CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1959 has recognised the rights of the child all over the world. Our ideas on young children and their education have changed considerably over recent decades. A child is today no longer considered a 'veritable devil' or a 'miniature adult' or a 'none-entity'. The biological, psychological and the social sciences had also explored the riches of the child's nature. All these point towards giving the child better scope for fuller development of his personality as an individual as well as a citizen under proper care and guidance of the skilled personnel in an improved environment.

The changing status of the child in the home and the neighbourhood, in the State and the nation has called for a change in the entire system of our education, particularly at the lower stages. The arrangements for providing the child with an environment congenial to his natural as well as planned development and growth at the early stages of his life has led to the establishment of various institutions for child care and infant education. These institutions are generally termed as 'Pre-Primary' or 'Pre-school' institutions. The term pre-primary education is usually understood as relating to the establishments which children attend before beginning their formal
education. In the same context, 'pre-school education' refers to the arrangement of education before 'school', 'school' being understood as compulsory schooling which begins in most countries about the age of 6. Today, this term has much broader significance and needs to be carefully defined.

The concept of the pre-school period covers the whole period from birth (perhaps even from prenatal) to admittance to the primary school. The broadening of the concept of education is a long established fact now. Education is far more than instruction in all sorts of ways. It is concerned not only with the intellectual, logical and rational aspects of the personality but also with the individual physical, emotional, artistic, moral and social life as well. Very great importance is attached to the biological, hygienic, nutritional, motor, emotional, verbal and other components in the education of children belonging to the age group 0-3 as compared with the importance attached to them later on by pre-school institutions and then the primary schools.

This implies, therefore, a natural extension downward of the compulsory primary schooling maintaining the unity of some educational components in the pre-school education. This would also imply a diversity and variability of content for each period depending on its particular characteristics. While the unity and the continuity will be taken care of by the teacher, specificity would result from the choice of content.
Beginning with the infant's first emotional and social relations with those around him, the fact of living in clean, pleasant and tasteful surroundings, the acquisition of certain habits connected with hygiene, nutrition, etc. are all parts of 'education' in the broadest sense of the term. Particular importance, at this early period of life, must also be attached to the acquisition of the power of self-expression and communication by speech and in various other ways and to the development of understanding others.

While the importance of the biological aspects of development is undeniable and the part played by the medical and social services will have to be emphasised, these must not overshadow the importance of the educational components.

The pre-school education thus defined, we must determine what the attitude of the teacher and the content of education should be. The pre-primary school teacher must turn to other specialists - doctors, pediatricians, public health specialists, psychologists and biologists to obtain objective information enabling her to apply her educational abilities under favourable conditions and to good effect. There is the need for intelligent understanding and close collaboration between all those concerned with small children. Each must know his or her own limitations so as to respect the work of the other members of the team and cooperate fully with them. The evolution of ideas and the improvement of educational methods and techniques can be accelerated only by the collaboration of all those concerned directly or indirectly with children from birth to the age of 6.
Educational administration means overall management, control and arrangement to ensure efficient functioning of the institutional machinery to secure the greatest benefit to the greatest number in conformity with the educational philosophy adopted by the authority. Educational organisation is a part of administration dealing with systematic arrangement for definite purpose. It is concerned with the process of regulations, calendars, daily work-schedules, arrangement for equipments, work-load and facilities for work. Good organisation ensures unity of efforts, efficiency and proper use of resources. It is, in this sense the term organisation is being used here. It brings all the components of an educational programme in fruitful relationship and harmonises their mutual actions. It ensures sound planning, efficient execution, good direction and proper economy. Administration and organisation are interdependent. A school is organised that it may be administered; it is administered that it may be instructed. Instruction depends upon proper organisation. A good organisation takes into account (1) a clear and distinct aim to be accomplished, (2) an ideal of the method by which the goal will be best attained, and (3) an idea of the obstacles which must be overcome to achieve the end. The disposal of members and instruments of an institution to secure a desired end is termed organisation.

The importance of pre-school education in a fast developing country like ours has become urgent to keep pace with the various changes that are rapidly taking place in different aspects of life of the individual and the society to avoid wastage and stagnation and consequent bewilderment and chaos. Prior to 1947 little attention was paid to the pre-school education. For the first time in our educational history, the report of the Central Advisory Board of Education on post-war Educational Development in India (1944), emphasised its significance and recommended that an adequate provision of pre-primary education should be an essential adjunct of a National System of Education is rapidly gaining ground in popularity in the post-independence period and, even though the progress is, no doubt, very small in relation to our goals, it marks a tremendous advance over earlier achievements. The Education Commission of 1964-66 in recognition of the importance and educational significance of pre-primary education recommended measures for the establishment and expansion of pre-primary educational institutions in a phased manner while treating the entire Pre-University period of education as one stage. The report of the Commission has been accepted by all the States almost in toto for implementation.

The Commission has noted with particular care the findings of modern researches that the years between 3 and 10 are of greatest importance in the child's physical, emotional and intellectual developments. It has also reported that the children who have been to pre-primary schools have been found to show better progress at primary stage and help reducing wastage and stagnation.
While it is not possible immediately or in near future on the part of the state to take over the responsibilities of establishing pre-primary institutions to cater for the needs of all the children belonging to the age group 3-6, much less to the age group 0-6, of the state of Assam for obvious reasons, it is necessary to enquire into the different aspects of existing pre-primary education and to see how best the same may be reorganised, if required, to derive maximum benefit under the prevailing conditions and circumstances and also to suggest ways and means to facilitate materialisation of the recommendations of the Commission referred to above and hence this study. The objective of this study is to analyse the trend of development of pre-primary education in the state of Assam, to survey its organisational pattern both under public and private management and to suggest as mentioned above on the basis of the findings. The period of review is from 1975 to 1980. Relevant data were collected from the district of Kamrup as it was deemed to be the most representative area of the State in this respect.

The district of Kamrup with its headquarter at Gauhati which also happens to be the capital (Dispur) of the state of Assam comprises of three Sub-Divisions viz., Gauhati, Nalbari and Barpeta and has an area of 9,863 sq.km. The population is around 28,54,183 of which 80% live in the rural areas. The percentage of literacy in the district is 28.8 (2)

The study has been empirical as well as historical in nature. A questionnaire embracing the different aspects of pre-school education was prepared and sent to all the institutions of the state concerned with the education of the small children for answering. Subsequently, the institutions that sent back the answers to the questionnaire were visited to supplement the information already supplied by contacting the teachers. Parents of children in the pre-primary institutions were also contacted, wherever possible, to supplement the information obtained from the institutions. Permission from the departmental authority (State Government) was obtained with a request to different agencies to furnish data on being approached in connection with the study undertaken. Intensified personal contacts were made with the institutional authorities to elicit authentic information and formal interviews were also arranged in some cases for the purpose. The sources of other relevant information have been mainly:

(a) the existing pre-primary organisations and their records including teachers, and members of the managements;

(b) Books and journals dealing with pre-school education;

(c) records maintained by the concerned departments of the govt. of Assam and other agencies.

Because of complete non-cooperation observed by the personnel connected with the pre-school establishments organised and managed by the Christian Missionaries within the State of Assam no information could be collected relating to these establishments. Hence these institutions have been excluded from the purview of this study.