

# **SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN MANIPUR**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Education is only one aspects of socialization that involves acquisition of knowledge and learning of skills which often helps to shape beliefs and moral values. Education promotes national identity and strengthens social solidarity within national boundaries. In Manipur, education has been growing faster than national level. Comparatively, the present scenario of education in Manipur has improved from the past few years. In northeast India particularly in Manipur, the several factors such as socio-political, geographical as well as the economic conditions determined the educational attainment of the different sections of the population.

This article focuses on the education system of Manipur where it attempt to highlight the present educational trend in the state. The study seeks to examine the trend and preference for educational choices particularly focussing on their locations of educational choices as well as the subject/course preferred. It also tried to examine the changes related to education in the past few decades. Manipur is one among the north-eastern states in India, bordering Myanmar (Burma) in the east, and three other Indian states – Nagaland in the north, Assam in the west and Mizoram in the south. It was an independent Kingdom and merged to Indian union in 1949.

**Keywords** : Education, Manipur, Educational Preferences, Course Choices, Private tuition

## **INTRODUCTION**

Education as the cornerstones of socio-economic and cultural development of a society, act as an essential mechanism to promote human resource development, achieving rapid economic development as well as the technological progress. Education helps to form a social order

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based on the virtues of freedom, social justice and equal opportunities resulting in raising the standard of living but also as a mechanism to prevent conflict situation in the society (Singha, 2013).

Emile Durkheim (1956), a prominent figure in the area of sociology of education in his book title, *Education and Society*, defined education as:

“Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its objects is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual, and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined” (Durkheim, 1956: 71).

According to Durkheim, education is the socialization of young generation. Education perpetuates and reinforces the unity and social solidarity by fixing in the child from the beginning. He argued that society can survive only when there is a sufficient degree of homogeneity (Durkheim, 1956: 70). Similarly, Parsons’s idea about the educational system as an important mechanism for the selection of individuals for their future role in society is also quite relevant to understand the role of education in changing social structure (Parsons, 1968:199).

In the earlier Manipur, education in the state was meant for the elite people. Indeed, it was imparted only to the priestly class (Brahmins), the Royal Pandits of Manipur (Kamei, 2002 :137). At the present time, the ongoing issues, like economic blockades, communal clashes, have adversely affected the educational system in Manipur for the last decade. The new education system adopted by the state government has indeed changed the face of secondary and higher secondary education in Manipur. But still the educational system is not satisfactory. Due to lack of attention in systematic educational planning, education seems to be demeaned the value in quality (Singha, 2013)

The ancient educational system of Manipur embodied the method of oral teaching. The teaching and learning was imparted through oral transmission of knowledge from generation to generation, before it was transcribed in the manuscripts. There was a little encouragement for education in the earlier Manipur. In fact, there was no institutionalised education in Manipur till 1885. The education system started growing with the arrival of the British missionaries

resulting a remarkable change in the educational scenario of the state. The formal education was established in 1872 by Major W. F. Nuthal (Kamei, 2002: 139; Mainom, 2001:153).

Through the course of time, Maharaj Chandra Kirti, the then king of Manipur, gave his consent to Sir James Johnstone for establishing an English School in 1885 at Imphal. Later on, the school was known as Johnstone Middle English School. During 1893-95, four Lower Primary Schools, three in Imphal and one in the hill area (at Mao) were opened. At that time the enrolment was confined to boys only as the parents were unwilling to send their daughters to these schools. Despite such prejudice against female education, a separate Girls' Primary school was established in 1899 at Imphal (Mainom,2001 : 21)

In order to cope with the expansion in all stages, the Department of Education was established in 1910. In 1909, the first batch of students appeared in Matric examination at Sylhet. In 1921 Johnstone M.E. School was upgraded to High School level and it was affiliated to Calcutta University. With increase in demand, many more High Schools came up during 1931-41. During 1939 - 1943, education in Manipur was greatly affected because of the outbreak of the World War II. It was only after 1944 that few schools were started functioning in Manipur. In 1946, Maharani Dhanamanjuri college was established at Imphal (the name is given under the person who donated a large sum of money i.e Rupees ten thousand for the cause of higher education). Gradually, schools were building up. The introduction of a separate education department in 1950 leading a step forward towards the improvement of education system in Manipur (Singha,2013 ; Kamei, 2002 :139)

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is based on exploratory in nature and primarily relied on the primary and secondary sources. The research material is drawn from both theoretical and empirical accounts taken from the various cultural, socio-economic and political literature of various communities of Manipur. In addition to this, the sociological understanding of present educational scenario and changes witnessed in the past few years are examined and analysed through focus group discussion conducted in some of the villages/towns in Manipur.

## **UNDERSTANDING EDUCATIONAL TREND IN THE STATE**

The socio-political issues have occupied a significant space in understanding the education scenario of the state. Economic blockade strikes and the ethnic tension brought negative consequences to the development of education in the state (Karam & Thounaojam, 2016 : 54-55).

Though there is frequent eruption of violence and conflict that arises from the different ethnic communities while attempting to assert their identities resulting to disturb the educational environment in the state but still the literacy rate in rural areas of Manipur as well as urban area are increasing day by day. As per 2011 census, the literacy rate in the state is 76.94% which is higher than the average national level. It is evident that the conflict and violence did not affect the overall system of education but it makes children to go outside Manipur for their studies particularly for their higher studies.

In the article ‘Conflict, State and Education in India: A Study of Manipur’ Komol argues that the root cause of the conflict need to be understood. Through the aspects of structural, behavioural and attitudinal, education can contribute to mitigate conflict. Education can alter societal contradictions (structural), improve relations and interactions (behavioural), and encourage in changes (attitudinal) in such a ways that it can help to control the risk of conflict and promotes sustainable peace (Singh;2013).

In order to have quality education, the state as well as the central government has taken up many schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhigyan, mid day meal schemes, scholarships schemes etc. The Scheme ‘National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education’ commonly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme was launched on the 15th August, 1995 on nationwide scale by the department of Elementary Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. However, the scheme was implemented in Manipur with effect from November, 1995 in compliance with the Hon’ble Supreme Court orders passed on 20-4-2004 ( Annual Work Plan & Budget, 2019-2022 :2). Under such programmes students are getting free school uniform, text books, books, as well as food etc. and such schemes helps to prevent dropouts of student from schools. However the higher education system in Manipur is quite unsatisfied so most of the students prefer to go outside Manipur for their further studies. Even though the parents have economic problems in family,

they tried to send their children outside Manipur for their further studies as well as for the betterment of their family as well as society.

It is more evident when the focus group discussion was conducted in some of the villages/town in Manipur. The discussion was focused on the preference for educational institutions as well as the subject/course choices. It has also focused on the changes witnessed by the villagers in the past few years.

During the discussion, it was clear that the majority of the villagers (the parents) prefer to send their children outside the state for their higher studies. They stated that their children could earn more knowledge as well as the communication skills if they studied outside the state. On the one hand, they claimed that the law-and-order situations in the state do not support and encourage them to study properly. Therefore, despite having financial problems parents send their children outside the state for higher studies. Some of the parents even claimed that studying in Imphal, (capital city of the state) which can also be considered as educational hub of the state, is equally expensive. One of an elderly person (age 67) gave a remarkable example in this matter by stating that if they have to spend Rs 8 (eight) for their children education in Imphal, the expenditure in education outside the state such as Delhi, Shillong, Guwahati could be Rs 10. The difference in educational expenditure within the state and outside the state is negligible. Therefore, they believed that if their children could explore more knowledge by spending few extra expenditures, they would definitely choose that. Nevertheless, it may be slightly different case for those living in Imphal.

Concerning the subjects/course chosen, they stated that they wanted their children to take science subject only. They considered 'science courses' as superior subjects than social sciences. For them, children prefer to take social sciences courses when the children are not good or interested in education. In fact, this is the overall educational situation in the state. There may be slight change in present day scenario but at negligible level. Regarding the changes in educational trend, the discussants stated that they have witnessed the trend of sending children for private tuitions. The trend of private schools has been witnessed for quite some time in the state. Now, the new trend is for private tuition particularly in the urban areas. The children as well as the parents give more emphasis on private tuitions. This system equally targeted the families of different economic backgrounds. This leads to create economic

problems to the populations of the economically backward section. The private tuition culture become an unbearable burden to many poor parents leading to acute ailment to the present educational scenario of the state.

Here, we can also bring about Apple's work on education and economic structure. As we all know that the people of Manipur face economic problems and it is one of the main factors that pull down the poor from education. Apple in his book 'Ideology and Curriculum' talks about education and economic structure as well as knowledge and power. Apple argued that one of the primary interests of socialization approached is in exploring the social norms and values that are taught in school. However, because of this interest, it restricts itself to the study of what might be called 'moral knowledge'. It establishes as the given set of societal values and further inquiries into how the school as an agent of society socializes students into its 'shared' sets of normative rules and dispositions. He further illustrates that school as an important institution become one of the significant agents of cultural and economic reproduction (Apple,1979:14).

Another important thing concerned by the villagers is the losing of moral values among the children. They claimed that children are busy with their private tuitions, therefore they don't have time to mingle with their elders, grandparents where they can learn about culture, customs and traditions that has enriched knowledge about moral values.

The functions of education can be discussed in two terms : conversation and change. Education preserves as much as it transforms. These two functions are complimentary to one another. Education act as a transmitter of values and sensitise new generations to follow certain rules or behaviour. It is equally important for the educational system to reorient itself from time to time and internalise change by preparing the young to accept this change. Education not only helps to promote culture but also prevent to indulge in supporting materialistic design. Modern educational concepts and practices have most often ignored the strengths that imbibed from the local cultures. B. V. Shah (in Indira, 2012) indicates that the educational process that occurs within the four walls of the school or college building is a part of the broader socialization process that occurs in society through other agencies such as family, the peer-group, the neighbourhood group, the means of communication, religion and the broader cultural patterns in society (Indira,2012).

In the article 'sociology of education' the author indicates Thorstein Veblen (who was an economist interested in the behaviour of social classes in industrial society) idea's about education. In this article he argued that education was a site where social class issues were resolved and that working class children received an education which prepared them for their place in society while the leisure class children were prepared for a life of leisure (Lawrence, 2011:302). This is very true and relevant in Manipur as well. In Manipur, people's first motive for education is to get a good job and second is for the quality education. In Manipur, it seems if you don't have good job or high income, your space in that society seems to be lost day by day. So people chose education as the best option for making their own space in society as well as for the development and of consensus and solidarity in Society. As we know that higher education system in Manipur is unsatisfied, therefore people prefer to go outside for higher studies.<sup>1</sup>

In the state like Manipur, when everyone talks about education, people are concerning more about morality. School is one of the best institutions where students learned and experience many things by mingling with people, friends etc. Education is very important in maintaining unity, peace and harmony. It is not only simply learning and attaining higher education but also earning the knowledge so called 'moral education'. According to Durkheim, Education is the socialization of the younger generation. In his book 'Education and Sociology', Durkheim (1956) treats the systems of education in terms of their relationships to the total social systems in which they occur. He has seen education as an agency for answering social needs (Durkheim, 1956)

He states that education may vary and must necessarily vary from one occupation to another and also from one society to other. However, each society makes education as a common base to build its own ideal, discipline and responsible man. For Durkheim, education in each society is "the means by which it secures, in the children, the essential conditions of its own existence." He further argued that society can survive only when there is a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education can perpetuate and reinforce this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning until fulfilling the collective life demands (Durkheim, 1956 : 70). This is very much relevant in today's society. Though different society have different way of approaching

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<sup>1</sup> N., Somendro. (2011) 'State of Education in Manipur'

educational system but their goal is everywhere same. In case of Manipur, every parent whether they are rich or poor, their first main is to give their children good education system and make their space in the society as well as their community.<sup>2</sup> So school is the miniature step to socialize their children and get them moral education. Durkheim believed that schools were the primary socialization agent for producing future adults and developing consensus and solidarity in the society. Durkheim described education as a contested social institution in society. Through its socializing function, education established and maintained social consensus and solidarity and simultaneously the self-interest of individuals and groups requires the state regulation of education (Lawrence,2011 : 301).

Today, the sociology of education is essential to study for the improvement of quality education. The sociology of education as the study of educational structures, processes, and practices from a sociological perspective has contributed in deeper understanding of the relationship between educational institutions and the community. It can be noted that the objectives of education may be found different in different types of communities' i.e. rural and urban communities, non-industrial and industrial communities, etc. Thus, the educational system of a community at a particular point of time is shaped by its social determinants. What education a child needs depends on the sub-culture of the child's home and environment as well as on the elements of the total culture common to all homes and environments. Sociology of education helps to establish these common and differential educational needs. Durkheim's idea on modern sociology of education has remarkably reflected on studies of how schools contribute to the socialization of the younger generation and how education contributes to a range of life outcomes, especially occupational attainment and social mobility.

Durkheim argued that education of the children should not depend upon the chance of their having being born from certain parents and not from others. He further added that education cannot be uniform and the career of each child would no longer be predetermined by heredity at least in large part, occupational specialization would not fail to result in great pedagogical diversity (Durkheim,1956 : 68-69). K. Subba Rao (2012 ) argued that in accordance with the concept of democracy, government is supposed to take the financial responsibility of the entire education and educationalist to bring quality education. In recent times, some critic argue that

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<sup>2</sup> Educational profile of Manipur



the era has changed. In today's society, instead of 'making man' through education, making 'money' through education became one of the growing trend in the society. Education become a commodity in the market or an investment for shaping a student would be a log in the wheel (Indira, 2012: 688). It is believed that education system doesn't create unemployment problem, rather it is the economic policies that cause distortions.

Achieving quality education as well as moral education needs deep and fundamental relation between education and culture. Education is the cultural agent that concerned with the functions of "conserving, transmitting, and renewing culture". Education is an institution that needs to be placed in its social context and understood in relation to contemporary social reality. Education must help the child understand the certain boundaries that constitute the historical framework of justice and further helps someone to attach to social groups. Nevertheless, some critic argue that though the state plays an important role in recognising and mandating institutions of education, these institutions belong to the domain of civil society. The term 'hegemony' seems to be the appropriate term in describing the position of the privileged in relation to the disprivileged (Bhattacharya, 2002). Indeed, economic problem is one of the main factors for privilege and disprivilege among the children.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

The educational scenario of Manipur is dominated by the trend of private schools and private tuition culture. This leads to create economic problems to the populations of the economically backward section. The private tuition culture become an unbearable burden to many poor parents leading to acute ailment to the present educational scenario of the state. Due to various socio-political issues, preferring educational institution outside the state despite having financial constraints has become a common trend in the present education system. Similarly, it has been evident that taking science subjects is considered as better option among the majority of the parents. Lastly, but not the least, there is also a concern about the fear of losing moral values, culture, customs and tradition due to lack of intermingling between the elder generations and the younger generations. The need for deep and fundamental relationship between the family, school and community is essential to produce moral education. It is not only the school which produces moral education but also the community that help children to

practice those moral norms and values in society for maintaining solidarity and sustainable peace.

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