

Impending Threat of Excluding Dropouts

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Abstract

Nagaland has changed from the path of violent struggle for freedom to non violent struggle that has brought more peace and prosperity to the place and people. This could be also attributed to education. Education system, which is enlightening the people, sometimes, unintentionally becomes a tool for grooming the youth towards antisocial and self-destructing activities in a state like Nagaland which is a frontier state and close to some other frontier states. Education might have caused the development of many individuals but the same education might have ignored a few individuals and that ignorance could cause a greater magnitude of destruction than the development brought by the educated people. This study describes, using the data from an unpublished study on the trend of school enrolment and dropouts between 2002 and 2011, the injustice done to the minority group who are often neglected and deprived of getting some more chances to improve in their education, by analysing the causes and consequences of neglecting them. Being realized the importance of assessment in learning, the principle enshrined in the phrase “Assessment of Learning” has been allotted a backseat nowadays and the phrases such as “Assessment for Learning” and “Assessment as Learning” are given due place for emphasizing that assessment is not to deprive but to empower someone. This article emphasizes the importance of using assessment for learning and suggests some measures that would prevent the youth falling prey for self-destruction and threat to peace and tranquillity. This is also an appeal to educational institutions for their participation in nation building.

Key Words: Nagaland, HSLC, NBSE, Dimapur, Kohima, *Dendrite*, *Gutka*, RTEA, NCERT

Introduction

Nagaland, one of the North Eastern States of India, shares its boundaries with the other frontier states. This makes her being benefited in the exchange of different culture and commerce but also hinders and causes threat to the social order and development due to different factors like the trafficking of human, arms and ammunitions, drug smuggling, etc. Children, who are more vulnerable to these elements, ultimately bring a great threat to the development of the country and more particularly to the State. Nagaland is

minimizing the path of violence through education- one of the tools of world peace and understanding, Education might have been directed towards the development of many individuals but the same education has been ignored a few individuals who bring greater magnitude of destruction than the development brought by the educated people. While making educational plans for the development of the State, it is felt that the impetus of one of the factors that hinders and also causes regress on the development, has been ignored for a quite long time in this State.

Therefore, this study tries to analyze the causes and consequences of students' dropping out from schooling at the secondary level causing 'wastage and stagnation'. Further, this analysis suggests some preventive measures by providing plans for the reduction of dropouts that would further ensure the development of the society and prevent destruction and threat to peace and tranquillity. As, the national investment on students' education becomes a wastage by their dropping out from schooling and also the dropped outs' participation in anti-social and self-harming activities brings regression in the development of the nation and also the individual well being, the analysis is a felt need of the hour.

Educational Planning

"Educational planning is the application of rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society" (Coombs, 1970). The precondition for planning is the existence of certain objectives which need to be achieved and constraints in this respect are time and resources. Here, the resources are physical (or material), financial and human. In this paper, one of the constraints on the human resources that hinders the educational development and make the education less efficient and effective in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society, is being looked into.

"From the beginning, it has been stressed that the objective of planned development is not only to increase production and attain higher levels of living, but also to secure a social and economic order based on the values of freedom and democracy in which 'justice, social economic and

political, shall inform all the institutions of national life' (GOI, 1961). . Therefore, the planning is aimed at development and not at the social disorder. Here, in Nagaland, the plan of screening the students before reaching the destination in educational institutions has been widely practiced that makes the students' being deprived of their rights to participate in the examination and get dropped consequently disturbing the social order.

Education and Society

Education and society are the two sides of the same coin; the one promotes the other. Educational aims are framed for the development of society keeping in mind the current needs. "Education as an ameliorative agency whose main function was the improvement of society" (F. Ward, 1924). The 'improvement of society' in the above definition implies 'the individuals of the society' too. As the society is a web of human relationship; education does not leave behind individual welfare and development in a democratic society. The following definition of education reiterates the foregoing statement.

"Education is the consciously controlled process whereby changes in behaviour are produced in the person and through the person within the group"(Brown, 1954). Therefore, in a democratic society, education should not leave behind a certain section of people rather it should empower them. But, the educators and administrators unconsciously, unintentionally or out of external pressures, make education as a tool for disintegration and a factor of regress to the social and individual development.

Nagaland Education at Secondary Level

In the State of Nagaland, the secondary schools under the Nagaland Board of School Education can be grouped into

three: government schools, private recognized schools and private permitted schools. The private recognized schools are either permanently recognized or provisionally recognized. The academic session starts, generally, in the month of January-February and HSLC examinations usually are conducted in the month of February-March. But, during the period between September-October, almost all the schools conduct screening examinations, called 'Selection Examinations'. Here, the selection examinations are conducted by the recognized schools for their own students and in some cases; some of the recognized schools are chosen as centres by the NBSE for conducting the selection examinations for the registered schools. In every centre school, a temporary committee is made headed by the head of the centre school and the heads of the registered schools appearing the examinations and the committee select the students with optimum required performance and the remaining students with weaker performance are being dropped. The number of students becoming dropouts at this stage is threatening.

Wastage and Stagnation at HSLC Level of Schooling

An unpublished study by the author in 2013 by analysing a decade's data reveals that in the 2012 HSLC examinations, there were 18,821 students, enrolled in 463 (NBSE Result Gazette, 2012) schools registered with the Nagaland Board of School Education in 2011. Out of which only 15,718 appeared in the HSLC examination conducted in 2012 and 11,025 students were qualified (58.6%). It requires a serious note that 3103 students (16.5%) became dropouts before appearing the final examinations. Similarly, from the 4,627 private students who appeared the same examinations, only 1438 were qualified (31.08%). This shows that a considerable number of students are being dropped out before reaching the final level examinations. These students might become not only a national 'wastage' or 'stagnation' but also 'a threat' to themselves and the society due to the peculiar environment.

The data collected during the same period from 27 permitted schools from Kohima district reveal that before the students appear the HSLC examinations 21% of them were dropped.

Students Enrolled in Class:10(Regular) (2002-2011)	Students Appeared NBSE Exams.	Students Dropped Out	Dropped Out %
4249	3355	894	21%

This could be further supported by the result abstract of 5 years (2007-2011). In the five mentioned years, 23,448 students appeared the examinations and 13.23% of them were dropped before they appear the

HSLC. From the date of enrolment, 53.15% students were dropped. This shows that an average, closer to half the number of students, is being dropped after being enrolled at the HSLC level.

School Type	Enrolled	Appeared	Passed	Pass %
Government	4855	3624	1274	35.15%
Private Recognized	9556	8557	7351	85.91%
Private Permitted	4410	3537	2400	67.85%
Total :	18821	15718	11025	58.6%
Private Repeaters	4627	4627	1438	31.08
Grand Total	23448	20345	12463	53.1%

To know, whether the students, who are dropped out and not qualified in the examinations, are reappearing the examinations, the results from 2007 to 2011 have been analyzed. The following table reveals that from 2007-2011 there were 40,600 students who became

dropouts and not qualified in the HSLC exams. But from 2008 to 2012 only 5624 students reappeared and qualified in the HSLC examinations. If the students re-enrolled are not taken into account, there were about 34,976 students become the 'wastage'.

Year	Enrolled.	Passed	Dropped	Repeater /Passed	Wastage
2007	22684	12116	10568	not taken	
2008	17763	10886	6877	1674	
2009	17587	10185	7402	9	
2010	17887	9763	8124	962	
2011	18213	10584	7629	1541	
2012	not taken	not taken	not taken	1438	
	94134	53534	40600	5624	34976

To see the trend for ten years, the above study was conducted and the next study is planned to be undertaken for a period 2013-2022. But, the trend of the study conducted in 2013 is threatening and explained hereunder.

Vulnerability of Students

“Northeast India has a long tradition of opium smoking. Until outlawed in the 1960s, opium dens were commonplace in Manipur. In the 1970s many of the opium users switched to morphine, produced in central India for medicinal use and legally sold over the counter in pharmacies. At the time the use of drugs was considered a

status symbol” (Translational Institute, 2011).

A senior psychiatrist from the District Hospital, Dimapur, Dr. Kezo lamented that though Nagaland is officially a dry state for the past 30 years (since the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1989) alcohol consumption, among other substance abuse is very much prevalent. (Nagaland Post, 2019)

“Nagaland is more vulnerable to drug trafficking as the main entry point of narcotic drug to Nagaland from Manipur State and Myanmar is thus mean for destinations other than our state towards

Assam, Bihar and Tamil Nadu”. To quote further, “The condition of North Eastern States of India, particularly Manipur and Nagaland, is very disturbing. In a study of selected villages in Nagaland and Manipur, alcohol was found to be used by 74% per cent of the people above 15 years” (Morung Express, 2019)

National level studies show that “one tenth of the drug users started drugs before reaching 15 years of age while a little more than one-fourth started when they were between 16-20 years. Early onset of drug use (use before 15 years of age) was more frequently reported from Mizoram, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir and Nagaland. A few states contributed large number of young drug abusers i.e., those below 20. These young abusers were mostly from Mizoram (37.9%), Jammu and Kashmir (18.5%) and Nagaland (16.7%). An additional report about Nagaland is that there is a largest number of lifetime Injected Drug Users in Nagaland and Manipur in India” (Translational Institute, 2011).

In a survey conducted by Nagaland Aids Control Society (NACS) reveals that there are around 27000 injecting drug users in the state excluding oral drug users. Also expected that the number of alcoholics would cross 50, 000. It is observed that students indulge in use of Gateway Drugs such as inhalants including Dendrite, Erasex, besides Gutka and Alcohol. Therefore, it was appealed by the NACS that as the students here are more exposed to drugs, the educational institutions are expected to be equipped at identifying roles and responsibilities towards initiating Drug Abuse Prevention in schools.

Studies on Dropouts and Drug Abuse
There are adequate evidences available to show a relationship between dropouts and drug and alcohol usage.

The first California study (1993-1994) to compare dropouts and student in their use of drugs and alcohol, found that ‘drug abuse more among dropouts and teenagers who quit school also report much rates of criminal activity’ and the findings highlight need for intervention at an earlier age. (US National Statistics, 2007). Studies conducted by US Department of Education (UDDOE) on 5,000 high school dropouts reveals that 75% dropped out of high school because they lack sufficient parental support and educational encouragement. One of the second top two reasons is drug and alcohol abuse.

‘The National Longitudinal Survey of Young Adults in America with a sample of young Americans aged 19-27 in 1984, reveals that cross-sectional data indicated that high school dropouts were more involved with cigarettes and illicit drugs than were graduates’. A total of 395 drug addicts from Nagaland, India during 1992-1993 were studied. Of these, drug related school dropout rate was 72.8%. A current undergoing research titled ‘Consequences of Drug Addition and Alcoholism on Naga Society’ by Velhou Koza, (Velhou Koza, 2014), reveals that the most number of school and college dropouts prone to use alcohol and drugs. As the alarming number of dropouts at the HSLC examinations, the availability of drugs and tobacco products in the society and the interrelation between the first two propel us to make plans for the removal or the reduction of the first factor that could be well done by the proper educational planning. But, before making plans for the removal or reduction of dropout rates, it is necessary to identify the causes of dropouts and thereafter identification plan for the removal or reduction of causes of drop out students could be discussed.

Causes and Consequences of Dropouts

According to Californian definition “Dropouts are defined as youths who had missed school for 45 consecutive days without an excuse or notifying the school”.

1. As Education Commission – 1964-66 states, “The group of underachievers consists of children who are not intellectually dull, but are at least of average and may even be of superior ability. The failure of such children should be of great concern to a developing country like ours, which can not remain indifferent to this loss of potential manpower within the higher ability range. Several factors – physical, intellectual, emotional and environmental contribute to the failure of the under-achiever to come up to the level of his latent abilities”. To the context of Nagaland, the absenteeism is the one imposed upon them by the schools as an average of 10-20% students are dropped on the basis of their under achievement in screening or selection examinations conducted well before 3-4 months before their final examinations. For the under-achievers, conducting the examinations 2-4 months before the final examinations brings more harm through their failures and discouragement than doing ‘good’ to them by placing them under high emotional and social pressure that make them unnerved to appear exams confidently.

While comparing the students who are not qualified in the HSLC examinations, the students who failed in the selection examinations have less chances to qualify in HSLC examination as they need to enrol them in a school and due to depression and humiliation many students would like to continue in the same school or in some other schools they either become dropouts or search for open schooling. Whereas, the disqualified students in HSLC

examinations, would preferably go to coaching centres/tuition centres and prepare themselves for the Board examinations. The dropouts’ long absence from schooling for 4 or more than four months’ gap in studies may make them more vulnerable to unwanted and antisocial elements. Here, at this stage many students celebrate their failures with alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants and some others face emotional imbalances due to stigma inflicted by the family and/or society.

2. Table-2 depicts the performance of the different categories of schools. General performance of the private recognized schools show better performance than the private permitted schools followed by the government schools. To keep a better statistical report and achieve the concept of “good school”, many schools practice dropping out the under achievers at the end of elementary or the beginning of secondary level schooling fearing to produce better percentage of results that is being published in the local dailies. The condition should not worsen the situation after the RTEA-2009 without knowing the crux of the Act. If schools are to be accredited with grades as propounded by NCERT, the enrolment from the primary level of schooling the reasons for students’ transfer should be seriously viewed. The accreditation of schools as visualized by the NCERT might become a threat to some schools who really take the education of the underachievers sincerely.

3. At the primary and secondary level, the identification of under-achievers and the causes of under-achievement followed by counselling had been never heard of and there is a doubt that whether the teachers are capable of identifying the causes, conducting psychological tests and counselling. If so identified in some

schools, it is generally done at the HSLC level but the identification efforts need to be made at the primary and secondary levels as suggested by the Education Commission 1964-1966. Majority of the schools do not have counsellors. The remedial programmes are at the most not done and not well organized. The enthusiasm shown by the teachers at the time of induction wither away and the teachers become sluggish and become outdated. Therefore, every institution at the institutional level with the help of teachers with enthusiasm and responsibility could bring up the educational status of the under achievers and avoid this 'wastage' and 'stagnation'. Teachers and schools find no place and time and everyone and everything runs for a race. The education aims at the survival for the fittest in achievement. There is no time or concern for the students who lag behind.

4. Educational institutions are considered as industries as per the Industries Acts. Therefore, the teachers who bring development upon the Nation through their effort on the students should be the share holders and stake holders at the outcome of their efforts. Researches should be made to know how the effect of teachers can be measured.

5. Overcrowded classrooms where 1:30 ratio proposed by RTEA-2009 is a dream. This makes the teachers not capable of handling the students by giving their individual attention on the students' individual differences.

7. Maximum number of students throngs into the greater number of private schools where the teachers receive the comparatively less salary than their government school counterparts but their work load is comparatively much higher than that of the government school

teachers. This makes their free time engaged in private tuition for uplifting their economic conditions rather than pondering over the children with special educational needs.

8. The role of educational technology is poor in the empowerment of the weak and needy students.

9. A greater responsibility and faith is reposed upon the schools by the NBSE to take measures for helping the disqualified and dropouts, high majority of the schools has not taken any measures for either prevention of dropouts nor for reinstating them back.

Remedies

1. "The first step in dealing with the under-achiever is to diagnose the causes of this failure by observation, interrogation and the application of psychological tests, if possible. Such a collation of data will make it possible to have a total appraisal of the situation and indicate lines of remedial treatment"(Education Commission, 1964-66)

2. The remedial programmes should be made to remove the causes of failures by involving the students to re-establish his/her confidence.

3. Schools may provide after school and summer/winter enhancement programmes at secondary level that eliminate information loss and invokes creativity.

4. Guidance and counselling services, which are not found in majority of the schools, should be developed.

5. Parent-teacher associations should be mobilized for enlisting the cooperation of parents in dealing with special cases.

6. Teachers' professional competence should be developed to deal with the students with special needs.

7. Transfer of students within the location without genuine reasons should not be permitted and the schools before issuing

transfer certificate to the students should be thoroughly examined for the reasons.

8. At present, for classes:1-9, the final qualifying examinations are conducted in the month of November and for class:10 examinations are conducted in the month of February. Examinations for classes 1-12 could be conducted between March-April as many other states of India.

9. If the Selection Examination could not be done away with, as it was practiced some years before, the students not qualified in the Selection Examinations could be allowed to appear as External Privates without attending schools (Open School option) as they had already attended the school for one academic year at the class:10 level.

10. Besides the preventive dropout policy, a restorative policy is also necessary, which will enable the disqualified students in the HSLC examinations to rewrite the examinations within a month from the date of publication of results. This will avoid the students waiting for a whole academic year and become deviants.

11. No detention policy could be implemented till the end of secondary level schooling. The students without minimum required marks need not qualified for taking up some courses but they could opt for some limited courses related to craft, employment and technical courses. The students, without qualifying scores, may be allowed to carry this subject in the higher classes as arrears and qualify them simultaneously.

12. Diversified subjects/Differentiated curriculum may be followed in the schools and the students should be allowed to opt for the basic or advanced level of the curriculum. More skills oriented courses like carpentry, electric, motor mechanic, computer related course, need to be introduced, with the students being given

the option to choose a course of their choice, as for a large proportion of children, secondary school is a terminal stage of education.

13. Parents-teachers-school relationship and co-ordination needs to be strengthened as here found the least parent-teacher contact. This will help in identifying the causes at the earlier stages and remedial measures could be taken at the lower level of schooling.

14. Professional competence of the teachers and schools administrators need to be addressed. They need to take in heart the greater responsibilities and values of their greater role and sympathy and empathy for the students and society.

15. Every school should take proper measures for helping the students who were disqualified in the HSLC examinations as well as those were dropped by the school at selection examinations or dropped due to some other reasons.

Conclusion

Therefore, to avoid the students towards self-destruction and causes of social underdevelopment, some measures identified above need to be taken for the sake of individuals and the society. Many suggestions for the reduction of dropouts' rate are suggested by different commissions, policies, researches and studies. But, it needs implementation. As the socio, cultural, economic and political environment of the North Eastern States are different from many other Indian States due to the region's vulnerability to anti-self and anti-social elements, it is expedient to implement some of the necessary and possible programmes to reduce 'wastage' and 'stagnation'.

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