CHAPTER -I

INTRODUCTION
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In this chapter there shall be presented an introduction to the research report. The research taken up involved a detailed study of the administrative, infrastructural and curricular aspects of five nursery schools selected for the study. Therefore it can be inferred that the research taken up pertains to the field of preschool education. Hence this chapter shall be initiated with a note on preschool education. This note shall include a brief presentation of the history of preschool education in the world and in India, the meaning of preschool education as understood today, the significance of preschool education, the agencies involved in imparting preschool education, the different types of preschools and the recommendations of various Education Commissions, committees and different bodies concerned with preschool education. Following such a note on preschool education, the actual research report shall be initiated through the statement of the problem, the presentation of the objectives of the study, the scope of the study, the delimitations of the study and finally an explanation of the terms used in the study.

1.1 HISTORY OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

The concept of education is as old as the evolution of human beings on earth. The concept of school as a formal organisation set up by the society to educate its young members is
however not so old. Still more recent is the concept of formal organisations set up by the society to impart education to the children of preschool age i.e. 2-6 years.

In 400 B.C. Plato had said that education and admonition of an individual should commence from the first year of his life. Hence the need for proper education even during early childhood has been recognised since a long time. However it took several centuries since then for preschools to actually come up.

John Amos Comenius in the early part of the seventeenth century was of the view that tender things are like wax and can be easily shaped while hard things tend to crack if they are attempted to be shaped. Similarly a young plant can be easily planted, transplanted, pruned and shaped but not a tree. Hence education should begin when an individual is young and we should not wait for him to grow up to receive education. Comenius is also credited with the development of the first picture book for young children. He also authored a book called 'The Great Didactic' in which he expressed the idea of 'Mother School' in every home. Comenius felt that 'mother' is the ideal teacher for an infant. Therefore education of children in the age group of 0-6 years should be imparted at home by the mother of the children. The education imparted to the children of preschool age should include such activities which will help to foster their physical, mental, religious and moral development. Comenius emphasised the importance of
proper food, rest, fresh air and exercise for the physical well being of young children. Therefore Comenius was concerned about the proper education and care of young children but felt that the mother or home was sufficient to impart that.

In the later part of the eighteenth century, the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau expressed that childhood of an individual extended from birth to five years. Regarding education during this period, he felt that a child should be left to himself to develop independently without any interference from the society. The child should learn from his close association with nature and shall be disciplined through the natural consequences of his actions. However physical development of the child should be taken care of during this period so that he grows into a healthy individual. Therefore Rousseau was totally against imparting education to young children through formal institutions.

Jean Fredrich Oberlin established the first infant school in France in 1774. This school was meant for the children in the age group of two to six years. The curriculum of this school included reading, number work, moral and religious instructions and indoctrination in desirable social habits. Oberlin felt that developing a child through the efforts of a formal institution was the duty of the society. Oberlin’s infant school is said to be the forerunner of the French ‘Crèche’ established in 1801 as an institution to take care of the children of working mothers.
Freidrich Wilhelm Froebel, a German educationist was the first person to develop a comprehensive theory of preschool education and put it into practice. His theory equated young children to young plants or saplings. Just as saplings can be tended in a nursery similarly young children too require a place where they can be properly looked after. Froebel termed such a place as a 'Kindergarten' and opened one at Blankenberg in Germany in 1839. The term kindergarten means a garden or nursery for bringing up young children. The kindergartens were meant for children in the age group of 3 to 7 years. Froebel felt that young children like young plants need a nursery where they can be tended to with care by the gardeners or teachers. This was totally against Rousseau's view that children should develop on their own without the interference of the adults. He advocated that education of the young children should be in keeping with their needs and interests. It should include activities to bring about their physical development and the training of their sense organs and establish harmony with nature. He also arranged training programmes for the teachers of kindergartens.

Inspired by the developments in the field of preschool education by Froebel, the first 'Infant School' was established in England in 1826 by Charles and Elizabeth Mayo. Clara Boelte and Elizabeth Peabody started a preschool at Boston in USA in 1860. During this period Matilde Krege opened the first training school.
for teachers of kindergarten in Boston. During the next few years a number of kindergartens were opened in the different states of the United States of America.

In Italy preschool education was popularised by Maria Montessori, in the beginning of the twentieth century. However the credit for opening a preschool in the early part of the nineteenth century goes to a Catholic priest named Abate Aports. Maria Montessori developed the system of Montessori schools for young children which soon became popular all over the world.

In the Asian countries and in several other erstwhile colonial states of the world, preschool education was started by Christian missionaries. In the Indian subcontinent preschool education was initiated by the Christian missionaries during the later part of the nineteenth century.

During the early years of the preschool movement, schools for young children were set up as philanthropic acts and were primarily meant to be substitutes for the poor care received by the children from homes which were not so privileged. Later on preschools were set up mainly with the objective to supplement the education and care received by the children at their home.

1.2 HISTORY OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA

In India education was initially imparted to the children of preschool age by the family. The mother and other adult members of the joint family endeavoured to provide the necessary environment
which would foster a child’s all round development. Through the provisions for nutritious food, rest and scope for play, physical well being was ensured. Social and emotional development were automatic since children were brought up in joint families with inherent traditions of sharing, caring and shouldering responsibilities. Intellectual and moral development were brought about by the innumerable stories narrated and songs and rhymes taught by the older members of the family. Cultural development was ensured through the child’s participation in the various festivals, rites and rituals performed by the family and the community. However, such preschool education was totally informal in nature. The main disadvantage associated with such a system was that only the privileged few had an access to such an enriched environment at home. Since the children from poor families were totally deprived of such facilities, development in the field of preschool education was lopsided.

Formal institutions for imparting preschool education were set up in India by the Christian missionaries in the later part of the nineteenth century. Inspired by the missionaries, some Indian educationists and social reformers came forward to develop and spread preschool education in the country.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1877-1883), the social reformer and the founder of the Arya Samaj, was of the view that an infant is totally under the influence of his mother. He also said that it was
the duty of the family to teach the child to speak clearly and also teach the right way to pronounce words. The child should also be taught to speak respectfully. Easy to learn and morally sound rhymes should be taught to them and the medium of instruction for a child less than 6 years of age should invariably be his mother tongue. Thus Swami Dayanand stressed the need for preschool education but felt that it could be provided at home.

Gijubhai Bedheka made a significant contribution towards the cause of preschool education in western India. He established several preschools in this region towards the beginning of the twentieth century. This inspired a similar movement in the rest of the country. He made an in depth study of the Montessori system of education. He established in 1920 the school for infants called “Dakshinamurthy Bal Mandir” for imparting formal education to young children. He believed in providing freedom to the children. Music, art, training of the senses, languages, numbers, play, natural science, story telling, dramatic activities and trips were the parts of the curriculum. He established in 1926 Nutan Bal Shiksha Sangh which started preprimary institutions in rural areas. Thus Bedheka made a significant contribution towards the cause of preschool education in India, especially in the western part.

Mahatma Gandhi in 1944 developed the concept of ‘Pre Basic Education’ for the children in the age group of 0-7 years to fulfil the needs of an individual child as well as that of the society,
through stress on Vocational Education in the curriculum of the preschools. Like Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Gandhiji too believed that the education of an individual begins even before his birth through the preparations made by the mother to shoulder her future responsibilities and by providing the right environment to the child. He said that pre-basic education should be the joint responsibility of the parents and the teachers. He opened junior basic schools for imparting such education. The first junior basic school was opened in 1945 at Sevagram under the supervision of Shanta Narulkar by Kasturba Memorial Trust.

The idea of pre-basic education as conceived by Mahatma Gandhi was comprehensive in nature. It aimed at the physical, mental, moral, cultural and spiritual development of the child's personality. Pre-basic education was divided into four stages according to the age of the child. The first stage (until birth of a child) is infact adult education and aims at training the parents, in child rearing practices and infant care. The second phase (birth to two and half years) focuses on the child's health and the provision of custodial care. At the junior level (two and half to four years) the child can leave his mother for a few hours. The teacher should provide during this stage an environment which is exiting to the child to motivate him to explore his environment, engage in free play and develop linguistic skills to express himself. At the last stage (4-7 years), which is the senior level, the child should socialise,
develop a positive attitude towards work and dignity of labour and engage in useful and meaningful activities and also shoulder responsibilities. The teachers should attempt to integrate work and play of the child to help future economic development of the country. Linguistic development and activities related to art, music and religion should also be included in the curriculum. Inexpensive equipments should be used in the pre-basic school and the teachers should maintain a close link with the parents.

Annie Besant, an Irish lady settled in India and joined the Nationalist Movement during the struggle for freedom. She was an educationist apart from being a nationalist. She was of the view that education of an individual below the age of seven years should emphasise physical development and the training of the senses.

Madam Maria Montessori visited India twice in the early part of the last century and popularised Montessori schools for young children in India. She established in 1948 the first Montessori school at Pondicherry. She developed several courses to train teachers in the Montessori method of teaching in India.

In India during the first half of the twentieth century preschool education was being imparted by mainly three types of institutions:-

(1) Institutions run by Theosophists and patronised by royal families.

(2) Special pre schools for the elite.

(3) Schools run by private bodies in western India.
In the pre independence period not much attention was paid to pre school education and it gained momentum only during the post independence era. Organisations and boards were set up to promote the cause of early childhood care and education. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) and the Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) were set up with in a few years of independence.

The Central Social Welfare Board took the initiative shortly after independence to open Balwadis and Anganwadis for preschool age children of rural and backward areas. This was accomplished with the financial support from the central government. In the same decade several other institutions were set up to promote pre-school education in India. In 1951 Shishu Vihar Mandal was opened at Yeotmal in Maharashtra. In the same year Happy Education Society was opened at Delhi, Nai Talim Sangh at Wardha and the Indian Council for Child Education was formed with Sarala Devi Sarabhai as its first president.

Rao and Islam (1977) have stated that the apathy of the British Government towards preschool education continued during the first and second five years plans and no allocation was made for pre primary education from the total fund allocated for the development of education. During the early part of sixth decade of the last century it was gradually being recognised by the central government that pre primary education was the base of the much desired National System of Education. In 1964 the Indian Association of Preschool Education
was formed. This association presented a comprehensive document which included some of the major problems of preschool education viz. preschool teacher education, preschool education for rural and tribal children etc. A few years later in 1971, National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) set up the department of Pre-primary and Primary Education and emphasised teacher education programmes for preprimary and primary levels.

In the year 1974, a National Policy Resolution was issued. It aimed at providing integrated services pertaining to the health, nutrition, education and general welfare services to promote the welfare of children. Following this, Integrated Child Development Scheme was introduced in several experimental areas. Such schemes aimed to provide facilities for immunisation, health check up, education regarding health and hygiene and non formal education to children till the age of six years. In the decade of 1980s more than 100 such projects were introduced. Shortly the term Early Childhood Education replaced the term 'Preschool Education' since the former term is more comprehensive and includes both care and education of children in the age group of 0-6 years while the latter indicates merely formal schooling of children in the age group of 3 to 6 years. However such provisions for care including facilities for health check up, immunisation and nutritious food along with non formal education to children from 0 to 6 years are provided usually at the centres run by the government or organisations sponsored by the government, in
rural and backward areas. The number of such centres is not large. On the other hand private nursery schools providing mainly education to children in the age group of two and a half to six years are rapidly increasing in number in the urban areas. This has made preschool education immensely popular in urban areas and the situation today is such that both private and government schools of urban areas prefer students with preschool background during admission to class one. While this has helped the cause of preschool education but in the absence of any statutory body to regulate and supervise these private pre schools their growth has been unchecked.

Thus it is seen that the history of preschool education through formal institutions dates back to the eighteenth century. From the western countries it reached India in the later part of the nineteenth century but became popular only after independence.

1.3 PRESCHOOL EDUCATION AS UNDERSTOOD TODAY

As stated earlier, today preschool education is commonly known as early childhood education which includes care as well as education of the children who have not yet attained the legal age for admission to schools. Though the need for education for children in the age group of 3-6 years has been recognised long ago but lately it has been realised that merely schooling a child to teach him the three R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) or to make him ready for
the academic subjects to be taught during future schooling is not enough. This is especially true when the child happens to be from an underprivileged home. Today it is being realised in different countries that the foundation of a healthy life is laid during early childhood. Hence the state has to play an active role for the welfare of children. In a developing country like India with high instances of infant mortality and malnourishment, merely providing facilities for academic education is not enough. Hence, since the last few years apart from education, facilities for immunisation, health check up, nutritious meal, etc. are also provided at the state owned centres for young children. Hence preschool education today is popularly known as early childhood education which is broader in scope and includes the total welfare of the children and not just education. Therefore strictly speaking preschool education pertains only to a part of early childhood education.

In urban areas preschools admit students in the age group of 2-6 years and limit themselves only to the role of providing education. Such preschools are known by different names like Kindergartens, Montessori Schools, Play way Schools, Nursery Schools, Pre-basic Schools, Balsevasadans, Balmandirs, Shishuvihars, Shishumandirs etc. The entrance age for children in these institutions is two and half to three years. Balmandirs, Shishuvihars, etc. are the Indian adaptations of Froebelian Kindergartens and Montessori School systems. Indianised version of the Montessori school gained
popularity since Maria Montessori’s second visit to India in 1939 and the establishment of a network of teacher training institutions to train teachers in Montessori method of teaching. Since the last few decades Laboratory Nursery Schools associated with various Indian Universities have been established. These nursery schools are run on the lines of the models of child development approach adopted by countries like USA and UK. However although preschools today are known by different names, they are more or less similar as far as their aims and curriculum are concerned. This is because of the similarities in the basic tenets of the Kindergarten and Montessori systems of education.

According to Marjorie M. Green and Woods E.L. (1954) nursery education and preschool education today are synonymous and nursery education is that which provides the young children with the following facilities:

1. Physical growth and development by ensuring preventive and remedial health measures, balanced diet, development of healthy habits, outdoor activities, active physical work balanced by sedentary activities and rest.

2. An opportunity to live and learn with children of the same age, socialise, share, defend their rights and develop initiative and leadership with companions of their own age and thus develop a foundation for democratic living and to make the children feel
secure in the presence of loving adults without their becoming too dependent on them.

3. A foundation of aesthetic and cultural experiences to enrich the child’s life by exposing him to good and beautiful things like music, colourful pictures, books, etc.

4. A wide variety of materials for experimenting and learning. Children should have an access to the playground apparatus for the development of muscles.

Thus preschool education or nursery education today is popular in urban areas. They usually restrict themselves to providing only education to the children from two to six years. On the other hand early childhood education which includes mainly care and some nonformal education and is mainly imparted through centres run by the State for the welfare of the children till the age of six years are more common in the rural areas.

1.4 DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRESCHOOLS IN INDIA

As stated earlier, today in India preschools or preprimary schools are popular by different names viz. Kindergartens, Montessori Schools, Balwadis, Junior Basic Schools, Shishuvihars etc. Kindergartens and Montessori Schools owe their origin to the educationists who had developed these systems. The rest with the exception of Balwadis are the Indianised versions of these two western systems - Kindergarten and Montessori schools. They have however
incorporated some ideas of Gandhiji’s Pre-basic education system like the development of the ideal of dignity of labour in children. However all these different names signify an institution called ‘Nursery School’. A nursery is a plot of land where baby plants are nurtured by loving and skilled gardeners and careful tending of which shall develop healthy trees in future. Similarly in a nursery school young children are nurtured by competent teachers to develop into individuals with balanced personality. However, some authors like Bettelheim and Takanishi (1976) tend to differentiate a nursery school from a kindergarten by stating that kindergartens are institutions with an educational bent. They are located in urban areas and cater to the needs of the middle class and the upper middle class while nurseries or day care centres are supported by the public welfare agencies and the State and cater to the needs of the lower strata of the society.

In this section the different types of preschools of India and the basic tenets on which they are based shall be discussed.

**Kindergartens**

Freidrich Wilhelm Froebel coined the term ‘Kindergarten’ and opened the first one in 1839 in Germany. Froebel stressed that children should be assigned work in keeping with their natural tendencies and thus make education enjoyable. A kindergarten should provide for the following:
(1) Physical development and training of the senses of the children and develop harmony between a child and the surrounding world. The children’s true potentials are to be unfolded through education by providing freedom to the children to develop their energies, curiosities and spontaneous activities.

(2) Play should be assigned an important place since it provides the opportunity for self expression, socialisation and physical development. According to Froebel play is the purest and most spiritual activity of man and is the source of all that is good.

(3) The kindergarten should resemble a miniature society and enable children to be truthful, just, free but responsible, capable of taking initiative, sharing and be helpful and thus be able to socialise and enjoy freedom with responsibility. Thus education here is synonymous with controlled development of individual.

(4) Education at kindergarten should consist of three main coordinated forms of expressions –

(i) Songs or music related to the daily life of the children make education enjoyable and indirectly teach about the common things of life, nature, language and even morality.

(ii) Movement – The children shall play and thus exercise their muscles and thus have physical development.

(iii) Construction : The children shall engage in creative activities and express themselves freely through various media.
These three forms of expression shall bring about the automatic development of language and the habit of cooperation. Education at kindergarten shall also use gifts and occupations for teaching the children. Froebel used gifts like balls of various colours, cubes, cylinder, etc. as toys and teaching aids. Occupations include enjoyable and creative activities like working with paper, sand clay, sewing, drawing, etc. They also develop a healthy attitude towards work.

(5) The teacher’s role in a kindergarten is to organise and guide the free and continuous development of the children through various activities and play.

(6) Exploration and study of nature and finally developing harmony with the natural world by children should be encouraged.

Thus a kindergarten as conceived by Froebel should provide an environment permeated with play, freedom and joy. The fundamental idea of a kindergarten is to help the child to express himself and develop his natural abilities through activities performed spontaneously by him.

Montessori Schools

The idea of Montessori school was developed in Italy in 1907 by Maria Montessori for children in the age group of 3-7 years. Such a system of education was based on the following ideals.

(i) All round development of the child’s personality through the development of the body as well as mind.
(ii) The environment at the school should be such that the innate abilities of the children are developed.

(iii) The children should enjoy the freedom to play and express themselves. Their thoughts and movements should not be restricted.

(iv) The teacher should not indulge in providing external rewards and physical punishment since they motivate and discipline a child only temporarily. The child should feel intrinsic motivation and learn to be self disciplined.

(v) The school should aim to develop the child as an individual against the development of the group. A child should be treated as an individual and not merely a member of a group.

(vi) The child should receive self education through his experiences. The teacher should arrange the necessary environment and provide the necessary experiences so that the child learns on his own and does not have to cram.

(vii) Training of the senses is necessary since during early childhood the senses are more sharp and their training should precede the formal education of a child. The sense organs are the gateways of knowledge and their training shall automatically lead to mental development.

(viii) Training of muscles through various kinds of physical exercises will lead to the physical development of the child. Hence facilities for climbing, jumping, running, etc. should be provided.
(ix) The teacher's duty should not be restricted to teaching but she should organise suitable experiences for the child and guide him towards self education.

(x) The curriculum should not include unrealistic things like fairy-tales as they confuse the child and interfere with his adjustment to the world of reality.

(xi) A child should not be attempted to be moulded into a definite pattern by rude and overbearing adults. The child should not be ordered to do certain things but the child should enjoy the freedom to choose activities.

(xii) A Montessori school was called 'Children's House' by Madam Montessori. Regarding its infrastructure it was spelt out that there shall be several rooms in the school with one room for studies, one for common room, one for refreshment, one for exercise and one for toilet. The rooms should be adequately furnished and have cupboards. A garden should also be there. The children should help in keeping the rooms clean and cooperate in keeping things in order.

Thus Montessori schools aim at the total development of the child, providing freedom to the child, developing his innate abilities, training his muscles and senses and organising suitable experiences leading to self education.
Balwadis

Balwadis of India are usually run by the joint efforts of the Central Social Welfare Board and the local bodies. The Central Government finances these schemes. They operate mostly in rural areas. These centres remain open almost throughout the year and each centre serves 25-50 children in the age group of two and half to six years. Balwadis are operated 6 days in a week for half day shift (3-4 hours) or even whole day shift as per the needs of the working mothers of the areas.

Balwadis are usually located in the community centres like the temple of the village. The Central Social Welfare Board however has suggested that a Balwadi should include an assembly room, a storeroom, a kitchen, a teacher’s room, a playground, toilet and a well for drinking water. Suitable murals and pictures are to be procured.

For Balwadis, teaching methods and curriculum are not fixed and the main objective of a Balwadi is to offer facilities for health care, immunisation, nutritious diet, teaching of numbers and alphabets recreation, and thus total day care.

Thus Balwadis are the rural counterparts of the urban nursery schools. However they are run by the State and hence provide free care and education to the children.
Laboratory Nursery Schools

Laboratory Nursery Schools are institutions where new methods of teaching in nursery schools and new curricula are developed. Such new methods of teaching and curriculum are to be used as models at other preschools.

Laboratory Nursery Schools are usually attached to the Departments of Child Development, Universities, Colleges of Home Science and Nursery Teacher Training institutions. In these preschools experiments and researches are taken up and theories of educationists like Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and others are tested. Practices prescribed by western educationists are also adapted to meet Indian conditions.

1.5 AGENCIES INVOLVED IN PROVIDING PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA

The agencies involved in providing preschool education in India are the following:-

(i) State (Government of India)

India is a developing country with limited resources. The state shoulders the responsibilities for providing free and compulsory education to all the children in the age group of 6-14 years. Higher education and various types of vocational courses are also heavily subsidised by the state. The role of the State in providing preschool education is limited. However Balwadis and Anganwadis represent the involvement of the State in providing comprehensive care to the
children from the socio economically backward areas. Programmes under Integrated Child Development Services and Early Childhood Education are also meant for such children and are provided by the State. Such programs are informal in nature and cater to the health and education of the children.

India has a predominantly rural population with both men and women working in the fields. To provide comprehensive care and education to their children, the Central Social Welfare Board set up Balwadis, few years after independence in rural areas. They are mainly financed by the Central Government through the Department of Social Welfare and partly by the local bodies.

In the different states pre-school education is organised by the Directorate of Social Welfare since preschool education is viewed as a part of the child and family welfare schemes. The State Institute of Education also plays an important role in this field. In the Union Territory of Chandigarh pre-schools are attached to the schools owned and run by the government.

(ii) Private Bodies

In India the private sector has been playing a significant role in popularising preschool education. Private nursery schools today out number the government nursery schools. The private preschools are however more common in urban areas. These preschools vary widely from the state owned institutions, in the facilities they provide.
Semi official and autonomous organisations

There are several international organisations like Montessori International Association, Indian Red Cross and national ones like Kasturba Memorial Trust, Indian Council for Child Welfare, Central Social Welfare Board, All India Women's Conference, etc. that organise preschool education. Some of these bodies like Kasturba Memorial Trust are voluntary organisations involved in providing preschool education to the children of the socio economically weaker sections.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

It is undisputed that home is the first school of an individual. Even before the development of linguistic abilities, a child is instructed by the adults of the family. He is told what to do and what he is to desist from. He is appreciated for the right conducts and admonished for the wrong ones. However education provided at home is informal in nature. It is often said that even the best of homes may fail to foster all round development of a child’s personality.

From the age of three years, a child moves from total dependence on adults towards independence. He develops linguistic abilities and from total ego centrism (concerned only with one’s own self), he moves towards reciprocity and exhibits interest in others. The child also desires to express himself and share his views with others. Thus he is now ready to socialise. Development of linguistic skills
further help him in socialising. Therefore the child not only requires the opportunities and freedom to express himself but also companions of his age to share his views and institutions like preschools can facilitate this.

A child of preschool age exhibits a keen interest to explore and investigate the world around him. This is facilitated by his rapidly developing psychomotor abilities like the abilities to jump, climb, use stairs, etc. Such interest in the surrounding world can be nurtured by introducing him to the natural world through lessons on plants and animals, imparted in a proper way by preschools.

In comparison to an infant, a child of the preschool age exhibits a greater variety of emotions along with a greater degree of control over his emotions. The child is now more willing to share, shoulder responsibilities, listen, obey, assert himself and even lead others. Overprotection or neglect at home may not lead to the right emotional development of a child. Therefore a child at this stage needs to spend a few hours in the company of other children and a few hours of disciplined life with a group outside his home in a preschool.

Apart from fulfilling the basic needs of food and rest, a child from the age of three years exhibits interests in various activities like music, listening to stories, drawing, playing with toys, etc. Such interests need to be nurtured to develop healthy hobbies in the
children and for this proper facilities and trained personnel are required. This can be done by a pre-school.

A child’s physical development needs to be monitored continuously so that he develops into a healthy individual. Apart from nutritious food and adequate rest a child needs adequate space and proper equipments to play which urban homes often fail to provide. Immunisation against preventable diseases and regular medical checkup are needed. Early diagnosis of a physical problem increases the chances of its cure. Although families belonging to the middle and upper class provide their children with these facilities but those belonging to the lower socio economic strata often fail to care for the physical well being of their children in a proper way. Centres providing preschool education in the rural areas provide such facilities. The private nursery schools of urban areas usually do not provide nutritious meals and facilities for immunisation but they at least provide adequate space and equipments for play. They also teach children about health and hygiene besides nurturing cognitive development.

It has been established through various studies that development of cognitive abilities of children in the age group of three to six years occurs rapidly. The children of this age are ready for lessons imparted by trained teachers through appropriate teaching methods. Intellectual exercises undertaken by a child sharpen his mental faculties and facilitate primary education at school. While
parents with inadequate educational background will fail to impart proper education at home even those who are educated but not trained in imparting lessons to the young will fail to achieve the goal.

Thus it is seen that for the proper development of the personality of a child, the environment provided at home is not fully adequate. A child who is three years old is ready both physically as well as mentally to spend a few hours away from home. Hence a few hours spent at an institution which would foster his all round development would be helpful for him.

It has been established through various studies that pre primary education has a positive effect on primary education. It facilitates learning at the primary level and reduces the number of dropouts and thus reduces wastage and stagnation in the nation's plans for providing Universal Elementary Education to children in the age group of 6-14 years. It is also expected that preschools will prepare children socially, emotionally, and mentally for future schooling. According to Foster and Headly (1959), the children with kindergarten training make relatively more progress in the first five grades than those without such training. The proportion of first grade repeaters are more among the latter. The former also show greater skills of reading, comprehension and show better person to person and person to group contacts. They also show higher teacher ratings in the matter of industry, initiative and linguistic abilities. Hence it is
not that there is a rise in the level of the intelligence quotient of the children as a result of attending preschools but that traits like working with a group, conforming to rules, accepting praise, criticism and suggestions, expressing himself, solving problems, socialising and cooperating with others, learning socially acceptable behaviour, developing independence, etc. are developed.

In the rural areas it is a common practice for the women to go out to work. Therefore their children need child care centres. Even in urban areas with rapidly disintegrating joint family system, more women joining the work force and adults having less time for children, the children are often lonely. A preschool provides the opportunity to the children for at least a few hours when they can enjoy the company of their compatriots.

In several countries preschools were opened as one of the measures to bring about social reform. It has been stated by Bettelheim and Takanishi (1976) that preschools present a kind of stimulus induced preparedness as a foundation for future development for a technology based society. In rural areas, a child’s environment is often lacking in technological stimuli available through mechanical devices and preschools can complement such an environment. These authors further state that preschools serve the compensatory role of equalising social and educational opportunities for children from different backgrounds. Hence it should be the responsibility of the State to provide preschool education and if not to
all at least to those from the socio-economically weaker sections of the society, those from families with working mothers, children with physical and mental disabilities and families with special problems like those having single parents or sick parents.

**Mahatma Gandhi** had conceptualised prebasic education as a step towards social reform. He had visualised that pre-basic education would develop positive attitude towards hard work and dignity of labour. According to **Lawrence A. Cremin** (1973) preschools play an important role in the social, economic and the political development of the society. In Cuba during the post revolutionary period a national network of child care centres were opened to unify the new society and absorb the new ideals to develop 'The New Cuban Man'. In the erstwhile communist Soviet Union, ideological orientation of the citizens was an important function of the State and this was initiated from the preschools. The author further states that preschools of India can be influential in the creation of the new 'Technological Man' who can make the transition from a primarily agrarian society to one in which technology shall play a critical role for national development.

The significance of preschools was stated during the conference held by the **UNESCO** in 1961 at Geneva. It was stated that even the best of home conditions cannot match the environment that is required for the all round development of a child and that such an environment could be provided only by a good preschool. It was further stated that with increasing number of working women,
preschools play a special role in looking after young children. The preschool not only facilitates transition of a child from home to school but also helps in the rapid identification of physical and mental disabilities and thus initiate their early treatment.

The benefits of preschool education were also stated by the Indian Education Commission (1964-66). This commission was of the view that although preschools were initially set up to look after the children from families with working mothers and those with small accommodations and unhealthy surroundings, later on it was realised that children from all sorts of families benefit from preschool education. This commission further stated that children attending preschools fare better in schools and that the all round development of the children, especially of those from unsatisfactory conditions is helped by preschool education.

The extracts from the background papers prepared for the report to the UNESCO by the International Commission on the Development of Education (1975) have been compiled under the title, ‘Education on the Move’. In the chapter pertaining to preschool education it has been stated that preschool education is an essential precondition to any educational and cultural policy and providing it should be one of the major objectives of the educational strategies of a country.

The preschools with their role in keeping the children active, awakening their desire to learn, helping them to make discoveries
about their physical and social environment, stimulating their intelligence, developing their learning abilities and awakening their desire to learn can immensely help in fulfilling the educational objectives of a country.

The report to the UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st century, entitled 'Learning; The Treasure Within' (1996) says that during early childhood the spark of creativity may either spring into life or be extinguished. Pre-school education fosters creativity, develops the ability to socialise and develops various faculties of the children. Hence proper education during early childhood can make an individual's access to knowledge a reality.

The importance of preschool education can be summed up by saying that all round development of the children is fostered through the environment provided by a good preschool and as Foster and Headley (1959) had stated that it plays an important role in preparing children for future schooling by developing the right values, proper attitude towards schooling and even basic academic skills in young children.

1.7 THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF VARIOUS EDUCATION COMMISSIONS SET UP IN INDIA REGARDING PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

The recommendations of the various Education Commissions are presented briefly hereafter.
Abot and Wood Report (1936–37):

Abot and Wood submitted a report to the Government of India for reconstructing the pattern of the education system existing then. On preschool education the report said that the aim of education was to develop good habits, development of the body and providing social experiences in a desirable form. The report further stated that nursery schools should be located in pleasant surroundings which are conducive to the development of the child and that such surroundings often cannot be provided at home. The report also stated that development of creativity in children occur in a well organised environment with provision for activities like art, music, dramatisation, etc. Hence such an environment should be provided at preschools. Besides this, physical and mental development of the children and training for future citizenship should also be initiated at preschools.

Kher Committee (1939-40)

Kher Committee was instituted in 1939 under the chairmanship of the chief minister of Bombay province of British India. This committee studied several issues in the field of education during that period. It made the following recommendations regarding preschool education.

(i) Model nursery schools should be opened at suitable centres.
(ii) Trained teachers should be available for nursery schools in adequate numbers.
(iii) Encouraging the enrolment of the children of preschool age in nursery schools.

(iv) Voluntary organisations should be encouraged to work in the field of nursery education.

**Sargent Commission (1944-46)**

Sargent commission was set up after the second world war to organise a national system of education in India, by the British government. This report covered all the stages of education from preprimary to the university level.

This commission said that it was the duty of the state for the sake of its future citizens to provide well equipped and well staffed nursery schools where children are looked after properly while their mothers went to work. It made the following recommendations in this regard:

(i) For establishing National System of Education pre primary education through nursery schools was essential.

(ii) In urban areas where sufficient numbers of children are there, a separate nursery school should be opened otherwise nursery schools should be attached to primary schools.

(iii) There should be specially trained female teachers for nursery schools.

(iv) In all conditions preprimary education should be free of charges. Till preprimary education is made compulsory every effort
should be made to persuade parents to voluntarily send their children to preschools especially when the mother goes out to work.

(v) In pre primary schools the main objective should be to provide social experiences to the young children instead of formal education.

In the post independence period in India, the various Education Commissions made the following recommendations regarding preschool education:

**Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)**

In post independent India, the first education commission to be set up was the University Education Commission in 1948-49. It was mainly concerned with higher education in India. Following it the Secondary Education Commission headed by Shri Mudaliar was set up. Regarding pre primary education, this commission recommended that young children should be introduced to the joy of learning through companionship and recreational activities and should be slowly guided to the development of proper habits of life, sense of cleanliness, healthy modes of living and the cultivation of social habits which are very important for community life. The commission noted that progress in this direction needed to be speeded up.

**The Committee on Child Care (1961-62)**

This committee was appointed by the Central Social Welfare Board to develop programmes for the care of children in the age group
of 0 – 6 years. Regarding pre primary education this committee made the following recommendations:

(i) The idea of pre primary education is to be in keeping with the Indian philosophy which stresses that ideal environment should be provided to the children for their proper development.

(ii) Preprimary education should fulfil fundamental needs of the children and should take care of the following factors:

(a) Heredity and environment of the child.

(b) Providing joyful environment to the children.

(c) Development of a child is optimum in an environment of freedom.

(d) Creativity of the children should be encouraged.

(3) Measures should be adopted to improve the situation prevailing in the field of pre primary education at the national level and a committee should be constituted for this.

(4) Voluntary organisations should be encouraged to take the responsibilities regarding pre primary education.

(5) Different types of preschools like half day shifts and full day shifts should be opened.

(6) Midday meals should be provided to the children of the preschools.

(7) Parents should be educated on methods of proper child care.
Indian Education Commission (1964-66)

This commission was headed by Dr. D.S. Kothari. Regarding pre-school education it was felt that in a developing country like India, primary education naturally deserved greater attention. However preprimary education should also be developed as much as possible. Research should be encouraged in this field to utilise the available resources for developing preprimary education. It stated that preprimary education should have the following aims:-

(i) To develop healthy habits and right attitude towards health and hygiene in young children by developing habits of cleanliness of dress, body, good food, etc. to ensure a healthy life.

(ii) To develop desirable social traits in children to make them responsible and disciplined.

(iii) Direction for proper emotional development of the individual so that children learn to control and express their emotions in a socially acceptable manner.

(iv) Encouragement of the child’s urges for self expression and providing him with the necessary opportunities.

(v) Aesthetic sense of the children is to be developed through their participation in programs related to music, art, etc.

(vi) Linguistic development of the child is to be brought about through the development of his abilities to express his thoughts and feelings through fluent, simple and clear language.
Physical development of the children should be fostered through proper development of his muscles and organs through opportunities to play, take rest, have a nutritious meal, medical check up and immunisation.

This commission studied the scenario existing in the field of preschool education and made the following recommendations for its development.

1. At the state level centres should be opened for the development of preprimary education. These centres should be located in the State Institute of Education. Similar centres should also be opened at the district level. Such centres should perform the following functions:
   (i) To guide and supervise the teachers of pre-primary schools and train them.
   (ii) To utilise locally available materials to prepare teaching aids.
   (iii) To educate parents regarding proper child care.
   (iv) To run experimental preprimary schools.
   (v) To develop new curriculum, hold refresher courses and provide in-service education to teachers of preschools.

2. Opening and running of preprimary schools may be left to private organisations with grant from the state. The state should organise preprimary education for the children of the backward classes of the society.

3. To devise economical methods for providing pre primary education, local women could be recruited after providing them with...
training for short periods and this method would be especially useful in rural areas.

(4) Opening centres for play with the help of primary schools. In such centers group activities like games, narration of stories, group songs may be organised. Health of the children attending such centres should also be attended to at such centres.

(5) The states should help in running centres which would train preprimary teachers, conduct research work on pre primary education, produce literature and materials related to preprimary education. The state should open preschools in rural areas and urban areas near slums. Private bodies involved in providing preprimary education should be provided with grants from the states.

(6) No definite curriculum is required at the preprimary level. The daily routine of a preschool should consist of the following activities:

(i) Activities related to play:
(a) Play with educational toys, indoor games, outdoor plays and other outdoor activities with other children.
(b) Physical activities involving big and small muscles.
(c) Plays that introduce children to home and social life and those that involve dramatisation.
(d) Activities in the play ground involving play ground equipments.
(ii) Simple exercises, dance and rhythmic play for physical training.
(iii) Physical labour and play like gardening, simple household work and participation in simple group activities.
(iv) Training of senses through specially made teaching aids and natural objects.

(v) Participation in different types of work like using simple tools, drawing, dance, etc. to develop dexterity of fingers.

(vi) Development of linguistic abilities, habits of personal hygiene and the study of natural sciences to introduce children to the world of animals and plants. Counting and arithmetic should be included in the curriculum. The children should also be taught to work independently in the preschool with minimum help from adults.

(vii) Coordination among the organisations working at the state and central level, in the field of pre primary education like the Central Social Welfare Board, the State Institute of Education, etc.

The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) set certain objectives of pre primary education, which are the following:

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

(ii) To develop desirable social attitudes and manners and to encourage healthy participation in group activities making the child sensitive to the rights and privileges of others.

(iii) To develop emotional maturity by guiding the child to express himself, understand and accept and control his emotions.

(iv) To encourage aesthetic appreciation though participation of children in activities related to art, music, etc.
(v) To stimulate the beginning of intellectual curiosity concerning the environment and to develop his understanding of the world in which he lives and to foster new interests through opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment.

(vi) To encourage independence and creativity by providing the child with sufficient opportunities for self expression.

(vii) To develop the child’s ability to express his thought and feelings in fluent, correct and clear speech.

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

Swaminathan Committee (1972)

This committee was headed by Smt. Swaminathan. It made the following recommendations for the welfare of the children in the age group of three to five years.

(i) Integrated child development services including education, health, nutrition and welfare of children of preschool age should be encouraged.

(ii) Preprimary education should include mental, physical and social development of children.

(iii) Data pertaining to the development of children of preprimary age should be collected.

(iv) Special attention should be paid to the children of the backward classes.
(v) Inexpensive educational materials should be prepared for preprimary education and local resources should be fully utilised for this.

(vi) Training programmes should be organised for inservice preprimary teachers.

(vii) Efforts of different organisations involved in providing preprimary education should be coordinated.

(viii) Part time employees and local educated women should be employed in preprimary schools.

(ix) There should be a directorate for the administration of preprimary education.


The National Policy on Education was framed in 1986. It has deliberated upon preprimary educations in a wider perspective and has included not only education but also the health of young children. This policy has stressed the importance of wholesome development of young children. Hence care for young children includes in its scope the provisions for nutritious diet, physical, mental and moral development. The other recommendations made in this policy regarding the care for young children are the following:

(i) Day care centres should be opened for children of working mothers so that the girl children who stay at home to look after their younger siblings can attend school.
(ii) Centres providing care and education to young children should do so in a child centered manner. They should foster the development of balanced personality in children. Instead of emphasising the learning of formal activities like reading, writing and arithmetic, informal methods like learning while playing should be stressed at these centres.

(iii) Integration of child care and pre primary education should be done to facilitate human resource development. For this the health of the children should be taken care of.

**Programme of Action (1986)**

For the implementation of the National Policy of Education(1986), Programme of Action was prepared in the same year. It included the methods to implement the various issues covered by the National Policy of Education (1986). One of these issues was ‘Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

The Programme of Action outlined the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education and spelt out the strategy to implement the programmes related to it through the following points:

1. Quality of life is determined by certain significant parameters like health and education of the infants. The health of the infants of our country is far from being satisfactory. Similarly cognitive stimulation which is vital for an individual, received at home by the infants is very low. This is mainly due to the low female literacy in our country.
2 During early childhood there is rapid physical and mental growth. Hence even modest investment in child development through programmes like Integrated Child Development Services greatly helps in human resource development. However it reaches only a fraction of the target population (0-6 years).

3 Early Childhood Care and Education is an important input in the strategy of human resource development. It is a feeder and support for the programme of Universal Elementary Education. It is also a support system for the working women of the disadvantaged sections of the society.

4. Strategy of Implementation: Early Childhood Care and Education involves total development of the child i.e. physical, motor, cognitive, language, social, emotional and moral development. Hence it should have a holistic nature and discourage the early introduction of the 3 Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). Emphasis should be on play and activity.

5. One of the weakest points of Early Childhood Care and Education programmes is the inadequate child to worker ratio. This should be improved. Such programmes should be developmental and should not provide merely custodial care.

6. For the successful implementation of any programme the workers should be adequately remunerated. For this both full time and part time workers should be adequately remunerated. For better supervision of early childhood care and education programmes
the number of supervisors should be increased. The supervisors and workers should be females so that they can care for the children and develop rapport with the mothers.

7. Early Childhood Care and Education programmes provide support service to the programme of Universal Elementary Education. Hence priority shall be accorded to the children of the disadvantaged sections of the society like slums, landless labourers, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, construction workers, population of remote areas etc.

8. 70% of the target population (0-6 years) should be covered by programmes of Integrated Child Development Services by the year 2000. Diverse types of pre primary education centres and day care centres should be opened to complement this programme.

9. The emphasis should be to upgrade, expand and strengthen the existing programme for children through:
   (a) Integrated Child Development Services
   (b) Early childhood care and education
   (c) Balwadis run by voluntary agencies
   (d) Pre primary schools of the state government and the municipalities. In such preschools the components of health and nutrition should be added. Emphasis on the 3 Rs should be discouraged. Teaching should be through play way method. Relation between the school and home should be developed.
10. During the VII and VIII five year plan, there will be an experimentation for developing low cost and context specific models for Early Childhood Care and Education.

11. In all the models of Early Childhood Care and Education the component of training of the workers shall be strengthened.

12. Support from the media like Doordarshan and All India Radio and organisations like NCERT will be taken to develop software in regional languages to aid the programmes related to Early Childhood Care and Education.

13. The system of monitoring and evaluation of the programmes related to Early Childhood Care and Education shall be strengthened.

1.8 ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE FIELD OF PREPRIMARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

As already mentioned, in India there are several national and international organisations working in the field of preschool education. Among the national organisations, National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) is actively engaged in this field. The union government has also established certain bodies like the Central Social Welfare Board, Indian Council for Child Welfare, etc. to directly or indirectly promote preprimary education in the country. At the international level the United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organisation plays an active role in promoting
the welfare of children and is also concerned with the promotion of pre primary education.

A brief description of the role played by the above mentioned organisations in the field of pre primary education is given below.

**Central Social Welfare Board**

The Central Social Welfare Board was established a few years after independence by the union government. It functions under the Department of Women and Child Development and is actively engaged in organising programs related to preschool education, throughout the country. It functions through the State Departments of Social Welfare. These activities are organised by the Central Social Welfare Board as a part of the Family and Child Welfare Schemes started by the Government of India. These activities are organised under the heads – health, nutrition, education and other social welfare services. Central Social Welfare Board organises Balwadis in the various states through the respective State Departments of Social Welfare. The Balwadis set up in rural areas are basically day care centres and according to Rao and Islam (1997), are the loose approximation of the urban nursery schools.

The Central Social Welfare Board gets funds from the Central Government according to the recommendations of the Planning Commission. It appoints national committees to examine various issues pertaining to education and welfare schemes for young children. It also organises training centres for Balsevikas.
Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW)

This body was set up by the government in 1951. It organises programmes for child welfare and like Central Social Welfare Board. It also helps in running Balwadis, and Bal Sevika training centres. It also collaborates with international organisations like UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Education Fund) in organising programmes for promoting child welfare.

National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT)

NCERT was established in 1961 as an autonomous body. It is mainly concerned with school education. It performs functions like conducting research, framing and revision of curriculum, etc. It functions through its several departments like the one for designing text books, one for preparing audio visual aids and so on. One such department is engaged in developing primary and pre primary education in India.

The department of primary and preprimary education was set up in 1971. This department was reorganised in 1975, to set up a separate Child Study Unit (CSU). This unit publishes articles on preprimary education and has set up Children's Media Laboratory to develop inexpensive teaching materials and teaching aids for young children. Other activities of this unit includes organisation of in-service education for pre primary teachers, undertaking research in the field of child development, framing and revising curriculum for preschoolers and preprimary teachers, devising effective methods of...
teaching the young children, collaborating with state and national level agencies, imparting preschool education, etc.

**United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**

The United Nations Organisation, set up in 1945 functions through its various offices, one of which is the UNESCO. It is situated at Paris and as the name of this office suggests it is concerned with the educational, social and cultural growth of the member countries.

Several recommendations on pre primary education were made by the UNESCO to the respective Ministries or Departments of Education of various countries at the International Conference on Public Education in Geneva in 1961. Some of the recommendations are discussed below.

a) Introduction, extension and progress of pre primary education should be encouraged and educational facilities should be offered to the children of preschool age wherever compulsory schooling for all children has been initiated. In countries where provision for compulsory schooling for all children has not been made, priority might be accorded to primary education but preschool facilities should also be developed especially in industrial and rural areas.

b) There should be a special department under the educational authorities of the countries to develop and improve pre primary educational establishments. This department should arrange
education and health inspection of all pre primary education establishments, whether public or private. Specially trained inspectors should carry out such supervision. Where private initiative compensates the shortage of public institutions, financial aid should be provided by the State to the former.

c) Notwithstanding the benefits of attending a pre primary school, attendance in such schools should remain optional. Education should be provided to the children free of cost if the preschool is financed by public authorities. Admission to a preprimary institution when cannot be granted to all due to non availability of seats in sufficient number, priority should be given to children with special needs like those from underprivileged families.

d) It is desirable to have a low teacher-pupil ratio. The average number of pupils with a teacher should not exceed 25. The working hours of a nursery school, especially that of rural agricultural area should be flexible to look after the children of working mothers.

e) Teaching methods in a pre school should be based on the recent developments in the field of child psychology and educational technologies. Teaching methods should be based on activities which in a preschool can be equated to play. Sensorimotor and manipulative activities as singing, dancing, drawing, etc. should be carried out by the children. Individualised education, essential for a preschooler should accompany group education to foster social and emotional development. Intellectual development of the children should be
through the observation of the immediate surroundings and the development of oral expression. All formal instructions must be excluded from preschools. From the age of five, the skills of graphic expression, the organisation of concrete situation utilising numbers and measures may be included in the educational activities. Varied materials and equipments should be available with the teachers. The children should have an opportunity to enjoy open air activities and regular health check ups.

f) The school should collaborate with the families of the students through regular interviews, talks, group discussions and home visits by teachers.

g) Research on pre primary education should be encouraged.

h) The teacher should be specially qualified and trained to teach in preschools. They should be provided with regular in-service training, proper salary, working conditions, holidays, etc.

i) All possible steps should be taken to ensure the children’s safety. Preschools establishments should be close to the children’s residences. There should be proper building with only single storey. There should be spacious and well lit rooms with adequate furnishings and should be aesthetically decorated. Every preschool should have a garden and a well equipped playground for outdoor activities. Provision for drinking water and sanitary installations should be there. There should be an overall hygienic condition.
Provision for meal and rest should be there in preschools with extended working hours.

j) Help from experts from different countries may be sought by countries which are contemplating the introduction of a system of pre primary education for the organisation of pilot institutions, development of courses and training of teachers. Countries already having preschool system should organise international seminars and conferences to exchange information and study the problems of preschool education.

**Report to the UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century**

This report entitled “Learning : The Treasure Within”, was submitted to the UNESCO in 1996 by the International Commission for Education. This report emphasised the importance of providing formal education to the young children in the modern world.

Education for young children has been termed as Basic Education. It targets children in the age group of 3-12 years. Hence it is seen that education imparted by the pre primary and primary schools has been clubbed together. The authors have expressed that basic education equips the children with knowledge, skill, right attitude and values which will in turn ensure a life of dignity.

Basic education helps the children in attaining minimum level of competence in the main areas of cognitive skills like literacy, numeracy, oral expression and problem solving. This will form a solid
base for future formal education and reduce the rate of dropouts from schools. Since basic education, levels the differences in children from different economic, social and cultural environment hence it is all the more important for the children belonging to the developing countries. For the children from all over the world basic education has been equated to an indispensable passport to life of improved quality.

So far in this chapter discussions have been made on the history of preschool education, the meaning of preschool education as generally understood today, its significance, the agencies imparting preschool education, recommendations made by various commissions and the role of different organisations in the field of preschool education. Discussions on these topics shall serve as a background for the research report to be presented hereafter.

1.9 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The title of the research taken up is “Administrative, Curricular and Infrastructural Aspects of Select Nursery Schools of Chandigarh: A Case Study”.

From the title of the study it can be inferred that through the present work it was intended to make a comprehensive study of the situation prevailing in certain nursery schools of Chandigarh and that such a study was centered around three focal points of the nursery schools viz. administration, curriculum and infrastructure.
1.10 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the proposed work was to gain a comprehensive picture of the situation existing in the nursery schools selected for the study through a detailed study of their administrative, curricular and infrastructural aspects. These three aspects had been studied in detail through an investigation about their various constituent components (listed under the next topic).

Following the detailed study of the above mentioned aspects of the nursery schools, their strong and weak points were ascertained. The situation prevailing in the different nursery schools had also been compared through a comparative study of the parameters included in the scope of the study. Finally generalisations were drawn from the data collected from the individual nursery schools to obtain an overall view of the scenario prevailing in the field of preschool education imparted by the nursery schools of Chandigarh.

1.11 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As mentioned in the objective of the study this research work centered around three focal points - Administration, Curriculum and Infrastructure of the preschools selected for the study. These three aspects have been studied through investigation of the various components comprising them. All these components which together, comprised the scope of the study are listed below.
A. Administration of the nursery schools

The administration of the nursery schools has been studied through the following points.

(1) Goals set by the nursery school
(2) Student strength of the school and the year of its establishment
(3) Ownership of the nursery school
(4) Mode of admission of the students into the nursery school
(5) Mode of recruitment of the teachers of the nursery school
(6) Decision making by the school authorities
(7) Working days and working hours of the nursery school
(8) Transport system for the children
(9) Methods of maintaining discipline among the students
(10) Records and registers maintained by the nursery school
(11) Methods employed by the nursery school to establish link with the home of the students
(12) Supervision of the nursery school
(13) Consultation with experts by the nursery school authorities
(14) Human resource of the nursery school
(15) Inservice education of teachers of the nursery school
(16) Meetings between the principal and the teachers of the nursery school
(17) Views of the parents on the administration of the nursery school
B. **Infrastructure of the nursery schools**

The infrastructure of the nursery schools has been studied through the investigation of the following aspects.

1. School campus as a whole
2. School building with its classrooms, hall, staffroom, office, drinking water facilities, etc. and the scope for future extension.
3. Play ground and its equipments
4. Miscellaneous equipments viz. musical instruments, computer, materials for art and craft, etc.
5. View of the parents on the infrastructure of the nursery school.

C. **Curriculum of the preschools**

The curriculum of the preschools has been studied through the following aspects :-

1. The criteria for framing the curriculum.
2. The academic and non academic parts (activities and subjects) of the curriculum
3. The timetable followed in the different grades
4. The teaching method – presentation, questioning, use of teaching aids, home work, correction of written work, drilling, revision, medium of instruction ,etc.
5. Evaluation system of the preschools
6. Criteria for selecting textbooks and the details of the books used like binding, quality of paper, size of printed letters, illustrations, scope for drill, price, etc.
7. Type of notebooks used
1.12 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Several centuries ago Plato had stressed the importance of education of an individual from his early childhood. Since then educationists have expressed the need for preschool education for the development of healthy attitudes and for laying the foundation of a balanced personality in young children.

In India formal system of preschool education has been gaining popularity since the early part of the twentieth century. Various education commissions set up in pre and post independent India have made several recommendations regarding preschool education. Indian Education Commission (1964-66) stressed the importance of pre primary education and set the objectives of a preschool. The Programme of Action (1986) expressed that even modest investment in providing care and education to infants can lead to human resource development. Today when the new century has begun, there is a need to ascertain through research work how far these recommendations are being implemented by the nursery schools.

Preschool education is a relatively new concept in the field of education. Review of the literature related to this field reveals that research pertaining to the total functioning of preschools is comparatively less. It has also come to light that although some studies of such nature have been carried out abroad but there is a
dearth of such studies under Indian conditions. Hence it was felt that research in this field was required.

Since independence preschool education has been gaining wide popularity in our country. There has been a rapid increase in the population attending nursery schools. This is especially true for urban areas which have witnessed a mushroom growth of nursery schools. However studies pertaining to the total situation prevailing in these schools have not been adequately done.

It is accepted that for any organisation to work efficiently, it is essential that it sets certain goals, plans the path to reach them, evaluates the results in the light of the goals fixed and then if necessary redefine the path to achieve the goals. Similarly nursery schools too need to set certain goals and develop the necessary infrastructure and curriculum to reach them. The goals of a preschool are bound to differ from that of a school because of their inherent differences. Indian Education Commission (1964-66) and several authors like Foster and Headley (1959) outlined the objectives of a nursery school. But today the parents of urban India often desire that their children should get admission in reputed schools following pre school education. If such aspirations of the parents affect the goals and the path to the goal (curriculum) of the nursery schools need a careful study. Hence researches regarding the goals, the curriculum and infrastructure of preschools are required.
Childhood is the period of life when the foundation of the adult life is laid. This period is characterised by rapid cognitive, physical, social, emotional and even moral development. To provide proper direction to such growth and to channelise the natural tendencies of the children according to the socially accepted norms, the right type of education is required. The right type of environment which will foster all round development of the child may not always be provided by even well to do homes. Families with spacious accommodations and educated parents may not have many children of the same age. Therefore social development may not be fostered. Again some parents may not initiate children into a disciplined routine and independence from an early age due to an over protective attitude towards children and thus impede their emotional development. Educated parents due to lack of training in teaching methods may fail to foster cognitive development of the children. Therefore organisations which can provide an enriched environment that would foster all round development of the children are required and preschools are such organisations. But how for the preschools are equipped to shoulder such responsibility and how well they carry it out is to be ascertained. Whether balanced development of the personality or lopsided one is performed at preschools is to be studied.

India is a developing country with limited resources. The government is actively involved in providing Universal Elementary Education to children in the age group of six to fourteen years. Right
from elementary to higher education and even professional studies are subsidised by the state. Therefore preprimary education with the exception of that in rural and backward areas is largely left to the care of private bodies.

In urban areas preprimary education is mostly imparted by the private institutions. Hence preschool education unlike other levels of education does not fully enjoy the patronage of the state. The resulting situation with the private bodies playing a major role in this field needs to be ascertained. Again there is neither any board nor any other statutory body to monitor and supervise the preschools. They are often run in an absolutely arbitrary manners.

Different aspects like working days, working hours, recruitment of teachers, admission of students, fees, salary paid to the teachers, etc. are totally at the discretion or rather whims of the owners of these schools. The curriculum too is often framed by the individuals running the school. Although organisations like The National Council of Education Research and Training and the National Council of Teacher Education have clearly specified the necessary qualifications of preschool teachers and have stipulated guidelines regarding the curriculum but in the absence of any governing body to regulate preschool education, how far such recommendations are adhered to, needs to be ascertained through research.

It has been reported by several authors like Bapat B. G. (1957) that preschool education reduces the number of dropouts and hence
reduces wastage in primary education. This is supposed to be brought about by the development of desirable attributes like the ability to socialise, physical development through the opportunity to exercise muscles, training of the senses, mastering the ability to read and write alphabets and numbers, etc. Above all a child is expected to develop a positive attitude towards schooling through the fun filled routine of the preschool. Therefore nursery schools are expected to play a positive role in making the nation's plans for Universal Elementary Education successful. The *Programme of Action* (1986) had expressed that proper programme of care and education if provided to the infants, it can act as a feeder and support system to the programme of Universal Elementary Education. However, nursery schools with the right infrastructure, curriculum and human resources can only make such a contribution. Hence whether the nursery schools have spacious play grounds with adequate equipments, trained staff, teaching aids and other facilities to make education enjoyable requires a study.

As stated earlier that there is no monitoring agency for the nursery schools, hence curriculum, books, system of evaluation, system of evaluation, etc. are at the discretion of the individuals running the school. Therefore there is every possibility that wide differences might be existing in such aspects among the various nursery schools. Whether there is any uniformity or lack of it in these aspects in the various preschools and whether they deviate from the
guidelines set by various commissions and authors requires a through study.

The time spent by a child at a nursery school, the time devoted to formal academic and non academic activities, the duration of confinement of a child in a closed space (classroom), the seating arrangement, the teaching method, the work load, home work, written tests, criticism and praise by teachers and punishment have a deep impact on a young child. Hence the nursery schools of modern India are to be studied to determine if the children enjoy nursery schooling or are burdened by it. Therefore a research covering this aspect is required.

Authors like Kanter R.M. (1972), Thomson K.H. (1964) and others have stressed the importance of proper infrastructure for a nursery school to ensure the safety and well being of the children. There should be spacious playgrounds and classrooms with adequate equipments and above all an aesthetically built campus. Safety measures like walled campus, well maintained furniture, non slippery floors and overall hygienic conditions are a must for any nursery school. It is a well known fact that today in urban India nursery schools are often run in cramped accommodations. Hence whether the infrastructure of the nursery schools is adequate or not requires research.

Since the research taken up involved the method of case study hence almost all the aspects of the preschools selected have been
studied. This revealed the shortcomings and the strong points of the systems. Only when one acquires such knowledge can he/she suggest the possible remedies for the shortcomings.

Although a sample of five schools is too small for drawing generalisations, nevertheless a comprehensive idea about the nursery schools of an urban area like Chandigarh can be obtained from this study. Thus this study shall not only add to the corpus of the knowledge existing in this field but also supplement it. In view of the reasons stated so far, this research was taken up.

1.13 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present work was delimited by the following factors:

1. The financial aspects of the schools viz. salary paid to the staff and other expenses incurred were not disclosed by the private nursery schools. Regarding the records and registers pertaining to the financial matter of the school, only brief verbal description could be obtained.

2. The present work was a case study and hence a huge volume of data was collected from the preschools using various tools of data collection. In several cases, the researcher had to rely on the data provided by the school authorities and there was no way to cross check the data provided. Again not only teachers but the parents also were reluctant to speak out against the school. The presence of the researchers during classroom teaching generated the probability that
the teachers were performing in a manner different from that under normal circumstances.

1.14 EXPLANATION OF THE TERMS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THE RESEARCH REPORT

An explanation of the terms and concepts that shall be used in the research report is given below.

1. Case Study – Case study is an intensive investigation of the situation existing in one or a few individual units which in this study are nursery schools.

2. Nursery Schools – Nursery schools today commonly refer to the institutions that cater mainly to the educational needs of the children of preschool age. However, according to some authors nursery schools refer to day care centres for the young children of working mothers where some sort of informal education is imparted along with care to the young children when their parents go out to work.

3. Preschools – The terms preschools, preparatory schools, preprimary schools, nursery schools and kindergartens are today used synonymously to refer to the institutions catering to the educational needs of children in the age group of 2-6 years and who are yet to enter primary schools.

4. Financing – In this study 'financing' refers to the income of the nursery schools through fees, fines, grants, donations, etc.
5. Budgeting – Budgeting encompasses the projection of the sources of funds of an institution and the sagacious allocation out of the same for different functions.

6. Administration – This implies all the techniques and procedures employed in operating an organisation which in this case is an educational organisation in accordance with established policies.

7. Records and Registers – Records and registers of a school mainly refer to the written or computerised account of the different aspects of the school viz. attendance of the staff and students, income and expenses, stocks and equipments, progress made by the pupils, general information about the staff and the students, academic and non academic activities, etc.

8. Inservice Education of Teachers – Inservice Education of teachers pertains to the various educational programmes provided to the teachers who are already in service to enrich and upgrade their knowledge and thus promote their professional growth.

9. Supervision – Supervision of the school refers to a planned programme carried out by specialists to study and upgrade the functioning of the school.

10. Infrastructure – Infrastructure refers to the material facilities or physical resources of an institution to be used by its human
resources for the achievement of the goals of the institution. In this study the infrastructure implies the school plant with its campus, building, playground and the various equipments.

11. Curriculum – Curriculum refers to the totality of the planned experiences provided by the school inside and outside the classroom to the students.

12. Evaluation – The term evaluation has been used in this study to refer to the assessment of the academic and non academic achievement of the students. It helps in assessing the degree of achievement of the goals set by the institution.

Thus this chapter consisted of two parts. While the first part which intends to provide general information regarding preschool education shall serve as a background for the research report, the second part consists of the statement of the problem, objective, scope, significance and delimitations of the study and the explanation of the terms used in the research report.