Practice teaching plays a very important role in the education of a teacher. This is considered as the most valuable part of training by many trainees, as for the first time, the fresh graduates undergoing the course of training face a class. For the experienced teacher also, this part is valuable because, for the first time, he learns to deviate from his own method of teaching which he acquired either from his most favourite teacher or from his own experience as a pupil. All teachers in training are required to give a number of lessons under the supervision of training college staff in actual situation as a part of their practical training. The rules and regulations for this part of training and the number of lessons to be given differ from institution to institution. As a general rule, teachers-in-training are required to give about 40 lessons at the secondary level. About one third of the total marks for the Bachelor of Teaching/Education examination is earmarked for practice teaching.

The purpose of this study was to determine the following:
1. how seriously the B.T. candidates take this part of training;
2. What benefit the trainees actually derive from practice teaching;
3. what are the difficulties they experienced during the period of their practice teaching;
4. what they learn from their supervisors;
5. how effective the supervision programme is;
6. what are the suggestions from the side of the trainees for the improvement of teaching practice;
7. what is the relationship between the theoretical and the practical part of training; and
8. to find out how teaching practice can be improved.

Altogether 134 candidates studying in the B.T. Department of the Gauhati University were studied. They were observed in the local schools when they were doing their teaching practice. They were also interviewed after the class. These teachers-in-training were doing their teaching practice in the local schools of Gauhati for about a month in the month of September. After the completion of their teaching practice, they were given a questionnaire in the B.T. class-room in the month of October. Some of these candidates who answered this questionnaire were interviewed after some days and the problem of teaching practice was discussed with them. A copy of this questionnaire is given in Appendix-4 .
The educational qualifications of the teachers studied were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Sc.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A. (Hons)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Sc.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Com.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These teachers included both deputed and private students. The deputed teachers invariably had some teaching experience and the majority of private students also had some teaching experience ranging from a few months to several years. Some of the trainees received special training in the teaching of Sanskrit, Hindi, Geography and English. Few of them attended refresher courses for subject teachers.

Majority of the trainees studied Political Science and Assamese Second Language as their combination of studies in the B.A. course. Out of 134 candidates, 78 studied these two subjects besides the two compulsory subjects, English and Vernacular. It can be pointed out here that Political Science is not a school subject. These trainees had, therefore, difficulties in selecting three method subjects for the B.T. Examination. Under the rules and regulations of the B.T. Examination of the Gauhati
University, a candidate is required to select any three school subjects as their method subjects. English, Geography and Science are equivalent to two method subjects. Each method paper carries 50 marks and is therefore a half paper. The next highest number of candidates studied Economics and History as their optional subjects for their B.A. examination. The number of candidates with this combination was 24. Only one studied Mathematics and Economics and the rest of the trainees had other combinations such as Assamese or Bengali, Second Language and Philosophy, Sanskrit and Philosophy, Economics and Botany, Economics and Geography, Economics and Education, Education and Second Language, Education and Political Science, etc. The number of candidates selecting each of these combinations did not exceed ten.

In response to the query, 'What subjects you taught in the school?' majority of the candidates wrote that they taught languages - Assamese, Bengali or Hindi. The number of teachers teaching History occupied second position. There were very few teachers teaching, Geography, Science or Mathematics. From this it appears, that there are too many teachers for the teaching of History, Assamese, Bengali or similar subjects but not for Science or Geography or Mathematics. It is interesting to note here that majority of 134 trainees studied, selected 'Primary' method in their B.T. although they never taught in the primary classes and will not be required to teach in the primary schools after
training. On being asked why they selected the 'Primary method' the typical answer was that they liked young children. Many answered that the study of this method would be useful to them if they were appointed as Sub-Inspectors of Schools in future. The answers given by many were vague. 'To become an ideal teacher', 'to give proper education to our own children', 'to teach the young people', 'to introduce new methods of teaching', 'to know child psychology', 'to know about primary education' were some of the explanations given in writing for the selection of the 'Primary method'. When these candidates were interviewed later on, they gave a different version. At the writer's insistence to reveal the truth they frankly said that they selected the 'primary method' because that was an easy subject from the examination point of view.

Another interesting feature of teaching practice was that in the final examination in practice teaching, majority trainees selected the same topic or topics in Assamese and History. Alexander's invasion, Shivaji, Gautam are some of the topics of History most frequently selected for examination. 'Dhulikana Mai', 'Janambhumi' (two Assamese poems) are selected by most of the examinees. According to Rule 7 of the Rules and Regulations of the B.T. Examination of the Gauhati University, 'Candidates will be required to prepare, for presentation to the examiners at least a week before the examination, full teaching notes of three lessons, i.e., one lesson for each of the
subjects taken up under Section 2(v-vii). The notes should indicate (a) age of the pupils for whom the lesson is indicated, (b) the previous knowledge which they are assumed to possess, and (c) the diagrams, maps, apparatus and other illustrations which it is proposed to use. The examiner shall decide which of the lesson prepared by the candidate shall be given.

This is however never insisted upon. Examinees are at full liberty in the selection of their topics, class and subjects. At the time of admission also, the trainees are at full liberty in the selection of their method subjects irrespective of whether they studied or taught the subject earlier or not. In the absence of such a rule, the schools do not get trained teachers for all subjects. Practically, all teachers who are Arts Graduates invariably select Assamese and History and Primary as their method subjects. The subjects taught in the schools are in many cases different from what they studied in their degree course. A teacher studied English, Assamese Second Language and Economics in his B.A., he selected History for Practice teaching and he taught Social Studies and General Science in schools.

Rule 6 of the Rules and Regulations for the Bachelor of Teaching Examination of the Gauhati University states as follows regarding the number of lessons for teaching practice
and the arrangement of teaching practice in the recognised schools:

"Colleges affiliated for the B.T. Examination shall make systematic provision for enabling students to see lessons being given by teachers of special competence and experience. Criticism lessons shall be conducted in small groups of students. Each student shall give a number of lessons in the subjects taken up by him under 2(v-vii) in selected schools under supervision. The number of lessons shall in no case be less than 30. All lesson notes shall be available to the examiners at the time of practical examination." The same Rule also states that the number of supervised lessons should be at least 40. However, in practice no body follows this rule. As revealed by the present study, out of 134 candidates, no one taught even 30 lessons during their practice teaching. Out of 134 candidates only 5 wrote that they gave 30 lessons, one gave only 3 lessons, one 7, two 8 and all the rest gave less than 20 lessons the average being 17 lessons per head.

Several factors are responsible for the neglect of this aspect of training. The University has no demonstration school of its own. After the transfer of secondary education from the Gauhati University to the Secondary Education Board of Assam in 1962, the University has no control whatsoever over the secondary schools. In the absence of a school of its own, the department
of teachers' training has to send its trainees to the local schools of Gauhati. Some of the schools are very willing to accommodate a reasonable number of trainees to do their practice teaching, but most of the schools allow very reluctantly to teach as this totally upsets the school time-table. As the teachers in training want to teach only certain selected topics instead of following the usual courses of study, this adversely affects the progress of the school. Instructions to candidates to follow the usual course of the school are never insisted upon. Another factor which contributes to this, is that practice teaching is done at a time when the schools are very busy in preparing their pupils for their annual examination. They do not want to be disturbed at that time. On the other hand, from the side of the training college, this is the most convenient time for sending the trainees for teaching practice. The B.T. session of the Gauhati University commences in January each year and ends in December. The Summer Vacation is from 15th May to 14th July and the Puja Vacation is from the last week of September to the last week of October. The classes are actually held from the 1st week of February till the summer vacation and from the reopening day of summer vacation till the beginning of the Puja vacation. Without being acquainted with the Principles and Psychology of Education, School Organization and Administration, Methods and techniques of teaching, the trainees would be unable
to utilise their theoretical knowledge in the classroom. So, before the Summer Vacation, the trainees learn these principles and they are sent for teaching practice in August or September. Lectures are suspended during the period of practice teaching except for one day a week. Unlike the Post-Graduate session, the B.T. session commences from January to synchronize with the school session. This has been done to bring a teacher for training in the beginning of the school session instead of in July in which case the schools suffer for taking the teachers in the middle of the session. It is, therefore, necessary to find out a suitable time for practice teaching which would be convenient both for the practice teaching schools and the training colleges. If the training colleges follow a holiday list of their own avoiding the two long vacations of three months in a session of nine months, it will not be difficult to find out a suitable time for practice teaching. There is also no point in holding the classes from February instead of from the 2nd January. If the classes can be arranged from 2nd January, the period from the middle of April to the middle of May will be a more suitable time for practice teaching than the present one. The number of trainees also should be reasonable for each school. The present practice of allowing the trainees to select their own schools sometimes puts a huge number of students in the same school. This policy may be discontinued.
Supervision of teaching practice is very poor. In response to the question, "How many of your classes were supervised", only a few wrote 'all'. Many wrote 'not a single lesson'. Majority wrote that only one or two lessons were supervised during the whole practice period. This is again due to several factors. The B.T. Department of the Gauhati University has only three whole-time lecturers and all the rest are part-timers drawn from the various departments of the University. Many subject teachers are without any training and they are not competent to supervise. Those who want to supervise or those who actually supervise, have to move from one end of the city to the other without getting any travelling expenses from the University. Since no one is made responsible for the organization and supervision of teaching practice in the schools, it is a responsibility of all the staff members which ultimately means no body's business. Under such circumstances, supervision is bound to be very poor both from the point of quality and from the point of quantity. If we really want to improve the quality of teacher training in this country, we can no longer allow such things to happen. In the Colleges of Education of England, a senior member of the staff is exclusively in charge of teaching practice and all staff members engaged for supervision are paid from the Colleges of Education to meet their travelling expenses.
In response to the question, 'were you instructed to follow a particular method of teaching by your method teachers and if so what was that method?' majority replied 'no'. Those who had English Method wrote 'direct method' and one wrote 'we were directed to follow the Dalton Plan and the Project Method'. Some wrote 'Herbartian method' in reply to this question. The trainees, however, invariably followed the Herbartian steps of teaching during their practice teaching as well as in their final teaching examination. Some of the trainees followed all the five steps and some of them followed three steps only. There was no attempt on the part of any trainee to apply any other method of teaching.

As stated by the trainees, there were two demonstration classes in English and those who did not offer English did not attend these classes and most of the trainees wrote 'no' in response to the question 'was there any demonstration class from the training college?'. The system of demonstration class has its merits and demerits. If strictly followed, such classes may encourage stereotyped teaching and discourage originality and initiative on the part of a teacher. It is, therefore, advisable to instruct the trainees to observe several lessons in the recognised practice teaching schools given by teachers of repute. It is not necessary that all classes to be observed by the trainees should be given by trained teachers.
only. In the Colleges of Education in England, the trainees are never allowed to teach in a school without at least observing for ten days.

There was no guidance from the schools regarding their practice teaching. Many trainees wrote 'yes' in response to a question 'did you receive any guidance from the staff or the headmaster/headmistress regarding your teaching practice?'. When they were asked what guidance they did receive, they replied that they were given some advice regarding the teaching aids, availability of a particular class and on such other matters but not on how to teach or what to do or what not to do in their teaching practice.

There is also no guidance whatsoever from the training college. It is relevant here to refer to the system of supervision and organization of teaching practice in England. On the preliminary visit to the schools, students are asked to prepare as fully as possible by making themselves acquainted with the composition of the class they are supposed to work, with the time-table, scheme of work, teaching methods followed in the schools, books used, available teaching aids and so on, so that they can make the fullest use of such resources on their practice. The students enter their schemes and a full record of their work in their school practice teaching note-book. Students are also required to write their own
comments on lessons they have given. This enables them to observe the effect of their teaching and to learn from their mistakes. Students are given definite instructions before sending them to the schools.

Many Colleges of Education also give instructions to the supervisors. The following is an extract from the instructions issued by the Organising Tutor of the City of Birmingham College of Education.

"Many students are extremely apprehensive about their first practice and need encouragement and reassurance when they face a class for the first time. The practice should begin with the student observing lessons given by the class teacher. He should not be urged to begin teaching himself too soon, and, when he does begin to teach himself, he should do so with small groups before he attempts to teach the whole class.

On the first practice, assessment is a very minor matter. The tutor's object should be to help the student to achieve success in his contact with children. Never criticise a student in the hearing of the children. Seek ways of enhancing his authority. If you wish to talk to the class, ask his leave to do so. Only when there has been a complete breakdown in the student's contact with the class should you consider taking it over from him, even then, you should make it clear that you are sharing in the development of the lesson rather
than replacing the student. Your object should be to keep the student involved and to return the class to him at the earliest possible moment. When observing a lesson, you will generally wish to make yourself as inconspicuous as possible."

In response to the question 'did you receive full cooperation from your school in which you taught?' most of the trainees wrote 'yes' but when they were interviewed their interpretations gave different meaning from what they wrote. They have narrated their difficulties in response to the question 'what difficulties you experienced during your practice teaching?' as follows:

- Schools do not have black boards;
- Students cannot answer in English;
- Insufficient accommodation for the staff;
- Rooms not well furnished;
- Schools are unwilling to give a sufficient number of classes;
- Teaching aids are inadequate;
- Black boards are very small;
- As there was no supervision, defects were not rectified;
- Misbehaviour of students;
- Overcrowding etc.

Many however wrote that they had no difficulties during their teaching practice. The trainees in general did not consider the number of lessons too heavy for teaching practice.
The trainees were asked to give their own suggestions for the improvement of practice teaching. The suggestions are of the following types:

There should be Roll Call in the schools so that all trainees are compelled to attend the school;

A staff member from the University should always attend the schools;

Students should prepare the lesson plans themselves;

There should be more demonstration classes;

Supervision should be very regular;

The period of teaching practice should be distributed throughout the session instead of holding it for a month;

Frequent inspection and guidance from the headmaster should be available;

Practice teaching should be conducted group-wise throughout the session;

The number of subjects to be taken by a candidate should be reduced;

The number of lessons should be reduced;

Rules for teaching practice should be strictly enforced.

A question was asked to the trainees as to what they learnt during their teaching practice. The answer was vague in most cases. The typical answers were 'to maintain discipline', 'to make the students involved', 'to apply the steps', etc. Another question was asked about the role of the supervisor in the improvement of teaching practice. Practically every one said that there should be more supervision
so that the trainees could know their flaws and could improve their teaching.

From this study it appears that the trainees do not take teaching practice with any seriousness. Lack of proper supervision and the failure on the part of the training college to insist on the rules and regulations for teaching practice are the main causes for the neglect of this aspect of practical training on the part of the trainees. Another important factor is that all those who appear in the Final B.T. Examination pass in the Practice Teaching Examination. If there is any failure in this part, the percentage of failure is less than one percent.

In the absence of a reasonable number of demonstration or observation classes, the trainees do not learn anything, except theoretically, about the methods and techniques of teaching. Their ideas about the Project Method, Dalton Plan, Laboratory Method and the like always remain hazy. Theoretical knowledge obtained prior to their going to the schools for practice teaching is not utilised. The relationship between the theoretical portion and the practical portion of training, therefore, is not established. The tendency on the part of the trainees to follow the Herbartian Steps of teaching too mechanically robs away
from them originality and initiative. The Herbartian Steps are based on the school master's psychology and not on the psychology of the child. It makes the teachers method conscious. Lecture seems to be the only method of teaching followed by the trainees. The trainees as such do not derive any benefit from teaching practice. It is, therefore, necessary to bring certain effective changes immediately in the organization and supervision of teaching practice which will be suggested in the concluding chapter of this thesis.