CHAPTER 3
CHOOSING SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN: SEEING THROUGH PARENTS’ EYES

The present chapter examines the explosive demand of schooling of children by parents in the state of Manipur. The study examines how social demand of schooling of children by parents remains a deep rooted realistic hope against all heavy odds such as economic constraints, spiral downfall of government schools, bureaucratic corruption and constant violence in the public space, all of which pose a huge obstacle for achieving universal elementary schooling of children. In the state, even the poorest households are clear about education goals, its vision and hence are able to make judgements about the relevance and quality of schooling. These parents are convinced that the unresponsive, failed education system in the state has pushed them truly hard in a dilemma with shock, frustration and sense of helplessness that today’s education has failed to provide the kind of education they are aspiring for. With a sense of frustration and helplessness, parents and children alike have abandoned government school in hordes by shifting their allegiance to private schools which are relatively accountable; though these parents are still ambivalent towards private schools since private schools too fall short of their expectation. Yet, the emerging phenomenon has empowered private schools; virtually leaving government schools completely impoverished to be experienced by only impoverished children whose parents are either survivors or intermittent income earners, most of who are daily wagers, and hence who absolutely have no voices in the education of their children by making the unresponsive system to task for the sake of their children. The chapter examines some of these critical reflections, hopes and aspirations of parents on the present education scenario in the state; and how universal elementary education for their children is likely to remain a mirage despite their overwhelming support.

3.1 Household Economic Status and Schooling of Children: Agricultural Occupation

The Meiteis of Manipur practice many forms of industry though most people are agriculturists and cultivators. Agriculture is a family enterprise and all family members contribute their labour including children in guarding the vegetable from stray cattle and birds. The agricultural produce of the land consists mainly of rice for immediate consumption and local trade. Rice forms the
staple food of the state and the fertility of soil knows no exhaustion that crops generally grow in abundance in most of agricultural fields. That sometimes it feels that the entire population is subsisted on the produce of the land. The economy of the state is predominantly agrarian. Yet, agriculture remains to be traditional as it is greatly controlled by physical and cultural factors such as climate, topography and socio-economic conditions. Cultivation in the field begins with rituals at the site of granary of the cultivator to invoke PHOUWOIBI, by uttering, 'you gave me good crops last year: please do the same this year.' He then goes to each corner of the field and makes an offspring of fruits and vegetables. Mc-Culloch (1908) cites the interesting methods of agricultural practice which is still rudimentary in the state. While ploughing the field, two bullocks are attached to the plough, one on each side of the centre pole. The operation of scratching up the soil and preparing the field for the reception of rice seed commences in the months of February and May month, they sow poong hule or dry seed cast in dry ground. It is in the month of June the rains having set in, the field is brought by successive ploughing into a state of liquid mud and in this the pang phel is cast. As this seat floats on the surface of the mud, it starts producing shoots. After this comes the process of lingba or transplanting. When the transplanting season sets in, the plants after washing the unwanted muddy earth attached to the seeds, and after having taken to the field they are one after another separately inserted in the mud. When the rice begins to grow and ripen, it has to be watched against the depredations of immense flights of birds, cows and oxen. The rice after being ripened is cut with a knife curved at the top and having a rough edge like a saw. As it is cut, it is laid in the handfuls on the favourable ground and tied up in sheaves after which these sheaves are carried to the field most convenient for the purpose and the rice beat from them on a large reed mat widely spread. After having been winnowed, by means of reed fans, the rice is ready for granary which is further used for consumption as well as sale in case there is surplus. The people of Manipur use Kangpot or sledge, the langol or plough, the ukai analba or the smooth harrow, the phou intok or the paddy spoon, the humai or fan used for winnowing, the chairong or paddy thrasher, the thangol or sickle, the yot or the spade to dig the field and yeina phak or threshing mat. These days the changes have been only that tractors are used to soften the soil of the field with one crop a year. Agriculture remains the mainstay of livelihood of people and continues to be the main
sector of employment absorbing the largest number of workers, though it is greatly unorganised and unskilled one.

Agricultural land is symbolic to the people of Manipur. While examining the possession of land and ownership of land among the respondents, it reveals that 63 percent of households own agricultural land ranging from less than one acre up to 3 acres of land. 45 percent of households own land less than 1 acre while 10 percent of them own more than 1 acre and the largest land holding is up to 3 acres of land. Owning of land helps households in drastic reduction of household expenditure as it meets the major household consumption expenditure on rice which is the staple food among the people. Yet as discussed above, practice of agriculture is quite rudimentary and hence not much surplus rice is produced. Compounded with this is a host of problems such as lack of irrigation facility, low use of improved and high yielding variety seeds and fertilizers and hence productivity of agriculture is low. Therefore not much income can be generated from the practice of agriculture. Still 65 percent of the households form the main working population in agricultural sector, which is more or less subsistence type.

Another source of income of households is derived from production of kitchen garden. Customarily, almost every households in Manipuri society possesses Ingkhol, homestead. In the Ingkhol, households grow varieties of seasonal vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peas, chillies, mustard leaves, lady fingers, cucumber, ginger, turmeric, dhania, spring onions, cabbages, cauliflower, carrots, radishes, beetroots, turnips, gourds, pumpkins, brinjals, peas, cucumber etc. A village in Manipur is a long straggling series of houses each standing within its own enclosure with access to the river on the bank of which it is built. It is a common sight that households grow vegetables on the fertile soil of river banks in the absence of arbitrary boundary of these banks falling within the boundary of particular households. It is usually the women who exclusively manage the kitchen garden; they plough the soil, fetch gobar that is used as fertiliser, fetch water for the plants and the entire process of nurturing the garden is done by women. These domestic products are used for household consumption as well as trading purposes which are carried out by women only.
As the people of Manipur valley thrive on green vegetables as part of their food consumption every day, households make substantial savings of income of the agricultural products and generation of income however big or small is made from both agricultural and vegetable products. There are also varieties of fruits grown such as apples, apricots, raspberries, strawberries, oranges, limes, oranges, pomegranates, guavas, mangoes, pineapples etc. The earnings made from these products range from Rs 300/ per month upto Rs 600/ per month. At least 75 percent of household respondents have earnings of more than Rs 300/ per month from the kitchen garden while the remaining households earn an income of more than Rs600 /per month. The amount though small is indeed significant in a society where most are left without any viable income from other sources of economic engagement. Another source of income among few households is fishing, which is a convenient practice as a large portion of the valley is still under the portion of water such as ponds, rivers and lakes; and fish forms an important article of consumption as well as sale. The gentle art of fishing gives an employment opportunity to many of these households specially women. During Ekpal Lokpa (rainy season), almost all women in large teams engage in fishing in flooded fields, ponds, canals and rivers. Yet in normal season, fishing is done by women on regular basis and marketing them off even to the remotest area at the risk of their lives is done by women. The river fish alone has thirteen varieties of fish. Dr. Brown (1908, p. 45) writes of fish that there is considerable variety and the supply is plenty.

3.2 Weaving and Other Economic Activities

Next to agriculture, weaving being a conspicuous economic activity is the most important economic activity. The activity is a year round pursuit among females. That almost all households possess a simple loom in the verandah of the house or Shangoi¹. All women educated, literate or illiterate make an effort to provide employment for themselves in non agricultural sectors which directly support the economy of their households. Almost every household, for

¹ It is customary that moderate and well to do families among the Meiteis of Manipur possesses Shangoi, a detached shed made of wood or bamboo and mud with either tin roofing or dry straw with three sides closed, usually located in front of the house. The shed is used for multipurpose activities such as weaving, recreation, ritual ceremonies, feasting etc.
example, owns a loom, be it a loin loom or a fly shuttle loom and weaving is exclusively in the hands of women only. The entire business of weaving is managed by women only. This includes tareng masa-spinning of wheels, langchak, bobbins while better off families have large tareng used for arranging thread on a roller for the looms. The cloths made out of weaving, though mainly intended for household use, are sent off to Imphal market for sale. Women only are in full charge of marketing off these products, generating cash economy for family maintenance including the support of their children’s education.

In the absence of any viable industry - large, medium and small, households engage in different occupational activities such as primary, secondary and tertiary. Going by these occupational groupings, it is seen that a large percentage share of the respondents engage in tertiary sector. Tertiary sector includes agricultural wage labourers, construction workers, brick making, agarbati making, selling vegetables, fishing, weaving, small trade such as goldsmith, coal and cylinder business, running fast food shop, grocery shop, selling home based products such as fish and vegetables, animal husbandry, piggery and poultry, carpentry, transport and construction workers, house building, to occupation such as rickshaw pullers. This sector provides economic pursuits for a large section of these households, such as 58 percent of the total parents interviewed. The households through these engagements earn intermittent income that is used to meet daily basic necessities. On the contrary, 42 percent of the respondents belong to

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2 Primary occupations include age old activities such as hunting, gathering of wild fruits, nuts, fishing, harvesting of trees and other commodities from nature such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, etc. Primary producers might also be labeled as red-collar workers due to the outdoor nature of their work. Secondary sector includes activities such as purposeful tending of crops and commercial livestock and agriculture. Secondary production increases the value (usefulness) of a previously existing item by changing its form. The farmer, for instance applies hybrid seeds, fertilizers and modern technology in the form of cultivating and harvesting equipment to increase the yield of crops. Those who engage in secondary sector are often termed as the blue collar labour force. Tertiary production involves the service sector. Service occupation such as barbers, cobblers, rickshaw pullers, retail clerks and a range of personal and business service sector fall in the tertiary sector. It refers to a range of personal and business services involving a rapidly growing share of the labour force. They are termed as pink collar worker (Alexander et al, in ‘Economic Geography’, 1988: p.1-2).
Table: 3.1
Occupational Categories of Parent Informers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Occupation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carpentry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>helps in selling it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House construction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick Making</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, prepares threading, weaves and sells in the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable seller</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, collects vegetables from home garden and sell it in the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, collects fish from rivers, ponds and lakes, sometimes roast it on fire for sale in market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, collects all necessary items from bazzar for sale to meet local consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Food Stall</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, collects all items from market and prepare them for sale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piggery and poultry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, helps in preparing food and feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood business</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agarbati Making</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salarieds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Survey, 2008

Skilled workers. These include clerical jobs in government sector such as peons, police constables, wireman, artist, health worker in hospital, government school teachers, auditor in government sector etc.

3 Among the salaried parent informers there were teachers, school head teachers, Deputy Director, Medical health practitioners, anganwadi workers, councilors, electrician and auditor etc.

4 A skilled worker/earner is the one who is capable of working effectively of exercising considerable independent judgment and of discharging his/her duties responsibly. He must possess a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the trade, craft or industry employed, whereas unskilled worker engages in activities that involve the undertaking of simple activities that does not require the exercise of little or independent judgment or previous work experience. However, a familiarity with the occupational
The high number of unskilled labour force in all the respondents indicates that many of these parents could not acquire skillful occupations due to lack of necessary skills. In this case one’s educational level is recognised as one of the most important factors governing the accessibility to social advantages including job opportunities as expected as there is an assumption that there is always a correlation between educational attainment and occupation though this may not hold a suitable argument in a state where job opportunities in service sector are fiercely scarce. For example, most parents, who have completed Bachelor Degree engage in occupations such as poultry, piggery, construction work, sale of firewood etc. 'My husband is a Bachelors Degree holder and I'm a matriculate; my husband is a construction worker, goes all over places wherever he finds a job in construction as everyday destiny takes him wherever it wants. She continued, 'We used to own our agricultural land but exchanged it for a sum of Rs50,000/ to be given as a bribe to a Minister in return of a teaching job. We sold off our land and gave away the money to the Minister but we are without a job now. We lost our land and my husband as a daily wager is struggling hard to earn both ends meet. Our earning is around Rs4000/per month.' Another such glaring example is when a lady respondent informed,'My husband is a graduate, he is a construction labourer ,he takes up the job wherever he is called for, works from dawn to dusk'. Another respondent referring to self and his wife said, 'We're class XII pass wage earners, so our earning is just Rs2000/ per month, there's no job in Manipur, I engage in seasonal farming earning Rs500/per season that's in a period of six months, before, I used to run a shop but now 'cause of my health problem, I can no longer run the shop, so I engage in seasonal jobs for our daily survival; my wife's meagre earning through weaving supplements our daily expenses'. In similar situation a lady respondent said, 'I'm a BA pass, I am running business in coal and gas cylinder. I earn Rs3000/ per month'. In the same weight another lady who is a graduate degree holder running a fast food stall narrated about her occupation, 'I make bora(, pakoras), sengju( a kind of mixed green salad),tea, my fast food stall is almost full time engagement earn as much Rs4000/ per month to support my family and
supplement the earning of my husband who is also a graduate engaged in business for a living.

It is therefore observed that parents most of who have completed graduates are employed as construction workers, brick makers while some of them engage in self employment such as piggery, poultry, wood business etc. while women sale home based products such as vegetables, fruits, fish and items of clothes woven at home. These products are brought to the local market and the main Imphal Bazzar popularly known as the mother market or the Sana Keithel (Golden Market) and the operation of the market is manned by women folk. Busloads of women carrying all types of products such as fish, vegetables, bamboo shoots, fresh spices, in big tin containers rushing to mother market are a daily site while streams of women carrying loads of eatable items such as fish, fruits, vegetables of all kinds, clothes etc walking on foot heading for local markets in early forenoon are a common street sight in the state. Market places in the morning except the permanent stalls are empty and the real hub bubs of market business begins in early afternoon during which well groomed women enter the scene with chandals on their forehead. The price of goods is fixed through bargain and is affected by factors such as lineage, kinship ties and status indicator of the consumer.

Data about the main income earner indicates that 33 percent of the women respondents are main income earners while almost all the women respondents contribute as supplementary income

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5 Chandal is a sacred mark on the forehead. It symbolises sign of purity.

6 The valley dwellers of Manipuri society are divided into seven clans such as the Ningthouja, the Kumul, the Luwang, the Angom, the Moirang, the Khabanaba, and the chenglui. The vernacular name of these divisions is Salai, each of these salais consisting of number of subgroups called Yumnaks (Hudson: 1908). It is through Yumnaks that one can immediately link oneself to the other. Members belonging to the same Yumnaks closely identify themselves with each other. The relationship through such kinship ties influence bargaining and fixing of prices at market places.

7 A main income earner is defined as the one who had worked for the major part of the year i.e. the one who was engaged in any economically productive activity for 183 days or six months or more during the year and a marginal worker is the one who worked any time at all in the year (Census of India:2001:p,xxxvii).
earners\textsuperscript{8}. However they belong to marginal workers though these womenfolk perform considerable endless household chores that remain as invisible labour force within the domestic domain. The occupational structure of different households offers some interesting developments. That, the absence of any traditional occupation associated with them and the mutability in the economic and occupational patterns among the various sections of these households has facilitated unrestricted choice of occupation and lateral mobility among these social groups.

As seen above though, there have been avenues for mobility in various occupations; the economy of the state has not been able to provide facilities to absorb its population into various sectors of employment. Despite sufficient labour force is available in the state, the problem of unemployment, both educated and uneducated remains acute. The occupational activities of these households indicate that a significant portion of them is engaged in primary occupations. Majority population is engaged in agriculture as wage labourers while some of them possess land. 57.5 percent of them belong to unskilled workers such as construction workers, farmers, brick makers etc. against 42.5 percent skilled workers. Households such as 37.5 percent have an earning of monthly income as meagre as Rs2000 to Rs 4000. Around 27 percent of households have an income of Rs4000/- Rs6000/ per month, while 35 percent of households have an income of Rs 9000 /and above per month. These households though insignificant in number are skilled workers employed in service sector in high positions including those of Commissioners, Deputy Directors, auditor working in government sector. Yet as indicated above, majority households are employed as casual and unskilled workers earning intermittent income.

3.3 Household Expenditure on Education of Children

Based on the findings of the above data, the households under study are at different levels of socio-economic status. A large number of respondents are seen engaged in occupation that

\textsuperscript{8} Manipuri women are seen to hold relatively high social position. This is evident from the unrestricted freedom of occupation that they enjoy unlike the case of mainstream India. Allen in 1905 observes that the women of Manipur are capable who at all stages of their career was allowed the fullest liberty (Lokendra: 1999). Regarding their social status, scholars such as Brown, Roy, Hudson, Sircar argued that the women of Manipur are not only major economic contributors but also have considerable voice in social and political domain.
provides them intermittent income and are always on the lookout for menial jobs to eke out for a living. The pattern of household expenditure on various items such as everyday consumption of food, medicine, festivals, various religious ceremonies observed during Rites des Passage\(^9\), feasting specially during Phairen-Lamda (Spring months) shows that 20 percent households spend upto Rs2000/ per month, 48 percent households spend upto Rs6000/per month while 32 percent spend more than Rs6000/per month. Interestingly, all households irrespective of their economic status send children to school. While looking at the patterns of household expenditure on children's education, there is sharp contrast in expenses where largest number of households such as 25 percent spends Rs500/ per child per month followed by 22 percent households spending as much as Rs330/ per month for children's education, while the marginal number of households such as 2.5 percent spend an expenditure more than Rs1660/ per month. In contrast to these observations, 35 percent of households spend as low as Rs160/ per child per month. This is a substantial burden for poor families particularly those earning intermittent income as daily wagers.

The most expensive school item ranges from school uniforms followed by stationeries and textbooks. Parents often need to buy stationeries especially for children studying in lower classes and school uniforms since small children often dirty their school uniforms. Yet the data reveals that, however disadvantaged they are in terms of financial position, or possession of assets such as land ownership and operation, income and wage, either working as red collar labourer or pink collar labourer, there is not a single household that neglects the schooling of their children irrespective of boys and girls. This is indeed not only significant but a glaring case where there is high social demand of schooling for children in the region. Interestingly

\(^9\) Arnold Van Gennep in his book, 'The Rites of Passage' (1965), describes the life of an individual as a series of passages from one stage to another where each of these stages in a person's life is deemed to be completed only after ritual ceremonies are performed. These rights are occasioned by celestial changes such as day, month, year and so forth. The people in Manipur observe different passages of rites in a person's life in particular periods of time without which the person cannot be fully integrated into the society. Most of these rites are observed during Phairen-lamda. Phairen also known as the Asit Tha is a period during which the Creator is believed to give the souls of all creations and Lamda is a period during which ploughing begins.
enough, as against general trends of relating a child’s education with perceived economic benefits from educational returns, the present study has not found such predominant observation among parents in which the findings are discussed later in the chapter.

3.4 Housing Conditions and Learning Facilities for Children at Home

Housing facilities can create an environment that operates against either learning or promotion of learning of children. The housing condition and house types are indicators of the general condition of the house and facilities available within the house. The presence or the absence of these facilities has a bearing impact on the motivation of learning of the child. David Lewis and Robert J. Havighurst in Society and Education (1992) argue that home environment and family characteristics constitute one of the most important factors that influence a child’s learning ability though quality of the schooling the child receives remains a prominent feature of learning capability of the child that is uniquely true for poor households since quality of schooling can compensate a child for his/her deficiency of home environment. To study the correlation between the two indicators, the present study briefly addresses the kind of home environment a child receives at home by looking at dwelling type of households. Of the total households interviewed, 65 percent households live in kuccha type while the remaining households live in semi pucca and pucca house type. These house types are relatively larger and constructed of better materials such as wood and bricks, while kuccha houses are made of posts and beams and of bamboos and mud. A semi-pucca and pucca house has many rooms while the kuccha type can have just one room where there is the hearth, the kitchen and the bedroom together. In most cases, the walls of the kuccha houses are reeds plastered with a mixture of earth and cow dung and the roofs of these houses are thatched with dry grass. These houses have narrow windows for ventilation that may not provide sufficient light to enable one read/write or perform normal household chores in the absence of electricity.
Customarily in Manipur all the houses face to the eastward (to get morning sun rise), in which direction the houses have a large open mangol if the members of the house can afford enough to find such space. In the mangol, the family sits during the day and in it all the work of the household is carried out such as agarbati making, extraction of muga threads, weaving of cloths etc.; while the south side of the mangol is considered as the seat of honour where children study on reed mat largely spread in early morning hours of the day before leaving home for school. Whereas puuca households on the contrary, have adequate number of rooms with reasonable size, kitchen and hearth are separated from other rooms, besides amenities such as potable water, electricity supply, sewage facility etc. These households have good amount of ventilation, decorative furniture and other items of articles such as tables, chairs, desks for the study purpose of children, whereas children in kuccha families are deprived of such study facilities. They squat on the mat or floor and write on slates/paper balanced between their knees or knell down on the floor while writing or reading. In most kuccha house types there is combined room where beds are placed with the hearth and kitchen located in the same room. It takes about one and half hour or sometimes longer to cook a complete meal using firewood and paddy husk. And traditionally, among the Meitei family, the heart is considered sacred and hence to be kept burning with low intensity of fire of paddy husk. The chimney coming out of the hearth and the kitchen is a natural cause of great discomfort and distraction of study for children living in kuccha houses. A parent informer who is a farmer in his late 40’s sitting in the mangol of his kuchcha house shared his situation, ‘Very frequently, we have chances to interact with our children, we’re aware they don’t have a place to study, our home is really small, particularly in the night we all sit together in the same room since we don’t have a separate room, I don’t sleep until my children sleep’. Added to this is the discussion, gossip mongers from neighbourhoods usually sit around the hearth particularly in winter, are sometimes though a source of entertainment, is nuisance and great disturbance to children’s study. He grieved about the uncomfortable situation of his house, ‘We reside in kuccha house, there’s no separate reading room in the house, there’s no electricity connection, our children use

10 Mangol is the front porch of a Meitei house where the space can be used for different purposes including entertainment of guests, informal meetings, and study purpose for children.
candle light for study purpose, there is reed mat where they study and bed in the house, that's all; they're all the more distracted if guests visit us'.

3.5 School Choice of Parents: Mapping the Future of Children

Existential situations of few households in deciding the choice of school indicate that space, travel and familial organisations are tied to the choice of school. This stands true mostly for poor households. Among poor households, constraints due to financial and lack of private and public transport play a key role in the whole range of decision making of school choice. These constraints and the forms of household organisations are developed as a result of association of parents with daily work responsibilities and the location of their households in isolation away from the availability of public transport facility. 'I always engage in seasonal job, sometimes in agricultural work, sometimes non agricultural work while my wife is busy in weaving and household chores. In this situation, I'm not able to arrange even private school for my children, I send them to aided school which is less costly, quite close by, my children can walk down on their own; they return home on their own, there's no need either for a cycle or a transport to reach the school,' explained a farmer.

Therefore in a situation like this, social reproduction through school is closely tied to a sense of local and community of which the household forms an extension of the locality in which the school exists. Whereas an affluent household respondent, who is a contractor located in the heart of Imphal capital whose children are in Maria Montessori School, stated, 'Only 'cause the brother and the elder sister go to Maria Montessori School, so my last child can join her siblings and its local as well, I mean nearby, just few kilometres away from our home; three of them can take van while leaving for school; return home together from school; it's easier for us, it's also a mixed school, coeducation is certainly better, offers better opportunities and chances to know both sexes from the beginning if children start socialising early regarding boys and girls; these opportunities aren't there in other schools. Moreover two sisters join their brother, they can go to school by the same van, I don't have to make trips for each one of them, it saves my time anyways'. Another respondent who makes his livelihood from poultry, referring to one of the famous sought after private schools, Bethel in the locality said, 'I did not
feel... it's very good school at least academically; but the distance between the school and my home is favourable for my children though the roadways is not safe at all; my child is very good in Sanskrit studies but could not continue in the previous school since there's no good teacher to teach Sanskrit for higher classes; so I had to shift him to the present school considering other options. Well there’re nearby government schools but’re on the decline at a fast speed, it's not an ordinary issue'.

Access to public transport system, the local timetable, the pattern of busy roads, open spaces, the physical location of the school and of course time, space and particular occupational engagements of the parents hold an important factor in deciding the type of school parents choose. Yet, the decision among parents to choose for a private school over other forms of school- Government, Aided School for the purpose of their children’s schooling is deeply entrenched and hence overwhelming. And that sending a child to a private school among almost all households has now become a social norm for the parents have completely lost faith in the system of government schools in which the credibility to cradle a child is in deep crisis. It is startling that the present study reveals an overwhelming 82 percent of parents choose private schools such as the individual private run schools and missionary schools as against the 15.5 percent households who send their children to government schools while a marginal such as 2.5 percent households send children to private aided schools.

Figure 3.1
Percentage of households sending children to different schools

Source: Primary Survey 2008
Writing about the development of parental choices of schools in USA in early 1980s, David Hogan in his work, 'The Social Economy of Parent Choice and the Contract State' argues, for legitimate rights parents exercise while sending children to particular school as parents are the better judges of their children and that the principle of equal opportunity required that all parents irrespective of their social background should have the effective ability to send their children to the school of their choice. But the developments in late 80's and 90's in state run schools pushed the parents much harder to go for a harder choice for fulfilling so far as school choice is concerned. While the performance of state run schools is failing rapidly, the phenomenon, on the other hand, gave a successful road map for the private schools to flourish in no time. This is no exception so far as the experience of developing countries demonstrates.

About post colonial educational developments in the third world countries, Jules and Apple (1995) argue that the developing country being a transition state is under tremendous pressure in which the educational role is purely administrative with a limited capacity for regulation by virtually leaving the actual provision of education to private entities including the missionary schools with strong western influence. In the state of Manipur, these developments could be seen from the early times such as the case of many Catholic schools which later acted as ideal models with a strong impact on producing more private schools, charging high fees where majority children from urban affluent families traditionally attend. These are some of the similar emerging trends that prompted scholars such as Michael W. Apple (2001), Torres (1999) to extensively engage on neo-liberal policies in education in the West.

These policies, they argue are guided by a vision of weak state and strong market, promoting what is private is necessarily good and what is public is necessarily bad. The idea is consumer choice as different from the welfare tradition is the guarantor of democracy for people in choice

11. In a transition state, the structure and policies inside and outside of education are in formation and are filled with conflict as they seek a coherent way of restructuring the relations between education and transformed economy, a radically different political power structure and a social and ideological agenda that seeks to overthrow the vestiges of entrenched elites of the old hegemonic relations of domination and subordination.
making and hence education will be largely self-regulated. Efficiency and cost benefit are its thriving force. Neo-liberal policies strive to pass the cost of educational services to clients through user fees, increasing the participation of private sector in education and with a drastic reduction in social expenditure by the state. Torres further argue that the new political agenda is associated with drastic shifting away from the welfare state policies that began in 1980s in developed countries including the period of Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Ronald Reagan in USA. He further cautions against such policies in the political agenda of the developing countries where its social formation is entirely different from the West most of who were early colonizers themselves and industrially advanced countries. Most importantly deficient in the concept of school choice was the overlook of issues of equality that never figured out among its advocates.

Continuing on the issue of development of private schools in the state, one could notice that in a short span of time, these private schools became very successful in terms of what it offers such as the whole package that is considered essential for the future of their children in this era of fierce competition. The package may include the general atmosphere of the school, discipline and morality, habits of cleanliness, school uniforms, emphasis on English language learning, commitment of teachers, weekly test, examination system, home work assignment, performance, class attendance, accountability, class consciousness and so forth. These factors which are seen missing in government schools are fundamental for giving parents an edge of selecting private schools over government schools.

Thus in the words of a conscientious parent who vehemently argued against the way the government school functions, 'In true sense, I prefer government school because it's cheaper, less expensive, But it's extremely sad that in government school, you see only 10 students, hardly any student is in class. Children run here and there, play mischief, without anybody's care. From home front we send children at early hours, hurriedly, without proper feeding so that my children reach school on time and can attend class on time. But at school what the teachers do is extremely unwanted. What's the whole point when teachers don't care for these kids on reaching school after so much of hassles?' asked the parent respondent in her mid 30's in an
assertive tone. Another informer said, ‘There’s good amount of strictness in private school; government school teachers lazy around; engage in Hik Kainaba (search for leach in hair strands practised usually among female teachers), bask in the sun, whiling away time in gambling, but never fail to collect salary every month, so there’s no need to bother much for the welfare of teaching children and don’t want to cultivate any sense of sacrifice; they just give homework to children without teaching them in the class; but in private school, if teachers don’t work sincerely, they’ll be penalised either through non-payment or termination. So, in government school no teaching takes place at all. The failure is that teachers aren’t interested; there’s no competition. You compare such performance with drama shows in a theatre; during a drama show in a theatre, when there’s no audience (students ‘re missing in classroom), there’s no performance, so there can be no drama and no competition.....’

In a similar observation, a 40 years old parent who is a cook, taking a sigh of relieve from her busy engagement of serving her customers commented, ‘Government school teachers want to relax, they eat pan, smoke bidi, cigarettes, gambling and play ludu, don’t teach children, wait for the monthly salary only, female teaches knit, form peer groups to bitch and gossip around, I just can’t accept these things, teachers only open register and roll call is done, children’s name ‘re in register, that’s all ; that’s their one day’s responsibility. Government teachers don’t ever think to let children become perfect human beings through good education. Most are trained in most cases but fail to respect the values and principles of training. There’re 7 to 8 teachers for 4 students only, no teaching takes place at all, there’re no students ’.

Many more parents opined government schools as death and that there is chronic shortage of students who were steadily absorbed in private schools. The glaring example is the case of Phoijing Upper Junior High School, in which the functioning of the school is synonymous with death. ‘There’s no child in the school and the situation was discussed in a meeting. It was called by the Head Mistress. We realized that all children have gone to private schools. The discussion was mainly focused on how to increase the enrolment of children, how to collect them in the school. The suggestion that came forward from all persons who attended the meeting is that retention of children depends on the performance of the school and school must be compulsorily
improved if at all we want to hold back children to the school. Everything in that school such as furniture, tables, chairs, desks - all are complete. But there're no students in that school. The number of teachers is 13 while the number of students is 14. So what do these teachers do and engage when there’re no students?’ expressed a government school teacher showing her concerns over the slow death of the above mentioned government school located near her home.

Teaching therefore involves exchanging and sharing experiences between teachers and the taught, with a determinate end, that of promoting learning on the part of the students, with a fair amount of dialogue in a classroom situation. Teachers have a social role that consists of a set of rights and obligations that goes with a position he or she occupies by virtue of being a teacher. The performance of role of teacher is thus in conformity with societal expectations. Drawing inspiration from Phenomelogist, Erving Goffman’s, ‘The presentation of Self in Everyday Life’, it may be argued that the role of a teacher can be compared to a theatrical performance, just as the role of a teacher as a dramatic metaphor. The role of a teacher in a school is readily interpreted as a form of role playing in a classroom, something of a theatre in a miniature. Teachers, equipped with all the necessary requirements for theatrical effect perform before their students in lecture. As argued by many, a teacher’s role is seen as an extension of what is valued and prized in a society. Sociologists such as Parsons (1968), Wilson (1970) et all, in a discussion of the teacher’s role argue that the role of a teacher in a classroom does the function of selecting children for their social future and occupational roles. The functionalists believe that teachers have taken over from parents something of their prior task of nurturing and developing the child. It is further argued that the increased importance of the teacher for the task of social selection and socialising children may lead to demand that teachers be made more accountable to the community at large particularly the immediate community in point such as the parents.

As many parent informers compares, here the notion of a school teacher as an actor, putting on a performance is seen that the teacher must set a particularly high standard of moral probity and scholarly zeal. In the light of the foregoing argument, antagonism between teachers and parents arise when the former fails to perform its roles in terms of interest of children which more or less represents the interest of parents. As grievingly expressed by a parent informer, ‘As we see
whatever's happening in government schools, we can count on private schools, method of teaching in both government and private are different, norms, guidelines and rules 're better prescribed, managed in private schools. But in government school there're alcoholic teachers, smoking teachers, drug addicts, inexperienced teachers; female teachers knitting clothes, sweaters instead of teaching, basking in the sunlight lazily, gossiping, bitching, gambling, playing ludu, all sorts of bad teachers are found in government schools; they are there solely for salary. When they fail as they're non performers, it's heart-rending, we are painful losers'.

On the contrary, the feature of private schools as perceived by parents brings out the better key role of accountability in the schooling system. In a private school the teachers are accountable to the structure of management and regulation. Teachers in private school are generally seen to have a stake in the integrity of their profession. A father of two school going children and who is engaged in the occupation of piggery and wood business, taking some time off from his routine engagement in work observed, 'Private school is better disciplined, we can claim over child's accountability. In private school, the management can become accountable, 'cause when we demand, we get people's support. But reverse is the situation in government school. The free salary government teachers collect per month fails them to be accountable, the fallout is on children. We want equality, we want changes for desirable direction but we are losing trust in them'.

Fingers running through her wet hair, basking in the morning sunlight, sitting in a relaxed mood on the mat spread at the mango of her home, a lady respondent who is a vegetable seller, also the head of Local Self Help Group Organisation puts it, 'Strictness in private school is no doubt a factor of sending my children to private school; teaching in private school especially in lower classes is really impressive; children can be disciplined at least upto class 10th and is a must. So there're lots of differences between the two; government school teachers let things loose in school, they have no control, it's like a free zone, but private schools 're not like this; I myself did schooling in government school, teachers of government school think of only salary; pattern of speech, teaching methods, behavioural patterns of these teachers 're somewhat different from those teachers in private school. Of course, both produce differential influence on children'.
The same view is reflected by other parents, for example, take the case of a father who seems to be proud of sending his children to one of the best considered private schools in Manipur, Saint Joseph School, ‘In a private school teachers are accountable to children; teachers ’re accountable for disciplining and moral values of children, teaching method is also very strict, we send our children to private school simply because we have faith in them; teachers are so compulsorily responsible to mould the child into a man; so I believe proper investment in a child is compensated If I send my children to private school’. ‘I send my children to private school, till now it’s good; private school is my preferred choice. While sending children to government school, they become increasingly lazy, however private schools are so strict that children after being educated, there’re large chances that they’re likely to improve themselves and naturally become good’, said an informer who is a carpenter. The view is commonly shared by all sections of parents as another retired service personnel from Defence Service said, ‘I personally prefer sending my children to government school but government schools are death, how can I as a guardian send children to a death school to learn something that is so impossible’.

There is a great deal of truth in some of these parental criticisms levelled against the functioning of government schools. Undoubtedly the pathologies of government school have indeed infected not only the hearts and minds of parents but young school going children too. For most of these parents, the child’s wishes of choosing a particular school is therefore given considerable thought. Take the case of a mother who thoughtfully shared her children’s sarcastic and mocking opinion on the status of government schools in Manipur, ‘My children look down upon government schools as gunny bag schools (Vora Schools), a cow shed, shabby and bleak place with no future’. She exclaimed softly, ‘Imagine even a tiny child, from the start of his school is capable of forming such negative attitude about a government school image, shows his contempt of poor condition of government school. So it’s obvious, we, parents’re embarrassed of sending children to government school’. Another parent informer, a mother of four school going children expressed how her children simply refuse to attend government school despite their grinding poverty. ‘It’s not a matter of liking or disliking government school, children don’t want to attend government school, their eyes and ears aren’t alert when socialised in a
government school environment; children in government school are asked to dust around, these kids are in shambles, running nose, saliva on their chin, wear torn cloths, filth to the extreme; government lower primary schools are worst, too dirty and unhygienic. 'Right when they wake up from sleep', she continued, 'They start for school without bathe or stationeries. Let children go to private and come back neat and clean. My children can't be forced to opt for government school; it's this helpless situation that is actually compelling me to send them to private school only'. Citing what was aired in morning news, in angry tone, the mother continued, 'In today's morning radio news at 7.30 A.M., it was declared that government schools don't teach children'. Choosing a private school has become almost universal and unconscious among households. 'Children are refusing to go to government schools. All their friends are going to private school, so they refuse to go to government school', is a concern as a father lamented. Another informer, a farmer by occupation said, 'Children refuse to attend government school; as a guardian, there is no way I can force them against their wish'. Another parent informer admitted, 'I sent one child to private school, two children to government school since both were failed while studying in private school'. This statement has a serious implication indicating how government schools in the state are synonymous with complete failures and exist by default. It is also apparent that people adopt a fatalistic attitude to children studying in government schools.

Going by the weight of parental opinion, it is children who have no roots, children who cannot purchase books and stationeries, orphans and hungry children without proper clothing are the ones who attend government school. Government school is indeed bleak and it is never a happy experience for both the children and the parents alike. Therefore, children attending government school has a bleak future and hence the future prospect of a child in a government school disappears in the void. This observation, in a deeply profound sense, is truly a constant traumatise for the poor hard working parents whose daily engagement is mainly on making both ends meet. 'Right now, my children go to government school, the choice is not in my hand, they (Government school teachers) don't care at all, I'm so disappointed, I'm so poor, it's my fault, If I was employed, I could have satisfied their needs- education, food, clothing', said a rickshaw puller, a father of three school going children, blaming his existential situation of poverty. Another rickshaw puller, a parent of three school going children expressed his anguish over his
inability to send children to private school, ‘We can’t afford private school, so we ask our children to go to government school, they understand because we are so poor. From the core of my heart, I’m not at all satisfied with government school and also the idea that my children attend government school when government school’s completely failed. We’re worried for the future of our children; I want my children on equal footing with kids of rich parents, it remains unfulfilled. There’s lots of dissatisfaction; government school is meant only for poor families. In complaining tone, the father further lamented, ‘Only children of rikshaw pullers go to government school, government school environment is equally lousy’.

Some parents strongly assert that government schools exist by default. Yet, poor parents due to their destitute circumstance have endless capacity to tolerate government schools that are likely to be perished soon. A parent informed of two school going children with a sense of guilt referring to her daughter bluntly puts, ‘We send her to Government Tangtek Junior School, we’re poor, can’t afford. I’m aware, my daughter’s school environment isn’t good at all; teachers come to the school to pass off their time, collect salary, I’m also aware of it, but I plainly can’t do anything about it; every day I’m thinking of how to earn few rupees to support family’s everyday need’. Most of these parents end up blaming their own destiny for their failure of sending children to private school since the cost difference between a government school and a private school is quite substantial.

3.6 Morality, Discipline, Dressing, Speech Forms, Examinations

It is alarming there is a whole hearted acceptance among parents of the deliberate general failure in government schools, the moral order and discipline in particular. Next to family, schools are seen as the most effective agencies in socialisation of children including discipline in myriad forms. Away from home, school going children spend several hours a day in a school which next to family is seen as the only means of socialising children as observed by Ronald G. Corwin:1974 ) that probably no other organisation outside the family has so prolonged a hold over the lives of so many young school children and schools as custodial institutions are socialising agencies as the caretakers of the young and a great influence in the values of each new generation. In this, school is seen as social environment where Paul Rabino in Foucault
Reader (1984) describes ‘school’ as a disciplinary and a grading mechanism. He further explains how discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation and what is most important is functional surveillance that is extended not only to the overall behavioural and dressing patterns of children but also school layout and its fencing, punctuality, regularity, absence, lateness, personal hygiene, cleanliness, performance etc. These strictures though required in all formal schools are strictly followed in private schools.

The above observation practiced in private schools was delightfully shared by most parent informers. For example, while citing parental views on school environment, a parent informer states, ‘I’m happy with the environment, ‘you see, for that matter, any parent feels safe,’cause my children’s school has a bamboo fencing across the boundary, children don’t move here and there, it restricts them from venturing into unwanted loitering’. The concept of discipline and moral order indicates not only the physical environment such as location of the school, school boundary and its fencing but its totality such as speech forms, dressing, cleanliness, health and hygiene, strictness, periodical test performance, examination results and scholastic achievements that are scrutinised through the prism of their children’s performance and overall behavioural pattern.

A widow, mother of two school going children and who runs a small grocery shop in front of her home is quite serious about the whole issue of schooling culture in the state, took some time off from attending to her customers, narrating her appreciation as to how discipline and morality maintained in private schools which she augments her views by the exhibition of personal habits of health and hygiene among private school going children. She considers it essential for personality growth in children. ‘If you watch them (students) during assembly time, teachers observe whether students have long nails, keeps your hair tidy, tie your hair neat and clean, you can’t grow long hair, you have to trim your nail, you have to maintain your dress neat and clean, you can’t apply perfume, you can’t slouch. Actually overall good habit formation is taught in private school; but in government school, nobody cares’. Another young lady engaged in coal and gas cylinder business appreciated private school by despising indiscipline in government school as, ‘But in private schools, teachers join on time, right from the beginning of the sessions,
teachers come, teach the students on time and regularly. It's not that I'm overwhelmingly accepting them just like that; I don't mean private schools are far better than those of government. In private school, when there're five teachers, at least two of them will be very sincere, strict and serious, this is guaranteed, there's discipline in them'. Another female informer said, 'Private school is my preferred choice, while sending children to government school for study purpose, they become increasingly lazy, however private schools are so strict that children after being educated in private school, there're large chances that children 're likely to improve themselves and naturally become good and well behaved'.

Apparently in private schools, competition in the form of examination and as a form of disciplining children has become a norm and the exactness of the standard and quality of the school is determined by the number and the ranking of students in Board Examinations. Precisely, because examination production is a crucial factor of parental choice of a particular school simply because examination production and production of top ranking students during examinations is a crucial part determining the reputation of the school choice in point. 'My child is studying in Joshep School, quite famous and reputed, is the best school for boys. The school produces at least 4 to 5 toppers every year in matriculation. There's also monthly test conducted, this lessens the burden on children at the end of the year during final year examinations', said a father, a driver providing van service to school going children. Another informer said, 'I want to send them (children) to private schools simply 'cause government schools aren't functioning anymore, but in private schools, classes're held regularly, my children also got rank. My perception about my children's school environment is satisfactory, till now it's good 'cause of the high ranking of students in Board Examination'. A widow who is in weaving business and kitchen garden said, 'Teachers in Bethel school try their best to teach children well, produces many rank holders, it simply can't happen if the school environment is bad. She further stated, 'In government school the rate of passing at Board examination is very low, moreover even if education becomes free for all children under the banner of Free and Compulsory Education, it won't have much weight since private schools 're so strong and competitive, private schools outdo government schools. All rank holders 're from private schools. In government school the rate of passing students at matriculation is very low; it's
hoped that mixing with good students can be helpful to our children though I don’t honestly mean children will become bad while keeping them in government school’, said a respondent who is a farmer.

However as shared by parents, they simply do not want an examination factory, performance, ranking and results alone, rather the whole package of cultural indicators and class advantage embedded in these schools including the feel good factor of the general atmosphere of the school, quality, English medium and overall ethos of the school. Parents are concerned much more with what Bernstein calls the expressive order of the school i.e the complex behaviour and activities in the school which are to do with conduct, behaviour, character and manner of children. This expressive order is the medium for the contextualisation of the student’s out of school and is often a formalisation, crystallisation even idealisation of an image of conduct, character and manner in the wider society (Bernstein: 1975, p.30,38 and 49; A.H. Halsey: 1997). ‘There’re lots of differences between the way of talking and conversation with different age groups such as elderly and junior. I didn’t notice these changes in my children before sending them to Bethel school; they have started changing to good habits after sending to school, I notice these marked changes and improvements in their overall behaviour’, said a mother of two school going children who runs a grocery shop. Another parent who is a construction worker, recollecting his childhood days, recounted, ‘I myself did schooling in government school, pattern of speech, teaching methods, behavioural patterns of these teachers’re somewhat different from those teachers in private schools, these have differential influence on the development of behavioural patterns of our children, don’t you think so?’ A female respondent who is a mother of three school going children shared, ‘My perception about my children’s school environment till now is good, the school is also strict in maintaining moral behaviour, discipline of children. I have noticed my children’s changed behaviour, they now realise about appropriate behaviour and speech pattern, how to politely speak to others’. A father who is a carpenter said, ‘I’m satisfied with my children’s school environment, they’re different, surely better than government school, children’re capable of facing the world. Yes, that time he was really poor in general behaviour, non competent while studying in government school but improved in behaviour and studies after being sent to private school’. A father who
has done diploma in fishing said, 'I prefer sending my child to private school 'cause there's discipline in study pattern, children become very dutiful. However there're relatively absent in government schools, most importantly, the way teachers teach and behave to their own students is very indisciplined, corporal punishment and unwanted treatment is meted out to a child. But disciplining of children should be in a play way method, they wait only for salary. Without understanding the attitude of the child, they start beating up the child to set him/her right. In any school, there're plenty of activities through which the bond between teachers and students're easily established. Such a bonding is absent in government school. The trust factor is missing'.

'Yes it's good. My children have been improved and I have noticed these improvements. Ranking also increases, they become knowledgeable, unlike before there're changes in them now, it's all 'cause of the environment, I guess so', said a parent who is a carpenter. A mother of two school going children and who is in business and engages in kitchen garden appreciated the private system as, 'Private school teachers try their best level to teach children well and 'cause of this, rank holders 're produced, this can't simply happen in case teaching is bad or environment is not conducive for children'.

Parents choosing private school for educating children hail from various socio-economic strata. Sara Uddin, for example, a rickshaw puller whose monthly income is as meagre as Rs 2000/ does not doubt his choice of private school over government school as he is more excited to send his children to private school, 'In private school there's moral and character formation, they're stricter than government schools, anyways children're better trained on their behaviour, learning abilities etc......'. In similar observation, another rickshaw puller said, 'I'm a rickshaw puller, my earning is meagre, sometimes I go back home empty handed. Despite all these heavy odds and struggles I still prefer sending my children to private school; in private, children who have completed at least 4th and 5th standards can read and write, but in government school, this is not possible. Teachers gossip and gossip at the neglect of children's care and attention; Children don't pick up learning skills at all, they don't know anything'.

Parents are therefore convinced that there is some amount of teaching-learning taking place in private schools while government schools are completely failed in enabling children functionally
literate. Parents unanimously agree that sending children to private school enables them at least to become literate. This feeling cuts across all economic strata such as salaried and non salaried rich and poor parents including farmers, daily wagers and rickshaw pullers alike.

At a stone’s throw distance away towards the south from the heart of mother’s market, there lies Keisampat town with mini shops existing. In this mini market, one could notice rows of small shops manned by both men and women. In one of these corners, there is a fast food stall manned by a female in late 40’s and who is quite active, looking after her business from dusk to down. Several elderly women including her 80 years old mother- in-law and leishabis\textsuperscript{12} from the nearby households lounged around to enjoy tea, sengju\textsuperscript{13} and snacks from her stall. While simultaneously attending to them, she shared some of her impressive observations about teaching -learning imparted in private schools. \textit{‘There’s deepness in the way teachers teach in private schools. For example, they teach that there’s an apple, ok, so they not only explain that there’s an apple but also demonstrate the process how the apple is grown. This is how a child learns about the apple, but also the processes of the growth of apple’.}

A conscientious mother who supplies coal and gas cylinder took some time off from her usual busy schedule of business, relaxing for a while over a cup of tea in the tea stall, shared her views reflecting on the system, \textit{‘Government school teachers as guardian send their own children to private schools, private schooling system has become a culture, a fad of the time; they do such whimsical things in government schools, they don’t teach if they don’t want, there’s nothing called responsibility in government school. But in private schools, teachers join on time, right from 10 o’clock in the morning and that too from the beginning of the sessions; teachers come and teach the students on time and regularly. It’s not that I’m overwhelmingly accepting them just like that; I also don’t say private schools’re far better than those of government. In private when there’re five teachers, at least two of them will be very sincere and strict and serious, this

\textsuperscript{12} Among the Meities, Leishabis are unmarried girls who enjoy relatively free movement among Leikais.

\textsuperscript{13} An all time favorable pastime snack taken mostly during evening hours. It is shredded mix green vegetables garnish with sesame, dry crush pea and dry fermented fish called ngari.
is guaranteed. In government schools, teachers come to sign on register only and plenty of absenteeism. If this is what private teachers do, then there'll be reduction in their salary, if they're not teaching students, they will be thrown out of the school. Government teachers impress the children they're not that wanted; children get upset and angry with government teachers, so shameful! In government school it's completely all over if they leave children early again without teaching. The failure has caused tremendous stress, anxieties and worries among parents.

Moving away from market places among clusters of households located in villages of Phoijing, Imphal west, one generally sees villagers attending upon kitchen garden from morning hours till forenoon. After a hectic engagement in daily tendering of his kitchen garden, keeping his spade aside, a trained pharmacist by profession and a father of four school going children set down in one corner of mango and shared, 'The standard of teaching in private school is high even if a child learns alphabets such as A, B, C, D, they're better taught, for example, children of class V in private school're better equipped than children learning in class VIII in government school; but in private school, there's some amount of teaching-learning taking place'. Interestingly a government school teacher residing as his neighbour, and who was in the middle of preparing her family's lunch meal hurriedly shared her experience as a serving teacher in a government school, 'Look! In government Schools, there's monthly fixed salary that compensates any misdealing and non-performance of teachers. So ultimately there's a marked difference in the performance of the teachers in private and government schools. Government teachers let everything loose, take studies and teachings for granted. Government school teachers start everything late. Take the case of learning Conjugation in Grammar; a child in a private school starts learning methods of conjugation at an early stage and hence there's more competition in a private school that will help and do well for the child in the future.' As expressed by the government school teacher, 'There's disappointment for the performance and outcome of government school is in point. There're plenty of discontentment, for example, when teachers're to teach Mapi Mairik( Mapi=Mother, Lairik=book) and when students have to thoroughly understand Mapi Lairik, their learning, understanding about Mapi Lairik is haphazard. Children start learning from a reverse order, instead of learning alphabets A, B, C, D, children
learn words first. So parents don't want to send children to government school where the order is missing in every sense of the term'.

The above observations of the respondents are admittedly shared by even government school teachers themselves though a lot of blame goes to the parental negligence of children taught in government school as schooling of children is intrinsically a joint task of parents and teachers, in as much as a child requires education not only at school but also at home. As the teacher complained, 'When nobody cares for the child even to assist in homework, it can sap the morale of both children and parents; they don't have the right kind of study habit, parents don't bring them up in right manner, never bother to see what's happening to the welfare of their children; children are in wretched condition, so you can't blame teachers alone, but these children would shine, I assure, if taken care just the way private school parents invest in their children'.

Nevertheless, the candid acceptance and open admission of the government school teacher on the issue of non-accountability of government schools as stated above highlights the summary of her other fellow colleagues whose preferences of school choice for children as a guardian is always in favour of private school. Many parents observed such a candid attitude of government school teachers as a form of acceptance of their own failure in performance to the extent that they have lost faith in their own capabilities of delivery as teachers. Many parents opined this observation as an important reason as to why they, as guardians do not prefer their own children to be in the custodian of government school teachers who have lost credentials as responsible teachers and guardians as in the words of an informer, 'It's certainly an issue ..... quite serious one when government school teachers send their children to private schools rather than to their own schools; it's quite not possible for us to send our own children to government school when they have lost faith in themselves, how can I entrust my children in them'.

Apparently the present study has also found that English medium instructions in private schools are a big selling point for school choice making of parents. A parent informer reflected what is fashionable in Manipuri society at present. 'In today's Manipuri society (Houjik Matamgi
It's like a custom and blow of the wind of the present time to attach some prestige to the culture of speaking English and Hindi. Therefore having knowledge of both languages has become essential in today's Manipuri society. It's compulsory to be educated; one has to be educated or else it's pointless. It's our desire that our children don't grow fearful and weak. Education is as important as one's ability to count numbers; calculate while sending children to market places. Knowledge of English is considered so desirable. Private school is what English learning is'. Private Schools have now become synonymous with English medium which is most sought after by parents. An informer who is a weaver said, 'For now, it has become a custom to send children to English school medium which is private. In retrospection, she said, 'We also question ourselves as to why it has become a trend and why it is happening'. Another parent said, 'English medium is what I want. Teaching-learning is different in private school when compared with that of government'. Focussing on infrastructure, he said, 'Government school might give facilities or not, I have never seen it, but in private school there are plenty of facilities and good infrastructure such as computers, extra and co-curricular activities, playground, So naturally overall environment is far better in private than those of government schools. In private schools all students seem to be uniformly good in dressing, maintaining discipline, neat and clean, healthy and routine habits, ties, homework etc. Children in private school start conversing in English, it becomes a natural habit'. Even a rickshaw puller goes crazy after private school that is synonymous with English language. 'I send her (my daughter) to English education, there's moral and character formation, they're far stricter than government school in anyways'. A lady informer whose children are studying in classes 11, 111 and V111 said, 'I'm satisfied with our children's school, yes it's certainly safe, it's private and English, students from other villages come to get education from here, the progress of the school is also good'.

As observed in the present study, parents selecting private schools exercise more potential choices. And while exercising their choice option, they are more likely to select schools that more closely match their expectations. It is this matching phenomenon that helps private schools to establish a clear set of goals formulated by and shared by the schools and parents community as well. Private school teachers for example, turn up to school on time, keep the students busy,
and maintain discipline and in all these respects private schools strike them. Benches, desks, electricity connection, doors, windows, ventilation, uniforms, ties, shoes of children make an impression of private schools though without much critical scrutiny. Students are also more likely achieve scholastically in schools that establish high academic standards, enforce disciplinary rules which are far better managed in private schools. This is perhaps the most compelling reason why private schools provide successful learning environment for children as perceived by most parents as Schneider (1986), Chubb and Moe, (1985) argue that private schools do not encounter the myriad of bureaucratic problems that beset with government schools and as such private schools can accomplish their goals with minimum interference and this is most visibly measured by performance and results in examination. Another major organisational advantage of private schools over government schools is that the principal who in most cases is also the manager, instructor and decision maker. It is this accountability and relative autonomy that raise the expectation and likelihood among the parents that goals will be accomplished. If this is seemingly what parents want for their children, the image a particular school conveys through its students is a powerful influence on school choice making. Many parents explained, for instance, examination results could dramatically provoke their school choice making. Therefore while exercising their choice; parents are likely to select schools that closely match their expectations, for instance, as in the opinion of a parent, 'In today's days, we all prefer sending our children to private school 'cause private system is so attractive since what they do is our choice'.

Despite, the above observations, acceptance of private schools among parents is without critique. Benches, desks, separate toilet facility for boys and girls, availability of drinking water facility, school fencing make an impression on parents without necessary meaning much of quality education. The hollow claim of English instruction made by many private schools is another illustration of this problem as observed in the present study. That, there is a great deal of variation in the credibility of English instruction, with teachers themselves knowing a few sentences with most of them as unemployed youths who have completed certain degrees as expressed by one of the conscientious respondents, 'In present day Manipuri society, there's craze for private school'. Referring to the Meitei community in a mocking tone, he said, 'The
Meiteis falsely believe that wearing neat and clean cloths, uniforms, neck tie, say that uniform things are superior dresses, but the fact is parents who don’t have food to eat can spare the money for purchasing food items of eatables at least rice in case they stop spending that much money in private school. He further added, ‘In the past many keralites used to teach just because they speak English; but these days anybody who can utter few words of English and knows mathematics are usually welcome in private schools’. For some parents therefore what exists in private schools could make a good impression without necessary meaning attached much in terms of quality education as such.

3.7 Ambivalence of Parents towards Private and Government Schools

The present study has found that there is a blend of both pessimism and optimism which so marked a feature of the advocacy of parental choice of private schools over government schools. Despite the weight of advantages of private schools as discussed by parents, there are dissenting voices from various corners of parents which is a matter of serious concern. As found in the present study, relatively better private schools serve the interest of only those children whose parents can afford, thereby leaving out a major chunk of children of poor parents especially those below the poverty line.

The cost difference between government and private schooling is substantial as already discussed. Private schools are the very institutions that provide a benchmark against which government schools can be compared. Private schools have been permitted to exist on the ground that parents cannot be coerced to accept the functioning of government schools that traditionally performs for the welfare and future prospect of poor children with minimum cost. However, the phenomenon of spiral downfall of government schools in the state empowers private schools to exploit the vulnerable parents who, in the absence of any alternatives available, rely heavily on private schools. This has caused a situation of chronic shortage of students in government schools while producing a phenomenon of chronic burden of overcrowding in private schools with serious impairment on teaching-learning processes in classrooms. The situation has become a cause of worry and anxiety among parents. Referring to her children’s private school, a parent said, ‘cause they don’t learn much in schools since so many children are to be attended by one
lone teacher. The teacher-pupil ratio is really bad in private school due to overcrowding of children in classrooms. The situation of overcrowding in private schools is felt in all private schools. Another parent informer, a part time contractor whose children are in Maria Montessori school said, 'I have seen the system, standard is high, teaching staff is not able to teach upto the standard, children're taught in the way they want; what they don't know is left to the students as home assignments. Teachers don't know what they ought to know, skip chapters. Teacher pupil ratio is high, number of students is so huge and it needs to be reduced. In class IV itself the number of students is 46, Its 62 in class VI and 96 in class I; then there is the need for hiring tutor. Another parent informer said, 'Without private tutor's assistance, it has become impossible. In short, yes there's teaching-learning taking place in the class, but since the classrooms're overcrowded, teachers can't look after the needs of the students. There're around 50-70 students in a class, much ahead of the required number of students. This makes the teachers difficult to give due attention to the whole students in the class. The natural result of a situation of this kind is lack of attention to be given to tiny tots. Hiring a private tutor then becomes essential, that way children learn stage by stage or else what learning they will have when they go to school since so many of them are tucked in one class. Teachers're unable to care for them, and there's too much of noise and teachers are not able to control, so there's hardly any learning in a classroom situation of this kind. Average students are ignored. They do inspect students but can't do it for all students, only few are benefited. Even while sending to a tutor, I ensure that I don't send my children to a tutor having more than four children, I know a tutor will not concentrate on the child's learning if number of children is more than the desired ...... if this is the case children know better, 're able to quickly understand what they're learning'.

One of the major complaints parents have against private schools are the overcrowding of children and children's inability to comprehend what is taught in the class. This has necessitated the parents to hire private tutors that have become a norm which is particularly true mostly for children attending to private schools. According to the present study there were as many as 72.5 percent of parents whose children are dependent on private tutors not just as tutors but as a guide, a mentor or a consultant. This is specifically true for households who can hardly
find time for their children due to engagement in family business or earnings and for affluent families who are deeply concerned about making their children’s rankings in examinations. The present study reveals that for most ordinary parents, particularly struggling parents whose survival issues have virtually rendered them into helpless situation, the feeling is that private tutors can enhance a child’s ability to understand what could not be learnt in classroom teaching or can mend what is missed in the class; can help a child in learning in advance and get a better deal in competition during examination, keep children engaged in the care of a tutor to avoid trapping in the bad company of local boys as one parent informer showed his concerns, ‘So busy we’re, we don’t get to meet our children, no time to look into my child’s studies; I don’t help them academically, sometimes my wife comes out of kitchen just to see about their studies, basically there’s no time for her too. When returned home in late evening, they’re at the place of tuition and when we retire to bed; it’s time for them to go to bed. This is where we also realise that our children don’t have the chance to go to drugs or alcoholism; at least tutors take care of them. They don’t waste time, can’t even manage to visit their friends. The influence of peer group on bad things/habit is less likely to be there; this is also the most important teenage period for them, actually a testing period, so very important time at least upto XI standard. I feel parental role is big and once children in this period’re not directed in right direction, they may go wrong in the future’. Being a van driver whose occupation is to drop and pick up school children, with a fair knowledge about the trends of tuition system and its demand in the state as a matter of fad, citing the case of affluent parents he added, ‘There’s possibility that children can do better in examinations since competition is too high; the entire business becomes so merciless. So much of exploitation on children from parents and society; they pressed hard on children, putting them to unrealistic and difficult situations. Affluent parent’re exceptionally running all the time after tutors and making their children’s life hell. Class differences’re also noticed, we don’t have money like affluent parents; these families drop children by cars and jeep even while sending children to coaching classes. Tuition business is flourishing in the state; even booking system exists; as soon as the examination is over, booking starts in fast manner. At the time of booking, one has to make full payment and for mathematics the charge is the highest that comes to Rs.2000/ per month; there also exist secret tuition system where parents separately hire a tutor who charges exorbitant amount ranging from Rs 1000- Rs1500/ per
month while the normal charge is Rs30/ per month of teaching students in group. He further added, ‘Hiring of separate tutor is deliberately done by desperate parents who want their children to be rank holders in Board Examination’. Considering the general poverty of economic situations faced by the people, he further added with surprise, ‘This is extremely unexpected in a place like Manipur where almost all households seem struggling all the time. Yeah, as a parent when I’m sending my children, I have expectations from the tutor, it’s the tutor who guides, moulds character for children. So long as the private tuition system is concerned, yes there’s this system round the year. Before sessions begin, tuition starts and continues till final year examinations and the course in this manner is completed. This is a general and normal practice.

Every child ‘re sent to private tutor, it’s like a norm in present day Manipur society, but for the poor families, they painfully disconnect from these norms,’ said a mother of two school going children. Thus sending a child to private tutor has become sort of social norm. Take the case of a parent who is a cook and admitted, ‘I emulate other households because they also send children to private tutor, while sending children to private tutor they don’t waste time, they’re better educated.’ Another parent who was quite critical of private school said, ‘Every year number of children’s enrolment increases, school reputation matters, accordingly we send our children to a particular school. ‘We don’t want the way how things’re changing, they should have fixed the number of students, they want to kill the government schools. We invest money in children. In our times we did not require private tutors. Tuition system is becoming rampant. Investment of money is becoming high; we don’t trust in the teaching method used by these teachers but we have no choice. Tuition only gives us the hope because it guides our children.’

Here again in the prevailing system of hiring private tutors, it is only those children attending to private schools who also require private tutors, while children in government school can’t afford hiring private tutor at all. Take the case of parents who are daily wagers and whose children study in government schools. With a sense of guilt on her sad face on her inability to afford private schooling for her children, gazed on the ground, a parent informer who sells vegetables and whose husband is a carpenter said, ‘I don’t feel good about school environment at all, there is teacher absenteeism problem, the situation is in extreme condition, even in case teachers are present, they don’t take interest anymore, become redundant, so habituated to lazing around, may be they don’t feel accountable, on the part of the principal there’re no
rules and regulations, no discipline; I'm aware about all these, they know no father or mother is going to complain about it. Despite these grievances, I can't afford sending my children either to private school or hire a tutor; it's so expensive'.

Considering the above discourse, private schools too fall short of parental expectations in terms of scholastic achievements and learning abilities of children. It is indeed important to know the fact that in private schools too, children do not learn as expected. For example, a government school teacher while contemplating the much hype appreciation and false claims about private schools observed, 'In private schools, children from one to twenty students 're good ones while the rest 're just like walls; they're thrown out when they reach the stage of class VI, VII and IX'. She further cited how children who are disqualified in private schools are easily drawn into bad company who are already in drugs and alcohol for they go astray with no proper place to be in simply because these children are so embarrassed to join government school after studying in private school. She quoted an incident that had happened to some of the tribal students from Phoijing Chingning hillock( Khoriphaba Hillock) that was quite shocking to the entire community. Her argument is that those students who are not neglected by parents and whose studies are taken care off are capable to sustain schooling in private school up to certain level such as the Board Examination.

Another common concern is that private schools and hiring of private tutors are concerned with examinations and performance of students only at the neglect of other value systems to be instilled in children. The fact that a large percentage of households send their children to private tutors because the tuition system is oriented to examinations as admitted by a parent informer who is a salaried employee, 'Tuition system is oriented to examination; through tuition system, one experiences the first hand experience of examination pattern, familiarity is gained. Students're made to be familiar with questions and answers, through tuition the child can gain familiarity with examination system. Referring to his daughter's school, Little Flower (LFS), one of the very famous convent schools in Imphal, he added, 'The largest number of students of LFS goes to tuition'. A mother whose children are in famous school, Tainito, Imphal came down heavily on private system, 'In private schools not only that fees're so high that they
randomly chew money, competition is also very high; when a child of some families get ranking, the question arises as to why our children can’t? She queried. ‘Associated with these’re the unwanted practices of gift giving that has become a fashion among parents. The practice insults those parents who can’t afford, one faces an embarrassing situation. And hence since nobody wants to be in that position, one tries to be a part of it, nobody can bear such a headache, too stressful, we parents, out of desperateness for our children’s welfare, we become like monsters in trying hard anything that could do good for our children.’

The whole business of private system therefore orients to competition and examination by cramming the heads of the students so that they pass the relevant examinations and if possible make rankings through which the reputation of the school can be elevated, which again serves a selling point of the particular school. This could, however, on the other hand prove to be extremely terrifying and horrendous experience for children and parents in which the experience could be drawn parallel as the ‘haunting’ in the ghostly sense to use Meighan’s analogy while trying to understand the way society’s values invade the classroom. Meighan argues, teachers feel that when the classroom door closes, everything within the room is within their control and direction which is not true in reality. The classroom is haunted by the ghost of the architect who designed the building, the ghost of the authors of books used in classroom and the ghost of the creators of language and most importantly the ghost of those executors of disciplinary rules and regulations at the neglect of other human considerations. These simply haunt and do not spare the tender child as lamented by a conscientious mother who critically looks into the whole system of private schooling where punitive and regimental rules prevail14. Thus in her words, ‘Syllabus is tough for children, it’s vast and difficult, syllabus is not suitable,

14 The parental concern as above has been one of most contentious issues at the centre of Sociology of Education. In early 1970’s in America, there was, as there is today a mood of great public urgency about the problems of schooling. That among many crisis, it was increasingly noticeable that schools, instead of meeting the student’s needs for growth and development, regimental and controlled rules, in an essentially authoritarian manner stifled intellectual and emotional growth of children. This necessitated the parents with support of progressive educators to question schools on their regimental rules, lecturing and recitation that could greatly undermine the intellectual independence and natural curiosity of the child (R.B. Coser :1972 in ‘Education: Structure and Society’).
it's so difficult to understand. I'm noticing it every time. The school is also ruthlessly very strict and the actions the school take for disciplining kids is horrendous. The motive of the school must be to discipline children, make them accountable to their own behaviour. But this is not suitable for their age. The brain of children goes deranged, it's torturous', the syllabus standard is high; it's a big burden for kids to handle such difficult books. Every sort of rating is done through marking, in case my child feels sick, can't attend school; his mark will be reduced. In case he's not sick, still absent then, 5 marks are reduced on the basis of being absent of detection in the classroom'. 'Further children don't trust us', the mother continued, 'Our children don't trust us, they're under the constant nourishment of their teachers who're every time so strict, they trust the knowledge of their teachers only, not others; once there was homework assigned to my child regarding animals that are not available in the state of Manipur'. By exclaiming softly she continued, 'Imagine!, we could not name even the animal even if we knew, children simply refused to accept, instead, they simply trust what their teachers say, these teachers're so imposing.' Other common worries parents are concerned about private schools is the mismatch in standard and syllabus of children. 'There're so many textbooks, twenty to thirty textbooks for a little child, it's quite burdensome and the standard is mismatch. Well some teachers are highly qualified and give care and due attention while some are not upto the mark, 'cause of overcrowding, children learn less than what they can actually do. What they learn is not translated into Manipuri and so over a time if children don't learn step by step, they become frustrated. These teachers're simply reading, nothing more'. Majority parents are thus chronically dissatisfied even with high fee charging private schools which appear to be relatively better performing. It points to the irrefutable fact that schools are failing to provide a minimally adequate education to children which are reflected in children's failure to acquire certain academic attainment in specific skills. Secondly, the pedagogic teaching is largely ill equipped to socialise children to make education relevant to the larger social context of their own lives. That, teaching system and its styles emphasised too much on rote memorisation with unnecessary regimental rules and detailed controls over the behaviour of children and cognitive achievement.
Struggling parents seldom translate their woes and complaints about local government schools into constructive action with collective efforts to draw attention of teachers and administrators of the withering of schooling system as many of them do not even form PTA. The mushrooming growth of private schools on the one hand has further endangered the government schools. Sharing a moment, sitting on the mat spread in the courtyard near the tulsi plant, in a pensive mood, gazed blankly on the ground and shaken by pangs of poverty, a parent informer, a daily wager who, was equally alarmed by the mushrooming growth of private schools compared the phenomenon by drawing a metaphor of the fertile seed of the famous eatable plant, ‘Shougree (bimlipatam jute or ambary)’ wherein the seed grows on any soil when slipped from anyone’s finger. Further, she shared her concern, ‘Everywhere there’re schools, even cinema halls, rather than providing entertainment facility’re converted to schools; it has become a lucrative business, yes these schools try their best to improve its reputation. Teachers in government schools feel they can arrogantly behave with the students, teach children in an abusive and callous manner, erodes the child’s self esteem, because they don’t expect challenges from the parents of these children to correct them. We’re virtually dragged in survival issues; we don’t have time to fight to correct them’.

Therefore as against the proposition of neo-liberalists, school choice, though appealing is a formidable difficulty for parents who are either survivors or earn intermittent income such as poor farmers, daily wagers, rickshaw pullers to name a few as revealed in the present study. Thus while some parents’ exercise of choice can boost their children’s moral and educational attainment, its accumulated effect is to increase in educational inequality and social polarisation to be born only by children of poor families. Secondly as observed above, the feasibility of strengthening local government schools is not in sight in the absence of trust and faith among parents, teachers and the local community whose collective social resources could generate ‘social capital’ using James Coleman’s terminology. Parental involvement though necessary, is not efficient enough to produce improve the state run schools without serious state and community commitment to serving children of poor parents by restructuring schools in low income neighbourhoods and their surroundings. Because putting the fallen schools right on tract is not only a herculean task for poor households since it involves continued dialogue and also
fighting of attitudes and perceptions of all those who run the system. The problem therefore lies squarely in the unresponsive system itself. Because what surfaced from the parental concerns in the present study are chaotic implementation of schemes, decline of inspection system, lack of transparency, corruption among officials and Ministers in recruitment of teachers, teachers inertia, feminisation of teaching profession as some of the silent features that continue to plague the functioning of government schools.

3.8 Whither Accountability: Inspection System: Why It Matters

Parents agree that government school teachers are qualified in terms of training skills they acquire and qualifications in particular fields when compared with private school teachers who are unemployed youths with certain degrees and able to utter few words of English. A parent informer, wife of a construction worker said, 'Government school is like a free zone for children since both the parents and teachers are not accountable to children. But, government teachers are qualified, have cleared B. ED, P. GT, trained in DIET. Stop private schools, private teachers are like contract workers, once you know some words of English and knowledge of Mathematics, you can teach in any private school without any specialisation'. However, much to the disappointment of parents, government school teachers are seen to be most inactive and found engaged in a variety of pastimes rather than discharging their responsibilities and hence reducing teaching activity to the minimum. This appears to be a consistent pattern and appears to be a way of life among government school teachers. This has forced parents to lose faith in government school teachers, leading to ultimate desertion of government school by parents and children. The issue has been sufficiently highlighted as discussed with parents in the forgoing chapter.

Yet, there are instances where few teachers, despite all odds are committed with shining accomplishments. 'What happens to the government school according to your experience as a government teacher' was asked to one of the parents who is a Mathematics teacher in a government primary school. The teacher by chiding away authorities responsible for the failure of the system, and being a committed teacher, shared his lived experience. By pointing to departmental failure, he argues, teacher accountability and irregularity of teachers derive from a variety of factors, for example; inspection system, an important instrument to keep the
accountability of teaching profession in check is no longer operative in the state. Referring to the inspection system prevalent in 1970's and 1980's, he took the case of Nambol Higher Secondary School where he was serving as a Mathematics teacher. In a delightful and thoughtful way, recalling his past days, he narrated, 'In those days, in my school there was inspection system for three times a year, that inspectors without even informing the school authority entered school premise, after taking permission from the class teacher, requested the teacher if he could enter the class. This was to show respect to the class teacher; he then started asking questions to students to test the efficiency of teaching skills of teachers on particular subject, for example, one particular inspector asked the spelling of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and they also checked on other subjects like Mathematics. Even the Education Minister accompanied those inspecting officers. The Minister used to interact with school teachers. The same view was endorsed by a parent who said, 'In the past government school teachers was incredibly good. Referring to a particular school in Imphal, he continued, 'If a teacher of Ram Lal Pal School was found absent, he was under scrutiny. Nowadays, there has undergone tremendous changes regarding responsibility and image of government school teachers'. Coming to the inspection system in the state, the teacher continued, 'Decline of inspection system has led to the decline of quality performance of government schools. In the past during inspection, even teachers were tested. Such a system lasted till late 1970's and early 1980's. The failure of appointment and recruitment of jobs through merit system and efficiency, the system of appointment based on favouritism has failed the quality for teaching profession, the Minister sees only money, not quality and merit. There's discussion with state government officials about missing quality of education. If you take the case of Phoijing Chinning Junior High School as an illustration where I'm serving as a teacher, there're only 2 students at primary level and 13 students at Junior level. He continued, 'Speaking from my heart and soul, I lived

15. Discussion with local experienced teachers has revealed that in the state there was much improvement in not only the expansion of schools but also school administration when Territorial Council took over the educational administration during 1957-1963. During the period, performance of government schools were under constant vigilance and carried out inspection in accordance to the norms of inspection including regular visits of inspecting officers to inspect the work of teachers and progress of school programmes as laid down by the Manipur Education Code. The territorial Council ended by July, 1963 by bringing education administration under the State Education Department.
from hand to mouth; I was a tutor from morning to night, teaching children. As a teacher, I choose teaching profession but when I see the situation of my own school, I don't want my child to be in government school'. Inspection system as a vital link between the various education department and individual schools are no longer operative in government school. Non functional of inspection system has delinked the highest educational machinery from various schools by completely washing its hands off, cutting dialogue between teachers and education administration where education decisions regarding schools are made.

3.9 Government is Blind

Chaotic and patchy implementation of schemes poses another challenge in government schools. Going back to his personal long lived experience, he further recounted, 'There's no scheme implemented in the school and government is running blindly. We do get teaching -learning material aids. But the school purchases charts and other materials for sports. We discuss about it, we complain to Zonal Education Officer. He openly, responded, 'please manage on your own; let it go as it's so long it does not cause great inconvenience'. But recently the new development is that textbooks are distributed to student of class 1 to VIII. Distribution of textbooks itself is good enough for us. For every year, teachers are given grant of Rs500/. Students of poor parents are supplied teaching stationery items. Out of this total amount, Rs 120/ is ceased by the underground outfit (PREPARK) and this is done at the higher level. Now we have started purchasing books for children. Feedback from the students is that before, students used one notebook for all the subjects. Now they started having separate copies after this distribution of items began. Delightfully he shared, 'This is good in many ways; children feel happy and excited about it. Out of this fund, we also purchase games and sports items. But there is no instruction for games, well there was just one lady teacher as sports teacher, Ms Nonibala Devi, coming from Mayanglenbi, 10 kms away from the school, used to visit the school once a month to sign on the register. In an exciting and mocking tone with a chuckle on his face, he narrated how her irregularity and long absence from school was caught by members of DESAM. He continued, 'She was caught by DESAM; DESAM, issued a letter complaining against her, she was forced to pay, Rs2000/ to DESAM in the form of fine. She was then transferred'. But as he wanted to clarify further, 'She was not entirely responsible for the problem', as he puts it, 'She
was irregular 'cause there was no student'. The enriching lived experience of his own school of the parent as a teacher is a widespread phenomenon of the situation of government school in the state.

Among parents there is unanimous concern about the prevailing corruption in the recruitment of teachers that has emerged as one of the most important issues that is responsible for the collapse of government schools. Looking at the deeply felt sorry state of affairs in the state, a parent in anguish condemned the state, 'Corruption in the system is responsible for the collapse of government schools since teacher recruitment is based on corruption'. The issue is, curbing of the springing growth of private schools is possible only if there is improvement in appointment and recruitment rules of teachers which are now based completely on the basis of corruption is what few parent informers shared. 'For this to happen, there should be a sudden brake on rampant corruption within the system of school governance including recruitment of teachers, implementation of schemes, arbitrary transfer of teachers etc. Can anyone think of such drastic possibilities in the system? She reflected, 'Not really so. Government is repeatedly responsible for the entire failure; it's a curse for ordinary people like us, there is no teacher who is worthy of (Mit Thup Thakpa) in today's Manipuri society: these teachers don't know how to draft an application, so how they can provide good education to students. Now insurgents have their own share in the recruitment of teachers, they sponsor their own candidate; the system has gone completely to dogs'. She lamented. Yet the profession of teaching is an extremely important job as expressed by one of the parent informers, Rita Pamei who is a principal of Saint Anthony School at Chingmeirong, Imphal. Being in the profession of teaching and having been in it for long years, she reaffirmed, 'The job of a teacher is extremely responsible and important; one has to be vigilant enough, group counselling has to be done and constant watch on teachers is important. Government school teachers get salary regularly, they are not accountable to their duties, can't create any impact on children, it's a blunder'.

However the blunder is not to blame teachers alone. At the time of recruitment, the government selects disqualified candidates but also teachers who lack subject specialisation. To say a case of an example, 'They don't keep specialised teachers and hence lack specialised skills in the
particular subject while teaching the students; how can you recruit a teacher of Hindi literature background to teach social science? There is no sufficient number of teachers recruited either, it's quite appalling', said a government school teacher. She continued, ‘If a teacher is vocal and wants justice to be done whatever the issues could be, he is transferred to far off places such as Ukhrul / Senapati (hill districts) for his duty in the form of punishment but the teacher who pleases the government gets undue favouritism. The corrupt and unfair system has its own consequences on school children too. The teacher after having transferred is disconnected from the students and a new teacher altogether is different in teaching styles, experience and skills in the particular subject will be introduced to the students, the change certainly affects the students in more than one ways. Worse is the case when there is no substitute teacher ‘cause children suffer the worst in a situation of this kind. The fallout is students’ unrest in the form of observing bands, strikes, boycott etc. The glaring example is the case of Government Nambol Higher Secondary School which is now synonymous with death. In every Leikai (locality) similar problem exists; these crises don’t exist in private schools’.

3.10 Feminisation of Teaching Profession: A Risk
Returning to the argument of the government school Mathematics teacher, being in the profession of teaching where women constitute 75 percent in the profession, outnumbering males, based on his own experience, he cautioned against the risks of feminisation of teaching profession. The presence of large number of female teachers could encourage greater gender equality and as role models, female teachers could expand the aspirations of young girls. However recounting his lived experience of his own school, he observed, ‘If you take my school as an example, out of 15 teachers, only two of us’re males. When a female undertakes the profession of teaching, the problem is- they start arriving school late at eleven in the morning but the timetable begins at ten in the morning. My female colleagues’re burdened with household chores, aren’t punctual at all; this has the most discouragement effect on children. This is a matter of serious concern on the part of school; in the morning children come fresh and with full of enthusiasm but no teacher around, they feel extremely discouraged. He further criticised the structure of the school, ‘There was no chawkidar appointed, so I had to do the work of a chawkidar. I’m very practical and dutiful. Key of the school was always in the hands of
Head Mistress. She couldn’t reach office on time at least by 10.30 AM. I asked if I could take care of the keys; for 3 years, I took care of the school. I was all alone, reached school at 9.30 AM. Not a single teacher reached on time. So the problem is that while taking care of one class, I couldn’t take care of children sitting in other classes. Course was not completed. Then towards the end of the academic year, students went on strike since they were not taught and course was not completed at all on time but examination schedule was ready. However students refused examination to take place, poor children, they’re the ultimate losers’.

The educational crisis in the state as revealed in the foregoing discourse indicates that parents have reached the vintage point of frustration that there is an outpouring of calls for urgent reforms and reconstruction in the system failure that is responsible for the collapse of government schools. These schools which are almost perished adopt desperate last resort strategies to save themselves. This is quite a shocking experience as narrated by a parent informer. Condemning government schools, the parent shared, ‘There’re cases where private school children join government school in the morning for the sake of registration only. These students collect stationeries from government school, exchange those stationeries with eatables from nearby shops; there’re kids, they simply do it, you will see teachers sitting and gossiping around in government school. Teachers collect money to distribute school uniforms to children even if they don’t get from the government. Survival of government school is the urgent need of the hour. This could be the last resort to save government schools through the distribution of books and stationeries’. He further chided government and private schools that there are no worthy schools in present day Manipuri society, whether it is private or government. ‘No I don’t feel there’s any school worth nearby, others may not believe, but there’s no choice left for us since there’re no schools nearby except Bethel and John school; there’re not good schools or else the only option is government school for us which is again not a favourable choice for my children’. The above view reveals that it is not only government school children who are at risk but teachers themselves are also under the weight of such risk especially when schools due to their failure are on the verge of closing due to chronic shortage of students.
3.11 Good Schooling Compensates a Fallen Society: Parental Concerns

Despite the deepening crisis in the present education system, there is little consensus among ordinary parents that a good responsible education system can compensate even a fallen society. Asked, 'Why do you like to send your children to school?' Parents - one and all have huge expectations from education and its role for individual and society. Today as in the past, people look at school to help create or sustain the values they feel are highest for their own society, as a parent, a weaver by occupation puts it bluntly, 'Why should we be sending our children to school, teachers are expected to take care of future generations, ward off young generations from unwanted elements (Ngak shenba toude, they don't think and look forward for the future of children); the future of children is the future of society (leibak); but the present day teachers fail to realise this vision'. Another parent conscientiously puts it, 'Earn knowledge, become wiser, moral and character formation, development of personality, socialisation in the right direction, a life time skill, if members are educated, our expectation is, we would be able to produce a good society, a broad vision of education to ponder over at a time when education system itself is in big crisis'.

The above observation indicates that there is huge parental expectation from education which is indeed in crisis. According to parental perception, education has intrinsic values in itself. It is perhaps the single most means of individuals to improve personal endowments, build capacity, overcome constraints, make critical choices and fair judgements, face struggles of life nobly and gracefully, acquiring practical knowledge for a living, give direction to life, necessity for participation in modern life and a solution of all problems and so forth. Therefore educational role in the life of a child is overwhelming as perceived by parents. The ordinary parents' vision of education is much closer to those of timeless visionaries such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber. Emile Durkheim, while writing, in late 19th century, treated education as a social fact which is indeed as sui generis both from the individual and social perspective, emphasising both on the individual and social significance of education. This argument stands similar to many of parental observation in their own situations. 'It trains one to be good citizen, knowledge though education is a lifelong benefit, good education can do good for future generations, sending children to good school/education, and help them to realise their goal, socialises
with teachers and peer groups for 10-14 hours in the school and constantly interactive. So sending children to school is only good, this is only our hope’ said a father who is in the occupation of piggery and poultry. Education can direct one to a desired future goal which will help a child to become a perfect and a fulfilling person in future. In addition, through education a child will be empowered to direct his own life independently and the child will be able to face all struggles in life. Thus in the words of a parent informer, ‘As a parent, my utmost concern is to make them perfect men in the future; if guidelines re given to children, they will automatically be able to direct themselves without being dependent on others; my child is very keen on the study of Space. His interest in Space study directs his mind and imaginations towards his future goal, it gives hope. These aspirations serve as a litmus test to guide future aims and objectives in life. All children have a target of their choice and interest, we must encourage them, it’s our responsibility’. Education trains the mind to be critical and judgmental, can discriminate what is right and wrong. When born as a human being, if the person is still uneducated, the person is just like blind and deaf. Moreover education is a basic tool of social transaction and meaningful participation in modern society besides inculcating moral values in a child. A daily wager, a rickshaw puller by occupation, citing reasons for sending his son to school said, ‘In order that he becomes an educated person and participate in modern day society, I’m putting my best responsibility to educate him well, not to do drugs, not to steal things from others’, not to get carried away in wrong direction by peer groups etc. To become more alert, more knowledgeable, able to face up life, if not at all for job are reasons why I am sending my child to school’. As revealed by the present study, parents send children to school with the hope that children through schooling will achieve, most importantly status, dignity with the ability to utilise resources judiciously and choices of profession as in the words of a daily wager, ‘Education is a matter of prestige; earning knowledge is as important as leading a dignified life, understand the world around us, differing standards of life, lead life with meaning, if educated one can utilise one’s resources and potential, for example, in a day I earn Rs 50/ without having any education, this will certainly be different for an educated person, so life can be more practical if one is educated’. Another parent further added, ‘They become knowledgeable, aware of self, can find a dignified place to live in society; no education no knowledge, an uneducated person is bound to suffer, education is essential, an educated person
is held so prestigious and respected by the Leikai (society)', after getting the light of education, they bear its fruit, their future life will be in peace. They will be reaping the benefits of education, they will get decent job'. The vision of education the ordinary parents hold runs parallel to the writings of Sociologist such as Max Weber, whose writings in early 20th century argued how impressive educational qualifications could be equivalent to noble blood or distinguished ancestry as the litmus test that persuades others that the individual in question is entitled to high prestige and a desirable occupation. The significance of such argument is, households undoubtedly use schooling as the main indicator of not only occupational achievement but also status and other forms of associational dignity that can counter any form of handicaps their children are likely to face by virtue of being born into a poor family. What is truly striking and remarkable is the level of awareness of very ordinary parents whose educational vision treats 'education as an end in itself'.

3.12 Economic Returns to Education: Only Half Truth: Parental Opinion
Contrary to the popular assertion, surprisingly enough, the present study has revealed that employment and jobs have hardly preoccupied as pivotal among parents in the motivation of sending children to school. A parent informer has thoughtfully put it, 'Never think for job, we can't link actually. Education is for life, education symbolises life itself, not necessarily a job. I don't want to be dishonest to my children promising them education guarantees a job in future'. Another parent informer who is self employed opined, 'Education is the best bet in one's lifetime. Even if there's no formal employment, he can establish his own private enterprise, business; self employment for his life's sustenance, Life skill itself is earned through education'. 'There's no linkage between job and education as I visualise the worth of education, what it could mean to us, as a human being my child must be a man of merit and knowledge, Never had I thought of linking education of my children with job for education is a lifetime necessity', observed by a parent who is a construction worker. Educated people are abreast of what is national importance and issues affecting them, it helps in fuller participation in state affairs. Educated people are much stronger and empowered, and can fight injustice. So sending children to formal school is not just for job security, but for developing the full growth in a person', said a social worker who has been selected as councillor for three times in the locality. Education helps
one to face the challenges of life in the right spirit fearlessly. Education helps in expansion of one's choice making. Education is essential in almost all walks of life; even for purchasing goods from market it is important to be an educated person. Modern day demand is education; education is the solution of all problems, why should anybody be deprived of education so long the person has a chance and opportunity to be educated. As a guardian, it feels good when our children are educated. In future, when they grow up, they will be perfect individuals, they will be able to be responsible for themselves, and they will stand on their own feet. These were some of common sentiments echoed by parents.

The responses and concerns of parents add up to a fairly understanding of the most valuable, empowering attributes and of individual and societal benefits of education. The approach that parents hold about the educational agenda thus goes beyond any doubt of myopic aims of education, rather, is one such that of timeless wisdom that promotes values of scientific temperament and teachings of humanity to mention a few which are in fact rooted in ancestral wisdom that was in vogue, in fact the core of ancient educational practise of Manipuri society. For example, Zamini's (1989) discourse on the history of education in Manipur before the advent of Hinduism in early 17th century reveals how teaching on various disciplines such as History, Religion, Medicine, Dance, Drama and Philosophy of life was by and large methodical and scientific by stressing on all round development of the individuals. And the famous scholar, Roy Jyotirmoy (1958) adds, 'This valley had the fortune to cradle saintly lives like Magang Guru Punsiba, Luwang Guru Punshiba and khuman Guru Punhsiba whose halo used to illumine man in the domain of knowledge. So the valley had the opportunity to nurse its own children, the Meiteis to whom knowledge was never niggardly in unrolling its ample page rich with the spoils of time, into a finest people and nurture so a civilisation of a high order as the Cretan soil or a Grecian land had the fortune to do'.

3.13 Epidemic of Violence and Conflict: Schooling of Children in the Crossfire

More than half a century of bloodshed has marked the life history of people of Manipur that every single ordinary life in the state lives in the midst of terror. The epidemic and endless phenomenon of violence in the period of intense political ferment and its impact on the lives of
people in the state can indeed be aptly drawn an analogy with the Hobbesian spectre of the collapse of civil society into conditions where every man's hand is against every other man's hand and life is nasty, brutish and short during the dark age of a conflict ridden England in the seventeenth century (Halsey, A.H.p, 69). Sporadic violent eruption and brutal killings of innocent lives either in insurgency related crimes or other form of violence, intermittent clashes of militants either security and police commandos, bloody factional fights within the underground groups, frequent intra-tribal conflicts are everyday occurrences in the state. Setting ablaze of villages and slaughtering of human beings by factional rival groups of insurgents haunt many lives. Sometimes the scene of such killings is so macabre and horrific that it continues to traumatise those who witnessed such a scene and the immediate family members of such victims and that people are forced to live in psychological warfare generations after generations. Every violent incident forces civilians at the crossfire, in traffic and life becomes stand still. Such incidents are treated with repressive state forces followed by curfews, destruction of property, mass strikes and bands, closure of roadways, offices and institutions. In the given situation, the present study, by interacting with the parents tried to explore how schooling of their children is critically constrained by endemic conflict and sporadic violence in the region.

Describing how the present day Manipur has become a zone of terror for all, quite unlike before in the past days when there was much of peace, a parent who is a retired Defence personal, shared his poignant and bewildering experience of the changing times, 'Times have changed for the worst, in the past, during evening hours we used to study on a mat, spread in the courtyard but in today's time, as soon as sunset starts, we ask children to go to bed, we don't let them sit outside and ask them to study, it's never safe even within the boundary of your own home. At the present times, Manipur has become a valley of killing field and coffins. On the issue of trafficking of school children, he continued, 'General strike is taken seriously, teachers and students can't come. On the way to school, authorities can't beat students but they do, naturally schools are closed. A parent who is an electrician said, 'With increase violence in public places, the option of going to school for children is at risk, certainly their attendance is on the decline. Sharing in brief he continued, 'Of course syllabus to be completed remains incomplete, this encourages to flourish private tuition system. There's insecurity all over, when
there will be bomb blasts, killings and whether one will be killed, the feeling is the same for all. Deaths and killings are so frequent, normal schooling of children is always shut, creates mounting frustration in children and us also as guardian. 'he grieved. A parent who is a trained pharmacist said, 'Whirling violence has caused tremendous loss, exams are postponed due to sudden violence, the destruction is beyond words and expressions, violence has become a fad of the present Manipuri society; in the past people used to be panic and remained inside on hearing of gunshot, now everybody is curious to know where and what is happening when shootouts take place, its repeated occurrence has made us to take violent movements as normal eventualities. Even when an army is killed, there's sudden stoppage of vehicles, roads are closed, and there's sudden call for band. Insurgent groups also often call for band. Then everything is in traffic, especially commutation; when there's blockage, children can't attend school, but teachers compulsorily complete the course; how children can cope up in such situation.' Parents are concerned about how violence has caused increasing demand for private tutor system. A father who is carpenter said. 'During bands, children miss too many classes, they never learnt what was taught during band, during such times, it served the purpose of only nearby children who reside near the school, so children who come from a little far off are worst losers. In a year number of teaching days is fixed, but due to bands, syllabus is not completed, there's no discussion; it's a dangerous situation for children, it's a great loss to children. Recalling the most infamous widespread incident of ceasefire in the state on June 18, 2001, the parent shared his share of sad tales and lamented, 'The ceasefire incident has caused havoc to children, there was emergency called for in law and order situation, followed by mass protest and bloody deaths of youths, bands are immediately called for and observed creating tremors, anxieties and distress in us'. A farmer said, 'The cyclic process of violent incidence handicaps the teachers to complete the school syllabus of children. There's certainly relationship between the quantum of violence and the tuition system that has become a fad among almost all sections of households. Each of us feels insecure when there's immediate closure of roadways while our children are still at school, this mostly occurs whenever there are immediate gunshots. Our worry is about our children's security, what could happen to them while they are on road, way back at home; sense of insecurity is there, always. A mother of two said, 'My children's school is far, 'Bands, strikes and economic blockades are the most prominent. Since the location of the school is far,
children stop going to school'. There were sections of parents who were equally alarmed about the impinging psychological trauma in children brought up in a violent and conflict ridden society, 'How a violent society has distorted the image of a society which was otherwise once a peaceful society where gun culture was completely an alien. In a society gripped by violence, youths go astray, children're demonised, deprived of childhood and forced to put up with a glut of commodified violence in everyday media; children develop negative attitude and affects their growth of healthy personality. Otherwise we're equally affected by the magnitude of violence in the state. Society highlights full of violence such as crimes, punishment and killings, Newspapers no longer send right messages and obviously children don't get the right message about their own society'. Worst is when protest gets intensified and goes on for end number of days, daily wagers in particular start suffering the pangs of hunger. A rickshaw puller said, 'Violence attacks the poorest of the poor; it affects our livelihoods. We are daily wagers, extremely distracting, it does affect a lot, it can deprive us of day's meal'. The same view was endorsed by another rikshaw puller who said, 'We're worst affected, 'cause we're daily wage earners, if work is stopped, where will we get money to eat and survive, leave the rest of the thing. On the trafficking of school children, he said, When schools stop due to band, it's like a bonus for teachers and take everything for a ride, children stop studies and school becomes very irregular; huge amount of time is lost and study becomes irregular'. Occasional feeling under the reel of violence, a school principal by taking a deep breath nodded, 'Yeah, plenty often we have violence, we are asked to sit in dharnas, putting up placards, that we want free zone school, Insurgents impose on us that we should sit in dharnas by using children as weapons for protest, So I send children of classes IX and X student for dharnas. They also demand money from us as tax once in a year. So many factional organisations come to ask for money, I maintain a register when they collect money from the school; by batches I pay them Rs 5000-10,000'. Having witnessed series of emergent conflict, a mother who runs a fast food stall brought alive those unforgettable, bewildering incidents of widespread violence in Imphal, 'I wish all those problems get over before the school session begins. Every parent must have the same wishes. Citing the prolonged protest march at the time of incidents such as ceasefire incident, she shared, 'The case of death of Chitarajan and Manorama keeps social life heated and burning, flares up emergencies, develops anxiety and tensions; we are always in civil
war. During day time we're sometimes in normal condition, but in night, we're just experiencing terror but since we're in Zero mile, army can't torture us. We experience series of violence, one after another, we're lost, Eikhoigi punshi Charak Chanhingnei (our life is always uncertain with anxieties and restless). ‘Why only schools and children, it's affecting all of us on regular basis’, said the father. ‘Restlessness and tensions, anxieties, emergencies're very often. This is not life’. He further lamented, ‘Sometimes violent incident erupts like volcano, only newspaper informs us that children’re not to attend school due to school closure. Trafficking is so frequent that, sometimes when my son jokes that there’s band even if it's not, I simply trust it.’ Violence of any kind at any time has become a customary experience for the people in the region that some parents went to the extent of expressing, ‘Look, if you think you’re going to be caught up in such incidents and’re afraid to go out of your house, it’s like saying, don’t sleep, you will have night mare during your sleep’, said a father indicating that violence in the region is a normal incident in which the experience deter one from everyday routine public engagement. The people take life as it comes every day. These are some of experiences of how ordinary people and children cope and negotiate with violence in the conflict ridden state.

3.14 Universal Elementary Education: The Formidable Challenge

Strong evidence supporting the social dimension of children’s education as a matter of social norm comes from parental response. On compulsory education, asked, ‘Would you support elementary education being made compulsory and fundamental entitlement for all children?’ Parents are concerned of the fact that childhood is a precious stage. ‘If they attend school, they don't waste time idling away at home, they can socialise among peer groups, can encourage and motivate themselves in studies, keep in touch with studies, basically I want my children to effectively utilise their precious time. Compulsorily children have to be educated’, said a mother who is a cook in a government canteen. There is overwhelming response in supporting the crucial aspect of this right, mostly, because of the fact that childhood period is the most precious period in one’s life and hence formal education, if made compulsory will benefit

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16 Zero mile is a zone where army personals cannot fire or misuse their power under ASFPA,1958. The rule is applicable only in select locations of Imphal area.
all children, specially the poor. However unfortunately, the chronic political violence in terms of corruption and poor governance of the state has virtually completely smothered parental hopes and aspirations for the educational right of children. Crudely exposing the level of corruption in the state, some of the sentiments parents vent out are as, ‘Elementary education and making it fundamental is indispensable, for the growing stage in a child is the most fresh stage of mind. Therefore educating children at the right stage is a matter of necessity’. ‘Policy is too good to look into its spirit. But in Manipur it’s like a tragedy bound to happen to its children, too corrupt to implement any policy; in the name of implementing the policy, not even 50% will reach the needy children. Corruption at every stage is the worst nightmare, at the last end of implementing the project, nothing will be left for children’s share. These days I have not heard of SSA, nobody knows where SSA is heading for’. ‘I certainly support the concept of making elementary education fundamental right. But as the present situation of government school suggests, the system will not draw any student to government school. Therefore possibility of bringing about any changes through the mandate in the state is nothing but a dream’. ‘Right to education and making it fundamental is good, but it’s not possible ‘cause Manipur state is too corrupt and money sanctioned for its implementation will be slipped in between the fingers of the officials; recruitment of jobs is based only on connection, how many people have sold off their property just to place the money at the hands of the politicians and top officials. Some of these individuals have become mentally deranged due to shock ‘cause they have lost huge amount of money, that too after selling off immovable property. The whole state of sorry situation is deliberately reflected in Shumang Leela17 (dramas and plays) by artists to sensitise people.’ ‘Aah! Right to education and making it fundamental right for all is the best. But the state, I don’t think is in a position to do so, ‘cause nobody knows who carries away all these tasks; it’s so painful that 90 percent of education affairs are not looked after.’ ‘Yes in

17 The Meiteis have a special natural knack for histrionic art. Shumang Leela also known as Yatras is an old age form of entertainment performed at the centre of an open round or a courtyard of any house owner who sponsors the cost of the performance. Hence the performance of shumang leela does not require any stage. The audiences, consisting of usually the entire village or the Leikai sit around on mat or moorah brought by them. During Shumang Leela, the actors perform reflecting a variety of current social themes on any issue such as political, religion, crimes and sometimes with satirical and grotesque performance condemning the ills of the established social institutions including corruption in the state.
that case we don't have to pay fees and spend so much as we do in private school; but I certainly doubt whether it can be really achieved or not because I simply don't trust the system. *All officials in the hierarchy are rotten, teachers and officers will be hand in glove to siphon off the resources for themselves; they will smoother all resources that come in the name of children*. 'Government must give without fail. It will simply empower people and will have major effect on poorer children. But the right to get due share by children will be unfailingly trapped by the system itself'. If a new scheme comes into place and is implemented, it's just like dropping a lump of sugar among beaming ants; ants are also living beings, they have the sensation to test the droplets of sugar; each tries to have a feel of it by grabbing it at any cost. This is the same with the project'. It's a good idea and correct too, but how revolutionary it will be when all children from poor background can attend school of equitable quality'. These were some of the surmountable problems parents anticipated while examining the feasibility of implementing the educational right of children as a matter of entitlement.

On the whole, parental hopes and aspirations to the concept of making elementary education fundamental entitlement are overwhelming. With this massive support, it is not just the Constitutional argument alone that clinches the case of Universal Elementary Education as a much desired social goal. However as emerged from the foregoing chapter, a common variant of this hope is that as things stand today, the parental aspirations would likely to remain a hope against hope that few parents went to the extent of expressing that there is no point of such a bill talking about children's educational right since almost all government schools are death. Therefore at a time when public schools are failing beyond reparation or when private and public schools are sharply and deliberately stratified, the idea of access to equitable quality education is simply a mirage for children of poor households.