

Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Pre-school education is an indispensable instrument for the proper personality development of a child. We must know that early years of children are important because, the rate of growth and development is fastest and environmental influences are minimum. The effect of pre-school education was found significant on primary and secondary education. Habits and attitudes acquired in the early childhood are fairly deep rooted. Curiosity and creativity both are found highest during this period. Pre-school education, an arena of games and frills to the young children, provides a strong foundation for successful achievement in the elementary and secondary education. Good pre-school programmes broaden social contact with others, cultivate curiosity and creative thinking abilities and expand the language as communication ability.¹

Pre-school education term has been used, to refer to group setting for children between approximately 3 and 5 years old which are deliberately designed to stimulate and support their mental, physical, emotional, language, social etc. development. It has been called by the psychologists, educationists and policy makers by variety of names such as Nursery, Kindergarten, Montessori, Pre-Primary Education etc. The age of children before they enter into class first or primary education is generally called pre-school age. A pre-school is a strategic portion of the primary school years devoted to the 5 or 6 years old children. Torrance, Montgomery, Andrews, Singh, Piaget have considered 3 to 5 years age range as pre-school age. Katz and Cain (1987) have also considered 3 to 5 years age range as pre-school age range.²

¹ B Singh, '*Preschool Education*' New Delhi, 1997, P-xiv.

² *Ibid*, B Singh, '*preschool Education*' New Delhi, 1997, P-8.

Preschool education is a great adventure for a child. It is voluntary. Most of the nursery or kindergarten schools are running by private agencies and churches. They charge very high fees and thus preschool education is limited to the children of more prosperous families. It is neither compulsory nor pre-requisite for entrance into primary schools. But it is very important for the total development of the child's personality. It is usually a child's first experience away from home. It is first experience with a stranger and with some children of his age group for three to four hours. In place of teacher the author is using a word 'stranger' because in starting preschool child of three years age group does not have a clear concept of the word 'teacher'. He is afraid of any stranger. But when he understands that stranger is a teacher, he feels happy. It is difficult for preschool children to stay in one spot or one place for a long time that is the reason why we find a lot of activity going on in a good nursery or kindergarten school.

1.1 Need and Importance

Preschool education is in a state of ferment today. Never has the education of the preschool children assumed greater importance in the eyes of the general public. There are several reasons that emphasize the need for preschool education for provision is made for preschool education for a variety of purposes. Some major reasons which were considered important are listed here: The fast changing living conditions have also necessitated that adequate provision be made for preschool education. Under financial pressure every member of the family seeks job. They need preschool education institutions where their children can be looked after.

- i. The preschool years represent a time of unprecedented growth and development, when skills are acquired that provide the foundation for all subsequent learning. That is time when teachers can have the greatest impact upon a child and can reduce the potential effect of environmental conditions upon a child.

- ii. Creativity peaks during the preschool years and that creative abilities not nurtured that time can become more difficult to express later.
- iii. Preschool education prepares a sound base for primary education thus reducing dropout's wastage and stagnation in primary education.
- iv. Preschool education serves to fulfill effectively all needs of the young children- physical social, emotional, mental, and psychological.
- v. Preschool education gives a child the time and the opportunity to express his curiosity in questioning exploring in experimenting.
- vi. Early stimulation and educational enrichment can promote creativity in young children. It was felt that early educational intervention providing stimulation and instruction during the preschool years- would make a difference in the children's school experience.
- vii. Preschool education helps to dispel old belief that preschool education is injurious to children because it separates them from their family members, impose structure upon them to early and hinder freedom and entertainment of the children.
- viii. Preschool education has changed the attitude of parents. Now the parents have positive attitude towards preschool education.
- ix. Very rare family can provide early training for their young children. The preschool experience may be speculative for some young children but great bulk of preschool children would be benefited from preschooling.
- x. From the psychological sociological and point of view preschool education is important. The role of preschool education in mental physical emotional, social language etc... development and in germination of readiness for the intellectual activities that will come in later years is important.
- xi. The preschool education is an arena of play and builds a foundation for primary education.

- xii. Early childhood years are the root years for learning about self in relation to others, for concept formation for language and for creativity.³

1.2.0 Contributions of Great Educators towards Pre-School Education

Pre-primary education is a very comprehensive education which includes parental education, pre-natal as well as post-natal education and child care. It extends from the birth of the child to his entrance into a regular and formal schooling. Educational thinkers and practitioners starting from Socrates to Plato, from Montessori to Mahatma Gandhi have contributed their mite to the growth and development of early childhood education.

1.2.1 Comenius

John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) is generally regarded as the "father of modern education" He occupies a place of commanding importance. He introduces and dominates the whole of modern education from early childhood to secondary education and his relation to our present teaching practices is compared with that of Copernicus and Newton towards modern science.

Comenius wrote extensively on religious and educational topics. The most outstanding work by him on education is the Great Didactic. Comenius has written in the book (1896) the duty of teachers of the young is none other than to skillfully scatter the seeds of instruction in their mind, and to carefully water God's plants. Comenius laid more stress on practice than theory. According to Comenius education should be natural and lively. There is no use to dumping the mind with dead ideas and words. Comenius wants that the desire to know and to learn should be excited in boys in every possible manner. The method of instruction should lighten the drudgery of learning, that there may be nothing to hinder the students

³ *Ibid* pp 9-13.

from making progress with their studies. His description of a school, particularly pre-primary school has given very lucid, vivid and interesting.⁴

1.2.2 Rousseau

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is accorded a unique place among Western educational author. Rousseau's ideas on childhood education, principles of curriculum, methods of teaching etc have been well presented in his immortal work "Emile", Children's interested are regarded by him as the basis of all his education. Rousseau makes a strong plea for giving full freedom to children. He says that he must learn from his own experience and he should not be spoon-fed. According to him, children are restless and curious by nature. Like Comenius, Rousseau is a great prophet of nature. He not believes in words, verbal explanation of descriptions.

1.2.3 Pestalozzi

Johann Henrich Pestalozzi (1746- 1827) is one of the great western educators. He seemed to have been immensely influenced by the educational doctrines of Rousseau and Comenius Pestalozzi also believes in obedience of children to wise and well-meaning teachers and parents. He therefore says, "Without it there is no education possible. There are crises, indeed, when the child would be ruined by being allowed his liberty, he must obey the wise teacher or the father he has learned to respect; but only in case of necessity must an order be given".

Thus, in Pestalozzian education there is balance quantity of freedom and obedience of children the teacher's control should be exercised with love and understanding for children. Pestalozzi has given family love and cares an important place in the life and education of the child. He believes that in the

⁴ Jagannath Mohanty and Bhagyadhar Mohanty, *Early childhood care and Education; Deep and Deep Publications*, New Delhi-2002. P -9.

absence of parent's affection, the child's education must be impaired. Pestalozzi is the pioneer in psychologizing education and bringing harmony in the relations of the child with his environment-home, school and community.

1.2.4 Froebel

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) is a world famous educator and has the unique distinction of being the developer of the kindergarten system. He believed that education must begin in early childhood. According to him child nature has its fullest expression in play which should be the means of child education. He started kindergarten which meant children's garden where they may grow as naturally as plants under the care of an expert gardener. Unlike Rousseau, Froebel believes that the child should properly, develop only in the society. He does not want to take him out of the society. Rather he insists on group activities in home, school and community. School, according to him, has sample social significance. It enables the child to discover his own individuality and to develop his personality. The child's capacity can be fully developed through cooperation and joint activities.

According to Froebel play is self-active representation of inner necessity and impulse. Play is the purest, most spiritual activity of man. It gives, therefore, joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer rest, peace with the world. He developed "gifts", number games, rhythmic plays, dances, songs, drawing, geometric studies and group games involving dialogues and corporation. Froebel believes in the value of children's manual work. The child is according to him, a worker by nature. Manual work is a precondition for realization of the pupil's personality. The child gets pleasure in constructive work through which his ideas find concrete expression.

1.2.5 Dewey

John Dewey (1859-1952) was one of the outstanding educational philosophies as well as practitioners of the western world. He exerted profound influence on the school programmes and practices in various countries through his works and writings. Freedom is an important element in the education propounded by Dewey. Nothing should be imposed on the child from above. A project when organized in a free atmosphere is a play activity and children engaged in such a project feel pleasure of a play even though they have to work hard. The child learns most effectively when he is able to complete definite job. Therefore, any work can be divided into a series of "tasks", "jobs" or "projects", which can be finished in a reasonable time. This makes learning through doing more interesting and also makes it more effective. Children thus get the joy and pride in doing such jobs and taking to the completion.

1.2.6 Montessori

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) achieved a universal reputation for her unique contributions to the early childhood education. Her book, "The Montessori Method" which gives a basic statement of her views regarding childhood education. Her schools for youngsters are called "Children's House". Although her approach is based on "liberty", actually discipline is enforced in the children's house. Montessori has aptly asked, "Discipline must come through liberty. Here is a great principle which is difficult for followers of common-school methods to understand. How shall one obtain discipline in the class of free children?" She at first worked for the deficient children and then for the younger children under six in kindergarten where she tried out her own ideas.

Montessori laid stress on the development of the child's individuality to the maximum. She did not believe in external motivation for accelerating learning. She pointed out that it is not fear of punishment all hope of reward that motivates a child, but the sheer satisfaction of the work itself. The greater reward, according to her, is to go from stage to another. Montessori advocated education as a development process; she emphasized the complete unfolding of the child's individuality. She observes "the child is a body which grows and a soul which develops. We must neither mar nor stifle the mysterious form which lies within these two forms of growth, but wait for the manifestation which we know will succeed on another.

1.2.7 Rabindranath

Ravindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was an immortal poet, philosopher and educationist of India and had his unique achievement in the fields of literature, philosophy, art and education. His famous book of poems Gitanjali was awarded noble prize for literature in 1913. Tagore pleaded for bringing the child into direct contact with the nature and said, "education discovered from nature has brought untold harm to young children." Since men have a close affinity with nature, he should realize this relationship not only between man and man, but also between man and nature. He wished that the child's life should be surrounded with objects of nature and should be keeping away from all artificiality and sophistications of the modern civilization. According to him, next to nature, the child should be brought into touch with the stream of social behaviour, "children's behaviour should be socialized and given adequate scope for making social contacts. Tagore held that in order to make education meaningful the child should be in touch with complete life of a people. It's economic, intellectual, social aesthetic and spiritual life.

Tagore emphasized that the child should be given ample freedom and education must be inspired with a spirit of freedom and joy. No imposition on the

child is desirable and liberty is the guiding principle of the child's education. Freedom should prevail in the environment of the early childhood education. Such freedom "does not mean more independence of control and right to self-will. It means liberation of all the aspects and powers of the personality, namely the senses, the vital energies, the various mental capacities including intelligence and imagination, and also the functions of the heart-feelings, emotions, sympathy and love". Tagore was not in favour of strict discipline. He had great sympathy and understanding for the child. He advocates minimum discipline with maximum freedom to the child. Rabindranath held that sufficient provision should be made for self- experience of the child.

1.2.8 Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) father of the modern India was an apostle of peace, truth and nonviolence. He was a great advocate of child centred education like Rousseau, Comenius, Pestalozzie and Froebel. He pointed out that education should fit the child rather than the vice versa the child's ability, interests and need should be taken into consideration in determining the programmes and practices in school. Learning experiences need be provided according to the individual differences.

Activity is an important urge in the child it should be taken as an end in itself, but a means to the end. Since activity is, therefore given crucial importance and curriculum for the child grows and develops through his own efforts and his education becomes meaningful in proportion to his own involvement in it. Learning becomes a joyful pursuit and various creative activities become effective in providing rich resources for his intellectual and social development. All this helps in the all round development of his personality.

1.2.9 Zakir Hussain (1897- 1969)

Dr. Zakir Hussain was born in 1897 at Hyderabad in the present state of Andhra. His most important contribution to education was his association with pre basic and basic education. His association with child education continued for many years. He gave his view on early childhood education years as President of the All India child Education Conference held at Indore in 1955.

1.2.10 Aurobindo (1872-1950)

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was born on August 15, 1872 in the town of a Konnagar near Calcutta. Some of his views relevant to the early childhood education are described in the following paragraphs:-

a. Creative Approach to Education: Aurobindo appears to be suggesting a creative approach to education. Ideas according to him should be organized around a central theme or higher ideal. It is not necessary to teach many subjects to the child. The child may find many approaches to the same subject. Many ideas could be building around some original subject.

b. Function of education: The principal function of education is to discover the “psychic being” within the person. This could be done by secluding for some time to one self, through concentration and focusing on an idea or problem.

c. Vehicles of Learning: There four vehicles of learning which include the vital (body) the physical (environment), the mental (attention, perception, problem solving) and the psychic are instrumental in cultivating power beauty, knowledge and love respectively.

d. Independent Work by Children: Children should be given instructions on work sheets so that they are able to carry out these activities independently by following some kind of ‘discovery’ or ‘heuristic’ approach.

e. Training of the Senses: The five senses and the mind form the six senses of man. The training of these six senses is the first care of the child. The senses must be developed perfectly unfortunately the development of the sixth senses is not included in modern education.⁵

1.2.11 Jiddu Krishnamurti

Jiddu Krishnamurti was born on May II, 1894 in the small hill town of Madanapalle which is about 225 kms north of Madras. The basic theme of his education philosophy is that children are not to be fed on others ideas dogmas, sayings, beliefs, slogans and quotes. Self knowledge is the best education. Freedom rather than conformity is the essence of true knowledge.

The bringing up of a child requires careful observation and care on the part of parents. Parents love has no substitute. But most parents corrupt their live for children by foisting their own fears and ambition on their children. They try to condition them to a particular way of living and distort their outlook for life. Both parents and teachers need to be re-educated in this regard.

1.2.12 Tarabai Modak

Padmabhooshan shrimati Tarabai Modak, a pioneer of pre-school education in India, was born in 1892. In 1931, the movement of pre-school education was extended by Tarabai to Maharashtra. In 1936, she started shishu Vihar Kendra at Bombay which served as a centre of pre-school educational training. This centre functioned in a well-to-do locally. In the year 1945, she moved to Bordi and founded the Gram BAL Shiksha Kendra there. She worked in Bordi for 12 years and then shifted her entire institution to the tribal area of Kosbad in 1957 where she tried her methods on the most neglected tribal children.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp 10-22.

Her contribution lies in the development of Balwadi, developed by Tarabai is a type of indigenous nursery school.⁶

1.2.13 Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru was born on November 14, 1989 in Allahabad. Jawaharlal Nehru loved children. Despite his busy life he paid special attention to the cause of children, he felt that the children of today will build the India of tomorrow. They should be provided with opportunities for growth and development.

He was convinced that no amount of money spent on children and their mothers was too much and that it was a sound investment for the future. He was deeply interested in any scheme designed to benefit children and women, more especially the provision of mid-day meal for the under privileged school children. Nehru was responsible for Indian School introducing knap sack which would hang on the back of children instead of the front or the sides. He wanted children not be stooping but to be erect while walking with load of books on their backs. Nehru was interested in almost everything. He retained the curiosity of a child throughout his life.⁷

1.3.0 Agencies of Pre - School Education in India

Following are the agencies which manage the preschool education in India

1.3.1 Government Agencies

Though education has been a state subject (now it is a concurrent subject) yet the policies regarding pre- school education have been mostly framed and implemented by the Central level agencies like Central Social Welfare Board.

⁶ J S Grewal, *Early Childhood Education-foudation and practice* Agra: National psychological corporation, 1984.pp-51-52.

⁷ *Ibid.* PP-54-55.

1.3.2 Private Bodies

The private sector in India has played a significant role for the spread of pre-school education. They stepped up their activities after the visit of Madam Montessori to India. Many Montessori and Nursery schools as well as training centres were started.

1.3.3 Semi- official and Autonomous Organizations

There are several national and international level organizations working in the field of pre- school education. The names of national level organizations are given below:

- A. Central Social Welfare Board.
- B. Indian Council for Child Welfare.
- C. Indian Red Cross.
- D. Kasturaba Memorial Trust.
- E. All India Women's Conference.
- F. Montessori International Association in India.
- G. Nutan Balshikshan Snagh, Bombay.
- H. All India Cosmic Education Society.
- I. Kishore Dal, Patna.
- J. Children's Education Society, Mysore.
- K. Happy Education Society, Delhi.
- L. City Montessori Schools, Lucknow.
- M. Bal Niketan Sangh, Indore.
- N. All India Balketan-ki-Bari
- O. Indian Association for Pre- School Education.
- P. University College/Departments of Home Science.
- Q. State Institutions of Education.
- R. National Council of Education Research and Training, New Delhi.

(i) Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB): The CSWB organizes activities of pre-school through its State Developments of Social Welfare. These activities are organized as part of the family and child welfare schemes and are organized under three heads: health, nutrition, education and social welfare services. The state Developments/Boards of social welfare organizes Balwadis. The Balwadis are day care centres.

The CSWB gets funds from the Central Government on the recommendation of the planning Commission. It also appoints national committees to examine various issues pertaining to the child education and welfare schemes. Some time ago the CSWB appointed an expert committee to survey and report on child care in the country.

(ii) Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW): The ICCW organises programmes of child welfare. It also helps in running the Balwadis and Bal Siveka Training Centres. It collaborates with the International Children's Centre Paris and the United Nations Children's Fund in organizing programmes of educational, social and nutritional nature.

(ii) Role of the NCERT: The National Council of Education Research and Training has been activity associated with the Development of pre-school education in India. The Department of pre-primary and primary Education was set up in 1969. The department collaborated with other state and national level agencies and prepared courses of studies for the pre- schools and training of school teachers. The NCERT has also undertaken research projects for the developmental norms of Indian children in the age group of 2 ½ to 5. The Department of pre-primary and primary Education was re-organized by the NCERT in 1975 and a separate Child Study unit (CBU) has since been set up. The CSU has brought out many useful publications on pre-school education and has also set up children's media laboratory.

(iv) Indian Association of Pre- School Education (IAPE): The IAPE was formed in 1964. Since then it has been actively engaged in promoting the cause of pre- school education. It has brought out several publications. In addition to this the IAPE teachers gives suggestions and recommendations on the various aspects of pre-school education.

(v) Numerous other Organizations: All India Women's Conference Guilds of Service, madras, India Red Cross, Bharat Sewak Samij, All India Balkan- ki-Bari, Bal Niketan Sang, Kishore Dal, Nutan Bal Sikshan Sangh, Bombay, Children's Education Societies in Gujarat, Karnataka, Delhi and Association Montessori International in India which organizes Montessori schools, teacher training programmes, day care nurseries, pre-primary schools, Balwadis and child health centers.

(vi) Education and community Development Departments in various States run Nursery Schools, Nursery Teachers, Training Colleges and Pre- Basic Schools.

(vii) Labour Welfare and Health Departments in States organize Creches, Maternity Centres, Day care Centres and Health Centres.

(viii) Public Sector undertakings have set up pre-schools in different cities under their own educational authorities.

(ix) The various religious bodies have started pre-schools along with the primary, secondary and higher secondary schools.

(x) The CARE operates its nutritional programmes in collaboration with different states.

(xi) The University Departments of Child Development and Home Science Colleges also have training programmes, mostly for women, at the early childhood education level.

(xii) Some national level Institutions like, B.M Institute of child Development, Ahmadabad and Child study Unit at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences Bombay are also working for the cause of pre- school education.

(xiii) Role of International Agencies: Activities of the International agencies are also notable in giving impetus for the Development of pre- school education. These include UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, CARF, International Association of pre- school Education and International Children's centre, Paris.⁸

1.4.0 Recommendations and Suggestions of Various Committee and Commissions

In the beginning the pre-school education was entirely under the control of private sector. Therefore, there was no national policy for the pre-school child. The first kindergarten schools in India were set up in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first regular teacher training efforts were made in 1924. The credit for building a rich tradition in pre-school education goes to the pioneering efforts of a galaxy of Indian educators like Gijubhai Badeka, Tarabai Modak, S.N. Namle, G.S. Arundale and Rukmani Arundale. Their efforts received further support with stay in India of Maria Montessori, a pioneer in the pre-school movement. Her organization, Association Montessori International conducted teacher training courses regularly in different parts of the country. Throughout the first half of the present century the voluntary bodies made significant efforts but there was not much official recognition of it. The public sector began to take interest in pre-school education mainly after the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) submitted its report on education in 1944, more commonly known as Sargent

⁸ *Ibid.* PP-167-171.

Report. Ever since the publication of this report several committee and commissions have deliberated upon the subject of pre-school education. Their commendations and suggestions of these bodies are given in this section in the following order:

1.4.1 The C.A.B.E Report 1944.

The Central Advisory Board of Education (C.A.B.E) on post war educational development in India was the first official document to take notice of the pre-school child. This report is also commonly called as sergeant Report.

The C.A.B.E Report recognized the significance of a very impersonal, plastic and educationally potent period of life and recommended that:

- (i) The main object of education at pre-primary stage is to very give young children social experience rather than formal instruction.
- (ii) The primary schools should have attached with them the primary classes in the town or other areas where housing conditions are unsatisfactory and also where mothers are at work. On the basis of a normal age range of 3 to 6 years a provision of 10, 00,000 places in Nursery Schools and classes was suggested with a full operation cost. Pre-primary education in all cases should be free.
- (iii) It may not be feasible to make attendance compulsory. But no efforts should be spared to persuade parents to send their children to school voluntarily, particular in areas where housing conditions are unsatisfactory and/ or mothers are accustomed to go out to work.
- (iv) Nursery schools or classes should be staffed with women teachers who have received special training for this work.

1.4.2 Views of Abbot and wood (1937) Committee

Giving its views on the curriculum of pre-primary education, abbot and wood Report said that a young child needs experience more than instruction and education for the young children should provide for their physical care, for training them in good habits and for widening their experiences through interesting activities. Abbot the activities to be included in the programme of a Nursery School, the Report suggested: (i) Acting and singing; (ii) Physical exercises; (iii) Games and dancing; (iv) Care of flowers and animals; (v) Drawing and making things.

1.4.3 Recommendations of All India Child Education Conference, Indore, 1955.

An All India Child Education Conference was held at Indore from 29th to 31st January, 1955. It was presided over by Dr. Zakir Hussain the then Vice-chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University. The following recommendations were made by the conference:

- (i) The Conference called upon the Central and the state Governments to take more interest in pre-school education and actively aid public effort in that direction.
- (ii) It called upon the public to financially support the cause of pre-school education. It hoped that “if public comes forward to take up the cause the Government would later follow with aid.”
- (iii) The Conference appealed for a co-operation between the parents and teacher.
- (iv) The conference proposed the setting up of an all India body to coordinate the various official and non- official efforts in the country in the field of pre-school education.

1.4.4 Recommendations of Study Group on Child Welfare (1960-62)

The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up in 1953. Major focus of its programmes was to give financial assistance to voluntary social welfare organizations in order to develop and maintain their existing programmes.

The committee emphasized the importance of training various categories of personnel dealing with the child and prescribed minimum standards for pre-school and listed various categories of institutes. The committee suggested that the responsibility of starting the pre-schools should be left to voluntary agencies for which the Government should provide suitable financial assistance.

1.4.5 Recommendations of the Education Commission (1964-66)

The Commission was set up in 1964 and it was for the first time in the history of Indian education that an All India body touched so comprehensively all the stages of education, pre-school education included. The Commission, in its report, gave direction to the pre-school level education when it said. The modern trend in educational policy therefore is to emphasize pre-primary education especially for children with unsatisfactory home backgrounds. This is the direction in which we also should move.

The commission was in favour of the need to develop pre-primary education as extensively as possible but the advance could not be rapid in view of the resources urgently required for the 'universalization' of primary education. Another problem pointed out by the Commission is of 'quality' versus 'quantity' which is not only relevant for the primary area but equally important for other sectors of education. The third issue raised by the Commission was regarding the controlling agency of pre-primary education. Should it be the responsibility of State or it should be left to private enterprise. Keeping these issues in view the Commission adopted the realistic and pragmatic approach by giving the following recommendations

- (i) Pre-primary is of great significance to the physical, emotional and intellectual development of children, especially those with unsatisfactory home conditions.
- (ii) The Commission envisaged that an enrolment of 5% of the population in the age group 3-5 and about 50% of the children in the age group 5-6 will be a reasonable target.
- (iii) The State Institutes of Education (SIEs) should control and supervise the state level development centres whereas the district level centres should control and guide the pre-primary education activities.
- (iv) Private enterprise should be made largely responsible setting up and running pre-primary centres. The state should give grants in aid on the basis of equalization.

- (v) Children's play centres should be attached to the existing primary schools. These should function as per-school classes.

- (vi) Experimentation should be encouraged and less costly educational material may be devised.

- (vii) The state should maintain the state and district level play centers, train pre-primary teachers, prepare children's literature and assist private agencies with grant-in-aid and run model institutes.

- (viii) The programme of pre-schools should be flexible including it in the play manual and learning activities.

1.4.6 Recommendation of the committee of Members of Parliament on Education (1967)

The Committee of members of Parliament on Education, constituted by the Government of India in April, 1967, to prepare a document on the national Policy of Education, suggested that:

“ Greater attention needs to be paid to the development of Pre-primary education Voluntary organizations conducting pre- primary institutions should receive encouragement and financial assistance, especially when they are working in rural areas, urban slums or for children of the weaker section of the community. Every encouragement should be given to experimentation, particularly in devising less costly methods of expansion.”

1.4.7 Report of the Study Group on the Development of the Pre- School Child (1970- 72)

In 1970, the Central Advisory Board of Secondary education at its 35th meeting passed a resolution which said: “The Board recognizes the significance of pre-primary education and commends the proposal to try out pilot projects by mobilizing local community resources, especially in rural areas.”

1.4.21-38 Integrated Approach to Pre School Child Recommendations of the National Seminar (1972).

The India Association for pre-school Education (IAPE) organized a National Seminar on integrated approach to the pre- school child in October, 1972 at Bangalore. This Seminar considered a number of documents on the integrated approach. The main working document was presented by Smt. Meena Swaminathan (Chairman of the study Group on the Development of the Pre-school Child) under the title: Towards a National Policy for the Pre- School child. Meena Swaminathan recommended the following choices:

- (i) The economically and socially weakest sections of the community as the primary target groups;
- (ii) Health and nutrition as the priority sector.
- (iii) Family (especially the mother) rather than institutionalized facilities for the child in isolation;
- (iv) Age group 0-3 as deserving the most attention in health and nutrition and age group 3-6 as assuming equal importance in regard to cognitive development.

1.4.9 NECRT's Handbook on the Supervision of Pre-schools (1972)

In 1972 the NCERT brought out a handbook under the titled “pre-Primary Institutions – Their Supervision.” The handbook has been divided into three parts. Part I deals with the concept of supervision. The three main points of action for supervision are health nutrition and education. Evaluation instrument to be used by supervision along with direction is described in the remaining two parts. “The check list,” according to a UNESCO review, is the most important part of the Evaluation Instrument. Under each aspect the check list of the attention of the supervisor to important factors which need investigation”.

1.4.10 Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) 1975.

After the Study group on the Development of the Pre-school Child submitted its report a seminar on the pre-school was held at Madras which suggested minimum integrated programmes under the following heads:

Health Services: The Pre-school child should receive health supervision which should include:

- (i) Immunization against communicable diseases, e.g. small pox. T.B. tetanus diphtheria, whooping cough and polio;

- (ii) Monitoring of growth and development to detect deviation from normal and to ensure intervention for preventive action.
- (iii) Provision of benefits of improved environmental sanitation and adequate water supply;
- (iv) Use of mass communication media through all health agencies to give health education to the community and
- (v) The quality of services meant for pre- school child.

Nutrition Service: The child is most vulnerable nutritionally during these years.

The following minimum services should be provided

- (i) Nutritional support to all pre- school children in the weaker economic segments of the population in the form of supplementary foods and this being necessary local resources be taken to produce nutritious foods with local resources at cheap prices and to make these available to those in great need;
- (ii) Facilities for the detection of early cases of malnutrition in all health agencies to prevent the cases from reaching a stage of no return or necessitating rehabilitation; and
- (iii) Nutrition education through extension techniques at all levels and with the help of all relevant agencies.

Education Services:

Programmes for pre-school education must provide scope for motor and physical growth opportunity to live and learn with children and adults, and to learn about the world around. Facilities like the play centres, Balwadis and pre-primary schools should be made available for learning through activities and aesthetic and cultural experiences. To facilitate this emphasis should be given on training the staff in the utilization of locally available materials for play and also in encouraging production of cheap play equipment for this age group.

Social welfare Services: Strengthening family life, family education for utilizing effectively services available for pre-school children: assistance to families for resolving social, education and economic problems; and community involvement in pre-school children's programme are some of the major areas where social services should be used effectively. Based upon the above suggestions, the integrated child development services (ICDS) programme was launched in 1975 in 30 Development Blocks.⁹

1.5.0 Growth and Development of Pre-School Education

In the last three hundred years, preschool education has been recognized. Rousseau indicates that a child is not just a smaller young adult but is in fact going just through a unique period in his life- childhood unfolding and growing. In 1524 Martin Luther urged the German people to send their children to school. The moment of preschool education received a new dimension when Froebel appeared the scene. He established first kindergarten school at Blackenburg in 1837 in Germany whose basic theory, organization materials and methods were primarily, designed to meet the need of preschool children. The main purpose of this institution was to provide education to young children through play way method. He develops "gifts" and occupations as the means of play accompanied by delightful' mother and child says. But 1847 Froebel established about ten kindergarten schools and six teacher's training schools for young children. Later on kindergarten schools became highly formal and the purpose kindergarten lapsed.

In France preprimary education was started in 1779. Interest in the education of young children in England and Wales can be traced to the work of Robert Owen, the socialist reformer. In 1816 he opened the first infant school which he called 'Institution for the formation of character at the New Lanark Mills in Scotland. It was felt that preschool is necessary for disadvantaged children. In

⁹ *Ibid.* PP- 171-188.

1912 Margaret McMillan to meet the needs of children in slum area established first nursery school in London. During the war years many other nursery schools were setup to meet the imperative need for child care. In 1918 the Fisher Act made legal for the establishment of free nursery school within the British school system. In Netherlands early childhood care were established in 1800. The early childhood education programmes were originally developed to provide education opportunities to the wards of wealthy persons. Early childhood education centres were established in Belgium in 1824. In Sweden, child minding facilities started in 1830 to care for children of working mothers.

In the United state the kindergarten education was setup in 1855 at Water town and slowly extended across the nation. This preschool education instruction was financially supported by school district funds fees and other contribution. Social organization in certain cities contributed in the establishment of preschool education institutions. By 1957-58 preschool education was available to about fifty- three percent of children of preschool age. Preschool education in Canada was started in the late of nineteenth century, not for children of the poor, but for the educational emancipation of children of the wealthy people who could afford to pay for careful individual attention to the needs. In Italy the first infant school was established by Roman Catholic Priest Abate Aportin in 1822.

During the World War II the federal government sponsored child care programmes for out of work families and women working in the defense industries. In USSR many people believed that the education system was not teaching young children enough. The National Defense Education Act of 1957 focused on instructional improvement in mathematics and science and on use of guidance and counseling in order to increase both the quality and quantity of scientific personnel. In 1967 National laboratory in early childhood education was setup. The basic purpose of this laboratory was coordinate research and development and to evaluate theories and methods which are being employed in working with young children based on the research. National coordination centre

and ERIC clearing house on early childhood education were the nucleus of University based research and development centres of the laboratory.

1.5.1 Growth and Development of Pre-School Education in India

The growth of Nursery and Montessori schools in India can be traced back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Loreto Convent School was started at Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh in 1874 and St. Hildas Nursery School was found at Poona in the then State of Bombay in 1885. Saidapeth High School, Madras was started in 1888 with the purpose of training teachers for the nursery schools.¹⁰

In the early part of the twentieth century most of the kindergarten schools were attached to the institutions established mostly by the missionaries. To them goes the credit of popularising the kindergartens in India. These institutions were not the typical kindergartens as envisaged by its founder. These kindergartens were later Indianised as Balwadis' (Children's orchards) of Srishuvihars' (houses of children). Sholapur Kindergarten schools were started in 1901- 1902 with the intention of training teachers.

In 1907 Mrs. Annie Besant who was British by birth, became the President of the International Theosophical Society after the death of its founder, col. Olcott, who had started many schools for the young children in the city Madras and its suburbs. According to Trilokekar (1968), Mrs. Annie Basent came to India was the country she adopted her own' (Indian Association of Pre- School Education). She stirred the Indians to free their country through her home rule movement. It was at this time that a number of schools for children and colleges for men and women, both in the North and South were run by her on idealistic lines. She started a school at Adyar near Madras which was later shifted to Rishi Vally where the theosophical Society had purchased property for education work. During 1920-30,

¹⁰ J S Grewal, *Early Childhood Education-foudation and practice* Agra: National psychological corporation, 1984, P-157.

most of the institutions concentrated their activities in the South India with few beginning in the North. In Eastern India in 1918 Mrs. Besant Started the Central Hindu College at Banaras with the help of Dr. George Arundale who came to India are her call.

In the Western India, Gijubhai Bhadeka started the first Montessori School in India in 1920. According to Ranjit Bhai (1961) “The name of Gijubhai should be written in golden letters in the history of National Movement because he started his institution in 1920”. In 1924 opened his first training centre Dakshinamurti Training College at Bhavanagar. This was followed by the formation of Nutan Balshikhsan Sangh in 1926 covering both Gujarat and Maharashtra. This organization was founded for the cause of child education. Two experimental schools the children of pre-school age. Nutun BAL Shikshan Sangh also organized a training centre at Dadar (Bombay) in 1938. In 1945 the Sangh started its rural Centre of pre-school education at Botdi in District (Maharashtra State). This Centre was named as Gram Bal-Shiksha Kendra, In 1935 and 1936 the Nutan Bal Shiksha Sangh shifted its Headquarters to Bombay and set a permanent training centre for the pre- school teachers.

In 1934 Dr, George Arundale had succeeded Mrs. Besant as the president of the Theosophical society. The school started by her at Madras had already been shifted to Adayr. Mrs Besanti had expressed a desire that there should be an educational institution in the vicinity of Theosophical society. It was to abide by her wish that Dr. Arundale and Mrs Rukamani Devi started the Besanti Memorial School at Adyar in 1934 with a Montessori Centre (AMC). The contribution of AMC is no less important. It idealized Montessori education even in rural areas of the country.

Dr. Arundale however, felt that no educational work would be complete without a training Centre for the teacher. Education of children depends on the right type of teachers. He therefore, invited Dr. Maria Montessori to India in 1939 and started Montessori Training Centre for teachers. Dr. Montessori readily accepted the invitation of Dr. Arundale and conducted the first training course with

people when she went to different parts of the country to conduct various training courses. She conducted special teacher training courses at Madras, Kodaikanal, Ahmedabad, Bombay and Karachi. In the meanwith Second World War, started Dr. Montessori was not permitted to leave India which she resented. But she utilized her time fruitfully to strengthen the Montessori movement in India.

Montessori was invited to India again in 1947 to start Arundale Montessori Training Centre for teacher at Adyar in the extensive gardens named after col. Olcot. But partition of the country at the time of independence, prevented many teachers from the North in joining the course. The then Government to Travancore financed the training and also deputed teachers for this course.

As started earlier, in the early part of the twentieth century, most of the kindergartens were started by the missionaries. But the pre-school movement in India took a definite shape under the leadership of Mrs. Annie Besant and Rabindra Nath Tagore.¹¹

Other developments which took place in the pre-school movement in India were opening of Shishu Vihar mandal at Yeotmal in Maharashtra and centre of Cosmic Education at Allahabad in 1951, Happy Education Society at Delhi, Nai Talim Sangh at Wardha, Balniketan Sang at Indore in 1941 and the Association Montessori International in India.

In 1944 the Central Advisory of Education (CABE) gave concrete suggestion for the reorganization of pre-school education in India

The CABE Report (known as Sargent Report) recommended that we should make a provision of 1,000,000 free places in many schools or classes for children in the age range, 3 to 6 years. The Sargent Report suggested that free attractive pre- school education by the state in order to pay attention to a very impressionable and educationally potent period of child's life.

¹¹ *Ibid.* P. 159.

1.5.2 Pre-Basic Education Plan

In 1937 Mahatma Gandhi did not have any plan for the child below seven years. But when he returned from jail in 1944 he had realized that he could not neglect the child below 7 then he gave his views on the pre- basic education of children under 7 which was termed as pre-basic education. This education, according to Gandhiji, should be conducted in cooperation with parents and community. The first pre-basic education school, established under Kasturbi Memorial Trust started functioning in July 1945 at Savagram (Wardha) under the guidance of Smt. Shanta Narulkar. Owing to more urgent calls on the national resources since 1947, it was not possible to plan any comprehensive development for the education of children of pre-school age unit 1951, when Indian council for child education was formed with Smt. Sariladevi Sarabhai as its President.

1.5.3 Pre-School Education during Five –Year Plans

First Five Year Plan (1951-1956)

In the First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) though the need for pre-school education was stressed but no definite financial provision was made for this purpose. In this regard, all India Education conference on the Problems of Education held at Indore in 1955 remarked.

It is also surprising that neither the First Five Year Plan nor Community Development Projects mention anything about the need for pre-primary education nor do they make any provision for the purpose. Obviously the importance of the subject has escaped the attention of the planners

As a part of the First Five year Plan (1951-56) the Central Government set up a central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) with the object especially of assisting voluntary agencies in organizing Welfare programmes for women and children. The CSWB assisted 2128 institutions of which 591 were child welfare institutions.

But in the first five year plan, out of 169 crores provided for the development of education no allocation was made for the pre-school education.

Second Five Year plan (1956-61)

In the later part of the second Plan (1956-61) the planning commission made a provision for child welfare and education. This was done on the recommendation of the child care committee which was appointed by the central social welfare Board. Out of Rs. 307 crores provision for education during the second plan (1956-61) no special provision was made for the pre-school stage. Assuming 3 to 6 as the normal age range for nursery schools or classes, there were over 40 million children in this age group in 1960-61.

Third Five –Year plan (1961-66)

It was only during the Third Five year plan that the Government formally recognized the need for pre-school education. The planning commission had asked the central Social Welfare Board to appoint expert committees to survey and report on child care in the country. For the first time, pre-school education was recognized by the Government of India as the base of national system of education, and thus a national policy was to be formulated for the cause of pre-school education. The report of the expert committee, set up by the CSWB is a land mark in the history of pre-school education as for the first time its recommendation to the Government covered the ‘total child’, including education, health, nutrition and recreation. The committee Pointed out that pre-school should be self-sufficient and should be started by the voluntary agencies. Balwadis Should be started both for rural and urban areas. These should be run by the Community Development Departments and central Social Welfare Boards. As a result of these effects the total numbers of pre-school child care centres was estimated to be 3,500

with an enrolment of about 14.5 lakhs which was 3.5 percent of the total population of children between 3.5 years. This according to Ranjit Bhai (1968) was a very bright account of people's response in the interest of child education.

In 1961 there were about 5000 Balwadis with an enrolment of about 300000 children. Of three about 2500 were assisted by the Central and state social Welfare Boards. By the end of third Plan the number of Balwadis organized by these Boards rose to 5761. The third Plan provided for the setting up of six training centres for Bal Sevikas. In the programmes for education Rs. 3 Crores were allotted for child welfare and allied schemes at the Centre and about Rs. 1 Crore in the States in addition to resources available under the community development and social welfare programmes. Schemes that were formulated by the Ministry of Education included improvement of the existing Balwadis, opening of new Balwadis, expansion of training programmes for Bal Sevikas and a number of other projects in which education, health and welfare services were integrated.

Development During 1966-1969 Period:

In 1964 the Indian Association of preschool Education (IAPE) was formed in 1966 the Education Commission (1964-1961) gave its suggestion for strengthening the pre-school education. The IAPE brought out a comprehensive document which dealt with such important problems as: Pre-school education for the rural and tribal children: education at the training centre; the system of pre-school education; recent trends in pre-school education: voluntary efforts in pre-school teacher education. In 1969 the National Council of educational Research and Training decided to set up the Department of Pre-primary and primary education. This department collaborated with other agencies and prepared courses of studies for the schools and also for the training of teachers.

Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)

It was suggested in the draft of the Fourth Five Year Plan that in the field of pre-school education, Government effort will be confined mainly to certain strategic areas such as training of teachers evolving suitable teaching techniques, production of teaching materials and teachers' guides. In the social Welfare sector, however there will be a small provision for the opening of Balwadis, both in rural and urban areas".

Children below 6 constitute nearly 17% of the total population of India and 15 million are being added every year. In the last two years of the Fourth Plan, services for 1 million additional children belonging to weaker sections were to be launched. In addition to this training of personnel through new types of training programmes were to be launched. Therefore, Fourth Plan period was marked by these developments in pre-school education. For example a national seminar on the pre-school child, organized Madras jointly by the International children's Centre, Paris and Indian Council for Child Welfare, discussed three broad aspects of early childhood education namely health and nutrition objectives, educational and social objectives. In 1970 the sixth meeting of the IAPE was held. During this year, the pre-primary teacher education curriculum was developed by the NCERT. In 1971 the NCERT set up the Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education at its National Institute of Education and special attention was paid to teacher preparation. More literature was produced for the pre-school level. Seventh meeting of the IAPE was held at Allahabad in March 1971 and passed several resolutions for improving the status of pre-school education. The IAPE in 1972 published its report on Relating Pre-School to primary School. A national seminar on An Integrated Approach to the Pre-School Child was also organized at Bangalore in 1972. During this year the NCERT also published its report on Pre-primary Institutions. Their Supervision. The concept of supervision at the pre-school at the pre-school stage has been discussed in this report. The evaluation instruments and

directions for their use in making assessment of a pre-school were also included in this report.

By the end of fourth plan the number of children benefiting from the various schemes had also increased significantly as pointed out by Iredale (1975). By 1974 the number of children benefiting from nutrition schemes at feeding centres and Balwadis all over the country amounted to nearly 7 million of which approximately 18,00,000 were in tribal areas and 17,00,000 in urban areas”

Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79)

The draft report on Fifty Five Year Plan recognized the importance of pre-school education. The facilities of pre-schools were however, limited as is pointed out in the report:

“The facilities available at present are however, limited to a number of privately run schools in urban areas and few thousand Balwadis and Anganwadis run under government auspices in social Welfare sector. While it may be difficult to provide pre-school education facilities of any sophistication the situation demands that some effort of an elementary kind be made immediately. It is, therefore, envisaged in the First Plan that children’s play Centres for the age group 3-6 may be attached to selected primary schools in addition to these centres, private agencies will be encouraged to run pre-primary schools and the state will further assist in the strategic areas of teacher training, preparation of teacher guides and promotion of research for evolving methods of pre- school education suited to our conditions.

The Fifth Plan had the rural, tribal and slum areas as its target for child welfare. The Plan aimed at providing integrated services- health, welfare, education nutrition and family planning- as bases to promote child welfare. During this Plan, 13 million children in the age group of 0 to 6 years were to be covered extending integrated service to 18% of the total children in the weakest section of Indian Society. In the Fifth Plan Rs. 25 Crores were provided for the educational

component and Rs. 75 crores for the social welfare Plan. A national Policy Resolution for children was issued in 1974. As a result of this a National Child, run's Board was constituted. The Integrated Child Development Schemed (ICDS) was introduced in 33 experimental areas which provided supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check referral services nutrition, health education and Non-formal education to children in the age group 0 to 6 years. Further 117 ICDS experimental projects were introduced during 1978-80. The local point of the ICDS project provided services through Anganwadis which was run by local voluntary worker who was assisted by a helper. The work of Anganwadi workers was to be supervised by a Mukhya Sevika.

Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85)

For the First time the term “early childhood education has been used in place of pre-school education as the former is intended to be more broad based and cover the entire period of crucial development up to 5 years. Special attention is to be paid to the children of under privileged groups. The Sixth Plan report says.

This early childhood stage is the period of maximum learning and intellectual development of the child and hence of great potential educational significance. The present pre-school childcare programmes are limited to the distribution of food supplements and routine health cover; these contribute very little to the personality development of the child, especially to its intellectual social and emotional growth. The concept of learning and development through play and joyful activities should be articulated, across age group through an all round programme which should be comprehensive in scope, integrated in nature and reinforced over long time. Organization of a crèche for children in the 0-3 age group and/or a Balwadi for 3-6 age group with provision for educational toys, play equipment learning materials and books for children's reading would be appropriate for this purpose”

The Sixth Plan provides an outlay of Rs. 2524 crores for development of education and culture. Out of this Rs. 905.37 crores 35.87% of the total outlay, (851-07 for the States and 54-30 for the Centre) have been allotted for the early childhood education which is the highest amount ever allotted for this purpose.¹²

Seventh Five-year Plan (1985-1990):

The seventh five year plan has to consolidate the gains of past investments spread over three and half decades and to launch the country on the path of further development geared to equity, removal of deprivation, and tangible rise in the levels of social welfare and social consumption especially of the disadvantaged sections of the population. A strategy for this purpose is being built on the basis of emphasis on food, work and productivity.

Eight Five-Year Plan(1992-1997):

An acceleration expansion had taken place in its coverage of pre-school children within the Government sector.

The Ninth Five Year Plan(1997-2002):

Reaffirmed the priority accorded to the development of early childhood services as an investment of women's groups in the management of ECCE programmes, particularly under the decentralized panchayat Raj system (PRS).

¹² *Ibid*, PP. 157-167.

The Tenth Five-Year Plan(2002-2007):

Adopts a right-based to child development, with major strategies aimed at reaching all young children in the country to ensure their ‘survival’, ‘protection’, and ‘development’. To ensure development through the effective implementation of policies and programmes in the areas of health, immunization, nutrition and education, the three nationwide programmes of reproductive and child health (RCH), ICDS, and sarva shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) were launched. They also recognized that, while early childhood up to 6 years is critical for the development of children, the period from the prenatal stage to the first 3 years is the most crucial and vulnerable one in life; it lays the foundations for the achievement of full human development potential and combative long learning, this reinforcing the importance of setting up family focused and community-based interventions. The tenth-five year plan also recognizes the increasing need for support services in the form of crèches and day care centres for the children of working and willing mothers, especially in the context most and more women are coming out of their homes to seek employment both in the organized and unorganized sectors. In this context, in this context, the national crèche fund will be further strengthened to aid in its mission to develop a wide network of crèches all over the country.

The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012)

The Eleventh Five Year Plan had also recognized that ECCE is critical for school readiness/entry with increased basic vocabulary and conceptual abilities that help school retention. Besides, it will free the girl child of sibling care and Report of the Sub-Group on Early Childhood Care and Education for 12th Five Year Plan age of three years for elementary education and to provide ECCE, appropriate Government may make necessary Report of the Sub-Group on Early Childhood Care and Education for 12th Five Year Plan Recommended one year pre-school education (PSE) for children entering primary school. The Report of the sub group on ECCC for the 11th Five Year Plan made several specific

recommendations with regard to ECCE, pertaining to access and coverage; advocacy and awareness; training and capacity building, and working conditions of ECCE functionaries. Many of these recommendations were not addressed in the 11th Five Year Plan, possibly due to inadequate resources and lack of a dedicated outlay for ECCE. Most of the recommendations of the 11th Five Year Plan continue to be relevant now and are therefore again being endorsed in the 12th Five Year Plan.

Twelve Five Year Plan (2012-17):

The sub-group formed for the 12th Five Year Plan also takes into consideration the fact that the overall scenario, globally and in the country, has progressed since the 11th Plan with regard to policy provisions and status of ECCE. Research evidence from the fields of Neuroscience and Economics in the last few years has further confirmed the significant impact of the quality of experiences of early years on brain development and lifelong learning. The importance of school readiness experiences for facilitating adjustment and learning in the primary grades is established, particularly in the context of EFA, wherein diverse groups of first generation learners are coming into the school system without adequate linguistic and cognitive preparedness. ECCE has also been included as a constitutional provision through the amended Article 45. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, which came into effect from 1st April, 2010 in whole of India, except the State of Jammu and Kashmir, although excludes children below six years, also specifies under its Section 11 that, “with a view to prepare children above the Arrangements for providing free pre -school education for such children”. It is expected that this policy directive will provide further impetus to the ECCE provisions and programmes in the 12th Five Year Plan. With regard to the status of children’s participation in ECCE programmes, there seems to have been a quantum jump during the 11th Five Year

Plan with 18.96% increase in non-formal preschool education beneficiaries and 32.88% increase in supplementary nutrition beneficiaries in ICDS over the previous plan period. However, data reliability may be an issue about provisions in private and voluntary sectors; the progress is distinctly evident particularly with the rapid expansion of the ICDS and its universalization in accordance with a Supreme Court directive to this effect and a very visible private sector penetration even in tribal and rural areas.¹³

1.6 Development of Pre-School Education in Assam

The state of Assam covers an area of 78,438 square kilometers and has a population of more than 31 million according to the census of 2011 and scattered over 28 administrative districts. The 2011 census literacy report in Assam was recorded at 72.19 %, of which male literacy was 77.85 % and female at 63.00%. (Directorate of Census Operation, Census of India, 2011).¹⁴

Development of pre-school education in Assam broadly can be categorized into three stages i.e., 1) British period 2) pre-Independence period and 3) post-Independence period for our discussion.

In the first part of 19th century missionaries came to Assam and established schools for the expansion of Christianity among the masses. They used kindergarten method of teaching for the education of small children. But in this effort of education they became more successful in hilly areas than Brahmaputra valley of Assam. They developed the pre-school education in khasi-jaintia hills, Naga Hills, Luchai hills etc. places through the successful expansion of Christian religion.¹⁵

¹³ *Report of the Sub-Group on Early Childhood Care and Education for 12th Five Year Plan*. PP 3-5

¹⁴ Census report, Barpeta, www.Barpeta.nic.in

¹⁵ *Progress of education in Assam*, Omsons publication, New Delhi, 1987.

In the first part of 20th century Montessori system of education also introduced in Assam. Maria Montessori in 1940 when he visited India and established Montessori school and teacher training centre at Madras subsequently in Assam also schools of English medium of this type were started in urban areas. In 10th November, 1950 the first Assamese medium Montessori school 'Ballya Bhawan' was established in Assam by the aegis of Mrs. Abala Gohain at Jorhat. She was a trained teacher passed from madras Montessori teacher training centre.

History records of the existence of two years pre-primary classes which were attached to primary schools since the beginning of 20th century till the reorganization of education in the state in accordance with the recommendations of the Kothari commission of 1964-66. But the educations imparted to the children of pre-primary classes were abolished from primary schools and pre-primary sections were functioning as independence ones during the period from 1966-1977. The number of primary schools catering to the educational needs of pre-primary children rose to 300. In 1968-69 to meet the necessity of trained female teachers 200 teachers were trained and appointed.

Before the introduction of the above mentioned system in 1968-69 six nursery schools were established for the education of Harijan's children with the help of central government. It was the first special step to establish pre-primary schools by the government.

Besides government two other agencies are engaged for this cause, (1) Missionaries (2) voluntary organizations. The schools started by the missionaries followed kindergarten method and the medium of instructions in these schools is English. Few voluntary organizations like the Asom Pradeshik Mahila samity run such schools with the financial aids from the social welfare board, government department of social welfare and the department of education. In 1976 ICDS schemes were implemented in six community Block areas.

The number of pre-primary schools under the education department was 258 in 1974-75 with an enrollment of 11360. The number of children recorded an upward trend the next decade. In 1978 the number of pre-primary schools rose to

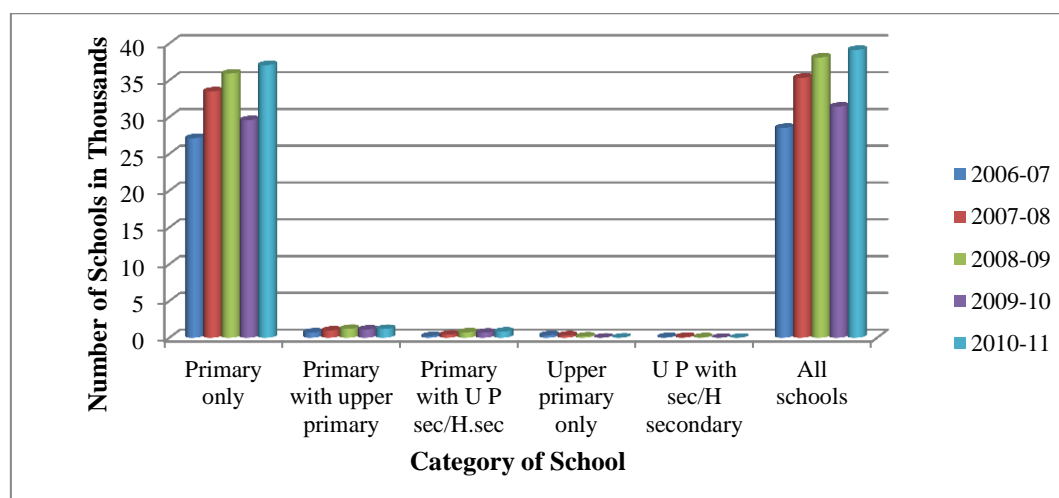
343.in 1994-95 the numbers of pre-school is 482 and students were 23005.¹⁶ The numbers of total pre-primary attached schools is 31420 with 333543 students in 2009-10.¹⁷

Table 1.1 showing the number of schools with pre-primary sections since 2006-07

YEAR	Primary only	Primary with upper primary	Primary with U P sec/H.sec	Upper primary only	U P with sec/H secondary	All schools
2006-07	27141	718	228	353	97	28537
2007-08	33498	991	423	314	117	35343
2008-09	35915	1207	738	168	71	38099
2009-10	29586	1119	691	22	2	31420
2010-11	37065	1196	837	27	6	39131

Source: NUEPA (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi)

Figure 1 showing the number of schools with pre-primary sections since 2006-07



¹⁶ *Bharatar Siksha Samassyat Dristipat*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Guwahati, 2000.

¹⁷ NUEPA (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi)2010-11.

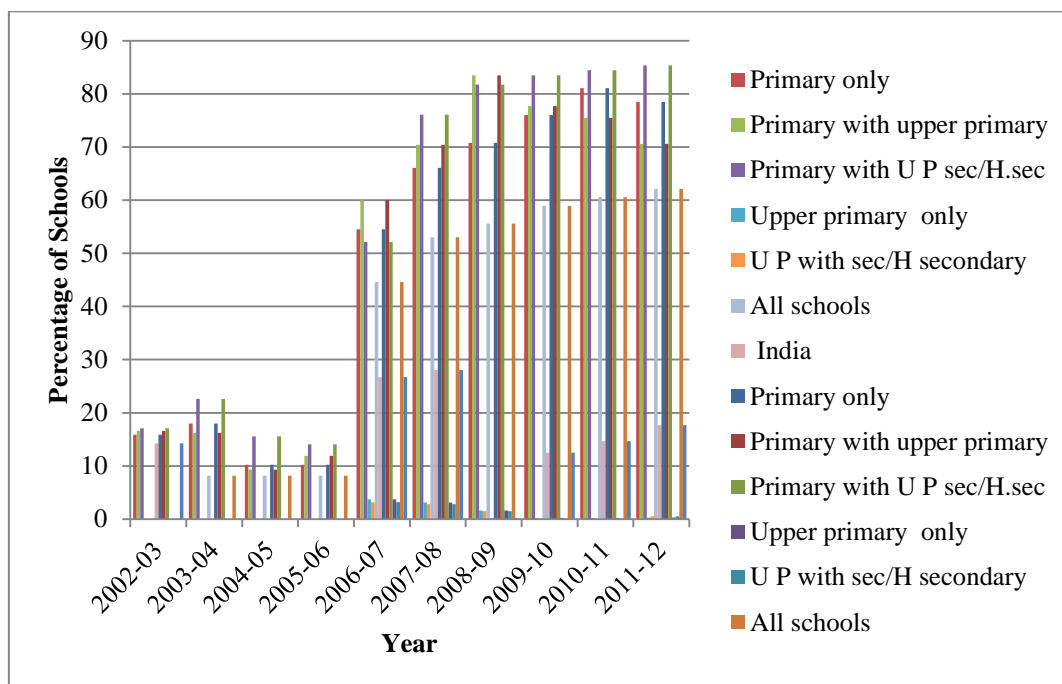
The Percentage (%) of primary schools/sections having attached pre-primary Section stood at 14.27 in 2002-03, compared to 17.70 in 2011-12 in India. In Assam the percentage of primary schools/sections having attached pre-primary section was 8.2 in 2003-04, compared to 62.09 in 2011-02. Table 1.1 below showing the Percentage (%) of Schools having Pre-Primary Section in Assam (India) since 2002-03:

Table 1.2 Percentage (%) of Schools having Pre-Primary Section in Assam (India)

YEAR	Primary only	Primary with upper primary	Primary with U P sec/H.sec	Upper primary only	U P with sec/H secondary	All schools	India
2002-03	15.9	16.6	17.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.27
2003-04	18.0	16.22	22.6	0.0	0.0	8.2	NA
2004-05	10.2	9.3	15.6	0.0	0.0	8.2	0.0
2005-06	10.2	11.9	14.1	0.0	0.0	8.2	NA
2006-07	54.5	60.0	52.1	3.7	3.2	44.6	26.69
2007-08	66.1	70.4	76.1	3.1	2.8	53.0	28.06
2008-09	70.76	83.47	81.73	1.6	1.5	55.6	24.0
2009-10	76.0	77.7	83.5	0.2	0.1	58.9	12.49
2010-11	81.08	75.46	84.46	0.25	0.11	60.52	14.66
2011-12	78.5	70.61	85.34	0.31	0.53	62.09	17.7

Source: NUEPA (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi)

Figure 2 Percentage (%) of Schools having Pre-Primary Section in Assam (India)



Percentage (%) Share of Enrolment in Pre-Primary Classes to Total Enrolment in Assam were 7.26 in 2004-05 compared to 19.3 in 2011-12(8.4% India). Table 1.2 showing the Percentage (%) Share of Enrolment in Pre-Primary Classes to Total Enrolment in Assam (India):

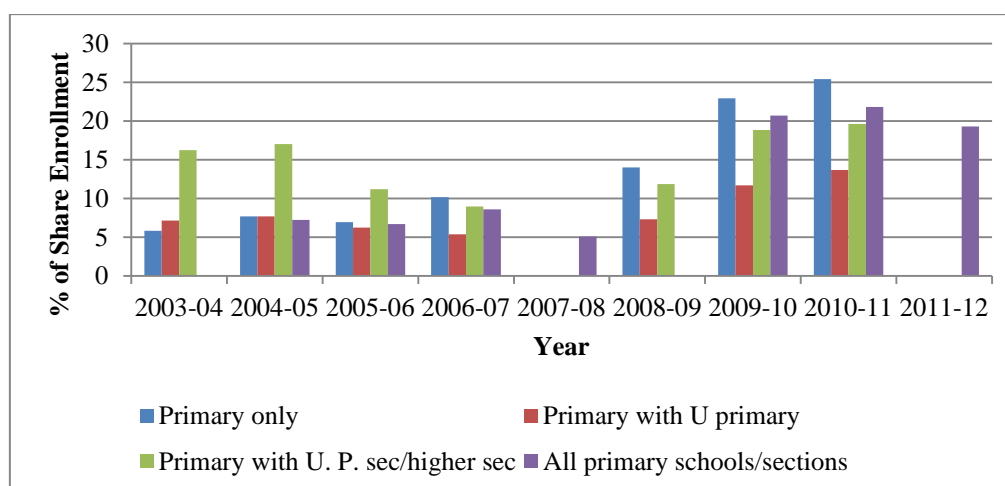
Table 1.3 Percentage (%) Share of Enrolment in Pre-Primary Classes to Total Enrolment in Assam (India) since 2003-04:

YEAR	Primary only	Primary with U primary	Primary with U. P. sec/higher sec	All primary schools/sections
2003-04	5.82	7.16	16.22	NA
2004-05	7.69	7.70	17.04	7.26
2005-06	6.94	6.23	11.22	6.69
2006-07	10.19	5.37	8.99	8.62
2007-08	NA	NA	NA	5.1
2008-09	14.01	7.32	11.86	NA
2009-10	22.91	11.71	18.86	20.7
2010-11	25.42	13.67	19.61	21.8
2011-12	NA	NA	NA	19.3

NA= not available

Source: NUEPA (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi)

Figure 3 Percentage (%) Share of Enrolment in Pre-Primary Classes to Total Enrolment in Assam (India) since 2003-04:



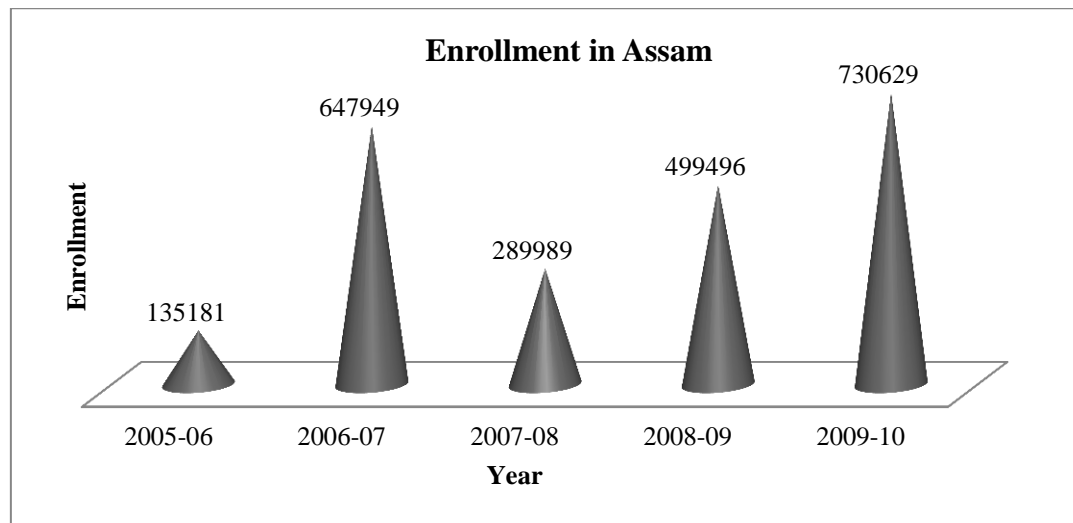
The table 1.3 above indicates that Percentage (%) Share of enrolment in pre-Primary classes to total Enrolment in Assam (India) since 2003-04 was increasing gradually and in 2010-11 it was highest 21.8%.

Table no.1.4: Total Enrolment in pre-primary section in Assam

2005-06	135181
2006-07	647949
2007-08	289989
2008-09	499496
2009-10	730629

Source: NUEPA (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi)

Figure 4: Total Enrolment in pre-primary section in Assam



The Table-1. 4 showed that the total enrolment in pre-primary section in Assam to its highest position in year 2009-10.

1.7 Need and Justification of Study

Pre-school education has assumed great significance as a critical input for child development. While in long-term perspective, it serves to provide a sound foundation for all round development of the child, it has also proved to be an effective input for primary schooling. The point worthy of consideration, however, is that the kind of early childhood care that is expected to provide these dual benefits has essentially to be a development and process oriented programme which must be transacted through play and activity. The National Policy on Education (1986) clearly states that there should be no teaching of 3R's at this stage. Early childhood education (ECE) must, on contrary provide play experiences to the child which should promote his/her cognitive, linguistic, psychomotor and socio-emotional development. But one important question is - is this kind of ECE actually being practiced in the most pre-schools? More often than not, the ECE content and methodology reflects a definite downward extension of the primary curriculum. The focus right through in most pre-school programmes, is not on development but on teaching of the 3R's through the formal classroom approach. Unplanned growth of pre-school education institutions has already affected the quality of service that they provide. Every year urban, semi-urban cities and towns see pre-school education institutions start with catchy names but with few physical facilities and no properly qualified staff. Although charging high fees, these institutions fail to provide the desired facilities.

In the present study setting, the state of Assam has experienced a substantial and quantitative expansion of pre-school education institutions. It appears that many pre-schools in urban and semi-urban areas are opened by private agencies with profit motive. It, therefore, becomes doubtful that these pre-school institutions impart to young children the kind of pre-school education they need and should get. Many questions arise in the mind of the people who are interested in the welfare and education of pre-school education. What are the existing conditions of the pre-schools? What facilities do they provide? Are

children given appropriate activities which enable them to achieve physical, language, cognitive, socio-emotional and creativity development? Are teachers properly qualified and trained? Are the existing conditions of pre-school education in conformity with the desired standards? Such and others related questions are not only raised about the pre-schools but also about the govt/provincialised pre-schools. Besides, how do parents react to these pre-schools and their programmes? What do they expect from these pre-schools? All these questions demand an intensive introspective analysis on the part of all those associated with the child, the policy makers, the administrators, the educationists, the organizers and teachers, and of course, the parents.

Unlike the west, where sufficient research studies have been conducted in young children by various agencies and persons. In India, in general and Assam in specific, the young child and his/her education as a subject of research have not received the attention it deserves. Although few studies have been conducted on status of pre-school and school education, no study is found to have analyzed the status in the light of the specifications or recommendations made for pre-school education. In this context, mention has to be made that maintaining some degree of quality control in early childhood education programme is becoming today a major priority in view of the mushrooming of pre-schools all over cities and villages. It is for the educational administrators to give serious thought to the idea of instituting some system of accreditation and licensing based on specific norms for maintaining basic standards.

Moreover, a persistent recommendation emerging from major seminars/conferences over the years has been that there should be some systematic licensing of pre-schools programmes. Therefore, a need to formulate certain pre-requisite standards which would ensure some uniformity within the diversities with respect to different aspects of pre-school programmes. Since the quality of pre-school education depends primarily on the quality of teachers, this area is totally neglected in Assam. Hence, it was found necessary to study about the pre-school education in the state.

The present study is necessary to investigate about the pre-school education in Barpeta and Bongaigaon districts which are densely populated areas of Assam, having enormous numbers of public and private pre-schools. Moreover, the investigator has not come across any such study in the above two districts of Assam. Further the study is justified on the ground that despite so many pre-schools serving in the two districts, yet dropout rate of the area is much higher related to other areas of Assam.

1.8 Statement of the Problem

Based on the need and justification of the study the statement of the problem can be stated as follows:

“A STUDY OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN BARPETA AND
BONGAIGAON DISTRICTS OF ASSAM”

1.9 Operational Definition of the Key Terms Used

a. Pre-school education

The term “Pre-school education” in the present study refers to the education of the young children of 3 to 6 years of age, provided by govt. /govt.-aided and non-govt. pre-schools.

b. Barpeta District

Barpeta district is situated in western part of Assam. It is surrounded by the international and inter districts borders i.e., Bhutan Hills in the north, Nalbari district in the east, Kamrup and Goalpara districts in the south and Bongaigaon district in the west.

c. Bongaigaon District:

Bongaigaon district is also situated in western part of Assam. It is surrounded by 4 districts namely Barpeta in the east, Goalpara in the south-east, Kokrajhar in the west and Dhubri in the north-west.

1.10 Objectives of the Study

The proposed study intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study the development of pre-school education in Barpeta and Bongaigaon districts of Assam.
2. To study the facilities and programmes of educational experiences provided in the pre-schools functioning in Barpeta and Bongaigaon districts of Assam.
3. To find out whether the daily activities and programmes conducted in different pre-schools are in accordance with the pre-determined objectives of pre-school education.
4. To study the profile of pre-school teachers of Barpeta and Bongaigaon districts of Assam.
5. To find out the problems faced by the pre-schools of Barpeta and Bongaigaon districts of Assam.
6. To suggest measures for the improvement of pre-school programme.

1.11 Delimitation of the Study

The present study is delimited only to the pre-schools attached to the formal schools of Barpeta and Bongaigaon districts of Assam and it does not include Angwanwadi and Balwadi centres.

1.12 Conclusion

Pre-school education is considered to be an important and essential part of the whole educational process. Everywhere whether it is urban or rural areas pre-school education getting more attention from the parents. So, present study was an attempt to know about the various aspects like development of pre-schools, facilities and programmes available, daily activities, profile of teachers, problems of pre-schools in Barpeta and Bongaigaon districts of Assam.

Pre-school education system of Assam has been managed by various governmental and non governmental agencies through varied methods of teaching since pre-independence period. Kindergarten, Montessori, indigenous system is being used in Assam. But the systems yet could not deliver its fruitful ends because most of the child below 6 years of age is not getting proper pre-school education in Assam. Pre-school education has been neglected since past but the success of primary education largely depends upon the quality of this kind of education, so due importance must be provided by the government to ensure that all the children below 6 years of age be given pre-school education.