of schools reached 4,710 with 2,53,808 pupils in 1934-35. In 1936-37, the number of schools were 5,029 with 2,82,403 pupils out of which 4,777 were primary schools and the rest middle schools. The number of schools under the Boards were 7,399 with 393,866 pupils in 1946-47, against 6,335 with 321,901 pupils in 1941-42.

The demand for primary schools was increasing year by
year during the period. For financial reasons, the Boards adopted a system of aiding schools. In 1922-23, the Boards aided 25 M.E. schools, 5 M.V. schools and 10 primary schools. In 1933-34, 59 M.E. schools, 4 M.V. schools and 101 primary schools were aided. Here the Government realised the danger of such a system which would result in the relaxation of an already tenuous control over primary education and reversion to the conditions prevalent in the distant past, when the village schools were subjected to very serious but well-merited indictment. The Government felt compelled to stop the practice of aiding primary schools with small grants since the Education department was convinced that "while affording relief to hard pressed Local Boards, it could only end in a lamentable condition of ill-furnished schools with teachers living from hand to mouth."

Since compulsory primary education could not be introduced, the Provincial Government allotted money in the budget for taking over venture primary schools by the Boards. An elaborate scheme for the spread of primary education on a voluntary basis was also prepared by the Government. There was growing demand in the Legislative Council that two-thirds of the expenditure which the Government proposed to offer to the Boards for the introduction of compulsion should be made available for expansion of primary education on a voluntary basis. Therefore, the Government provided ₹70,000 in the budget of 1927-28 for opening 420 primary schools including 42 muktabs by twelve Boards. Next year, ₹50,000 was provided for taking over 300 primary schools. Such recurring grants were continued thereafter.
With the help of grants the Local Boards took over venture schools. At the end 1937-38, there were only a hundred venture schools. In 1937-38, 221 primary schools in the Assam valley and 101 in Surma valley, mainly venture schools were taken over by the Boards. In 1936-37, the Government laid down the condition that approximately one-tenth of the allotment should be spent by the Boards for the benefit of the educationally backward communities. 52

Diversion of Funds

4.17 The Local Boards had shown a tendency to incur as little an expenditure as possible on primary education. When additional funds were received from the Government for educational purpose, the Boards curtailed the normal expenditure on education from their free income. As a consequence, the development of elementary education was thwarted. Therefore the Government fixed the amount to be spent on elementary education by each Board whenever additional grants were given. 53 The basis of this amount were the normal provincial grants and local resources devoted for educational purposes. 54 Even then the Boards continued to allot less amounts on education. In 1918-19, Local Boards in Assam utilised 20 per cent of their free income on education, against 31 per cent in the previous year, 32 per cent on roads and 15 per cent on medical aid. The Mangaldai Local Board spent 15 per cent, Dibrugarh and Tezpur Local Boards spent 17 per cent, Jorhat 19 per cent while Golaghat 38 per cent and North Sylhet 39 per cent of their free income on education. 55 In 1923-24, the Local Boards spent 28 per cent of the free income on education, 26 per cent on communication and 21 per cent on medical aid. The figures for several Boards continued to show
wide variations from 14 per cent in the case of Tezpur Board to 36 per cent in the case of Goalpara Board. In 1938-39, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Dhubri, Goalpara, Gauhati, Jorhat Local Boards allotted 30 per cent or more of their free income for education. Dibrugarh came last with 18 per cent preceded by Silchar 25 per cent, Mangoldoi and Sibsagar 26 per cent.

Though the Government had expressed no desire to interfere with the discretion of the Boards in the allotment of its own fund, the Government expected that the Boards would not curtail the level of expenditure which they had incurred on education from their free income after the receipt of additional Government grant. The Government made it clear that each Board by accepting grant binded itself to spend the money on the purposes for which it was provided. But there was no machinery to find whether the Boards carried the directions of the Government. As a consequence some Boards diverted Government grant for education for other purposes. The Boards contended that they had a right to allot funds for any service according to their discretion. Have they right to violate the condition under which grants were received?

4.16 Diversion of Funds - A Case Study: The Mangoldoi Local Board received a Government grant of Rs.5,352 in 1922 for the improvement of pay of the teachers. The Board reduced its own expenditure in education and diverted a part of the grant sanctioned by the Government for a specific purpose for other purposes. For instances;
TABLE 4.1

Government grant and expenditure on education by Mangaldoi Local Board during 1917-23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Expenditure from Board's own fund</th>
<th>Government Grant</th>
<th>Total expenditure (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917-18</td>
<td>9,701</td>
<td>9,024</td>
<td>18,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>8,233</td>
<td>11,799</td>
<td>20,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-20</td>
<td>9,802</td>
<td>11,957</td>
<td>20,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>9,594</td>
<td>12,330</td>
<td>21,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>4,812</td>
<td>17,094</td>
<td>21,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>6,155</td>
<td>17,432</td>
<td>23,587</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that the Board reduced its own contribution and diverted funds for other purposes.

In 1922-23, the D.I. presented a budget for Rs.25,047. But the Board reduced it to Rs.21,106 and provided Rs.4,012 from its own fund. The Vice-Chairman of the Board informed the D.C. of Darrang district that the request of the D.I. for opening schools was not refused. The Vice-Chairman was not speaking the truth. On December 14, 1922 applications to re-open Ramrai Para, Borkuliazan and Teknapara schools were considered, but as no funds were available, the consideration of the applications was deferred. Further there were numerous applications for taking over schools in various places of the district. In two mauzas, Shekhar and Harisinga, there was no school at all and in two others, Majikuri and Chinakona only one school each.

When money had to be found for other services, the Board invariably pruned the education budget. In 1937, the Goalpara Local Board closed down 27 primary schools and diverted funds for other purposes. The facts of the case were that the Goalpara Local Board budgeted Rs.26,484 for communications in its budget for 1937-38. The Commissioner refused to pass the
budget until the Board provided a sum of Rs.29,300 under this head which was the estimated grant from the Government for communication plus the estimated receipts from cart tax. His advice was that the cart tax and the Government grant for communication should be devoted to communication. The Board found out the remaining amount for communication by closing 27 primary schools. The North Sylhet Board also diverted in 1932-33 educational grants amounting to Rs.13,891 for other purposes. But an Executive Officer, A.D.C., or S.D.O. is more powerful than a D.I. of schools. Sometimes Local Boards took D.C. into confidence to spend more money in roads and found additional amount by curtailing the educational budget. In such situations the cause of education suffered.

The Gauhati Local Board also diverted funds from educational budget for other purposes in 1932-33 and 1933-34. In this connection, the D.I., Gauhati wrote:

"It is seen that last year the Board did not spend Rs.7,619 out of their budget allotments on education and diverted the amount to non-educational needs. This year also the same thing has happened. Proposals were submitted in due course for the utilisation of the unspent balance on different educational heads, specially for the improvement of the buildings and supplying the long felt want of the necessary furniture and equipment. But the Board thought it proper to divert the money from educational to the following different heads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Epedemics</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Medical buildings</td>
<td>835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Communication (repair)</td>
<td>2,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Pay of cart tax</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>establishment</td>
<td>1,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Cart-tax commission</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Travelling allowance</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of surveyors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Inspection Bunglow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>furniture</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Village roads</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,809</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Local Boards were not expected to start or aid schools in urban areas. But some Boards started schools in urban areas. This was due to the dominance of the Boards by the urban elite.

Other Abuses of Local Boards

4.19 Some of the Chairmen of the Local Boards abused powers vested in them. They transferred teachers, retired them, suspended them, granted them leave against the existing rules and appointed whom-so-ever they liked as teacher violating the rules framed by the Government for the purpose.

Relationship with Inspecting Staff

4.20 The Scheme of localisation of the Office of S.I. in the Local Board introduced in 1882, did not work well. Out of the 19, 11 Boards had expressed a desire to have the Office of S.I. localised in the Board. As the scheme did not work well, the Chief Commissioner abolished the scheme with effect from April 1, 1888. After expansion of the strength of inspecting staff in 1906, one D.I. was appointed to each Local Board. The D.I. was also made its official member. The Local Board Act of 1915 made the D.I. an ex-officio member. By the Local-Self-Government (Amended) Act of 1926, ex-officio element was abolished.

4.21 As the Assam Municipal Act of 1923 and Rural Self-Government Act 1926, gave importance to elected members, many local bodies did not include the D.I. as a member of the educational committees. The amended Act had made the D.I. a supernumerary member and deprived him of the right to vote.
4.22 The system under which the Chairman and the Deputy Inspector had to work was defective. It was practically a form of dual administration and when differences arose it worked badly.

4.23 The Inspector, Assam Valley wrote in 1932 that all the D.I's in the Assam Valley except two reported that their relation with the Local and Municipal Boards were harmonious. A number of officers wrote in eulogistic terms of the co-operation and consideration they had received from the Chairmen and Local Boards. The unhappy exceptions were North Lakhimpur and Jorhat. In the case of Jorhat, the D.I's delay of submitting the educational budget estimate to the Local Board was made an occasion for the finance sub-committee of the Board to pass a resolution against the D.I. Though the relation between the departmental officers and the Boards appeared to be generally cordial but cordiality was mainly due to the officers of the Department yielding to the officers of the Board.

4.24 Under the rules, the D.I had no power what-so-ever to control the staff of the Boards' school. Rewards and punishments were often awarded completely ignoring and sometime in direct opposition to D.I. This was really a very frustrating situation. It spoke volumes of the good sense of the officers that even with such handicaps they had administered with reasonable efficiency and promptness the educational affairs of Local Boards. In many cases the orders of Chairman and Vice-Chairman were influenced by political or personal
considerations. In spite of whatever happened in office files and meetings, the personal relations between officers of the education department and the Local Boards remained cordial.

4.25 In fact little attention was paid to the recommendations of the D.I when it did not suit them. The suggestions made for the improvement of schools in the inspection reports were not acted upon, often disregarded and ignored and sometimes flouted. When the D.I brought to the notice of the Board or to the Chairman any lapse or irregularities committed or protested against any highhandedness, such actions were resented by the Chairman. In such situations, the Chairman tried to carry out his point with the support of the members of the Board. Moreover, there was often a tug-of-war between them in regard to the provision in the budget for education.

Weak Financial Position of the Boards

4.26 The Boards were in fact labouring under financial difficulties. They had no money to do all that they wanted to do. They were also reluctant to raise funds by imposing unpopular taxes as that would render them unpopular. As a result they were unable to meet the urgent needs of the schools. They could not supply furniture and other equipment sufficiently to all the schools.

Remedial measures

4.27 As a remedial measure, a Provincial Board for Primary Education was formed in 1948-49. After the formation of the Board, all primary schools so long under the local bodies were transferred to the School Board. At the time of transfer the Local Boards maintained 5533 primary Schools and aided 69 primary schools.
II. UNDER MUNICIPAL BOARDS

4.28 The Municipal Boards were created by the British in the urban areas primarily to look after sanitation, roads and lightings, rather than education. For this reason, the early Municipalities had nothing to do with education. It was not obligatory on them to incur expenditure for education. But under the Municipal Act of 1876, the Boards could maintain schools.

4.29 In 1884-85, an expenditure of Rs.837 was incurred for primary education from Municipal fund. After the adoption of the Bengal Municipal Act 1884, in 1887, expenditure on primary education from municipal fund increased to Rs.2,079 in 1887-88 and to Rs.2,977 in 1889-90. In 1911-12, Municipalities in Assam had 18 boys' schools with 1,783 pupils against 20 boys' schools with 1,293 pupils in 1906-07.

4.30 The Assam Municipal Act, 1923 authorised the Municipalities to establish, maintain and manage all primary and M.V schools under public management within the Municipality. The Municipal Boards were more autonomous than the Local Boards. The D.P.I was only an advisor of the Boards. He was consulted sometimes and sometimes not. The relations between the Department and Municipalities were not clearly defined. There was no officer of the department in any Municipal Board, but the educational budget of the Municipal Boards were prepared in consultation with the D.I and approved by the Inspector of School.

4.31 The conditions of service of teachers under the Municipal Boards were however better than those under the Local
Boards. Generally they recruited better men and made better provision. Most Municipal Boards admitted their teachers to the benefit of provident fund.  

4.32 In 1936-37, Municipal Boards incurred an expenditure of Rs.63,352 for the management of all types of institutions. Out of the above amount, Rs.50,653 was devoted for maintenance of 67 primary schools and aiding 30 others.  

4.33 The Assam Rural Panchayat Act, 1948 did not authorise the Panchayt to establish primary schools. But the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959 authorised them to establish and maintain schools up to middle standard.  

III. ROLE OF PANCHAYATS

4.34 Concluding Remarks: Local Boards were the main agencies for control and expansion of primary education in the plains districts of Assam before 1949-50. Local Boards failed to discharge their responsibility in regard to the expansion of
primary education and to utilise the opportunities to the full for promoting the cause of education. The education department could not intervene effectively due to the absence of any provision to that effect in the Act. The suggestions given by the department and the inspecting staff were very often ignored and were considered to be interference in the functioning of the Boards. During Diarchy adequate funds for the promotion of primary education were not provided due to stoppage of central grant to the provincial government. As a result, expansion of primary education could not keep pace with the demand. Both the Central and State Governments should have borne the ultimate responsibility for primary education and assisted the local bodies with adequate grant-in-aid to carry on the functions entrusted to them. Any scheme or arrangement which did not take into account the financial requirement for expansion and development of primary education is bound to be a failure. Nevertheless, the Local Boards played a significant role for the spread of primary education in the rural areas of the plain districts of the Province before the formation of the School Board in 1948-49. Compared to Local Boards, the part played by the Municipal Boards of Assam was totally insignificant for maintenance of the primary schools. The Panchayats gave aid by supplying a chair in one school and a bench in another without preparing a master plan for the development and improvement of primary education in the Block area. In fine, local authorities failed miserably to discharge their responsibility for control, development and improvement of primary education in the State.