CHAPTER II

PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

If we need a nation of healthy and fully developed men and women, we need disease-free and correctly growing children. In case of children, rearing up becomes all the more important, because apart from the body we have to deal with mind and soul also. We have to look after the child constantly and carefully, cautiously and conscientiously with love and longing if we want children to grow into healthy, intellectually alert and spiritually awakened citizens.

For the first time in the educational history, the Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on Post-War Educational Development in India (1944) emphasized its significance and recommended that an adequate provision for pre-primary education be an essential adjunct of a national system of education. Pre-primary education had made great progress during the post-independence period.

It is a known fact that first six years of a child's life can be moulded in any way one desires. Most of the problems that arise later on in the child are due to his maladjustment during his pre-school period. It has been observed that the children who had received pre-primary
education, showed a better progress in primary stage and helped in reducing wastage and stagnation. The modern trend is to emphasize pre-primary education especially for those children whose home-environment is unsatisfactory.

The objectives of Pre-Primary education are (1) To develop good health habits in the child (2) to develop good social attitudes and manners (3) to develop emotional maturity in the child by guiding the child to express, understand, accept and control his feelings and emotions (4) to encourage aesthetic appreciation (5) to stimulate the beginnings of intellectual curiosity concerning the environment (6) to encourage independence in the child by providing opportunities for self-expression (7) To develop in the child the ability to express his thoughts in correct and clear speech (8) to develop a good physique and muscular co-ordination and basic motor skill in the child.

The pre-primary schools were first established to meet social needs such as looking after the children of working mothers, to give suitable environment to the children of urban families whose small flats were not good for the proper growth of the children. These schools also compensate for those children who come from slum areas and whose home-environment is not satisfactory for the proper growth.

Pre-primary education extends from the birth of the child to his entrance, at the age of five or six into the
first year of the primary school. It includes parental education, pre-natal and post-natal care and early infancy training. In the words of Gandhiji- "The real education begins from the conception as the mother begins to take up the responsibility of the child."^5

The pre-primary school generally looks to physical, mental, social and psychological care of the children of age group 3 to 5. Comenius and Robert Owen were the first persons to give an idea of infant school to the world.^6 Their main emphasis was on the physical development of children. Froebal, a German educationist was the first to use the word "kindergarten" which means "garden of the children."^7 He established the first kindergarten at Blankenburg, Germany in 1857 and laid emphasis on self-activity and individual expression.^8 The method employed was through play. A Kindergarten generally enrols children at the age of four. But in spite of all his efforts the system did not become popular in Germany.

Towards the end of nineteenth century a new movement of Nursery schools was started in England. Schools were started in slum areas for the children of those mothers, who used to go out for work. Today these are quite popular in every society. Miss Margaret McMillan a pioneer in this field has remarked, "Nurseries and Nursery Schools are wanted simply because little children want nurses."^9 The nursery schools are generally meant for children in the
Then came the Montessori school in the present century. Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952), was the founder of Montessori system of schools. She worked out her method among the poor as well as abnormal children in slum areas. She prepared specially designed didactic apparatus. Her emphasis was on sense training.

Arnold Gesell, an American psychologist introduced infant education on the foundations of psychology. He conducted research on pre-school education and arrived at the conclusion that mental disorders in adult life had roots in early childhood and these would not occur if there is proper child education.

Pre-primary education was at its infancy in this country before independence. Prior to the formation of Himachal Pradesh very little attention was paid to the pre-primary education. Christian missionaries and voluntary organizations had recognized the importance of nursery education. These Christian Missionaries were the first to start some nursery schools or attach nursery classes in convent schools during the last two decades of the 19th century. Initiative from the Government, however, came much later. The stay of Dr. Montessori in India (1940-48) gave a great encouragement to the movement. She trained a large number of teachers and opened a number of Montessori schools in big cities.
The Committee on Basic Education appointed by Central Advisory Board of Education recommended that Primary education should be supplemented by generous provision of nursery schools. Various commissions like Sargent Commission, Secondary Education Commission (S.E.C.), and Kothari Education Commission also gave their verdict in favour of pre-primary education.

Sir John Sargent, Educational Advisor to Government of India, made recommendations about nursery schools in his Report of 1944. He pointed out that an adequate provision of pre-primary instruction in the form of Nursery schools or classes should be an essential adjunct to any national system of education. Such schools should be staffed with women teachers who would have received special training for this work. Pre-primary education in all cases was suggested to be free. The main object of education at this stage was to give young children social experience rather than formal instruction.

Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), Kothari Education Commission (1966) and Committee of M.Ps on Education (1967) were all in favour of pre-primary education. Pre-primary schools are of four types as given below:

1. Kindergarten Schools: These are expensive schools, being run on Froebel's system of 'play theory' and are mostly attached to Public Schools or Convents.
2. **Montessori Schools**: These are still more expensive schools owing to the cost of scientific apparatus used on the pattern of Montessori system.

3. **Nursery Schools**: These schools are very well known in India and are being run on the scheme of Margaret McMillan.

4. **Pre-Basic Schools**: A few schools, on the pattern of Gandhiji's Basic education, are being run by Nai Talim Sangh, Wardha.13

Apart from above types these institutions are known by different names such as Happy Schools, Bal Mandir, Balkanji Bari, Balwari, Bal Shikshan Sangh School, infant and pre-primary.

**Pre-Basic Education**

A new outlook in pre-primary education is given by the experiment in pre-basic education, which begins from conception and continues till the age of four or six. It is divided into four categories— (1) from conception to birth (2) from birth to two and a half years (3) from two and half years to four (4) from four to six.14

Although the importance of pre-primary education is not being denied, yet it has not received so far the attention it deserves. Only well-to-do families are alive
to the need for pre-primary education, because perhaps they alone can afford it. These pre-primary schools which are mostly situated in urban areas are being run by private agencies and the same is true in Himachal Pradesh. Such schools are very costly. Government is not giving any grant-in-aid and the schools generally maintain themselves through fees. There are no centres for the training of pre-primary teachers in Himachal Pradesh.

There were no facilities for pre-primary education in Himachal Pradesh in 1948-49. Later two institutions were opened and both were maintained by the Territorial Council one at Bilaspur and the other at Mandi with total enrolment of 70.

Most of the pre-primary education institutions in Himachal Pradesh came into existence progressively only after independence. In Himachal Pradesh, a step towards pre-primary education was taken under the Five Year Development plans, in Community Development Blocks. Some provision was made to run Balwaries which were in fact preschool institutions for the development of child and were to prepare him for systematized schooling to enter the school at the age of 5 or 6 years. There were 151 Balwaries in the year 1980 which were being run through various voluntary organisations in the Pradesh. Welfare Department releases grant-in-aid for running and maintenance of these Balwaries every year. These Balwaries were
being run by voluntary organisations. The first organisation to run Balwaries is Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Shimla which was established on 15th August, 1949. The names of other organisations which run Balwaries are Himachal Pradesh State Social Welfare Board Mandi, Himachal Pradesh Council for Child Welfare, Shimla, Kasturba Child Welfare Association, Mandi and Harijan Sewak Sangh, Shimla. The details of Balwaries organisations through which they are being run and the year of inception is given below:  

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Organisation</th>
<th>Number of Balwaries from being run</th>
<th>Date/year from being run</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Himachal Pradesh State Social Welfare Board, Mandi</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>36 from 1971-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50 from 1979-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Harijan Sewak Sangh, Shimla</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>151</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Material collected from the official record of the Welfare department, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.
Balwaries functioned in Community Development Blocks to cater to the needs of the children before they took up the formal education starting with primary education which was compulsory. In these Balwaries recreation is arranged for the children between the age-group of 3 to 6 years. In these Balwaries, nutrition programmes were started where some items like milk, biscuits and other cereals were served. The nutritious food that is provided to these children is at the rate of 0.50 paise per child per day. The nutritious food was, of course, considered essential for children of this age group because chronic-malnutrition in the first five or six years can impair a child's brain development for life. There are a fairly large number of children who indeed suffer from 3rd or 2nd degree malnutrition. The physical retardation and related diseases brought about by under-nourishment are no less serious Medical treatment, can only provide temporary relief. The main problem being, malnutrition food supplements are essential. The nutrition programmes in Balwaries, however had meagre financial allocations and were not enough to meet the demand.

The provision for toys were made in the Balwaries. These Balwaries also provided a compound to serve as a playground for the children. The performance of these Balwaries encouraged the parents to send their children to these institutions. These Balwaries were located in villages which had good population and could not obviously be run in
areas which constituted villages of few dwellings. Balwaries did not exist in the urban areas of Himachal Pradesh.

In each Balwaries there is a Balsewika generally in the scale of clerk i.e., 400-600 (unrevised) and a helper at the fixed salary of Rs. 60/- P.M. The Balwareries classes are held for about 4 hours in a day from 10.00 A.M. In every Balwaries, there are about 20-25 children. The Balwareries cater to the needs of all sections of the society including scheduled castes and scheduled tribes without any discrimination. 17

The Integrated Child Welfare Scheme which is a centrally sponsored scheme, has emerged as a very important programme in the field of child welfare. 18 It is being run by Himachal Pradesh also under the welfare department. This scheme started in Himachal Pradesh in October 1975. The first project was started at Pooh in district Kinnaur. Integrated Child Development Services Project was also started in Rampur in the year 1981-82 with 100 Anganwaries.

The main objectives of Anganwaries were (a) to improve the nutritional and health status of children unto 6 years of age (b) To lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child (c) To reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and drop-out in schools (d) To achieve effective coordinated policy and its implementation amongst the various departments
to promote child development and (e) To enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.  

There were some nursery schools run by some private agencies as well as by Christian missionaries but the fee charged in such institutions was exorbitant and beyond the reach of poor people. Only the persons from middle class and well-to-do families could afford to send their children to such nursery schools. The Himachal Pradesh government was conscious of the difficulties of the weaker sections of the community, so the government started a good number of pre-primary schools, one each at tehsil headquarters at Arki, Solan, Bilaspur, Chamba, Kalpa, Mandi, Nahan, Paonta, Rampur and Theog. Then there were three non-government schools of which two were in Hamirpur District and one in Mandi district. The name of the two schools which are situated in Hamirpur district are Adarash Shishu Nursery School and Nehru Memorial Co-Education School, and the third one which is in Mandi district is Kasturba-Nursery School.

At the end of the IIIrd Five-Year Plan in 1965-66, the number of pre-primary schools in the State was 12. During the merger of Hill Areas from Punjab into Himachal Pradesh on 1st November 1966, one pre-primary school was in existence in those areas and was inherited from Punjab. In
1971-72 there were 10 government pre-primary schools and one Non-Government school. One more government pre-primary school was opened in 1972-73 and the number thus increased to 11 government schools and one non-government school. In 1973-74 and 1974-75 the number remained the same but in the year 1975-76 the Government Pre-Primary schools reduced to 10 and the Non-Government increased to 3 and thus the total number became thirteen. In 1980 also the Government Pre-Primary schools remained as 10.

There are quite a few Anglo-Indian Schools in Himachal Pradesh in which pre-primary education is imparted. These schools functioned during the period under study as well. These are: Loreto Convent Tara Hall, Auckland House School, Convent of Jesus and Mary, Bishop Cotton School all situated at Shimla. St. Stephen High School at Mandi, Wood Stone School at Solan, Sacred Heart School Dalhousie and Public School Dagshai. The name of the schools where pre-primary education is given and the number of students in such schools in the year 1980 was as follows:

Table 2.2.
The Position of Pre-Primary Schools in Himachal Pradesh as on 30-9-1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the School</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland House School, Shimla</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop Cotton School for Boys, Shimla</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convent of Jesus and Mary, Shimla</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loreto-Convent Tara Hall, Shimla</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas's High School, Shimla</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arya High School, Shimla</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daya Nand High School, Shimla</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.A.V. High School, Shimla</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Stone High School, Solan</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephan High School, Mandi</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garton Mission High School</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotgarh (Shimla District)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Heart High School, Dalhousie</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantorment Primary School, Dalhousie</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public High School, Dalhousie</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Heart Sidhpur</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan High School, Dharamsala</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School, Dagshai</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary's High School, Kasauli</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School Patalikuhan</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(District Kullu)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School Furawalla (Sirmur)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Sabathu</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab Government High School</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundernagar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project High School, Surgani, Chamba</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhava High School, Sungra (Kinnaur)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may not be out of place to mention here that many of the schools, no doubt, have a large number of facilities needed in Pre-Primary Schools, yet many suffer from a woeful lack thereof. A few suggestions therefore are essential. There should be very simple non-instructional curriculum for pre-primary school children. About the curriculum various suggestions have been made by different persons from time to time specially by Abbot and Wood. The views of Abbot and Wood need to be considered. They have suggested following six activities:

(i) Acting and singing
(ii) Physical exercises
(iii) Games and dancing
(iv) Care of flowers and animals
(v) Drawing
(vi) Making things.

Medical care, personal and community cleanliness, self-help, educational creative activities, social framing, speech training, Development of mathematical sense, scientific spirit and nature study, and music and development of rhythm including voice production and art are the items which should be taken into account in pre-primary schools. Light refreshment should be given to children. Furniture should be light and painted in various attractive colours. The chairs and tables should be small and should be of wood and light so that the little children can easily carry
them. Pets like parrot, dog, cat and pigeons etc. should be kept in the school. There should be a small and beautiful garden attached to the school. Beautiful flowers and small plants may be grown in pots by the small children. Pictures of plants, birds and animals etc. should be hung on the walls of the classroom. Dancing and singing should be taught. Equipments for dancing and singing should be kept. Ran about toys, manipulatory toys and simple-toys, toy banks should be provided to little children.

The methods of teaching should be through play, sensory training, self-expression, community living and companionship. Handsome pay should be given to women teachers in order to attract them to teach small children.

Beautiful Nursery rhymes should be taught to children with action. The nursery rhymes should be displayed to children on charts which should be hung on the walls of the classroom. Toy room should be attached to their rooms. Toilet should be attached to their rooms and a woman should always be kept to help them in going to toilets etc. They should maintain the children's health, interests and habits. The record of the children should be maintained. Nursery schools should be a separately located independent school and not nursery class tagged with some institutions.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid., p. 148.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


7. Ibid.


11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 46.

13. Ibid., p. 48.


17. Ibid.


21. Ibid., p. 128.

22. Ibid.


