

Changing Educational Trends in Manipur : A Shift from Privatization to Commercialization

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Abstract

Education has emerged as the most indispensable factor in promoting human resource development, economic development and technological advancement in the form of virtues of freedom, social justice and equal opportunities. Besides that, education plays an important role in contemporary society to raise the standard of living and act as a mechanism to prevent conflict situation in the society (Singha, 2013). There has been a critical analysis of education which claimed that the era has changed. In recent times the focus is from 'making man' through education to 'money making from education' became one of the objectives of education. Such stages are coming up when education is moving towards the process of commercialization. Education is taken as a commodity in the market by investing for shaping a student in future role and can make profit out of it in the form of income (Indira, 2012:688).

This paper seeks to study the changing trend of education system in Manipur particularly the trend of private tuition culture which has become a competition not only for the students but also for the parents. The study seeks to examine the commercialization of education and its impact and will also aim to examine how education gradually becomes pertinent only to some section of the population.

Key words:

Education, Indigenous/Traditional Education, Modern Education, Privatization, Commercialization.

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1. Introduction

Education is the substantial factor for the change in socioeconomic and cultural life of the people in the state. The development of society is interrelated with the quality and quantity of the education that has been achieved by the society (Biswas,2008:13). Higher education is the consequential factor for social and economic development (Rao, 2010:171).

Durkheim elucidated that education may vary from one occupation to another and also one society to another society. However, somewhere or the other every society share some common base of education (Durkheim, 1956:70). It is evident that different society have different way of approaching educational system but their objectives are everywhere same. The sociology of education develops the common and differential needs of the education (Shah, 2012: 6). In case of Manipur, the first and foremost objectives of every parent, whether they are rich or poor, is to give their children good education and make their space in the society as well as their community.

It was the missionary efforts that brought substantial change in the development of education in all the states of Northeast region (Biswas, 2008: 24;Mainom, 2001: 153). In earlier Manipur, during the Maharaja's rule, the responsibility of education administration was taken by the Manipur State Durbar. In the state Durbar, a member was selected as in charge of education to look after the Schools in the valley region under the supervision of the British officials. In fact, inspections in schools were supervised by the Political Agent during their tour (Mainom, 2001:25).

In earlier Manipur, the Maichous or the Priest Scholars imparted education only to the Royal Princes, sons of nobility and few select commoners. In the hilly region particularly among the tribal people, the traditional/indigenous education was passed from the elders to children in the form of training in warfare and martial arts, creative arts, handicrafts, customs and traditions, morality and discipline. Imparting education was mean to produce a comprehensive individual, a tribal warrior, a responsible member of the community, enriched with full knowledge of the creative arts, customs, tradition and folklore of his tribe, clan and village. Indeed, education is a lifelong continuing process in tribal society (Kamei, 2002: 137-138). In fact, the education of warfare and pursuit of military activities were considered as the valuable assets than any other formal education system of learning (Mainom, 2001: 7). Education in Manipur was greatly affected due to the outbreak of the World War II and it was only after 1944, few schools have started functioning in Manipur (Kamei, 2002:139).

2. Concepts

Education can be defined through different theoretical perspectives. From a sociological perspective, education can be described through two basic ideas: i) education as a social process and ii) education as a process of learning through social interactions which means education is socialization (Saxena, 1975:5).According to Durkheim, education is the socialization of younger generations which aim to develop in the child as an individual whole with virtue of physical, intellectual, and moral states (Durkheim, 1956:71).According to Ambedkar, Education is something which should bring within the reach of everyone. He further opined that there is necessary to make higher education cheaper or accessible to everyone specially the lower classes people (Ambedkar, 1980:40-41).

Indigenous education can be defined as teaching indigenous knowledge, models, methods and content with formal or informal education systems. In a simple term, Indigenous education is the form of learning in traditional society where the knowledge, skills and ideas are learning from elders to children through the transmission of oral methods. Indigenous knowledge encompasses the skills, experiences and insights of the people to develop one's livelihood. It also includes the skills of weaving and hunting, the knowledge of medical plant to use when necessary. This knowledge is transmitted through generations to generations (elders to children) in the home or at workplace. This was considered as the biggest assets of the society. In recent times, people are trying to revive the indigenous education in response to reclaim the value, culture, language and traditions of the society.

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Indigenous education is enriched with culture, customs, value and traditions of the society (Ekeke & Theresa, 2015:32-34).

Modern education is the system of learning through structure hours and a classroom setting with curriculum. It is the formal education system. Orumbie states that 'Modern education can be understood by a product of capitalist regime'¹. Indigenous education and Modern education have shared similar purpose for educating the younger generations. Indigenous knowledge focuses on particular community and strengthening about the community, modern education, on the other hand, focuses on the society which has structure and formal organization of education system. It had curricula and particular syllabus to follow. Indigenous education had unstructured and informal type of education with no schools/buildings or formal organization where knowledge is transmitted through oral methods. In modern education, knowledge is imparted from written or printed records. There is always room for innovation and curriculum can be modified and improved from time to time (Orumbie, year not mention :8; King & Schielmann,2004:7).

The term privatization can be defined as the process of the transfer of activities, assets and responsibility from Government/Public sector to private agencies. The term privatization of education covers to many different educational policies and programmes (Abrol,2016:1). Education is the significant source of employment, income and standard of living. In a simple term, the Commercialization of Education can be defined as the process of private ownership and management of educational institutions of which investments are made for earning profits or personal gains.

3. Research Method

The present study tries to understand the educational trend in Manipur particularly the new trend of private schools and private tuition culture. This research study is exploratory in nature as in this study an attempt has been made to analyse the educational trend in Manipur and how it reflects in the society. The study is relied on the primary and secondary sources. Research material is drawn from both theoretical and empirical accounts of the various communities of Manipur, cultural and political literature of various community organisations, and news coverage in print media. Along with the primary and secondary resources, the present trend of change in education is discussed and analyzed through 'Observation' and 'Group Discussion' conducted in some of the villages in Manipur.

4. Educational Backgrounds of the State

In earlier Manipur, the learning and teaching was conducted orally which is passed from generations to generations. The ancient educational system in Manipur are based on the method of oral teaching. Like any other society, it is process of learning customs, traditions and moral values, creative arts, discipline etc. Manipuri 'Phungga Wari' (folktales) narrated by elders in the earlier periods encompasses moral values, discipline, customs and traditions. Through these folktales, elders tell about the value of life and the society (Kamei, 2002:139; Mainom, 2001:153). The formal education in Manipur was established in 1872 by the British Political Agent, W.F. Nuthall (Kamei, 2002:139; Mainom, 2001:153). In the earlier times, learning English education was not encouraged since it is considered as taboo (Mainom, 2001:153). Western education was introduced by the British political agents posted during that period of time.

During the pre-colonial period, education in northeast India was imparted only to the Priestly class, the Hindu Brahmins, the Ahom Deodhais and Bailung, the Maichous (priest scholar) of Manipur. Education was imparted by the three different agencies; i) the Christian missionaries, ii) the Provisional Government, and iii) the Private Schools. Among the Khasis and Garos, education was

¹Orumbie, Regina Minye, (Year not mention) 'Compare and Contrast Indigenous Education with Modern Education' Pp.6 Available at: http://www.academia.edu/8294226/Compare_and_contrast_indigenous_education_with_modern_education

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imparted by the Welsh missionaries while among the Nagas and in upper Assam it was imparted through American Baptist missionaries. Later on, the missionaries' activities and imparting education reached to Mizoram and Manipur. However, the progress was very slow due to the shortage of resources (Kamei, 2002:139). In many occasions, education was imparted informally through the interaction between children and parents in the family and workplace (Biswas, 2008: 24). The upgradation of Johnstone Middle English School in Imphal in 1909-10, can be considered as the beginning of Secondary Education in Manipur. Till 1930-31, Johnstone High School was the only high school in Manipur (Mainom, 2001: 45-46). Gradually, schools were established with the help of public initiative. Informal education remained active till the advent of Christian missionaries in the northeast region. Education became a mechanism to abolish poverty. Similarly, the social progress or the development of the society is often associated with the level of educational development in the society (Mainom, 2001: 151). D.M. College was the first government college in the state, other colleges were private colleges both aided and unaided. The Imphal College (1952-53), the Manipur College (1958), the Oriental College and the Modern College (1963) were established by the public initiative which has marked the beginning for the expansion of higher education in the State (Mainom, 2001:67).

The private education started since 1930s and education in ancient Manipur was imparted under the administration of private agencies. The decade (1931-41) is considered as the decade of private enterprise in the history of modern education in Manipur. Eventually, the importance of modern education could reach the people of Manipur (Mainom, 2001: 47). It was in a span of 11 years, the private unaided schools had capacitated huge space in the educational set up of Manipur (Mainom, 2001: 53-54). In ancient Manipur, private schools were established through public initiative to expand education in the state. However, in present society, there is a shift from privatization of education to commercialization of education. The private unaided schools have increased rapidly and it has risen from 83 in 1985-86 to 226 in 1996-97 (Mainom, 2001: 54-55). It has risen to 927 in 2017². During the last decade, there is mushroom growth of private schools with the motive to commercialize education in order to get more profit/earn money. During the second five year plan, private organizations/sectors made tremendous contribution to the development/promotion of higher education. The emergence of private sector in education led to increase competition to provide better quality at competitive prices. (Shah, 2012: 6).

Privatization not only increases degree holders but also rises unemployment. Education is taken more as a commodity than public good (Grace, Gerald, 1989:209). Schools/Colleges are increasing day by day and some of them even sell the degrees. The rich parents buy the degrees and jobs for their children which are one of the acute problems in Manipur and may be also other parts of India. The main concern for the privatization of education is to expand the education qualitatively as well as quantitatively. However, in present scenario the focus seems to be more on quantity and just to provide degrees.

5. Privatization of Education in Manipur

The private sector has occupied its space in the higher education system. The demand for the expansion of higher education is often fulfilled by the private education. Higher education certainly acts as a mechanism to the development of economies in the state or the Country. Privatization in higher education can be specified as the process in which the educational institutions (both public and private) are meant to follow the characteristics and norms of the private sector and act accordingly. Jamshidi, Naveh, Zeinabadi (et. al.) elucidated that it is conducted more like business and market-oriented manner and likely to reflect on consumer and customers' expectations (Jamshidi, Arasteh, Naveh Ebrahim, Zeinabadi, Damkjaer, 2012:790-793). Sociology of education as the study of educational structure, processes and practices from a sociological perspective provided a deeper understanding of the relationship between educational institutions and society reflecting the social reproduction of personalities and culture. This paper focuses on the issues of private schools most

²UDISE code of Private Schools, Available at :
<https://manipureducation.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/5.-Private.pdf>

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importantly the residential private schools as well as the private tuition culture and it reflects on how such educational institutions are gradually mean for commercialization.

5.1 Private School and Private Tuition Used as Tool for Commercialization of Education

According to Durkheim, schools were the primary socializing agent for the production of future adults which developed the consensus and solidarity in society. On the one hand, education is established to maintain social consensus and solidarity through its socializing function, however the self-interest of individuals and groups entailed the state regulation of education (Lawrence, 2011: 301).

The private institutions are progressing day by day. The deterioration of the government and aided schools has led to the commercialization of education by the private sectors. This is one of the acute ailment in the present educational scenario of Manipur. In Manipur, there is a common phenomenon of sending children for private tuitions. The children are running after private tuitions before or after the schools hours. Even the parents are so concerned about their children's private tuition particularly in the urban areas. Parents seems to be apprehensive about their children's education until and unless they sent for private tuition after school hours. It is also believed that the students who take tuition from their respective class teachers usually score higher marks. The students who could not afford to take tuition are lagging behind. Even the teachers are giving more importance in private teaching rather than teaching in School (Valui, 2012:102). This creates another economic problem to some sections of the population.

The schools are the primary agent who generates different elements of commitment and capacities that enables an individual to allocate 'manpower'. Parsons elucidated that in American society, one's status level is correspond to the levels of educational attainment. The educational relations and social status are interrelated with the occupational status which is attained. Therefore, the completion of high school is the minimum necessary level of educational attainment (Parsons, 1968:200-201). After family, the elementary school took the first major step in socializing the children (Parsons, 1968: 208). In Manipur, there was a time private schools were established with the initiative of public to expand higher education. Nevertheless, in recent times, private schools are established only to earn money.

Kleanthous elucidated the role of familial capital (economic, social and cultural) in higher education. Though the students fail to understand the parental influences on their educational choices, parental influences what Bourdieu called 'symbolic violence' was noticed. In this context, parents and students primarily fail to recognise the influences since it is certainly unconscious (Kleanthous, 2013:159-160). Kleanthous argue that familial capital influences the parental choices. Kleanthous highlighted about the familial capital are invested to fulfil all the requirements of their children's educational choices such as private tuitions, cultural goods and overseas studies. Further, it is mentioned that symbolic violence cannot be observed empirically but it has to be understood interpretatively (Kleanthous,2013:160).

Bourdieu argue that cultural capital learned in schools are the important agency to demolish the reproduction of a hierarchical society. For instance, schools partly play as an agent for social and economic hierarchies of the larger society. Apple argued that the problems of educational knowledge of what is taught in schools can be looked from the perspective of larger distribution of goods and services in the society (Apple, 1979). The alleviation of poverty occurred when education value is focus more on investment in human capital to enhance human capacities, productivity and income. In wider sense, education is affecting the income/poverty (Lynden & Khonglah, 2004:236-237).

In the present time, education becomes a 'social right' of the people. Education act as a key agent for wealth, status and power. It is the instrument for economic growth. However, Kamei elucidated that quantitative expansion of education led to the problem of quality and standard of education. In addition, he states that it would be really difficult to form a uniform national education policy or common education system which suits or fulfil the ethos to every group (Kamei, 2002:42-43). Social change is associated with social structure. Generally, social change can be seen from two sides, either

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from the phenomenon of progress or from the phenomenon of destruction. Kamei examined that economic condition is closely associated with social situation. Society changes along with change in economy.

In Manipur, there is a mushroom growth of educational institutions which may highlights the state's /people's desire for education. However, the education culture seems to be slightly changed in the present day situations. The tuition culture has become menaced culture to some sections of the population. It has become a unbearable burden to many poor parents. Even the nursery children of the educated parents are sent for private tuition. Gradually, the formal education seems to be only mean for degrees/ future certificates while the actual learning is taking place in private tuition or coaching. Therefore, the actual expenses of the education goes to the private tuition centres. Many of the parents claim that education is becoming expensive day by day. However, Haokip argued that who is spending that money and where? Why it has become easier to use education or specially the school students as commodity by some businessman or elite people? ³Government schools/college employees themselves are sending their wards to private educational schools. Parents are highly concerned about the outcome which is not actually the desirable level. Parents invest their familial capital to their children education and later they expected children to get govt. job which includes earning good amount of money.

Education become commodity where most effective investment one can make. It is the education that helps to detach the poor from poverty through the knowledge and skills an individual has learned (Ozturk, 2001:2). Education is the influencing factors for transforming the economy of the family as well as the society by seeking for better job and economic opportunities. (Ozturk, 2001:4). Education has made a significant contribution to economic development, therefore it is fascinated as human capital as a result investing on education is considered as investing on human capital⁴ one's position in white collar employment is closely associated with the levels of education that individual have. Bourdieu's works reflects on the reproduction of social and cultural inequalities through education by tracing the parental influence on education which develop unconscious inequality (Rawolle & Lingard, 2013: 120). In the article '*Emerging Trends of Privatization of Education in India*' Abrol elucidated that encouraging privatization may be because private expenditure on education make to exempt from taxes and those families are getting advantage from these tuition tax credit (Abrol, 2016:4). However, this is not the situations in Manipur.

Private tuition culture deteriorated the education system in Manipur. It even brought inequality between the children of rich parents and poor parents. Many of those involved with starting private schools are returnees migrants with some capital come back and invest in the private sector. Sangaiporou in Imphal area has become the epicentres of the boom in private education. Paddy fields and small farms are transforming into the buildings of schools, hostels and small shops. Many of the founders or the entrepreneurs who started schools are returnee migrants who had spent time for studying and working outside Manipur. Many of them have studied business or worked in marketing or similar fields outside the state⁵. The first target for private school would be the opening of coaching centre. The coaching centre/private tuition centres are the initial step to open a formal educational institutions particularly the residential private schools. The earning that private schools counts are from the hostel/residential fees, again private tuition fees in private schools, mess fees, etc.

³Haokip, Rev Fr Paul Lelen, 'Education culture' Available at:http://e-pao.net/epPageExtractor.asp?src=education.Education_culture_By_Paul_Lele_n_Haokip.html

⁴Guru, Supriya,(Year not mentioned), 'The Role of Education in Economic Development', Available at: <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/economics/the-role-of-education-in-economic-development/38355/>

⁵McDuaie-Ra, Duncan,2015, School vs Paddy: Education and Mobility in Manipur, The Focus, The Newsletter, No. 71, Summer 2015

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The rapid development in educations always correspond with privatization and commercialization of education. Next to Imphal, the capital city of Manipur, Kakching and Thanga villages have become the best examples of such change. Private tuition culture, boarding system fully dominated the education system in these two areas of Manipur. There is also a trend of Sunday Tuition System of students from the rural areas are going for private tuition in Imphal, the private tuition is taken only on Sunday to those teachers who are expected to be the Board Committee members of the questions setting. The parents from particular area (from rural areas of Manipur) hired a vehicle together to send their children for private tuition in Imphal. If the tuition classes start at 5 am in the morning, they have to go from their native place around 3/3.30 am in early morning which is before the sun rise. Besides this, some of the parents have to accompany with their children. Parents are competing to produce position/rank holders so that the amount the parents have spent in their children's education needs to return in the form of scholarship/award once the children stood among top 20 positions in the Board exam. Along with the student's bright future, it gives prestige/honor to the family. In analysing the structure of education, Bourdieu concept of symbolic violence is very relevant in shaping the interconnections between parental influence and their children's choice of subjects. Bourdieu's work on symbolic violence reflected on how parents exercise symbolic violence on their children by investing familial capital for their education, it is considered as a 'gift' their children need to return as economy by pursuing Higher education (Kleanthous, 2013:160). Here, it reflects Parsons ideas on education which is a mechanism to develop an individual for their future role in the society. He further elucidated that parents' occupational ambitions for their children reflect on the educational attainment of the children/society. Parsons highlighted two indispensable elements to develop by the individual for their future role performance; the development of commitment and capacities of the individual. Here, the commitment referred by Parsons are the commitment to safeguard the values of the society on the one hand and commitment for a specific role within the structure on the society on the other hand. Similarly, the development of capacities is divided into two ways; the capacities or skills to conduct individual's role and the second is the responsibilities to fulfil other people's expectation associated to that particular role (Parsons, 1968:200).

5.2 Day Boarding System and Kids Day-Care Centre

Another new trend coming up in recent educational system is the trend of Day Boarding system where children are sent to the boarding schools from breakfast to dinner. This also makes to expend extra expenditure to van fees. Parents believed that day boarding system allows them to spent time with their children at least at night time. However, whether it really makes any differences in the parents-children bonding is always questionable. It is often evident that children come back home with no energy left and they tend to sleep as soon as they reach home. In some of the occasions, while interacting with few elders in some of the villages in Manipur, many claimed that both the parents and children giving too much focus on bookish knowledge, there is tendency to forget the value of the bonding and sense of community among the younger generations. Recognizing the value of indigenous knowledge is very important to maintain peace, unity and diversity in the society. Earlier indigenous/ traditional knowledge was imparted with the motive to learn, taught and practice. People try not to harm the society or community from their actions. Nevertheless, the discussants in the group discussion claim that the era has changed. People give more importance to themselves rather than community or the society. People would learn, read and taught but never care about what they had learned and taught. Some of the elders even remained the proverbs for this 'Lairik Heiraga Laisu Yaodaba' means 'Persons earning/learning higher education but no moral values in his actions'. Therefore, modern education should incorporate with the indigenous knowledge in order to promote societal value, understanding, peace and justice.

Along with this trend, one of the acute problem that has been witnessed in the past few years is the blooming of kids centre. It is understandable at some level that such kind of kids care centre is needed when both the parents are working and there is no one at home to take care their children. However, the problem comes up when the non-working parents (especially the mothers) started sending their kids to such centre just to free themselves. It has become a fashion among the parents rather than a necessity. As a result, Day-care kids centre have become fully commercialised to such an extent that parents are fully influenced that sending kids to such kind of centre is one of the mechanism to develop the personalities and skills of their kids. It is well known fact that parents always had a larger dream for their children which has future aspirations of preference towards professions like doctors

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and engineer as they are considered prestigious occupations. In order to realize this dream large numbers of parents are sending their children to private schools to get quality education which they considered as better education. Therefore, parents always desire to give good education to their children from the very beginning of their schooling. However, somewhere or the other, they are encouraging the privatization in education and gradually moving towards the commercialization of education.

Concluding Remarks

There should be regulatory bodies to maintain standards and quality of education. Similarly, there should also be standard fee structure as per Government norms. The government should securitize those schools and coaching centres which earned money by selling their degrees. Mushrooming of private educational institutions, preferring quantity over quality led to commercialized education system in Manipur. At the same time, Parents care less about increasing privatization of education at school level. In Manipur, the privatization of education exists only at school level. Till class XII, education is fully privatized, and the competition is very high among them.

Therefore, it is the high time the government or the concerned authority keep an eye on private institutions and ensure the quality of the education. At the same time, both the parents and students should rethink and abolish the tuition culture (which is affordable by only some sections of the population). So that the educational gap between the children of rich and poor parents could be diminished. Otherwise, in the near future education will gradually become pertinent only to some section of the population.

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