CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

In the present educational system, children generally begin their formal schooling between the ages of 6 and 7. Before this age many children attend 'pre-schools' - a general term which we use to cover the variety of settings in which children receive caretaking before school age. Nursery, Kindergarten, Montessori, Balwadi, Anganwadi and day care centres (Creche) are the principal kinds of large scale pre-school institutions in Assam. These institutions have different aims and backgrounds and reflect to differing extents the needs of children, their parents and the wider society.

In Assam, the pre-school education is still in a state of infancy and there is lot to be developed to bring it to the mature stage. During this period, the children are distractable, shy and may be unco-operative but after attending pre-school the predictive value gets better, like controlled attention, memory, reasoning and perceptual relationship. At the same time they are also developed socially, physically, emotionally and intellectually. The objectives of the pre-school education, its needs and significance are the most important noted points to organise pre-school education for the children of 3 to 6 years. The aim of education for these children is to provide wholesome environment through organised care and non-formal education in a playway method. As a matter of fact, these early years are the most crucial years in terms of the child's over all growth and development, and especially of the mind's capacities.

Benjamin Bloom of the University of Chicago, in his "Stability and changing human characteristics" pointed out that half of all growth in human intelligence takes place between birth and four years; another 30% occurs between the ages of four and eight, and the remaining 20% between the
ages of eight and seventeen years. In other words, a major part of human intelligence develops during this period of early years. The influence of child's environment in stimulating maximum development of individual characteristics is greatest during the period of most rapid development i.e. during pre-school years (Verma, 1968).

1.1 Goals of pre-school education

The special goal of pre-school education is to focus different experiences, by its syllabus and teaching methods, forcing a more careful look at certain types of things. It helps to organise and structure information by providing certain types of experiences planned to clarify feeling, thinking and judgements. It expands knowledge by exposing to experiences and materials which have never been encountered before and which are not to be encountered without attendance at school. It helps to acquire the tools to continue learning, to search out information, reason out concepts, express thoughts and feelings in different play situations (Ruth, 1972).

As part of building confidence and self respect, the pre-primary school offers the child experiences which will help him to develop the skill he needs for intellectual mastery and for success in school. The curriculum of a good pre-school includes a carefully planned variety of experiences for developing linguistic skills, perceptual and conceptual skills as well as for developing a sense of the kind of person one is. Conversation, asking questions as well as answering them, reading, telling stories, making up stories, and dramatic play contribute to the improvement of this most important tool for learning and living with others (Read, 1967). The children must learn to share, to help each other, to listen and talk to each other. Because each child is only one among many, he must become more independent in the child's world.
The pre-primary school aims to develop a good physique, adequate muscular co-ordination and basic motor skills in the child. Through different activities in the pre-primary schools, children master the basic motor skills involving large muscles as well as finer muscular co-ordination (Muralidharan and Banerji, 1972).

The overall goal of pre-school education is to promote healthy growth. By healthy growth it means as proposed by the World Health Organisation as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." The pre-primary education is concerned with healthy personality growth, the result of physical, mental and social well being (Read, 1967).

The most crucial shaping of the young individual to fit in a particular society is generally believed to occur in early childhood years through pre-primary schooling according to Erikson, Radka, Yarrow and others. Dewey and Whiting and Child state that the extent to which this will or will not happen depends on the significance given to the young child in the educational philosophy of a country (Verma, 1968).

1.2 Pre-school provision: the present situation in Assam

It has been the recent Government policy in Assam to expand provision for the pre-primary education and there is a general public and professional consensus on the desirability of doing so, although at present progress has been halted on economic grounds.

According to Quinquennial Report for 1937–42 there were two infant schools in the province and in 1942–44, these increased to four. However, after independence, there has been a rapid growth in the pre-schools in the state. In 1960–61, there were 43 schools with an enrolment of 2,227 children.
A number of other schools also had the pre-primary classes attached to them. The total number of pupils in both the pre-primary schools and the pre-primary classes in 1960-61 was 7,547. The number of the pre-primary institutions in the year 1979-80 was 482 excluding Balwadis and Anganwadis. Till January 1981, the number of the pre-primary institutions remained constant of which 41 institutions are under private management but recognised by the state department of Education by sanctioning Grant - In - Aid and the rest are primary schools with pre-primary classes attached to it.

TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of pre-primary classes</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>8,651</td>
<td>7,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>9,289</td>
<td>8,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>5,992</td>
<td>4,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>8,993</td>
<td>7,870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Directorate of Public Instruction, Assam

The Government of Assam initiated a scheme as early as 1962 to recognise the five class lower primary schools by designing the first two classes (A and B) as pre-primary classes and to appoint full time teachers exclusively for pre-primary sections in the lower primary schools in a phased manner. Under the scheme, 473 additional teachers were appointed in Assam against 473 recognised lower primary schools to look after the primary sections.
While abolishing the classes A and B, from the five class primary school, the Education Commission suggested for 10 + 2 pattern of schooling at high and higher secondary school level and revised the age of admission in primary class from the age of 6+, and the age of 3+ for admission in the pre-primary classes. The number of teachers in these establishment varies depending on the number of children enrolled with the ratio of teacher and children as 1:45 on an average.

Most of the pre-school institutions works for 3 to 4 hours a day usually in the morning hours. There are two or three classes in the pre-primary sections. The lower class is termed as Nursery and then next is Kindergarten for two years programme and some time as Nursery, Kindergarten I and II for three years programme.

TEACHERS AND THEIR TRAINING : The professional education of pre-primary school teachers has been a sadly neglected field in the state of Assam. It has been and continues to be "No-Man's-Land". There is only one institution except a few under the voluntary and private organisations for training of pre-primary teachers at the state level in Dibrugarh, established in the year 1963 with an intake capacity of 40 pupils each year. This is a Government aided institution with a suitably qualified staff. It prepares more that 30 pre-primary teachers every year. Moreover, the Education Department of the State deputes 2 to 4 fresh graduates or school teachers to Tamil Nadu and New Delhi for the training in Montessori method (IAPE, 1972).

Since the Government has not given much attention as far as the development of pre-primary teacher training is concerned, naturally private and voluntary organisations have taken the lead in organising training programmes at their own will. Minimum standards and requirements for teacher training have not been laid down, hence it is confronted to-day with problems
of having no uniformity of standards in the programmes offered in various institutions.

**TABLE II**

Number of teachers in pre-primary classes in Assam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>N.F.</td>
<td>N.F.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Untrained:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>N.F.</td>
<td>N.F.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Directorate of Public Instruction, Assam.

Dearth of trained teacher is the result of failure in the scheme of early childhood education. The number of untrained teachers are more than double the number of trained teachers as employed in various pre-schools of Assam. The total number of teachers were also increased slightly in the year 1976-77 and has declined after 1978.

Thus, a review of pre-primary education in the state of Assam clearly brings out the fact that inspite of the various steps that were taken up, not much attention has been given to the special education of these youngsters.
1.3 Voluntary action and the pre-school child

Voluntary action by individuals, communities and organisations has existed from ancient days for different welfare activities in the country. Due to paucity of resources, the Government cannot provide all the services needed by its citizens. By encouraging voluntary participation, the Government expected that resources not otherwise available to it could be channelled for the common goods. Besides, voluntary organisations were supposed to have the advantages of flexibility and the capacity to experiment in conducting programmes in close rapport with the community. This expectation is apparent in the First Plan statement that voluntary agencies must continue to shoulder the major responsibility for organising social welfare services for sometimes to come.

Voluntary Organisations and Social Services:

Some welfare agencies, focuses attention on pre-school children by organising services such as child health centres, creches, day nurseries, Kindergartens, balwadis and other types of pre-primary schools, feeding centres, milk distribution centres, play centres etc. At the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan, when a planned approach to child welfare was made, there were 558 voluntary organisations rendering welfare services for children. Of these, 152 organisations provided education for children, 98 offered nutrition services, 95 rendered welfare services for socially handicapped children, 89 provided recreational and cultural programmes, 76 promoted medical and health facilities, 23 organised maternity and child welfare services, 29 undertook research work and another 10 provided facilities for psychological services (NIPCCD, 1976).

At the state level, Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) through its different branches in the district has focused the attention
of the people and the authorities on the needs of children. The ICCW together with the Central Social Welfare Board, assisted the Government in setting up the child welfare demonstration projects in the Third Plan. In this plan period, ICCW was given major responsibility for training balsevikas. The ICCW and the All India Women's conference have set up an adoption committee to accelerate passage of the Indian Adoption of Children Act.

Among the other organisations for child welfare, mention may be made of Balakon-ki-Bari founded in 1926 for the promotion of the education of children and their physical, mental and moral welfare. It runs nursery schools, children's clubs, play grounds, children's literacy programmes, child art and craft, etc. Kishore Bal in Bihar founded in 1942, Nanhi Duniya in Uttar Pradesh founded in 1946, and Bachchon Ki-Bidari started in 1949 in Delhi have organised Shishu Bhavans, Kishore Dal clubs, child art exhibitions, play centres, and distributed milk. The Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh and the Harijan Sevak Sangh also have organised services for underprivileged children (NIPCCD, 1976).

Indian Red Cross Society, a well known organisation distributes nutrition tablets, milk powder, and butter oil through its branches spread over the country. The All India Women's Conference started milk centres through its branches in some of its states. The Meals for Millions Association of India (New Delhi), formed in 1945, devotes itself to the relief and prevention of malnutrition. Its aim is to supplement diets deficient in proteins and vitamins. It prepares a low cost food of high nutritive value, the Indian Multipurpose Food, which is prepared from specially processed defatted groundnut flour (75 parts) and roasted Bengal gram flour (25 parts) and fortified with essential minerals and vitamins. The Association distributes this food free of charge among children's institutions, orphanages,
Voluntary Organisations and Pre-School Education:

The beginning of efforts for providing pre-school education can be traced back to 1885 when the Loreto Convent school opened a kindergarten in Lucknow. This was followed by a similar one at Poona. Both these efforts were pioneered by a Missionary Organisation (Baruah, 1986).

Prior to 1947, provision for pre-school education was entirely in the private sector. The pioneering efforts of Sri Gijubai Bhadeka, Smt. Tara Bai Modak, and Shri S.N. Namala, Dr. G.S. Arundale, and Smt. Rukmini Arundale and others contributed to the rich tradition of pre-school education which received further impetus with the stay of Madame Maria Montessori in India. Shri Gijubai Badeka started a Nursery school in Bhannagar in Gujarat in 1926. Smt. Tara Modak worked at the unique experimental centre called Gram Bal Sikshan Kendra at Kosbad in Thana district of Maharashtra. The influence of Tagore and Annie Besant in promoting and spreading the idea also cannot be overlooked (MSW, 1983).

The contribution of Madame Montessori marked a new era in this field of pre-school education in India. With the help of enthusiastic people, she opened several nursery schools for children based on Indian condition. She has adopted special methods of training young children from Mahatma Gandhi's Basic education in India (Baruah, 1986).

The founding of the Indian Council for child Education under the patronage of Smt. Sarala Devi Bajpai gave further impetus to the movement.
Even many conferences were held for promoting pre-school education in India (NIPCCD, 1976).

1.4 Governmental concern and committees:

Governmental concern for the promotion of services for the growth and development of pre-school children is evident from the number of expert bodies that have been set up by various departments from time to time. The Government has financially assisted voluntary organisations through the grant-in-aid system channelled through the Central Social Welfare Board. Most of the committees set up by the Government have included representatives of voluntary agencies and outstanding social workers. These committees have played an important role in charting the direction of child health, welfare and education policies (IAPE, 1972).

Governmental concern for pre-school education was first visible in 1944 with the publication of the report of the central Advisory Board of Education, on Post-war Educational Development in India, named as the Sargent Committee's Report. The Commission recommended that "Pre-school should be free and no pains should be spared to make as attractive as possible with the object of persuading parents to send their children voluntarily. The report for the first time pointed out that "the state should provide pre-primary education and popularise it". The committee also visualised a special allocation of 1.02 per cent of the total expenditure on education for pre-primary children. This recommendation was not acted upon for several years (MSW, 1983).

In 1953, the Central Social Welfare Board was set up with the objective of giving assistance to voluntary social welfare organisations throughout the country to maintain and develop their existing programmes.
as laid down in the first Five-Year Plan. The board also placed considerable emphasis on programmes for pre-schools children. Since the board has been developing "balwadis" under the various categories of programmes directly through grants to voluntary agencies and other departments like the community development and the local authorities have developed programmes along the similar lines. The Board also set up training courses for the teachers of pre-school children (MSW, 1983).

In 1953, a study team on social welfare of the Backward classes was constituted by the committee on plan projects on Planning Commission. The committee also emphasised the need for promotion of Balwadi programmes in rural and slum areas for the benefit of the underprivileged children (MSW, 1983).

The constitution of a child care committee by the Ministry of Education and the Central Social Welfare Board in 1960, to prepare a comprehensive plan for the care of children in the 0-6 years age group marked another milestone in the history of the development policy regarding the pre-school child in India (IAPE, 1972).

In 1961, the ICCW with the assistance of the central social welfare Board started the First Balsevika training programme in two centres. The number has now expanded to more than 30. This was a major landmark in the evolution of programme for pre-school education.

The education commission appointed by the Government of India in July 1964, also made significant recommendations with regard to pre-school education, stating that private enterprises should be made responsible for setting up and running pre-schools, the state assisting with grant-in-aid on the basis of equalisation. The state should provide proper supervision and
guidance, model schools, training, research and preparation of literature. These recommended programmes also have almost remained uncared for so far (IAPE, 1972).

In August 1968, the Govt. of India passed the National Policy Resolution on Education. It is significant for its omission of any reference to pre-school education (MSW, 1983).

In 1968, another committee, under the chairmanship of Sri Ganga Saran Sinha (M.P) was set up by the department of Social Welfare to determine the educational needs of children in various fields of development. The committee suggested that Balwadi education should be the responsibility of the local community as well as the voluntary organisations and emphasised the need for heavy state investment in these sectors in the immediate future. The implementation of this report remained limited (IAPE, 1972).

In 1970, the Central Advisory Board of Education recognised the significance of pre-school education and recommended to try out a pilot project to develop a programme for pre-schools by mobilising the local community resources, especially in rural areas (NIPCCD, 1976).

During 1972, the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare appointed a study group on the development of pre-school child and recommended a variety of models of pre-school to suit the local conditions and a programme personnel to be trained. The community should be involved fully in the provisions of various facilities like accommodation for pre-schools (NIPCCD, 1976).

On the recommendations of an interministerial team, constituted by the planning commission, the integrated child Development Services (ICDS) scheme was launched in 1975 in 33 selected blocks throughout the country. Accordingly, pre-school education formed a crucial component in the
ICDS scheme for the children of 3 to 6 years to look after the needs of young children including supplementary feeding and health services (Baruah, 1986).

In 1980, a child care committee was set up to prepare a comprehensive plan for the care and training of children below 6 years. The responsibility of starting pre-school should be left to voluntary organisations and recommended for midday meals and emphasised the importance of training of various categories of personnel to maintain the minimum standard of pre-schools throughout the country (NIPCCD, 1976).

In May 1986, the National Policy on Education (NPE) was approved by the Lok Sabha and emphasises investment on the development of the young child, particularly children from section of the population in which first generation learners predominate.

Recognising the holistic nature of the proper child development, viz. nutrition, health, social, mental, physical, moral and emotional development will receive high priority and be suitably integrated with the Integrated child Development Services (ICDS) scheme wherever possible. Day care centres will be provided as a support service for universalisation of primary education, to enable girls engaged in taking care of siblings to attend school and as a support service for working women belonging to poorer sections.

The programmes of ECCE will be child centred and focussed around play. In should take into account the individual difference of children and should aim at their all round development. It cautions against the dangers of using formal methods of teaching and the early introduction of the 3R's in the early childhood stage. The local community will be fully involved in these programmes.
The existing ECCE programmes includes:

1) Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

2) Scheme of assistance to voluntary organisations for conducting early childhood education centres (ECE);

3) Balwadis and day care centres run by voluntary agencies with Governmental assistance;

4) Pre-primary schools run by the State Governments, Municipal Corporations and other agencies;

5) Maternal and Child health services through primary health centres and sub-centre and other agencies.

What is aimed at is the full integration of child care and pre-primary education both as a feeder and as a strengthening factors for primary education in particular and for human resource development in general.

The review of the growth of pre-school education brings out the fact that despite various recommendations made by different committees, not much attention yet has been given to pre-school education. Yet, it is the responsibility of voluntary organisations for the care and education of these young children through pre-school education (Baruah, 1986).

1.5 Need and Objectives of the study

In India, in the mid 1980s there were some 115 million children in the 0 through 6 age group comprise about 21 per cent of the total population. The proportion of the child population is not likely to decrease in the next decade. The distribution of population is about 74 per cent in rural, 20 per cent urban and 6 per cent tribal. About 40 per cent of the children are below the subsistence level: 34.0 million in rural areas, 9.2 million in urban areas and 2.8 million in tribal areas. The combination of these figures mean staggering of 46 million children living in conditions below the minimum of survival level (Census of India, 1971).
The infant mortality rate of India is still very high, it is 105 deaths for every thousand births and in educationally backward areas, for example, the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, it is as high as 156. The morbidity of children in pre-school stage is also alarmingly high. While infant mortality is 7 to 8 times of that in developed countries, the mortality between 1 and 4 years is 45 to 50 times of that in the developed countries. It is estimated that 1.5 million per year die of diarrhoea alone. Different pre-school centres are expected to play a leading role in this effort (Muralidharan, 1986).

The general literacy rate has improved, but not as substantially as hoped for, over the last decade; it was 24 per cent in 1961 and 30 per cent in 1971. Family size continues to be large among the low income groups, notwithstanding the family planning programme. Migration to already congested areas continues unabated. In 1901, the urban population was 11 per cent of the total by 1981, it had arisen to 25 per cent (Census of India, 1981).

It was observed that during the same period the mothers of pre-school age group engaged in paid employment increasing at a fast rate. The shortfall of institutional provision for working mothers is obvious, and many young children are in fact cared for by childminders - often parents themselves who take in several other young children. In different states of India, there is a considerable feeling that a policy of increasing organised pre-school provision should be pursued. Financial considerations have tended to curtail any large scale implementation of such policies, but in future pre-school facilities may accommodate many more young children than they do at present.
While the ultimate success of pre-school institutions can be judged by the impact they make on the healthy growth of the children, it needs to be realised that efficient delivery of benefits and services offered by them and their proper utilization by the beneficiaries are essential prerequisites for ensuring the desired impact of the healthy growth of the beneficiaries. The implementation of even a very well conceived programme may pose problems and difficulties which may impede efficient delivery of benefits and their proper utilisation by the beneficiaries. It is, therefore, necessary that the implementation of these programmes is evaluated and studied systematically to have a realistic assessment of the manner in which the different pre-school institutions in Assam are actually functioning and their utility by the public. Such efforts may be made with a view to identifying the points of divergence between what is envisaged in the programmes and what obtains in the field and the problems experienced by the organiser and the parent beneficiaries. Empirical studies on these lines may also suggest modifications in the method of pre-school programming for actual implementation of these programmes. The present study is an effort in this direction.

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To make a review of the pre-school programmes in the state of Assam and to know its status in general.

2. To make an indepth study of the pre-primary effectiveness of the existing teaching methods in pre-primary schools of different localities of the study area.

3. To find out the facilities provided to the beneficiaries as it obtains in the field.
4. To identify the problems experienced by the teachers and to know their views while implementing pre-school services to the beneficiaries.

5. To know the awareness on the part of the parents on the impact of pre-school education for the healthy growth of children.

6. To suggest modifications in the implementation of strategy for making the organisation for delivery of benefits more effective and for ensuring proper utilization of the benefits by the beneficiaries.