CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Prelude:

Education is a distinct human activity. Human being without education is like the animal. Primitive education was primarily related to skill learning of man for his survival. But present education is not only that; it is more complex and complicated. Scientific development, modern economic outlook and modern way of life have made life of man more challenging. The total system of modern life compels man to think afresh about all aspects of human life.

Education is such an activity which is important for the proper development of total human potentiality. Its importance for the development of human being has been realised since times immemorial. Every individual without education is incomplete. And so, philosophers and leaders of human thought, have eloquently sung its praises in all ages. Aristotle has gone to the extent of saying, “Educated men are as much superior to uneducated as the living being are to the dead.” Knowledge or education is more purifying on the earth than anything else.

Education is a continuous process. It starts at the cradle and ends at the grave. There are different stages of human development and
accordingly educationists have arranged different stages of education. Pre-school age is the age between 3 + to 5 + of a little child. This stage of human being is crucial and significant from different point of view. Gabriela Mistral’s observation is very significant in this regard. He said, “We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life.

Many of the things we need can wait.
The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, His blood is being made and his senses are being developed.
To him we cannot answer ‘Tomorrow’.
His name is ‘Today’.
Her name is ‘Today’.

1.2 Comments of great educators (east and west) :

John Amos Commenius (1592—1670) the father of modern education has recognised the importance of early childhood and preschool education. He observed that education is a development of the whole man. If the superstructure is not to totter, the foundation must be laid well, studies should be adapted to the capacity of the pupil. The proper education of the young does not consist in stuffing their heads with a mass of words, sentences and ideas dragged together out of various authors, but in opening their understanding to the outer world, so that a living stream may flow from their own minds, just as leaves, flowers and fruit spring from the buds on a tree.
Rousseau has also emphasised the childhood age of the little child and also his education. According to him people should love the childhood, indulge its sports, its pleasures, its delightful instincts. He said that man should regard the child as a child not as a man. If we can treat him as a child then only we can give him better pre-school education.

Pestalozzi who psychologises education has influenced the pre-school education. According to him child’s education must be natural. In a natural setting the child can listen better and the senses of freedom will give him more strength to overcome difficulties.

Froebel, the world famous educator has developed the kindergarten system of childhood education and ultimately help the child in the real sense. Froebel was the first person to delineate in a systematic way how young children should be educated. His statement, “Educate every child as if he were your own” contains all the important principles of the child’s education.

The great American educationist, philosopher John Dewey’s name is also taken very respectfully, when we speak about the education of the pre-school children. According to him freedom is an important element in the education at the pre-school level. Nothing should be imposed on the child from above. Anything impairing one’s freedom is disliked and even play when imposed tends to lose its charm. So John Dewey was always against the force from the above. He stressed on free movement of the child.
Maria Montessori achieved a universal reputation for her unique contribution to the early childhood education. According to her education is not teaching something to the little boy or girl. It is development itself. She emphasized the complete unfolding of the child’s individuality. She observes, the child is a body which grows and a soul which develops.... we must neither mar nor stifle the mysterious form which lies within these two forms of growth, but await for the manifestation which we know will succeed one another. Self education or auto-education, not imposed education is the method of Montessori system of education for the childhood level. Spontaneity is an essential criteria of her education.

India was perhaps the earliest country to think of some kind of a systematic education of the child from the beginning through the various stages of its life. It is commonly believed in India that ‘Abhimanyu’ learnt the art of entering the ‘Chakravyuh’ a circular formation of an army in the battle-field during the period of conception of his mother.

Indian philosopher Swami Dayananda’s belief was outstanding about the education of the little child. According to him, a man becomes learned and wise only when he has three proper instructors—the mother, the father and the teacher. Education is a continuous process, which begins from the mother’s womb. A pleasant environment should be created from the time of conception. Since the mother is the first teacher, she should inculcate in the young child qualities of cheerfulness, truth, patience and honesty.
Swami Vivekananda, disciple of Ramkrishna has contributed a lot in the concept of child education. He said that no one was really taught by another. Each of us has to teach himself. A child educates itself. According to him for the little child play is more important than the study of Gita.

Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore was very much sympathetic towards the life of the little children. He said that it is mistake to judge boys by the standards of grown-ups. Adults ignore the natural gifts of children and insist that children must learn through the same process as themselves. This is man’s most cruel and most wasteful mistake.

Gandhiji, the great soul of great India will be remembered for his manyfold activities in Indian soil. Gandhiji was very much particular about the pre-school education of the children. He wrote in his autobiography, “We labour under a sort of superstition that the child has nothing to learn during the first five years of its life. On the contrary the fact is that the child never learns in after life what it does in its first five years. The education of the child begins with conception.

1.3 Pre-school education. What is it?

Pre-school\textsuperscript{5} education refers to the education of the young child, usually of 3 to 5 or 6 years of age, that is, up to the age of entry into primary school. A pre-school centre of education is a place where some programmes are initially taken up to accelerate growth and development.
of children of the age group of 3+ to 5+. This period is, in some places extended up to 6+ looking to the cultural heritage and entry age to formal education. In some places even children of age 2+ are also taken in. In spite of all these variations the pre-school period is generally for 2 years, may be, from 3+ to 5+ or 4+ to 6+. This period is in some institutions divided into lower K.G. and upper K.G. In some institutions this division is known as nursery class and K.G. Class.

Pre-school education is the education that a child receives before entering primary school at the age of 6 years.

1.4 The importance of pre-primary education:

The progress and prosperity of any nation are intimately related to the maximum growth and development of children. This can be possible only when there is a systematic and well-planned pre-school education. Because pre-school level is such a period of life which is regarded as the foundation of future life. Great psychologists and educationists of different countries have remarkably emphasised on this period of life. Edgar Foure and others in their important Report 'Learning to be' have mentioned that the importance of early childhood in later development of aptitudes and personality is beyond doubt, as modern psychologists and ordinary observation testify. Robert Fulghum was right when he said, All I really needed to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandpile.
Research studies conducted by the psychologists and educationists, all over the world have showed that an adequately enriched environment in early childhood brings about optimum development in various aspects of the child. It is felt that pre-school education is absolutely essential for the maximisation of educational development of the child. In his autobiography Gandhiji said about the great importance of first five years of life. It is felt that on the basis of proper pre-school education the future development of the child is estimated. It is possible only with a proper and adequate pre-school system. Only proper and adequate educational and stimulating environment of pre-school institution can help the little child to grow and develop to the maximum. To bring the necessary physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of the child, adequate and planned pre-school education is a must. It is said that these aspects of development should be taken care of from the early childhood for the all round growth of the child’s personality. Benjamin Bloom, an eminent psychologist and educationist observed that environment from the first six to seven years of life is very significant for cognitive development. Therefore, all kinds of facilities should be provided to the child to explore, to enquire, to play and to interact with his peers for optimum education.

The Planning Commission of India in its sixth plan framework states that attention should be paid to all children during their crucial development years. The pre-school years of a child is the period of its maximum learning and intellectual development and hence of gross potential educational significance.
Shiva Kumar Mitra, the former director, NCERT rightly pointed out that if children were made to take interest in learning right from the tender age, then it would appreciably bring down the present high drop out rate of about 60 percent in the first five years of primary schooling. Hence pre-school education is given special importance by the educationists as well as planners.

The Kothari Commission have also rightly mentioned that pre-primary school were first established to meet social needs such as looking after the children of working mothers or providing a suitable environment to the boys and girls from urban families whose small tenements or flats were hardly appropriate for the children's proper growth. So pre-primary education should be planned in such a way, which can fulfill the needs and requirements of the pre-school children.

**Report and Recommendation related to Pre-school.**

1. In 1944\(^8\), the Surgent Committee Report gave stress on the following points relating to Pre-primary education:

   (a) An adequate provision of Pre-primary institutions in the form of Nursery schools or classes is an essential adjunct to any national system of education.

   (b) In urban areas, where sufficient children are available within a reasonable radius, separate Nursery schools or departments
may be provided. Nursery classes should be attached to junior Basic Primary schools.

(c) Nursery schools and classes should invariably be staffed with women teachers who have received special training for this work.

(d) Pre-primary education should, in all cases, be free. While it may not be feasible to make attendance compulsory, no efforts should be spared to persuade parents to send their children to school voluntarily.

(e) The main object of education of this stage is to give young children social experience rather than formal instruction.

2. In 1952-53, the Secondary Education Commission recommended Nursery schools for the age group 3—6. The report says, "At the Pre-primary stage, Nursery schools of various types exist in some states but on a very small scale. At this stage the child is introduced to the joy of learning through companionship and recreational activities and it is slowly guided in proper habits so necessary later for a community life. In several states, there are a few such Nursery schools run by private organisations or by missions and where they have been so established, they have done excellent work. The cost involved and the very limited number of trained personnel precludes any large expansion of Nursery schools. The age of admission to Nursery school varies, in some States
it is between 3 and 5, in some, the children are trained up to the age of 7.

3. The Indian Education Commission's (Kothari Commission) recommendations include various aspects of Pre-school education.

"Pre-primary education is of great significance to the physical, emotional and intellectual development of children especially those with unsatisfactory backgrounds. An enrolment of 50% in the age group 5 to 6 in the Pre-school will be a reasonable target by 1986".

4. The Gangacharn Committee Report—In 1968, the Government of India set up another committee under the chairmanship of Sri Ganga Charan Sinha. The committee report highlighted the following points:

(i) The report recommended that 82 percent of the total budget for welfare and education be earmarked for education (including Pre-school education) and 14 per cent for Health and Nutrition Programmes. It suggested that "Ultimately the programme of Balwadi education should become the responsibility of the local community as well as voluntary organisation". It is for the first time felt the need for heavy investment in these sectors in future.

Committee of Members of Parliament (1967) emphasised on Pre-school education and suggested that financial assistance should be provided to voluntary organisations for running Nursery schools.
Central Advisory Board of Education in 1970 recognised the importance of Pre-school education and gave stress in developing a Pre-primary programme by mobilising community resources in rural areas.

Study group on Pre-school child in 1972: Mrs. Swaminathan study group appointed by Govt. of India also laid emphasis on co-ordination of different efforts for development of pre-school education. It recommended the following points:

(i) Integrated services combining education, health, nutrition and welfare are essential for the development of the Pre-school child.

(ii) The objective of such services should be to promote the optimum physical, mental, emotional and social development of the Pre-school child.

(iii) The concerned agencies should make co-ordinated effort to provide these services.

(iv) Basic data should be collected at regular intervals for proper planning, implementation and evolution of programmes for the Pre-school child.

(v) In drawing up a programme of the services for the Pre-school population special attention needs to be given to the vulnerable
groups of children remedying imbalances in the distribution of services, co-ordination among the agencies involved in the programme, expansion and re-orientation of the training programme and provision of guidance and supervision.

(vi) Strategies that would help in undertaking a sizeable programme within the limited resources available include mobilising community support and involvement, employing women in rural areas, part-time students, maximum utilisation of existing institutions and facilities and adoption of variety of models.

(vii) About one million children in the age group of 3–5 are covered at present by existing services. A reasonable and feasible target of enrichment would be made to cover 10 p.c. or 5 million children by 1981. Priority should be given to children from the vulnerable sections of the population i.e. children from urban slums, tribal areas and underprivileged group in rural areas.

(viii) A variety of models have been suggested which may be adopted to each situation in the most advantageous manner possible. These include the comprehensive Day Care Centres mainly for Urban slums, half-day Balwadis, first stage centres, Anganwadis mainly for rural areas and primary school based centres.
(ix) An adequate training programme of good quality should be designed for all categories of workers, the part time worker, the local woman worker and supervisor.

(x) Suitable and adequate play and educational equipment needs to be provided.

(xi) Immediate steps should be taken to produce the needed literature for teachers, teacher trainees, teacher educators, supervisors, administrators and planners, the community and the children.

(xii) Special emphasis should be laid on the development of appropriate programme of research.

(xiii) Implementation of a comprehensive programme requires a strong administrative machinery at all levels—national, state, district and local (rural and urban).

(xiv) The maximum amount of community participation should be mobilised for the development of the Pre-school child. Such participation would include contribution in cash or kind, contribution towards building, equipment and feeding programmes. Well-to-do communities should also extend support to those who are less advantageously placed. Local bodies should explore all avenues to raise for Pre-school
services.

5. National Seminar in 1971: In 1971 a National Seminar on Pre-school Education was held and made the following recommendations:

(i) Special cells of Pre-primary education should be created in the State Institute of Education.

(ii) Voluntary organizations working in the field of education should be encouraged for its further expansion.

(iii) Less costly equipment should be developed with the help of indigenous materials and the community resources should be utilized for the purpose.

(iv) To facilitate training in Pre-school education, principles of child care and Pre-school education should be included in Primary school teacher training.

(v) The programme for the Pre-school education can be made interesting and effective if it is closely related to the home and community development of the child.

(vi) Various techniques can be used to popularise and develop Pre-primary education such as introducing shift system in Primary schools, employing retired personnel, engaging
educated or semi-educated wives of Primary school teachers, attaching Pre-primary classes to primary school, using mass media etc.

(vii) The State Government should take the responsibility of providing funds for training teachers and supervisors for Pre-primary education.

9 National Policy of Education 1986 and Pre-primary education:

This is discussed under Early Childhood Care and Education. The main points:

1. The National Policy especially emphasises investment in the development of the young child, particularly children from the section of population in which first generation learners predominate.

2. Recognising the holistic nature of child development ECCE will receive high priority and be suitably integrated with the Integrated Child Development Services Programme (ICDS). Day care centres will be provided as a support service for universalisation of primary education, to enable girls engaged in taking care of sibling to attend school and as a support service for working women belonging to poorer sections.

3. Programme of ECCE will be child oriented, focused around play and individuality of the child. Formal methods of the introduction
of 3 R’s will be discouraged at this stage.

4. The full integration or child care and pre-primary education will be brought about, both as a feeder and a strengthening factor for primary education and for human resource development in general. In continuation of this stage, the School Health Programme will be strengthened.

The Revised National Policy on Education 1992—The Revised National Policy of Education has also reiterated the postulates and provisions of NPE, 1986 on ECCE.

1.5 Aims and objectives of pre-primary education:

With a view to promoting physical, mental, social and aesthetic development of young children, the pre-primary education must have clear-cut aims and objectives.

Froebel the great educationist laid down some very significant aims of pre-school education and that aims cannot keep aside at the time of formulating any scheme of pre-school education. Following are the aims of pre-school education recommended by Froebel:

(i) To provide opportunities and equipment for fulfilling physical needs of young child.10
(ii) To provide satisfying learning experience.

(iii) To help children to develop their creative intellectual sides.

(iv) To develop interest of children in things and persons.

(v) To provide varied experiences for the modification of behaviour and control over the environment.

(vi) To offer a common ground between home and school and promote parent-teacher relationship.

(vii) To provide opportunities for fullest development of inherent potentialities of the child through rich, healthy, joyous experiences.

(viii) To provide varied experiences of children for expansion of social relationships.

(ix) To build up a warm, happy and wholesome climate for growing children.

According to Miss Grace Owing, a pioneer, in the field of early childhood education, there are seven objectives of pre-primary schools. These are as follows:
(i) To provide healthy environment to the children like space, fresh air, light and sunshine.

(ii) To provide a healthy, happy and regular life.

(iii) To provide continuous medical supervision.

(iv) To assist each child to form for himself wholesome personal habits.

(v) To give opportunity for the development of different interests and skills of various kinds.

(vi) To give experience of social life, on a small scale where children work and play together.

(vii) To establish real unity between external environment and home life.

Sergent Report on objectives of pre-primary education was very much specific. According to that Report of 1944, the main objective of education at the pre-school stage should be to give young children social experience rather than formal instruction.

The Secondary Education Commission (1952–53) on objectives
of pre-school education goes on the following lines:

1. Introducing the child to the joys of learning through companionship and recreational activities.

2. Providing opportunities for developing proper habits of life, cleanliness and healthy modes of living.

3. Cultivation of social habits so necessary for a community life.

Child Care Committee 1963–64 on objectives of the pre-school:

The committee listed the following objectives of pre-school education under the chair personship of Smt. B. Tarabai—

(i) Taking very great care of the physical development of the child in the very early years in terms of health, nutrition, posture and capacities for activities.

(ii) Developing habits of cleanliness in the pre-school child at home as well as in the school.

(iii) Providing adequate nourishment in kind and quantity for growth of vigorous healthy bodies.

(iv) Providing facilities for training and exercise in personal cleanliness and hygienic habits.
(v) Providing play ground activities and handiwork activities necessary to develop all the skills of the child to deal with the environment.

(vi) Providing opportunities for the emotional development of the child.

(vii) Providing opportunities for developing good behaviour patterns.

(viii) Providing a suitable environment for the development of the senses on which depend the total mental life and the psychological health of the child.

The Indian Education Commission 1964-66 has enunciated the following objectives of pre-primary education:

1) To develop in the child, good health, habits and to build up basic skills necessary for personal adjustment, such as dressing, toilet habits, eating, washing, cleaning etc.;

2) To develop desirable social attitudes and manners and to encourage healthy group participation, making the child sensitive to the rights and privileges of others;

3) To develop emotional maturity 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 and to help him understand the world in which he lives and to foster new interest through opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment;

6) To encourage independence and creativity by providing the child with sufficient opportunities for self-expression;

7) To develop the child’s ability to express his thoughts and feelings in fluent, correct and clear speech; and

8) To develop in the child a good physique, adequate muscular coordination and basic motor skills.

The above objectives of pre-school education are based on thoughtful experimentation and on long experiences. The objectives which are given by the National Council of Educational Research and Training and subsequently approved by the Kothari Education Commission, has historical importance.

The development of child is an integrated, multidimensional and co-operative process. Pre-school, family and other related social agencies if use their co-operative and co-ordinated efforts, the aims and objectives of pre-primary education are not difficult to be realized. But for this
reason, there must have a properly organised and well-planned programme and practice.

1.6 Developmental characteristics of pre-school children:

The human child is a growing organism. Different aspects of child such as physical, mental, social, emotional, aesthetic etc. are to be developed through specific and stimulating environment. Before giving the proper environment to the child to develop, it will be wise to known the different developmental characteristics of pre-school children.

UNESCO's report¹² 1978 has narrated the following characteristics of a child during the period of 2½ years to 6 years.

1. From 2½ to 4 years.

The child:
— Walks around.
— Can walk on tip-toe
— Learns to dress and undress alone.
— Acquires toilet training at night.
— Imitates a cross, draws a figure with a head and trunk, sometimes other parts of body.
— Recognizes two or three colour.
— speaks intelligibly, but still using childish language.
— Can state his name, sex and age.
— Asks many questions and is interested in how children are born.
— Recognizes top and bottom, front and back.
— Listens to stories and asks for those he likes to be told again.
— Plays with other children, begins to share things.
— Shows affection for younger brothers and sisters.
— Becomes able to perform simple tasks.

2. From 4 to 5 years.

The child:
— Leaps, jumps, swings.
— Walks down stairs putting one foot on each step.
— Draws a figure with head and principal limbs and parts of the body.
— Copies a square and a triangle.
— Speaks quite intelligibly.
— Knows how to count his fingers.
— Knows his age and the day of the week.
— Listen to a story and can repeat its substance.
— Still asks many questions, takes an interest in new words and their meaning.
— Protests vigorously when prevented from doing what he wants.
— Can recognise four colour.
— Can assess shape and size, distinguish large from small.
— Takes an interest in the activities of adults.
3. **From 5 to 6 years**

The child:

— Knows how to climb trees and dance to music.
— Can catch a ball thrown from a distance of one metre.
— Can remain motionless for one minute.
— Speaks correctly, relinquishes childish language.
— Draws a figure with head, trunk, limbs and hands.
— Begins to distinguish right from left, yesterday from tomorrow.
— Asks for meaning of abstract words.
— Takes an interest in the age of young people and old people.
— Distinguishes between sweet, salt, sharp and bitter flavours.
— Invents games and changes the rules while they are proceeding.
— Detests authority imposed on him and carries out orders slowly.
— Performs simple tasks with interest.

The pre-school child cannot be over burdened with so many facts which are more or less not related to his needs. His growth and development should be taken care of carefully and should be assisted for his optimum development of all aspects of its life.

1.7 **Statement of the problem:**

The importance of pre-primary education is increasing day by day. Parents are also taking interest in admitting their children in the pre-primary school. Generally it is seen in the urban areas. In this context, the emphasis
is also given on the organisational aspect of pre-primary education. As pre-primary education is given to the children at the age of 3+ so parents’ involvement is also very much important. The importance of the role of heads of the pre-primary school and also its teachers in pre-primary education is highly significant. The success of pre-primary education depends not only on the organisational aspect of pre-primary school but only largely on healthy viewpoints of parents, teachers and the heads of the institutions. So it is necessary to take a study on these aspects of pre-primary education. On the basis of these concepts the statement of the present problem is capsulized in “Present condition of pre-primary education and its impact on pre-school children with special reference to the Sonitpur district of Assam”.

1.8 Importance of the study:

For optionisation of the potential of an individual in his whole life, proper pre-school education to him during his early childhood is a must. This study is confined to five urban areas of Sonitpur district of Assam in order to ascertain whether proper pre-school education is prevalent in those institutions under the proper direction of the pre-school education system. The viewpoints of the teachers and the heads of the institutions and the parents of the children are of paramount importance for proper running of the pre-primary schools. The investigator has taken up this project to know the present condition of pre-primary schools and the viewpoints of the teachers, the heads of the pre-primary schools and parents of the children of those institutions regarding the pre-primary
education system. Project of this kind has not yet been taken for study anywhere in Assam and the North East of India so far.

1.9 Objectives of the study:

The objectives which are formulated for the present study are:

1) To study the present condition of pre-primary education in Sonitpur district of Assam with special reference to —

   i) Organisational structure.
   ii) Finance.
   iii) Infrastructure.
   iv) Teaching personal.
   v) Educational activities

2) To study the viewpoints of the heads of the pre-school institutions, teachers and parents towards pre-primary education.

1.10 Hypothesis of the investigation:

1) Pre-primary education loses its pre-primary nature and becomes primary education.

2) Present pre-school education is unable to provide free and spontaneous atmosphere to the child.
(3) Present pre-school education has more predetermined adults idea than the actual activities of the children.

(4) There is much room growth of pre-school with a profit motive.

1.11. Scope of the study:

(a) Limitation—

1) The first limitation relates to the area under study. Urban areas of Sonitpur district of Assam, namely Gohpur, Bishwanath Chariali, Dhekiajuli, Rangapara and Tezpur town have been taken for field study in this research work. The urban areas of the district were selected because pre-primary education is gradually expanding in these areas with different set-ups; Organisational patterns are also different in different schools.

2) The second limitation is that the schools of children of 3 to 6 years age group are taken. This age group has been chosen because children normally attend a pre-primary school when they are about three years old.

3) The third limitation relates to the organisational point of view. The investigator wanted to study the organisational pattern of pre-primary school specially private institutions
along with the view points of teachers, parents and heads of the pre-primary institutions towards the pre-school education.

4) The fourth limitation is with regard to the selection of the samples. Samples are taken from all the aforesaid 5 urban areas of Sonitpur district. Out of 35 pre-school institutions of those urban areas of the district 20 schools are selected.

5) The fifth limitation is related to the selection of parents, teachers and heads of the institutions. 100 parents of the said 20 schools have been taken according to the need of the study. 75 teachers of those 20 schools have also been taken for study. All the 20 heads of the institutions also have been taken as samples of the study.
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