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Intertwined Education and Social Inequality: A Sociological Analysis of Schools and People Groups in Nagaland

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Abstract

No society is free from social inequality with any exception to Naga society. The paper is an attempt to study issues of social inequalities in Nagaland with reference to educational accessibility provided in the ‘backward areas’. Additionally, it explores credible contributors for outcomes of the school results in backward areas. This linkage will help in nuancing social inequality and vice-versa in Nagaland. The study employs the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The polarisation of Naga tribes into advanced and backward categories for reservation and development purposes has percolated and immersed into the fabric of the society. Locating the tag of backward, it tries to contour problems related to education in backward areas that contribute to further backwardness of certain people groups in Nagaland.

Keywords: Social inequality, Education, Backward people group, Advance people group, Nagaland.

Introduction

“…the problem is not simply why inequalities come into being, but why despite efforts of many kinds, they refuse to disappear.” Andre Beteille (Gupta, 2005, p.320)

Social inequality refers to the existence of socially created inequalities. Invariably, power and prestige are unequally distributed between individuals and people groups across human societies. It consists of the different privileges which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others, such as that of being richer, more honoured, and more powerful or even in a position to exact obedience (Bottomore, 1965 as quoted in Haralambos, 2009, p. 27). Beteille (1969) considered that even the simplest communities are not free from inequalities of power. The existing inequality between different people groups has been reproduced to maintain a status quo and in many cases the social status has been transferred to their heirs or the
next generation. No society is free from social inequality. Naga society has been considered to be an egalitarian society by colonial ethnographers and anthropologists (Vashum, 2000, p.22; Kuchle, 2019, p.240; Yeptho, 2016, p.1711). However, contrary to this notion there are many facets of inequalities that have existed then and are more conspicuous now. There are grey areas of inequality and the emergence of class formation in Naga society which contradicts the representation of tribal equality in various forms of media and publications (Kuchle, 2019). The social polarization and stratification of Naga society as a result of the western education system has resulted in creating asymmetry in structures of power and wealth which also brought bureaucracy and elitism, or a Euro-American class system to a formerly classless society (Thong, 2012, p. 903). Today, Naga society is differentiated into sections of stratified positions among others in the category of 'Advanced' and 'Backward' people groups in Nagaland. Khiamniungan (2014) examines inequalities in Nagaland between the Advance and Backward tribes of Nagaland, locating the demand for its separate statehood by Eastern Nagas. She unfolds reasons such as unequal infrastructural development, the role of Christianity in imparting education to Advanced people groups and now domination over the Backward people groups. Khiamniungan places ill governance as the main factor for such a socially unequal society in Nagaland. Kikon writes that the coming of modern education employed the Nagas which led to the formation of a new class of 'educated middle class' which emerged as an important factor that moulded the political history of the Nagas (Kikon, 2003, p. 236).

**Contextualizing social inequalities**

Social inequality is a determining factor that impacts many the aspects of life even to access quality education (DiMaggio 1982, as cited in Stolley, 2005, p.132). Inequality in education is also a form of social inequality that is linked to many problems in society. Freire saw inequalities in the polarisation of society into two opposites and calls it dehumanisation. He argues that education was never neutral. For Freire schools either domesticate and socialize students into the dominant’s group ideology as legitimate or empower them to transform themselves or society (Solorzano, 1989). His critical pedagogy is uniquely situated to address this dominant ideology and described the process of realizing dominant ideology through critically engaged practice as ‘conscientisation’ (Freire, as cited in Bolin, 2017). He saw society divided and hierarchical and education acted as a tool used by the dominant group (oppressor) to rule and legitimize oppression. Instead of education being critical, he found ‘education as the exercise of domination, stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived
by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression’ (Freire, 2005, p.78). He argued that a thorough understanding of oppression must always take a detour through some form of class analysis and the oppressed can overcome the contradiction in which they are caught, by perceiving the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can free and transform (Freire, 2005, p.13). For Gramsci, education was a part of ideological hegemony and embedded in a relationship with hegemony. According to him, hegemony is achieved through establishing consensus rather than oppressive force. The lower classes accept their social roles and consent to the rules enforced by everyday institutions. So, hegemony is achieved through the establishment of an organic link between civil and political societies (Gramsci, 1971). An institution like school produces and disseminates hegemonic power. Hegemony exists in all aspects of human life. The field of education is no exception to it. The elites through education are able to produce and promote their ideologies that justify their position by making their beliefs seem general (Mc Donald & Coleman, 1999, as cited in Syukur, 2019, p.74). Kozol studies inequalities based on class and race disparities and affirm that unequal schooling perpetuates social inequality. The disparity in quality of education segregates people as a result of disparity in schools' qualities. Every districts or group have its unique educational problems and needs and that, ‘equal funding for unequal needs is not equality’. He argues state unequal funding and distribution of resources are the ‘decisive force in shaping inequality’ (Kozol as cited in Coleman, 1992, p. 138).

Bourdieu uses the concept of merit to explain the mechanism of the institutional form of cultural capital based on which, the students of upper and middle-class backgrounds can appropriate this cultural capital more easily than other students. In India with the acquisition of merit, the upper and middle strata of upper castes are dominating in higher education and public employment (Nash, 1990 as cited in Raj & Gundemeda, 2015, p.129). Reproduction of social hierarchies is legitimized by the school, in that it converts the existing inequalities into an academics hierarchy and conceals this reproduction beneath a cloak of an ostensibly meritocratic and democratic selection process (Dawson, 1982, p.153). Social selectivity in system of education remains a strong agenda of social inequality (Kreckel, 2006). Generally, sociologists agree that education is the most important factor influencing individual life chances in societies. Education is an important social institution that is also responsible for the socialization and full capacity development of an individual. At the national level, despite the massive expansion of the education system in India, inequalities continue to be visible at all stages of
education ranging from non-completion of primary schooling to low transition rates striking most among the socially and economically disadvantaged section of society such as Schedule Caste (SC), Schedule Tribe (ST) and socio-religious minority (Nambissan & Rao, 2018, p. 02).

In the context of Nagaland, Humstoe and Jamir (2017) linked education inequality with income inequality, stating the importance of education for the development of human capital. Beteille (1969) considered that even the simplest communities are not free from inequalities of power, and if these generally appear small or negligible, this may partly be because we assess them according to standards that are not always appropriate to them. According to Beteille, the forms and elements of inequality can change with time and space. The existing inequality between different people groups has been reproduced so as to maintain a status quo and in many cases the social status has been transferred to their own heirs or next-generation (Dasgupta & Prakash, 2013, p.103). In the study by Andre Beteille, sources of inequality are not something merely to be measured by technical devices, but it is visible to the naked eyes. Hence, there is a perceivable difference between advanced and backward categories of people groups within a given society. Therefore, one can say, the advanced countries are ‘advanced’ not only materially but also ideologically. The countries of the third world are not only ‘backwards’ economically but many of them are also ‘traditional’ in their cultures (Gupta, 2005, p. 282).

**Locating Advanced-Backward People Groups of Nagaland**

According to the 2011 census Nagaland state consists of eleven districts which home to sixteen major tribes. Nine tribes are considered to be backward tribes for reservation namely, Chakhesang, Chang, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Phom, Pochury, Sangtam, Yimchunger and Zeliang. Some of them inhabit the easternmost districts of Nagaland which borders Myanmar. These categories of people groups are officially listed to give special recognition within the state. Nagaland was created out of the Naga Hills areas of Assam and North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1963 becoming the 16th state of the Indian union. Tuensang district was part of North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), which later was included in Nagaland, forming a part of the Eastern Nagaland region. The areas in Eastern Nagaland - the Mon and Tuensang districts, were classified as ‘Un-administered Areas’ during the colonial period(Khiamniungan,2014, p.72).Being un-administered for a protracted time, Tuensang district lagged compared to the other districts like Kohima and Mokokchung. The Nagaland Act (Act no.73 of 1962) which was passed in the
parliament in 1962 also acknowledge Tuensang district being backwards and inhabited by simple tribes. Therefore, it was to remain as a special charge of the Governor for ten years (HDR, 2016, p. 39). After statehood, in the year 1970, the government of Nagaland added an extra local reservation system by classifying tribes in Nagaland under the ‘forward’ and ‘backward’ categories. The classification of Naga tribes into Backward and Advanced has created a certain form of polarisation within the state. The social status held by different tribes in Nagaland is not the same. As such, the ‘advanced’ or ‘forward’ or sometimes known as ‘western’ Nagas hold a higher status in the society. These phenomena are predictably manifested in the West Nagaland with better infrastructural development and educational institutions besides better accessibility and healthcare, etc. In the year 2003, the Nagaland government also established the Nagaland Department of Underdeveloped Areas (DUDA) with the objective to cater to the needs of the underdeveloped areas and accelerate the pace of their development to bring them at par (Wouters, 2018, pp.222-223).

The Nagaland Backward Tribes Commission (NBTC) Bill of 2016 passed by the State government seeks to establish a commission for backward tribes in the state with a special focus on the six Eastern Naga backward tribes Chang, Khaimiungan, Konyak, Phom, Sangtam and the Yimchunger which are the predominant inhabitants of Longleng, Kiphire, Mon and Tuensang districts. This was an initiative of the government to provide special attention along with state backward quota for various state services. With the progress of time what started with 25 percent of reservation, now the quantum has increased and stands at 37%, with 25% earmarked for the six Eastern Naga backward tribes and 12% earmarked for the rest backward tribes. It may be mentioned that a roster system was also initiated in the year 2001 to ensure equal distribution of reservation among the backward tribes (Cabinet sub-committee, 2021, p.1). Hence, the local tailor-made reservations, the institutionalization of a separate state government department, etc. carved the identity of the backward tribes more prominently in the state.

**Social Inequality and the Educational Case of Backward Tribes**

Education among Backward people groups arrived late as compared to the other Advanced people groups of Nagaland. With the advent of Christianity and education in the advanced tribe initially, it became a factor for development and change in Naga society. With close to six decades of statehood, there is a marked difference inequality that can be observed in many aspects of society between the Advanced and Backward Tribes of Nagaland. Kuchle, in his experience of
travelling from West to East Nagaland, remarked a total shift of view of urbanization and integration as one passes from Dimapur to Mokokchung to the main Town of Kiphire (Kuchle, 2019, p.01). Similar to his observation travelling to backward areas for fieldwork was a rather strenuous affair owing to transportation and roads issues. While in the schooling aspect of the state, various central and state schemes such as Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, RMSA of education, now has provided access to equal educational opportunities for all the districts. Almost every village has a government school that provides for elementary education and private schools can also be found likewise. There are a total of 2758 high schools in Nagaland and out of which, Government schools account for around 72 percent. However, shows a lower rate of performance in comparison to private schools, as it fails to provide quality education. Over a span of seven years (2014-2020) out of 41383 students enrolled, government schools have produced only 32.03 pass percentage in High School Leaving Exams conducted by the Nagaland Board of School Education (NBSE) as observed from data collected from the office of NBSE, whereas private schools have produced 76.72 percentage out of 112695 students. Although, Central Board of School Education (CBSE) schools are blooming with other international boards of education mostly in Kohima, Dimapur and sparsely in other advanced tribe districts, where some of the Naga students get access. Out of total 35 (thirty-five) CBSE schools in the state, only nine schools are located in different districts of backward areas. Overall, the majority of the students study under the state Board - NBSE. The records of the list of toppers from NBSE conducted High School Leaving Certificate Examination (HSLC), which happens to be the first competition for a typical Naga student, show that most of the toppers hail from the Advanced Tribes or the schools of advanced areas like Kohima, Dimapur, Mokokchung, etc. The top 20 list of the HSLC exam in the past five years (2015-2020) shows no topper from the Mon and Longleng districts. Presumably, the pass percentage is higher for Advanced Tribes. If we examine the cumulative pass percentage for seven years spreading from the year 2014-to 2020 of HSLC examination under NBSE, we will find that Longleng and Mon districts stand at the lowest pass percentage with 35.37 percent and 46.58 percent respectively. Whereas Kohima and Mokokchung stands at 80.6 and 69.1 percent (Table I) respectively.

Table I
Distribution of district wise pass percentage in HSLC exams conducted by NBSE from (2014-2020) (Database NBSE)

**Inter-district developmental disparities**

Another perspective of looking at the difference is the distribution of government servants in Nagaland. The data reported by Eastern Mirror (2017) in (Fig I) shows that advanced tribes dominate the state list of civil servants. Also, the government employees for class B, C and D categories in the state as reported by the then minister in charge of Development of Economics and Statistics tabled the numbers of employees from the Personnel Information Management system 2017-18, P&AR shows that out of the total 1,20,171 employees, 25,445 belongs to eastern backward tribes, whereas the remaining 92,740 is hold by advanced tribes. Ao as an advanced tribe itself holds 22,445 which are nearly equivalent to the eastern tribes of Nagaland put together (Nagaland Page, 2019, p.4). The Human Development Indices (HDI) of Nagaland which is a summary measure of the income, education and health achievements shows large inter-district disparities in performance. Within Nagaland, the HDI was highest in Dimapur with 0.81, followed by Kohima and Wokha both with 0.66 and Mokokchung at 0.61. On the other hand, the Mon district had the lowest HDI with 0.50. This inter-district disparity seems to have not changed since 2001 with districts like Tuensang and Mon still at the bottom in 2011 along with districts like Zunheboto and the new district Longleng. The Gender Development Index for the State was 0.58 in 2011, which shows a considerable improvement over the figure of 0.49 in 2001. Here Dimapur has the highest index
of about 0.72 followed by Kohima, Wokha and Mokokchung. Here again, the districts of Mon, Longleng, Zunheboto\textsuperscript{xii} and Tuensang are clear laggards with the GDI lying below 0.50. As in the case of the HDI, the GDI of Mon continues to be at the bottom. The Human Poverty Index combines the availability of basic amenities like toilets and pucca houses, immunisation at birth, poverty levels with education facilities and illiteracy levels. The Human Poverty Index (HPI) for the State is at about 29 percent which also shows a clear improvement over the figure of 40 percent in 2001. Once again, the districts of Dimapur, Mokokchung and Kohima are clear leaders. More crucial, the eastern districts of Tuensang and Mon continue at the bottom in terms of changes in the HPI index between 2001 and 2011, the GDI lying below 0.50. As in the case of the HDI, the GDI of Mon continues to be at the bottom (HDR, 2016, p. 32). The success in board examination, distribution of employment and the other government reports further adds to the stratifying structure as success seems to be ‘embedded in structure’ (Platt, 2015, p.129). This study also explores backward area accessibility to quality education and the probable contributors to outcomes of the school results in backward areas. This linkage will help in nuancing social inequality and vice-versa in Nagaland.
Data and method

The state of Nagaland comprises eleven districts, out of which six districts fall under the category of Backward area and five under the Advance area. The study employed quota sampling to select two districts out of six Backward areas viz. Longleng and Mon and two from the Advanced area viz. Kohima and Mokokchung. According to the 2011 census, the Longleng district which homes the Phom tribe has a population of 50,484, with 562 sq.km the smallest district of the state, with a literacy rate of 72.17 percent. Mon district, land of the Konyak tribe has 2,67,988 populations, the largest and most populous district among Backward areas, have the lowest literacy rate of 56.99 percent in the state with an area of 1,786 sq.km. Significantly better performing advanced sample areas, the districts of Kohima inhabited majority by Angami tribe has 85.23 literacy rate with 2,67,988 population and Mokokchung, the land for Ao has the highest literacy rate of state with 91.62 percent with 1,94,622 population.

Three schools were selected in each district, two private and one Government
school based on their performances in the State Board High School Leaving Examination (HSLC) employing quota sampling. The selected sample schools are better-performing schools in each district. For the primary data, both interview and questionnaire method of data collection was employed. Slovin method of determining samples was employed. This method allows a researcher to sample the population with a desired degree of accuracy when nothing about the behaviour of a population is known (Ellen, 2020).

For the sample size, based on the total NBSE enrolment of class 10 of the year 2019, using Slovin formula in determining the sample size would be 376. To calculate and obtain the sample size for each district under study, the percentage of the sample size for each district is calculated in the following way:

Percentage of Kohima district: \[
\frac{\text{enrollment of Kohima district} \times 100}{\text{Total enrollment}}
\]

Where, the enrolment of Kohima district is 3567 (NBSE, 2019) and the total number of enrolment for field area is 16778.

\[
\text{Percentage of Kohima district} = \frac{3567 \times 100}{16778} = 21.26
\]

Percentage of Kohima district is 21.26% from the total number of population for the proposed field area.

The sample size for Kohima district is calculated in the following way:

\[
\text{n} = \left(\frac{\text{Percentage of Kohima district}}{100}\right) \times \text{Total number of sample size}
\]

Where, \(n\) is the sample size of Kohima district and total number of sample size is 376.

Now, \[n = \frac{21.26}{100} \times 376 \quad n = 79.9\] Sample size

\[n = 80\]

Therefore, the sample size for the Kohima district is 80.

In the same manner, the sample size for the remaining three districts, namely, Mokokchung, Longleng and Mon is being calculated and obtained as shown in
(Table II).

Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.:</th>
<th>District:</th>
<th>Enrolment : (NBSE, 2019)</th>
<th>Percentage:</th>
<th>Sample size:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kohima</td>
<td>3567</td>
<td>21.25</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mokokchung</td>
<td>1542</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>1851</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Longleng</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>7342</td>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distribution of District-wise sample size.

Thus a total of 165 questionnaires were employed and distributed to class 10 level students. Students of class 10 were chosen; as HSLC happens to be the first competition for any typical Naga students. A total of twenty-eight personal interviews were conducted with males and females working in different capacities; Principals, civil societies, religious organisations, and gazette officers. Twelve group discussions with the teachers also form a part of the study. Secondary data were collected from offices of NBSE and DOSE, newspapers; journals etc form the base for the secondary source.

The Backward Syndrome

Backward syndrome resonates with the concept of ‘minority syndrome’ as argued by Das in his study of understanding the Karbis tribe of Assam suffering from minority disabilities, experiencing social exclusion and marginalization resulting in their demand for a separate state which had resulted in ethnic unrest as one among the many cases in North East India (Das, 2015). There is a similar kind of sense of feeling of a minority among the backward tribes of Nagaland which can be attributed to a ‘backward syndrome’. One of the perceived factors that inhibit institutional development and educational progress of the Backward people group is the acceptance of the tag of being ‘backwards’. While enquiring among the students, it shows that out of 166 total respondents of Backward and Advance students 66 percent of the respondents affirm that Backward people groups occupy
a low position in the Naga society. Further probing into the reason, 55 percent of respondents indicate that they consider lack of proper education to be the main reason for occupying a low status in the society. They also consider education to be the factor producing a gap between the two people groups. The location of all the important educational institutions in Advanced areas, the inability of the Backward people groups to compete in competitive exams and failure to enter into prestigious colleges and institutions after schooling waste the recurring causes students attributed to the continuous gap between the two people groups. Table 4 shows the distribution of their responses (Table III).

Table III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ responses distribution on education is a factor for producing a gap between the two people groups.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In a group discussion with the teachers, it came to light that the ‘undermining self-worth consciousness’ of the students acts as a mental block to the development of the people in general and students in particular. According to Rose (28 F), a teacher who works in a private school of Longleng belonging to the Phom tribe;
‘The main reason we fail to excel is that the students consider themselves backward and we cannot reach, we cannot reach’.

In sync with what the teacher had to say, a school principal serving in East Hills School Longleng for more than twenty-five years confirm that students think they are not good enough. He added that they need to have the self-belief that they are good enough to excel in state board exams or for that matter any competitive exam. Abeni (27F) who teaches in Kohima said that the tag of backward is not allowing the people to grow. Although some have come up, the majority of them are affected by this tag. The tag in itself is degrading she affirmed.

Another aspect is the consensual response to the social structure of the state that leads them to take it as something given. The Backward people group members tend to take the status quo as something legitimate or commonsensical (Gramsci, 1971). This is perceived in what the Executive Secretary of Konyak Baptist Bumeinok Bangjum, Mr Manglip (57 M) has to say on the reason why backward people are still lacking behind, he stated that;

‘Advanced tribe dominates because they are qualified and that is not unjust. We cannot change that fact or the mindset of our people’s ‘inbuilt mindset’ (backward). There is a vast difference in the understanding level between us (advance and backward)’.

Social Inequality and Everyday Life

The domination of the Advanced Tribe as a more dominant group than the Backward Tribe can also be understood in the way they encounter domination which gets expressed in their everyday lived experiences. During the course of observation of schools, interviews, and group discussions with students and teachers, it was observed that when the students come across the term ‘backward’, they would laugh and giggle, perhaps a tag that the students do not want to associate them with or talk about. Questions about backward inadvertently making them shy and nervous. One of the respondent remarked that the word backward reminded them of their inferior low status in society. Such encounter is not limited to the students, but corresponding evidence was also narrated by the Principal of Government Higher Secondary School of Longleng area, who cited that in her district everyone belongs to the same community and so there was no problem within the school surrounding. However, when it comes to dealing with higher authorities of the Education Department in Kohima for example, she mentioned belittlement not just by superiors but counterparts and subordinates of other people
groups. Again a Phom young teacher, Mr Mania\textsuperscript{ix} (25 M) recounts that people belonging to the reserved category (backward tribes) are very often the butt of a joke. He states;

‘The letter BT just makes us numb! Whenever we see in the results of job recruitment the letters BT (backward tribe) specified with names of the selected candidate, we actually cannot recognise whether the candidate is qualified like others. We may be well qualified but having those letters attached just makes us numb!

The feeling of being numb and inferior is not only felt by youths or those engaged in the educational sector, but civil society also encounters suppression of their voices. Recollecting the experiences of dealing with Naga Hoho\textsuperscript{xx} the apex civil society of the Konyak tribe, Mr Yamlo\textsuperscript{xii} (58 M) stated that;

‘Such kind of inferiority and feeling of us as a rare species is experienced during discussions and debates of certain matters with the Naga Hoho, in certain discussion our ENPO voices are not much heard.’

The dominance can also be viewed from the context in which they identify themselves in society. A Gazette officer of the Phom tribe, Aniem\textsuperscript{xxiii} (53M) recollects

‘Many years back there was a trend among the Phoms to keep Ao names such as Akum, Moa, etc. we love keeping Ao names as our people wanted to associate and identify with the Ao’s. Having Ao names made us feel advanced.’

The pursuit to identify them with the Advance Tribe needs to be understood from the condition that they have to speak loud in order to be heard and identified to which tribe they belong to. According to 2011 census, the dynamic of the population shows that Backward Tribe constitutes as much as 41.94 per cent of the total population of Nagaland. Efforts are often required to make their existence known as a people group. According to Chingshak Chang\textsuperscript{xxiv} (46 M), a teacher in Mon catholic school, he purposely chose to use his tribe name (Chang) instead of his given surname. This was so because to him, many people groups were not aware of his Chang tribe’s existence in Nagaland.

Often even powers in the hands of the Backward Tribe fail to garner the same social status accorded to advanced people groups. Sharing a lighter moment during the
interview one respondent from Phom apex student union, Mr Nuklo (32 M) narrates with laughter the joke that goes around in everyday life Interaction;

‘This tag of backward should be removed! Even the so-called Ministers and MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) although they share the same rank and file with those of Advanced Tribes, they are ridiculed with tag such as-, ‘backward Minister ase ki kobo’! (What to do a mere Backward Minister!).

**Paucity of Motivation and Reference Group**

According to Merton, a member of a particular group, another group is a reference group when members of a group strive to be like the members of the second group in some respect, the second group serves as the reference group of the first (“ChromeIAS,” n.d). Any individual in a society, when he finds one progressing in life, he desires to progress and try to imitate and take the value or standards of other individuals and groups (Merton, 1968, p.282). Beteille mentioned that the obstacles are many before backward classes for free and open competition. Besides, objective factors such as lack of means, subjective factors like lack of motivation and consequences of centuries of organised discrimination adds to their despair (Beteille, 1983, p.100). One of the determining factors that add to further strengthen the reproduction of the gulf between the advanced and backward tribes is the lack of motivation and intellectual leadership.

The importance of motivation is very crucial for any individual success in life. It serves as a drive to reach the goal and determination. A school Principal of Mon district who had served around twenty-five years as a teacher in King Henry Higher Secondary School Mokokchung remarked that there is a major concern with the students and parents in Mon and that is their lack of motivation. He added that in King Henry school junior students invariably want to perform better than their seniors, which is missing here in New Horizon Higher Secondary School. This is a uniquely placed scenario of status quo and reproduction of academic mediocrity in the backward district such as Mon.

Another principal from Longleng district, Prakash Kumar (49 M) stated that;

‘From interaction with the students, I learn that they hardly aim to achieve sixty to eighty percentages in the exams. They are contented with forty or fifty percent they are more than happy with a mere pass mark. Whereas in the school where I worked before students were
very competitive among themselves including their parents. You see even community, parents and society need to encourage the students to excel.’

Quizzing the teachers on why there are less toppers from backward areas, teachers said that in advanced area schools they have the role model of successful seniors that always inspire or ignite them. They also mentioned that in backward areas many parents are still ignorant and so they fail to inspire and encourage their children. Schooling is much more than just sending kids to school, a respondent remarked. Sharma (47M) who teaches Math is one of the reputed school in Kohima noted that teachers enjoy teaching in Kohima as students are competitive with one another which enable the schools to produce toppers. A teacher of Government Higher Secondary School Longleng who had being transferred to many districts adds that in Kohima and Dimapur not only the students but the parents and schools compete with each other which is a great motivation. No doubt, such kind of scenario could be true in any district between government and private schools. Talking about lack of determination among the youths, Apex Student Organisation President of the Konyak tribe, Mr Angki (29 M) stated:

Nijor laka determination ekta nia in konyak tribe (there is lack of self-determination in Konyak tribe). In the race of development, we cannot expect the advanced tribes like Ao, Sema, Angami to wait for us. Another important reason why ‘we’ Konyak are lacking behind among all the other backward tribes is that we don’t have a good neighbour. For example, the Phom tribe is close to Ao area; they are getting the Hawa Pani (air and water) of Ao. Talk about Chang tribe in Tuensang area; since it was the first headquarter with Kohima and Mokokchung so they had opened their eyes way before and the Sangtams neighbouring to Sema. So they have an additional advantage of being in closer proximity to the advanced tribe, whereas for us, our neighbours are Arunachal and Assam. We lack such influence as that of Chang and Phom tribes.

Proxy teachers and lack of qualified teachers

According to the data collected from the Directorate of School Education, it shows that comparatively in Backward area schools, the student-teacher ratio is more. In other words, the number of teachers is less in Backward Schools. For schools in Mon and Longleng, there are round twelve and four students respectively for every teacher, which is high when compare with districts like Mokokchung and Kohima.
With regards to qualifications of teachers, out of the total number of teachers in both the districts, Under Graduate Teachers constitute about 51% in Mon and 64% in Longleng. (Table IV).

Table IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. no</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Total of schools</th>
<th>Total number of Govt.schools</th>
<th>Total number of students (1-12)</th>
<th>Total number of teacher</th>
<th>Below graduate level</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Post graduate</th>
<th>B.ed qualified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>19958</td>
<td>1594</td>
<td>817 (51%)</td>
<td>585 (37%)</td>
<td>192 (12%)</td>
<td>184 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mokokchung</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>9896</td>
<td>2570</td>
<td>891 (35%)</td>
<td>1251 (49%)</td>
<td>428 (17%)</td>
<td>572 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kohima</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>11907</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>751 (37%)</td>
<td>822 (41%)</td>
<td>439 (22%)</td>
<td>611 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Longleng</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3586</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>504 (64%)</td>
<td>239 (27%)</td>
<td>42 (5%)</td>
<td>71 (9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student-Teacher Ratio and Teachers Profile of Government School, Nagaland, (Class 1-12), (database: DOSE).

One of the major problems in the state education system is the existence of proxy teachers. It refers to the practice in which a government-appointed teacher illegally appoints another person to work in one’s place for consideration. It is one of the most common problems which results in the quality of education being compromised. Recently in the year 2020, the Directorate of School Education through its verification drive detected 438 proxy teachers which demonstrate the gross problem in the state. It was a common narrative discussed during group discussion and interviews with Teachers, Principals and Civil Societies of the two
districts. Commenting on the problem of proxy teacher, Iralu xxix (52M) vice president of Angami Public Organisation said that government schools are equally provided but the existences of proxy teachers make a disparity in the quality of education. The General Secy. of Konyak’s apex Students Civil society Langpong xxx (36M) pointed out that though they carry out surprise checking yet, the existence of proxy teachers could not be curbed in their area. He mentioned that due to lack of facilities government employees posted in their areas don’t want to come and resort to such malpractice. Discussing on the existence of proxy teachers in Longleng area, Yangli xxxi (29F), Phom Lady Teacher who is serving in Government Higher Secondary School Longleng cited that the practice of keeping proxy teachers was not limited to single tribe but her people who stay in Kohima and Dimapur were also included. In fact, she added that her tribe might outnumber the other tribes in keeping proxy.

The existence of proxy teachers in backward areas like Mon and Longleng comes with great loss. Looking at the NBSE record of NIL performance from the year 2008-2019, it is observed that some government schools in Mon and Longleng have been consistently underperforming in Matric examination for over five years. For instance, in the case Longleng, out of twelve schools recorded so far for nil performances, six schools come in this category of discussion. In sync with the report the president of Phom Student union, Nuklo (32 M), disclosed that in their area two high schools were shut down owing to underperformance. When they detect any anomalies such as proxy, they report it to the concerned department, but not much help is extended, and no proper action is taken. In addition, it was also mentioned that the Sub District education Officers (SDEO) or District Education Officer (DEO) who are transferred to their area by the government are mostly those with poor health, nearing retirement, etc. Hence, not only do they lack good teachers but also a good administration force, he added. Students’ body with the help of donations received from well-wishers often employs private teachers to teach Maths and Science and also conduct special coaching for the HSLC candidates. But in one or two months they cannot help to improve most of the students. Instances such as these go on to show inconsistencies and a lack of political will on the part of the state to bring about significant changes in these so-called backward districts.

While talking about quality education in private schools, Aien xxxii (34 F) a lady Post Graduate Teacher (PGT) from an advanced tribe who is currently working in Mon higher secondary school added from her experience that even during Diploma in Elementary Education (D.EL.Ed) xxxiii programme classes most private teachers
don’t even know how to speak English and most teachers are not qualified. Hence the unemployed youths who fail to find employment in urban areas, return to their area in hopes of finding one. Also much to her shock and astonishment, one of her students who dropped out of High school was serving as a substitute teacher in their village. Such instances contours lack of economic resources, owing to which, quality education in Backward people groups areas gets compromised. Furthermore, the schools in these areas fail to attract qualified teachers because the schools are mostly in no position to pay salary like those schools in Kohima and Dimapur. The principal of a catholic school in Longleng, Father Phillipxxxiv (48 M) stated

*We cannot employ qualified teachers because we cannot pay them. Here in backward areas, we cannot charge a higher amount of fees like in Kohima and Dimapur where parents are financially stable to pay higher fees. But here most parents are farmers so the maximum we can charge is four to five hundred monthly. Suppose if we increase the fees structure to eight hundred then we end up losing students as parents will go in pursuit of schools with lower fees structure.*

**Bourgeoning opportunities, social inequality and the status quo**

Kikon& Karlsson (2019) in their book ‘Leaving the land’ talk about the journey of migration of Naga youths in various metropolitans cities of mainland India in pursuit of jobs. They try to understand the migration of youths who fail to get employment opportunities in their homeland as a result of prolonged armed long internal conflict, militarization, and a stagnant economy coupled with ineffective governance. And the new life that the indigenous migrants envisioned which is completely different from the reality back home makes the question of return more uncertain. The Wayfinding of better opportunities in life leaves lesser scope for coming home. Akin to it, people in Mon and Longlen districts in their pursuit for wayfinding of better opportunity and education lead them to leave their home for Kohima and Dimapur. Hansula xxxv (26 F) who earlier had worked in Backward area, presently serving in Mount Zion School, Mokokchung shared from her experience that it’s challenging to find good and experienced teachers, especially Science and Math teachers, to work in the Backward area. They feel reluctant to work owing to the distance and salary package. The schools also suffer from the transfer of many good students to Advance areas which the teachers attested for low performance. The transfer of bright students for better education or the lack of
job opportunities and poor development makes it clear that the area has failed to attract and retain bright students and employ their educated youths. The Principal of a private school in Longleng, Prakash Kumar (49M) stated;

‘Primary section, they may study here in Longleng but after that, they relocate to Kohima, Dimapur. Many good students have left this school. They opt to leave because they feel that they will have better opportunities (school and job opportunity)’.

Being exposed to better schooling and opportunity in life makes the return uncertain. It was mentioned that even after the completion of education, parents want their children to live in Kohima and Dimapur even though they may not be doing anything, and the parents are willing to sacrifice just to retain their wards there. While interacting with Ching (xxvi) (12M), a domestic helper in Mokokchung from Konyak tribe it was learnt that he along with his parents considers the education provided in Mokokchung government school is far better than that provided in Mon district government school as teachers teach mostly in their dialect and not in English.

Conclusion

Education rests on the principle of equality as it is an agency for equalizing the educational opportunities of an individual by improving life chances for achievement. Many aspiring Naga students depend on the reservation policy of the state. There are mixed opinions among the Nagas with regard to the reservation policy, especially among the backward tribes. The Eastern Nagas consider it as their legitimate right and seek to increase the reservation percentage. The prevalence of the job reservation policy has enabled Backward tribes like Chakhesang in climbing the social ladder and improving their condition. For an instance the Chakhesang has 75 civil servants, which is more in comparison to an Advanced tribe like the Sumi with 58 civil servants (Eastern Mirror, 2017). With the change in times, conditions and perceptions as the state need to re-look and review the policy. The polarization of Naga tribes into Advanced and Backward categories for reservation and development purposes has percolated and immersed into the fabric of society. There is inequality of social status enjoyed by the different people groups which casts an overarching effect on all spheres of life. As a result, a norm like situation has being created which is constructed and accepted (Guziec, 2015). The established structure of society creates a hegemonic principle that flow down from students’ expectation of themselves and their belittled and even degraded feeling of the backward tag. The motivation of the students gets arbitrate by such feeling.
of de motivation and inferiority complex. In addition, the looming presence of
corruption of proxy teachers and insufficient opportunities for employment are
undoubtedly important dynamics that work together to make backward area more
vulnerable to social inequality. Education as an equaliser is questioned owing to the
existence of constraints related to the accessibility of quality education. As such it
is sheer inequality in education that needs to be explored and understood in
conjunction with the advancement of time.

1Advance word is used as an administrative category used in Nagaland for job reservation in Nagaland. Advance or
also known as forward tribe consisting of Ao, Angami, Lotha, Rengma and Sema tribe of Nagaland.

ii Backward word is used as an administrative category used in Nagaland for job reservation. Nine tribes are considered
to be backward tribes for the purpose of reservation namely Chakesang, Chang, Khamiuniangan, Konyak, Phom,
Pochury, Sangtam, Yimchunger and Zeliang

iii Dimapur is one of the districts in Nagaland which is the main gateway and commercial centre of the state

iv Mokokchung district of Nagaland is mainly occupied by the Ao(advance tribe) Naga tribe which is politically and
economically the most important urban centre in northern Nagaland

v Kiphire is newly formed ninth district of Nagaland which was carved out of Tuensang district home to
Yimchungru, Sangtam and Sumi Naga tribes

vi SSA: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan or SSA is an Indian Government programme for universal primary education

vii RMSA: Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Human Resource
Development, Government of India, for the development of secondary education in public schools throughout India

viii NBSE: Nagaland Board of School Education is Nagaland’s state agency for the promotion and development of
secondary and higher secondary education.

ix CBSE: Central Board of Secondary Education is a national level board of education in India for public and private
schools which is controlled and managed by Union Government of India.

x Wokha is a district in Nagaland which home to the Lotha Naga tribe

xi Tuensang district is the largest district of Nagaland. Chang, Sangtam, Yimchunger and Khamiuniangan tribes lives in
this district

xii Zunheboto is a district of Nagaland, inhabited by Sema Naga tribe

xiii Based on NBSE records of school performance in the HSLC examination district wise, those schools in each district
whose pass percentage and performance are comparatively better are referred as better performing schools.

xiv Rose is a social science teacher of St. Thomas High School, Longleng (Rose (28 F), interviewed on 27/10/2019 in
Longleng-India).

xv Pseudo name has been used here.
xvi An English teacher at Clare Higher Secondary School, Kohima (Abeni (27F), interviewed on 12/02/2020 in Kohima-India

xvii Konyak Baptist Bumeinok Bangjum is an organization of the Baptist Churches of the Konyak Naga tribe. It’s headquarter is at Mon.

xviii Executive Secretary of Konyak Baptist Churches organization (Mr Manglip (57M), interviewed on 12/11/2019 in Mon-India).

xix A social science teacher at East Hill High school, Longleng (Mania (25M), interviewed on 29/10/2019 in Longleng-India)

xx Hoho is a Naga term, the meaning of which is Parliament. Naga Hoho is the apex tribal body of Nagas.

xxi President of apex Konyak civil society (Yamlo (58M), interviewed on 11/11/2019 in Mon-India).

xxii Eastern Naga Peoples’ Organisation(ENPO) is the apex body of six Naga tribes namely Konyak, Chang, Yimchunger, Sangtum, Phom and Khaimniungans

xxiii Vice Principal of Government College, Longleng (Aniem (58M), interviewed on 27/10/2019 in Longleng-India).

xxiv Chingshak(46M) interviewed on 12/11/2019 in Mon-India

xxv President of apex Phom Students Union (Nuklo (32 M), interviewed on 29/10/2019 in Longleng-India)

xxvi Principal of East High school, Longleng. Serving for more than twenty years (Prakash Kumar (49M), interviewed on 26/10/2019 in Longleng-India)

xxvii Sharma (47M) interviewed on 13/02/2020 in Kohima-India

xxviii President of apex Konyak Students organisation (Angki (29M), interviewed on 10/11/2019 in Longleng-India)

xxix Iralu (52M) interviewed on 15/02/2020 in Kohima-India

xxx Langpong (36M) interviewed on 10/11/2019 in Mon-India


xxii Post Graduate Teacher of English serving at Government Higher Secondary School, Mon (Aien (34F), interviewed on 10/11/2019 in Mon-India

xxiii Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed). A programme conducted by National Institute of Open Schooling India, which provides designed package for in-service untrained teachers as a result of Right to Education Act of India making mandatory for every teacher to gain professional training for teaching

xxiv Principal of St.Thomas High school, serving for more than fifteen years( Father Philip (48M), interviewed on 25/10/2019 in Longleng-India)

xxv Science teacher at Mount Zion School, Mokokchung (Hansula(36F) interviewed on 5/12/2019 in Mokokchung-India)
Domestic helper from Mon district, studying in class nine at Mokokchung Government Higher Secondary school (Ching (12M) interviewed on 8/12/2019 in Mokokchung, India)
REFERENCES:


**WEB SOURCES:**


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