CHAPTER 4

HAS THE STATE FAILED?
LOOKING THROUGH A GOVERNMENT SCHOOL
The present chapter brings out the extremely challenging learning conditions of children by examining the nature of school provisioning in terms various physical dimensions of school resources of the government Junior high School, Phoijing No.6. The study of these resources is an important determinant while examining as to how state is fulfilling the critical issues of access, equity and quality of schooling of children. The effective provisioning of schools in terms of school building, classroom facilities, suitable teaching-learning material aids, pedagogy, basic conveniences, successful implementation of schemes and incentives contribute in effective participation of children in schooling. The present chapter examines some of these dimensions of physical resources in the select school and how children cope up in an impoverished school environment where these resources are extremely limited. It is in this context that the present chapter brings out human resource as the most important attribute of school resources by examining the contributions and roles played by teachers in upholding the moral of the school children who otherwise would have not survived in the school and hence survival of the school. This also illustrates how important it is to maintain the dialogical relationship between physical and human dimensions of school resources to make schooling effective, vibrant and most attractive for children. Apart, the chapter also examines the constraints of educational opportunities of children caused by sporadic violence and conflict in the region. And in the process, how children in government schools, in the absence of any alternative learning opportunity are the hardest hit in unique ways.

Research studies on school quality reveal that there is interlocking relationship between various dimensions that constitute school resources, physical as well as human. Physical aspects of school resource include school infrastructural facilities such as school building, space, parks, playground, separate classroom facilities, furniture, student’s desks, equipments etc. These determine the very organization of teaching learning activities that play pivotal role in motivating

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1 The present sample school, the Phoijing No.6 Junior high school was primarily established as the number fifth Phoijing Lower Primary school. The school was established as a boys school in 1898 by the colonial government.

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children for learning. Operation Blackboard\(^2\), Mid Day Meal Schemes\(^3\) and SSA\(^4\) are the most recent schemes and projects that are designed from time to time to address issues of quality school education to achieve equal excess for all children. Other forms of academic inputs in the form of instructional facilities and materials such as usable blackboard, textbooks, globes, chats, library facilities, science kits, newspapers, radio, television sets, games equipment etc., when utilised in school can be effective in facilitating learning capacity and cognitive achievement of children (N.V Verghese:1995, Josephine Yazali:2005). On the other hand, the absence of attractive and simulative learning environment can have discouragement effect on schooling of children. For example, when children are made to squat on the floor and write on slates or exercise copies balanced between their knees, it creates obstacles in the physical setting of the child, thereby distracting the child’s comfortable situation of learning. Dilapidated school building, the absence of adequate teaching-learning material aids, and overall demotivating school environment can sap the moral of both teachers and students on everyday basis. Apart from these, the study of these essential facilities and whether they are found missing in schools or

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\(^2\) The scheme of OB was launched in 1987 in pursuance of National Policy on Education,1986 and Programme of Action,1992 to provide minimum essential facilities to all primary schools in the country. These include at least one room for each class/section, a Head Master/Mistress-cum-office room, separate toilet facilities for boys and girls, essential teaching learning materials including a library, good working usable blackboards, maps, charts, toys, games and some equipment for work experience, one teacher for each class, contingency for minor/major repairs etc (POA,1992).

\(^3\) In 1995, the United Front Government launched the centrally sponsored scheme, ‘the National Programme of National Support to Primary Education. The programme is specifically designed for children coming from economically poor households. Under the programme, cooked mid day meals were to be introduced in all government and government aided primary schools within two years. In the intervening period of two years state governments were allowed to distribute monthly grain rations to school children instead of cooked meal (Dreze Jean and Aparajita, Goyal:2003).

\(^4\) After successive education projects have failed to materialize Universal Education for All, the Government of India introduced the latest and eth largest Education Project, SSA. The project was developed in conformity with the policy outlines of achieving Education for All by building partnership with state Governments with a long term perspectives on cost sharing with the aim to universalize elementary education by 2010. Assistance under SSA is on a 85:15 sharing arrangement between the Central and State on its initial stage of IX plan, followed by 75:25 and 50:50 in eth following plans (Sarva Shiksa Abhiyan, Manual for Appraisal of Plans,2002, MHRD, Government of India, New Delhi). However, going by the nature pf provisioning of schools in the state of Manipur, there is widespread disillusionment concerning the possibilities of achieving EFA within the stipulated period.
not is indeed significant since the availability of these facilities in public schools is a reflection of public initiatives and allocation of resources by the state.

4.1 Physical Dimensions of School Resources: The School Building

School building constitutes the most visible form of school education. It is the first criteria to examine the aspect of physical facility available to the school. Availability of school building, however as argued by A.C.Mehta does not guarantee the minimum infrastructure facilities required for smooth classroom transaction more or so when the building is in dilapidated condition.

![Site of the sample School building](image)

**Source:** Primary Survey, 2008

A little portion of the sample school building is made of brick and the major portion of the school is made of wood and mud. The roof is made of tin, mostly constructed years ago and there are holes leaking, resulting in the destruction of walls, furniture and the scarcely available limited teaching-learning material aids in the classroom. ‘There're holes in the tin roofing
because of which there’s leaking of water during rainy season; teaching-learning process in the classroom is seriously impaired during rainy season and when there’s wind and storm,’ lamented the Hindi male teacher. ‘Leaking of the roofing further dampens parts of the wall and ultimately damages the wall’, he added. A lady teacher who is also teaching Hindi of class VII joined the conversation and expressed with dismay, ‘During rainy season, especially, when there’s storm, it becomes unmanageable, the classroom becomes muddy; so slippery, students and staffs sometimes slipped off’. In a dampened school environment where the roof is dripping, the walls are damaged and the rooms are dingy, teaching-learning can hardly take place. Flooring is not made of pucca but of mud and not of the same level. The overall physical condition of the school indicates its requirements of major reparation since the portion of the school where classes are held is in complete dismal condition.

At the backyard of the school, parts of the building are uniformly broken up to the portion of knee level. The physical condition of the school building indicates years of neglect and not anybody’s concern, though it is a cheerful feeling to witness the efforts of the cook, who everyday cleans the school building, sweeps and wipes the floor. Though a non-staff, she plays a vital role in keeping the school environment manageable. Nevertheless, the school authorities remain still ignorant about the requirement of major reparations that is the urgent need of the hour before the school is completely damaged resulting into heavy cost, materially and morally.

It is natural that a functioning school has sufficient playground facility and space for the students to engage in physical exercise, games and sports, and extra-curricular activities for the development of their mental and physical growth. In the sample school, there is but little space. Hence practically, the school does not have playground facility. The school is no doubt easily accessible from all crossroads since it is situated on the side of the main road. However, it is dislocated among the local houses and hence it is not an ideal place for a school to operate smoothly as the Hindi male teacher recounted the unwanted experience of the school environment, ‘Foul smell of human excreta from latrines of nearby houses disturbs us so badly; it’s not in the best of health, disturbs the teaching-learning process in the class’.
Teachers who were standing nearby the conversation complained about the awful and constantly disturbing condition with disgust. Other reasons why the location of the school is not suitable are that the little space available for children becomes a grazing ground for the cattle of the houses located nearby the school. Another female teacher complained, ‘Often water logging during monsoon creates obstacles for children, classes’re also regularly suspended during monsoon’. Any sign of effort to relocate the school near empty fields or such like areas was not in sight since the school as one of the functioning schools, is considered to be good as claimed by the locals and is the pride of the local people. Despite such symbolic attachment, the locals do not seem to show a desire to improve the school except leaving it to the hands of the teachers who have limited role in school function though mostly belong to the local area and neighbouring towns.

While looking around the overall surrounding physical environment of the sample school, it was noticed that mosquitoes were swarming on the backyard of the building and in dark corners of the classrooms since the surrounding of the school is dirty, especially the backyards that are surrounded by shrubs, bamboos, trees and wild grasses. In front of the school building too, there are patchy wild grasses grown that remains without being tended upon. School verandah is not properly maintained. The verandah gathers mosses and there are cracks in the verandah. Hence it needs to be repaired. In the absence of cycle shade facility, part of the verandah is used as cycle shade since there is no cycle shade building.

In order to reach the sample school, 30 percent of students travel a reasonable distance of 3 Kilometres while 3 percent of the students travel for more than 3 kilometres (as against the prescribed official norm of 3 Kilometres). The distance can stretch upto 7 Kilometres as the case of the tribal students residing at Waroiching hill. The hill is separated from the main road by long isolated narrow land surrounded by paddy fields on both sides. When one considers the mode of commutation of these children, it is found that 50 percent children commute to school by walking while 50 percent of the students reach school by cycling only; further suggesting the urgency of building a cycle shade, as the School Head complained against even having one, ‘A cycle shade at least for 50-60 cycles is urgently required; the non-availability of cycle shade facility is causing disturbance so much since part of the verandah space is used as cycle shade
and particularly in rainy season, it becomes unmanageable since the flooring is partly of mud and using the verandah for cycle shade constraints free movement in the verandah'.

4.2 Classrooms, Furniture, Windows and Doors
The school has doors and windows, but not all are in usable condition, especially the windows. It is horribly depressing that classrooms are dark, dingy with papers littered around and one is constantly nagged by the dusty smell. Ventilation is extremely poor with insufficient windows partly broken, suggesting the urgent need for repair. Leaking of tin roofing and unhygienic surrounding physical environment are contributory factors in dampening the classrooms. Classroom walls are not attractive and there is not a single interesting picture hung in the wall, rather one can observe cobwebs and cracks on the wall. In the absence of school chawkidar, it becomes difficult to keep the classroom environment neat and clean. This can be most discouraging and can dampen learning ability of children.

There are six classrooms for instructional purpose which is found to be more than sufficient, though the Head Mistress complained about its inadequacy. But more problematic is that the rooms are partially separated by torn mats with passage of entry to the next room so that one can move from one room to the other. Hence these rooms are hardly separated from each other except the one used for cooking mid day meal for children. The rooms are kuccha, dim and dingy and the condition of the rooms are completely devoid of pleasant and attraction. There are benches, tables, desks and chairs available in classrooms. Of the desks, benches, tables and chairs provided in the classrooms, the desks and benches of the school Hall where classes are held are found to be in proper condition though the table and the chair meant for the teacher were shaky since the joints were loosening out. However, desks and benches in other classrooms were not only in extreme poor condition but also insufficient.

4.3 Teaching-Learning Material Aids
Teaching aids play a crucial role in imparting quality education in any school. Usable blackboards, chalks are inevitable items of teaching-learning aids. The blackboard as
pointed out by Jossy Bass, in the absence of the modern equipments such as white board, or flashy slides, film strips or projector, provides the best and the simplest means on the spot organization of school classes and emphasis with which the teacher can focus and shift the class attention. It forces the teacher into physical movement and remains as the best of audio - visual aids, not as flashy as slides or film scripts. And except for want of chaliks and erasers, the blackboard never breaks down causing disturbance in classrooms. Unfortunately, blackboards in the sample school are no longer in proper usable condition. The blackboard is no longer found to be black, with white patches here and there and even if one tries hard writing on it, it cannot be distinctly seen. The sample school lacks even the modest facilities of teaching-learning aids.

In the Head Mistress’ room, which is simultaneously used as an office cum staff room, one long table and strong two long wooden desks are provided and there’s one wooden chair meant for the Head Mistress. There is no separate room for administration work. Items of equipment such as bells, globes, maps, charts of flowers, vegetables, trees, mathematics and science kits are torn out and kept in the Head Mistress’s room though some of these items such as globes and maps look somewhat new but remains un-utilised. The availability of these

| Table 4.1 |
| Teaching -Learning Facilities in the Classroom of the Sample School |
| Items of equipment | Adequate | Not in Proper Condition | Completely Lacking |
| Usable blackboards | ✓ | ✓ |
| Chalks, dusters and Bell | ✓ | ✓ |
| Globes, maps and charts | ✓ | |
| Mathematics kits | ✓ | |
| Science kits | ✓ | |
| School textbooks and stationary | ✓ | |
| Library | ✓ | |
| Children’s book bank | ✓ | |
| Game materials | ✓ | |
| Audio visual aids | ✓ | |

Source: Primary Survey, 2008.
teaching-learning material aids does not seem to have had any relevance on children in classroom interaction since they are hardly utilised. 'Moreover it's a regular phenomenon that these teaching-learning materials aids are eaten up by rats' claimed the Head Mistress.

Items of stationery and books are kept in two small wooden almirahs kept in Head Mistress' room. 'There's no library facility in the school; the concept can't even be imagined', grieved the Head Mistress with great disappointment. A partially torn country map and two maps of important national leaders are seen hanging on the wall of the Head teacher's room. Textbooks, globes, charts, dictionary were seen kept on the top of the wooden almirah. A literature teacher stated in a complaining tone, 'These items 're purchased out of the teachers' grant of Rs 500/ given every year by the state government. Teachers' handbook, plan book and oxford dictionary 're additional items purchased out of these grants'.

However, teachers complain against the under payment of only Rs300/ instead of Rs 500/ since Rs 200/ is deducted from the total grant released. The books and stationery purchased out of these grants are distributed to students studying from class 111 to class VIII students. The distribution process began during the year 2004-2005 as a follow up programme of SSA. Though inadequate, these facilities bring certain relieve for school children who cannot afford to purchase even an item of pen, leave the rest of necessary stationery items. 80 percent of the students responded that they received books and stationeries from the school as shown below, however, quite inadequate they are.

Teachers are however quite disheartened to be chronically disturbed by the entrenched corruption among education officials as complained by many of them, 'All of us 'ere paid Rs. 200/ less than the due such as Rs. 500/ as registered on paper as record signed by each teacher. This is very much against our conscience. The practice is quite terribly discouraging for us. Such malpractices can be noticed whether in the sanctioning of mid day meal programmes, building of kitchen room for mid day meal or distribution of salary for teachers and release of school development funds'. 'In the absence of school monitor, maintenance and improvement of infrastructure facilities, it's we who repair the tables, chairs, desks by fixing the joints with the help of knell and hammer', shared a teacher.
Table: 4.2
Incentives Schemes at Sample School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities at school</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uniform Facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance scholarship for girls</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stationery Items*</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Survey, 2008
*Only 80% students receive stationery items and textbooks.

There is electricity connection in the sample school. It is available only from 8 A.M to 10.30 A.M. and that too, for alternate days. Electricity connection in the sample school is therefore not that useful (as it should have been) for classroom teaching-learning purpose since classes begin at 9.30 A.M and ends by 2.30 PM. Once again, it is the teachers, not the state education department who make regular payment for electricity bill of Rs 120/ per month. Teachers wherever possible, seize the opportunity to discuss and complain about the poor condition of the school with Zonal education officers but Zonal education officers have turned to deaf ears despite repeated complaints.

When inquired about the poor school infrastructure, school fund and its improvement, one lady teacher added, ‘There’re funds for improving the school infrastructure; but the state machinery is fully corrupt, we’re extremely powerless, when there’s funding of 100 percent, only 10 percent reaches us, it’s certainly a power game expressed through the medium of power; education is the dirtiest zone, you know’. Similarly, the Head Mistress chided the Inspection system as complete failure. Recounting her personal experience, she said, ‘I often call up from my personal mobile to come over to our school at least once so that we can have discussions on deficiencies of the school but never budge, it’s their willingness and responsibility to oversee what’s happening in the school, but never bother, we’re tired’.

It is an unusual phenomenon that school teachers are obliged to invite inspectors to inspect the school, rather, than conducting surprise inspections at schools to keep a track on the duties and performance of teachers and test even the students’ progress while interacting in classrooms.
Failure of inspection system as evident in the present sample school is an attributing factor for the fast failing government schools in the state. One reason provided for non-cooperation of the Zonal education officers who are also the inspectors is as explained by the head teacher, ‘In spite of their entitlement, Inspectors aren’t provided with tour allowance and hence there’s no inspection of schools’.

4.4 Basic Conveniences and Ancillary Facilities
The quality of a school is supplemented by a number of essential basic facilities such as safe drinking water, electricity connection, toilet facilities, separate toilet facility for girls, first aid kits, immunization facility, availability of trained teachers, teacher who have received in-service training, teaching experience, desirable teacher-pupil ratio etc. For example, in the academic session of 2007, there were thirty five students in class V and thirty two students in class VIII. This is an ideal norm so long as the teacher-pupil ratio is in point.

While examining basic conveniences of the sample school, it was noticed that on the back of the school, there are two toilet facilities- one for the students and the other for the staff. The toilet is made of brick wall and tin roofing with mud holes dug as pits. The toilet is used both by boy and girl students. This is where a concerned lady teacher expressed about the discomfort of sharing toilet facility commonly by girl and boy students. As the lady further expressed, ‘Children of class VIII are grown up, a separate toilet facility is a must, by commonsense, this is not a matter to discuss’. The toilet is simultaneously used for latrine purpose. However the toilet remains non-functional, as the Head Mistress puts it, ‘In a situation where water is not available, the toilet which is simultaneously used for latrine purpose is in pathetically horrible condition’

The teacher sitting next to the Head Mistress said, ‘Student themselves fetch water by drawing from the pond which is few yards away from the school, but lots of complaint from the local people, drawing water from the pond is discouraged since students use latrine bucket while drawing water from the pond, the owner of the pond is also a Brahmin.’ The emphasis here is not so much on who owns the pond water but the bucket used simultaneously for latrine purpose is unhygienic to use for drawing water from a public pond used by the local for various
purposes- bathing, cooking and feasting etc. The teacher continued, ‘We vehemently complain about the problem of shortage of water, latrine and toilets to the Zonal education officer. But there’s no use of such complaints; we ourselves contribute money about Rs.400/ to Rs.500/ each to repair latrine work, it takes at least Rs.4000/ or Rs.5000/. Since it’s related to the work of cleaning latrine, there’s no way we can bargain, we just pay what’s demanded’.

On the issue of basic convenience such as drinking water facility, the cook narrated, ‘Drinking water is fetched by using the water pump installed in neighbouring village, called Khajiri Mamang Leikai, which is at a distance of almost 1 kilometer’. Shockingly, it is the elderly students of the school who fetch the drinking water, as she continued, In order to fetch forty litters of water per day, four or five children walk a distance of almost 1 kilometre two times a week on normal seasons but almost every day in summer season since the need of more drinking water increases. When the students find it difficult to fetch water repeatedly, I assist them’.

When the school fails to provide basic conveniences either the drinking water or toilet water, students are punished and bear the brunt of such deficiencies. It is an unusual form of treating students, offending the sense of justice for the helpless children; and is an indignity imposed on them, assaulting their self perception. This is morally an outrageous incidence where children from impoverished homes are forced to encounter an impoverished school that barely meets the basic requirements of quality schooling.

First of all, a school is a temple of learning and children come to school for learning. They are physically tender and need nurturing, instead of pushing them to any kind of drudgery. This illustrates that there is hardly any difference between home and school environment for the children in sample school if they are to be responsible for the inadequacies of school basic facility as the home account of these children indicate that an overwhelming ninety five percent of them engage in all types of odd household jobs, ranging from cooking, attending to cattle rearing, kitchen garden, sibling care, fetching water to firewood collection for kitchen etc.
Unwanted school experience of this kind by any school going child cannot be anybody's imagination, at least the parents' whose ethical sensibilities are offended. In the absence of such basic essential facilities such as the toilet facility or the drinking water facility, there is also every possibility that children are found missing from the class since they can easily move out either for toilet or in search of water or both and hence class room learning for these children may not take place at all, while they are the ones who are most in need of regular class attendance.

The sample school does not have first aid facility and children are not administered with immunization facility in which the facility must be made available for once a year. There is no regular medical check up facility in the school. Availability of medical help and immunization facility at school can drastically reduce health risk for school children but the cost is continued to be borne by poor households. Interestingly, in the absence of first aid facilities provided in the sample school, it is the teacher themselves who arrange for the basic first aid kits as shared by the concerned Hindi male teacher, 'Even though we can't do much about medical facilities, we keep ready for first aid stuff like cotton, bandage, needle, datol, ointment and necessary items of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic facilities available at the sample school</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drinking water facility</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity Connection and supply facility</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Toilet facilities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Separate toilet facility for girls</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs and tables for teachers in classroom</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desks, benches for students</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunization facility at school</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid Kits at school</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of regular medical check up</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almirahs available in classroom</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelves</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Survey, 2008
antiseptic at least'. In the sample school, there are no incentive schemes such as free uniform facilities for girls and attendance scholarships for girl. The provision is basically designed to facilitate the schooling of girl children in order to bridge the male–female gap in schooling. Yet, despite the absence of such facilities, the number of girl students in classes V was 22 outnumbering boy students forming as low as 13 while in class VIII, there was 16 girl students in which the number was the same as that of boys.

4.5 Distribution of Mid-Day Meal

Mid-day meal is one of the most important incentives to attract children to schooling and their ultimate retention in school. The sample school shows the potential usefulness of the incentive scheme of mid day meal\(^5\) that began distributing on 14\(^{th}\) November, 2004. Cooked rice is distributed while it is either the *Yensang* (sabzi) or *hawai* (dal) distributed to children on everyday basis. As per the official norm, cooked food is to be distributed for children studying in classes 1 to class V but; the school provides the facility for all students studying upto class VIII since the school considers it unfair for children who are studying in class VI and above.

There are no sufficient utensils for cooking as well as eating and drinking purpose such as plates and glasses. Three cooking utensils and one frying pan are donated by the school Head. Another problem explained by the cook is the non availability of a separate kitchen room where the meal can be prepared. Therefore the meal is compulsorily cooked in one of the classrooms adjacent to the classroom where classes are held. As complained by the cook, 'This creates major disturbance, children simply can’t concentrate on teaching- learning in the class as children become all the more hungry. With a chuckle, she said, 'It’s funny, their mouths start watering when they feel the smell of sabzi, but then, the smell of the,*Yensang* (sabzi) prepared and the fuel smoke in the kitchen causes great inconvenience for both students and teachers'.

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\(^5\) Even after six years, state governments failed to provide cooked meal and it was only after the intervention of the Supreme Court in November 2001, all state governments introduced cooked meal in primary schools within six months time (Jean Dreze and Aparajita Goyal:2003). However, some states complied while some others have not. When there was so much of corruption among politicians and the officials during the distribution of dry rations in the state of Manipur, the state has finally succumbed to the Supreme Court Order of November, 28, 2001 and the program was finally started during 2004 when SSA was launched in half haphazard manner.

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Despite such organisational difficulties of providing the mid day meal, one of the oldest serving teachers of the school explained the significance of mid day meal since parents reportedly send their children to school because of the food served in the school. She shared her lived experience as, ‘Distribution of cooked mid day meal is the best form; all children of the school come from families below poverty line; distribution of cooked food is great relieve for poor households living from hand to mouth. Most children come to school hungry. The Mid Day Meal facility has become a supporting mechanism for sustaining the school since majority parents send children to this school for the sake of food’. This suggests mid day meal scheme in the sample school is last but not the least hope of not only bringing children in the school but also retaining them in the school, because, for these parents, it is better for their children to be fed at school and the partial burden on them is over. When children are provided with meals at school, it is obvious that their families feed them less at home as teachers shared, the plight of the parents, ‘Some parents ask for distribution of mid day meal before sending children and if we say yes, they’re ever willing to send their children to our school’.

In actual situation, a child should be given 100 grams of protein consisting of milk and dal per day. The reason for such a provision is that such nutrients would support the nutritional intake of children and retain capacity and stamina so that the child’s concentration level is not diminished fast while relatively difficult disciplines such as mathematics, science lessons are taught in the afternoon period. A conscientious teacher who was keen to share her ten days’ training experience in the area of Mid Day Meal organized by All India Teachers Federation in the year 1995-1996 at Imphal, expressed her disliking and the quality of the food items distributed for mid day meal by the school. She argued, ‘It’s unwise to treat all states equally so far food items of distribution is concerned, for example, milk is a much desirable part of the food items to be distributed to children since there’s larger concentration of calcium in milk so that the child can concentrate till the last class. In case milk is not available, nung hawai (soyabean) can be distributed instead of distributing poor quality rice of 20 percent less collected on ration supply, which is quite smelly and making the children bored. We’re ready to prepare soyabean in our own pressure cooker from our own homes. But the government is not interested in changing food items that could be more nutritiously useful to children. The idea of mid day meal provision also
means supplementing the child’s nutrient that was deprived in the child when the child was in the mother’s womb.’

The same teacher expressed about having periodical fights and tensions with the Head teacher for her lack of enquiry when less number of bags of rice reaches the school. For example, as she continued, ‘Every month, the actual amount of sanctioned bags of rice is five but the school collects only two bags of rice’. Despite such tangible benefits of the programme on children of poor households, the scheme is implemented in a chaotic, haphazard manner and such lip service to children of the sample school in the name of school provision reveals nothing much beyond the extent of corruption at every level.

In another sense, this is clear evidence as to how schools address poverty as an important test of schooling system when other parameters are failed as evident in the present sample school. The idea is hostile for welfare state that envisages alleviating human miseries through compensatory programmes as legitimate entitlements not as charity. Government schools in the name of provisioning of welfare policies have become like charitable organisations where children of poor households take refuge in the name of schooling.

The argument, is, if expansion of social opportunities and choices of people through education can counterforce weights of constraints and all those difficult circumstances by virtue of being born into a poor family, the more crucial issue is the accountability of the state in the just provisioning of school education. Interestingly, the idea was the essence of the origin of the Compulsory Education Act, 1870 that first originated in Britain and later in British India which was, over a period of time, resulted into making elementary education fundamental right. The original aim of the Act was to bring educational reforms based on compensatory programmes. Reform through education was considered to be the most efficient mechanism for breaking the vicious cycle of poverty among the poor. The concept is, elimination of mass poverty requires simply helping children from poor families to escape from their situation by making them acquire of competencies to succeed and the best and the most efficient mechanism for breaking the vicious cycle of poverty is educational reform. Reform was thus the original objective of the Education Act 1870 to empower the poor, making their situations better. Despite such
reformative objectives, public schools today are still designed through the culture of poverty to maintain the distinctiveness of school poverty meant only for the poor.

4.6 Grievance Raised by the Cook and the Head Teacher On the Supply of Mid Day Meal: Logistic Delays

In interacting with the Head teacher and a couple of teachers, it was understood that state government does not sanction money not only on time but also sufficient amount and hence there is wide spread complaints against the delayed payment of cash for mid day meal programme.

The head teacher expressed her woes, 'Government sanctions money for ten or fifteen days instead of twenty days which is the official norm. In addition, as an official norm, mid day meal is served for children studying from class I to class V. But children of all classes including those studying in class VIII 're served food since the teachers are not comfortable to let these students just watch in hunger while the other students 're served food'. But it is the teachers who collectively bear the cost for the excess expenditure. Secondly, when less number of dry rations is distributed every month, it is natural that children are less fed than that is due to them.

For overall maintenance such as buying up for firewood, vegetables, and cooking materials, the school ties up with local shopkeepers as continued by the Head teacher, 'Since we don't receive money during the stipulated time, and payment is made after money is sanctioned on a much later date'. The Head teacher expressed the displeasure of bureaucratic hurdles, corruption and complained against the non receipt of a single paisa spent on mid day meal even for more than a year. In her complaint, she warned, 'The government has appointed only one cook instead of two as per the sanctioned norm. The cook who is also responsible for the work assigned to a chawkidar who functions alone without the assistance of a helper. In affirming the complaints of the Head Teacher, the cook added her share of complaint, 'With added responsibilities, I am at the same time underpaid; too painful, the actual pay is Rs2350/ per month; but Rs 200 /,Rs 300/ are deducted per month. There's huge burden on me. 'M the only one, who is actually managing the overall maintenance of the school without the help of chawkidar or any other helper, one helper should have been provided to me by now, but they aren't. Problems of water shortage and poor hygiene 're other common problems I have to often take care of'.
4.7 Corruption and Theft

A clean separate kitchen, away from classrooms is not only ideal but is recommended to prepare mid day meal so as not to distract classroom teaching. The sample school does not have the facility for a kitchen room nor does it have a kitchen box. In the light of the urgent need of such a separate room and also due to repeated complaints by the teachers demanding for the kitchen room, heaps of bricks and sandstones were parked within the school boundary. This was supposedly the material required for building the kitchen room. However the materials was no longer seen within few weeks as the Head teacher explained in a surprise tone, ‘Nobody’s aware about who kept the materials and when and for what purpose. These materials remained in one corner of the school boundary for few days; but suddenly on one fine morning, the building materials disappeared in the absence of the teachers’ knowledge. The materials ‘ere never brought back’.

The above incidence indicates lack of accountability, transparency and coordination between the school and the state education department. Even after the school community and the Education department is well aware of the fact that building a separate kitchen room is the crying need of the school, the plan was nipped in the bud due to corruption of the Education department and lack of vigilance on the part of the teachers’ community. The opportunity of building the separate kitchen room was lost due to which the school community continue to lament.

This is a case of stark illustration where the dynamics of corruption and unaccountability on the part of the state as an overwhelming powerful dominant is deeply entrenched, while on the other, the teacher community as a residual category remains dormant, strikingly distancing themselves from power politics, with the idea that their main role is just teaching and concern for children’s welfare. The state which is traditionally the symbol of the promoter of public school systems through its funding, regulation, management and control, all of which are important has become hostile to its own policies that are self contradictory.6

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6 When policy measures have been instituted specifically aiming at ameliorating conditions for the lower strata, they have either not been implemented and enforced or have been distorted so as to favour the not-so-poor and to discriminate against the masses. . . . Gunnar Myrdal : The Challenge of World Poverty
On the contrary, the availability of the facilities discussed above through the provisioning of school education constitutes the crucial aspect of quality education that can also powerfully influence learning improvement, enrolment, retention, completion of elementary stage and most importantly learner's achievement, such as the cognitive achievement, though it requires a separate treatment since the present focus does not deal with learner's achievement.

Quality of education is thus visualised in terms of its product or output that is the learner's achievement both in terms of scholastic and co-scholastic areas, i.e. the performance of various subjects of study, habits, attitudes, values, life skills necessary for becoming a good citizen though the present focus does not address the issue of learner's achievement. This is closely associated with the condition of learning and teaching environment. It is a complex issue to understand since it looks at attitudes, values etc. However the quality of education, though difficult to capture is of interest because of what it can do for people.

The difference between poor and quality education matters in terms of what, how and how much children learn. This remains not only a burning issue but also has caught the attention of many scholars who have interest in the way how equality of educational opportunity works and how it can be achieved in public schools where majority children of poor households attend. Because, in essence quality education and access to equal opportunity is an important potential instrument to help achieve greater equality between those who start life with different sets of economic and social advantages.

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7 Concept of equality of educational opportunity though powerful one( if achieved, can act as a great equalizer), is a complex issue particularly for a society where stratification based on various factors is high and rigid and when the state claims to be a welfare one such as the case of India. In a debate revolving around justice as an integral part of welfare state, Kathleen Lynch asserts that equality of opportunity is viewed as being dependent upon the existence of equal formal rights, equality of access and equality of participation to ensure equal rates of success for all groups of society through state intervention to prevent disadvantage. But the fundamental problems inherent in welfare state are the question of hierarchies of power, wealth and other privileges. As argued by Roger Dale, state is manned by various institutions. Welfare state is the comprehensive set of institutional arrangement inescapable of generating non-tuistic attitudes on its actors and hence the failure in its duty to facilitate the building of social capital. The case of Manipur is a glaring example of this kind.
The above argument is close to the structural-functionalist proposition such as that of Parsons and Durkheim who view education as an agent of social change, promoting greater social equality and social integration. Echoing Durkheim, education as a social fact, is a means of maintaining social solidarity, a necessary condition for the society to perpetuate itself, which is a sui generis. Making sense of Durkheim’s proposition is rooted in developing equally the potentials of every child of the society (if solidarity is expected to prevail in society, justice for all is what is required) through state run school system and such equal access is one of most important booms that can be provided in any democratic society in which the main task lies with the state. As the argument suggests, every individual has the right to develop themselves equally by creating equal opportunities for all by the state as a duty bearer.

The central debate is, school system is seen as a powerful institution through which societal reform can be undertaken by equalising school facilities for all children. Secondly expansion of such facilities is an essential requirement of more rapid elimination of gross inequalities in as much as the strongest impact of education has on the economy, governance and other host of factors including social stratification (Apple:1982) or else differential access to school accentuates inequities in economic and social opportunities. Sen and Dreze(1998) underline that it is a form of social apartheid when there is dual operation of inferior government schools for the underprivileged on the one hand, and the private schools where better infrastructure facilities are provided for the privileged on the other. In more or less similar concern, quoting, P.C Mahalanobis Mrydal’s in ‘The Challenge of World Poverty, articulates ‘By and large, it is the rich people who have the opportunity of giving their children the type of education required for posts of influence and responsibility in the country..... the power and privileges of a small group of people at the top tend to be not only preserved but strengthened .... This has created an influential group of influential people whose natural desire is to maintain their privileged position and power.’

The observation apparently presupposes the views of classical thinker such as Max Weber who views education as the source of new principle of control as instrumental rationality or bureaucratic domination, while the Marxian tradition treats education as site of ideological
reproduction of interest of the dominant class (Morrow R.A and Torres C.A: 1995,p.10). Both the views, though differ in fundamental ways anticipate debates that concerns about the education as a site of expression of cultural domination of the powerful few, whose self interest is fundamentally opposed to mass education. Quoting J.P. Naik, Myrdal, further points, ...

... educational development is benefiting the 'haves' more than the 'have nots'. 'This is a negation of social justice and planning proper'. Therefore, when schools are sharply and deliberately stratified, quality aspects of school education and how it reaches the children of poor households, as a matter of social justice, holds an important key issue in the discourse of education as a matter of right for the poor.

4.8 Human Dimensions of School Resources: The Teaching Staff

In ‘The Process of Schooling: A Sociological Reader’ Hammersley and Peter observe, when the new sociology of education began to affect research paradigms in the sociology of education in Britain towards the end of the 1960s⁸, it opened up a wide range of issues for investigation which was previously considered to be trivial. The new paradigm examines a number of interlocking relationships and interactions between school environment, teachers and students. One of these approaches is the sociology of inter-actionism.

The new paradigm underlines the significant role teacher’s play in classroom interaction with students as an important process of improving teaching-learning processes in classroom setting. The approach emphasises students’ perspectives to teachers, school environment, pedagogy, curriculum and overall school processes as the major areas of sociology of education, assessing quality schooling of children. Thus the new sociology of education began to examine non-physical dimensions such as teachers as one of the most important human resources and utilisation of their knowledge, skills, talents, time and wisdom that greatly influence the overall school environment specially the students as Gracey. He discusses in ‘The Craftsman Teachers’ (1976) that the teacher’s primary task is to present the curriculum in such a way that knowledge not only shall be acquired but that it will become part of the children’s general power to cope

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⁸Most of the works of the sociology of education in 1950s was concerned with the question of equality of educational opportunity within the framework of structural-functional approach. The horizon however came a rapid expansion with the accompanying of organisation theory, role theory, symbolic inter-actionism, phenomenology etc.
up with intellectual problems and personal difficulties, they not only become aware of a wider and wider world, but they feel deeply and vitally connected with it; and enabling the child to move from the world of childhood to the world of adulthood with a positive self feeling by establishing emotional, cognitive and authoritative ties with children.

In the sample school, despite many physical handicaps as discussed above, the study observed that few teachers in the sample school have taken the greatest challenge to keep the ball moving. One of the greatest challenges of effectiveness of the sample school comes from teachers' contribution to the overall functioning and sustaining of the sample school while other government schools are failing at a fast track.

4.9 Teachers' Qualification and On Training to be a Teacher

In the sample school, there are fifteen teaching staffs, two are males and thirteen are females. The gender bias in the teaching profession is no doubt skewed in favour of females, quite contrary to the usual phenomenon. It is in one sense positive since it reflects the official efforts of recruiting more female teachers. More than half of the teachers such as nine of them are trained while the remaining six are untrained. Nine teachers from the school were randomly selected and were asked a range of questions about his/her social background, training exposure and its usefulness in teaching, qualifications, experience in teaching, aspirations, their role and contributions to teaching and other additional roles they perform besides teaching.

The study observed that the teachers in the sample school are relatively privileged in terms of social status and comfortable in terms of economic security such as their salary status and other privileges when compared with their counter parts serving in private schools. On the issue of salary status, all teachers are satisfied with the amount they receive that ranges from Rs 800/ to Rs 15,240/ per month except the male teacher, appointed on ad hoc basis and is paid an amount of Rs 4500/ per month. All teachers who are enjoying permanent status are comfortable with their salary status but are extremely frustrated on receipt of salary after three or four months late.
While studying the teachers’ social background, the teaching force is drawn from all sections of society. All parents except that of one teacher are literates. They have completed functional literacy and elementary education. However occupationally, the parents are either farmers or engage in some form of family business. Only one father of a respondent was found to be a Sanskrit pundit, whose teaching profession has some amount of influence on the respondent, as a teacher. So long their economic status is concerned, all belong to economically better off families.
Teaching experience of these teachers ranges from 2 years to 25 years of time span. Of the total nine teachers interviewed, five of them are trained in the conventional sense of the term. The most common type of training they received is Junior Basic Training, B.T. and B. Ed, which usually last for two years. All teachers interviewed are quite sensitised about SSA programme in the state, though many have reservations and grieve about the way how SSA programmes are implemented. For example, as per the provisions of teachers' training under SSA, a teacher must be trained 20 days in service course each year, 60 days refresher course for untrained teachers already employed as teachers and 30 days orientation course for freshly trained recruits @ Rs.70/per day(Chapter1,p.9, SSA, Manual).

The above norms are however, by and large violated, for example, not a single teacher was given refresher course under SSA. The course content of training was not only patchy but also irrelevant. One teacher, teaching English for classes 111 and 1IV who attended training programme under SSA recently complained, 'The course content was a bit funny, I mean not suitable at all, it was irrelevant. The content of the training was designed basically for the lower class such as nursery classes and hence not suitable for teachers teaching higher classes'. Others expressed the usefulness of training programme designed for value education incorporating subjects like AIDS, STDs, problems of drug abuse and its prevention at school level etc. The response indicates a mixed reflection on the suitability of the course. But on the whole, the training failed to achieve the targeted goal since individual teachers were randomly picked up. Most teachers but consider the training course indeed useful and are helpful in teaching.

On the usefulness of other training programmes, a lady teacher who got the Junior Basic Training expressed a sense of satisfaction about the training she received, 'The training is helpful in classroom interaction with children in certain specific ways such as maintaining silence and discipline in the class and use those training methods of teaching I received during training, it is really useful. She further added, 'I keep them shut when I am angry'. Getting training on how to control, discipline and silence are the common training, most teachers had undergone. The idea conveyed is, discipline trains students and it makes them.
4.10 Inside the Classroom: Maintaining Order and Discipline

The exercise of discipline in classroom transaction presupposes a mechanism of controlling students in classroom so that a meaningful classroom orientation can take place between the teacher and the taught. Moral education and discipline are seen essential in teachers' training as commonly shared by almost all teachers. For Durkheim, disciplining the youngsters by the adults with humanitarian feelings is a kind of educational rehabilitation and this also implies a reform of pedagogy. Durkheim's argument need not be lost in unsympathetic critic, because, for him discipline over the youngsters could mean damage control from societal chaos and breakdown of institutions.

Yet, a teacher in a classroom can be overwhelmingly powerful to the extent that the classroom situation is completely under the teacher's control. A teacher can show her tantrums, moods, temperaments and gestures of all kinds. The school through its agencies such as the teachers becomes a sort of permanent observatory where the pupil is subjected to habits, rules, orders, in which the obedient subject is constructed by a technique called discipline. Interestingly, as the teacher commented on the importance of training and controlling of students, it points to the important observation of how classroom interaction between the teachers and the taught in many ways reflect ways teachers exert control and discipline among students.

In an interaction process of teacher with students of class VIII in the sample school, it could be noticed how teachers are concerned with classroom control in instructional phases of lessons. On the one hand, the teacher sets out to engage and maintain the attention and effort of students to motivate their participation, while simultaneously trying to seek control the extent, nature and timing, classroom official rules of maintaining discipline and distribution of students' participation to control lesson topic.

The social science teacher while setting the stage off ensured that all students completed home assignments, while simultaneously checking all students have access to the necessary materials so that they will have no excuse for future inattention on the grounds that they are searching for them.
The teacher-students conversation are as follows:

Teacher: Right, children, look in front. (Students look up, try to be attentive). Before we proceed, can I ask you all if you have completed yesterday's homework or not?

Students: Yes Ma'm (some of them look distracted since they have not done their assignment, that too from boy's side, boy and girl students sit separately).

Teacher: Bring all your exercise copies, submit it immediately, then we go for next lesson, a' right.

All students rush to the teacher's table with exercise copies at their hands (while some sit back, mostly from boys' side only, all copies are kept on the table for checking during her free time).

Teacher: Ok. Those who did not do homework, get up. (Students did not bother yet to get up).

Boys are you hearing me up. I said get up, come here (It seems that those who usually don't perform homework without genuine reason get beaten up two times of canning).

Teacher: Come! I said, hurry up, we're wasting time unnecessarily (As it appears these students are habitually neglectful of their home assignment and get canning regularly).

All eyes of the students look towards the boy's side. Four Five of them get up. Shyly, they slowly move towards the teacher who is waiting with a cane at her hand.

Teacher: Stand in row. Why did you forget what I said? Tell me why; stretch your hand, hum! Ehh! Ehh! (Two times canning were given to the palm of each of the students in row) but leaving the last one who is a girl student. This in one way is demonstrative of the teacher's claiming of being superior position vis-a-vis the students when fellow students loss faces before other fellow students because they were penalised as wrong doers before their own peer students. Secondly, physical punishment by the teacher demonstrates the superior position of teachers to the students.

Student: Ma'm I had chicken pox; I could not do (In meek tone, keeping head down).

Teacher: Oh! How many months? Are you a' right now.

Teacher: How many months, you weren't seen in class for long.

Student: Yes, M' feeling better.

Teacher: Have you vaccinated? I have to ask your parents, were u you given full round vaccination? If you hadn't, don't come. It's dangerous for other children. But she was not concerned why other students failed to perform home assignment.
Students: All are quiet, except one or two boys try to snatch books from fellow students. Yet, they are under control.

Except the girl student, reasons for the students’ failure to perform home assignment were due to lack of necessary item such as the textbook of social studies. The school promises to distribute textbooks but failed to do so on time.

The interaction of the classroom was often disturbed by the heavy noise of shouts by children of class V1 from the next classroom. At interval, the disturbance caught the attention of both teacher and students. The teacher was repeatedly feeling signs of disturbance, rushed to the next class, gave one shouting, who is your teacher, what subject are you having, go and ask for a substitute teacher. We aren’t able to hold class. The teacher comes back, looks at the students straight and asks them to maintain silence to begin lesson. It also shows that she is simultaneously keeping a check on the behaviour of students in classroom so that she can set off her lesson teaching.

Thus making the classroom environment as official environment and serious not funny, important, not trivial, gospel not moonshine, powerful not puny, interest consuming, not as a casual background and thus as grounds for enthusiastic participation, not yawns and arguments etc.(Hammersley:1976, p.109) – all add up as responsible etiquette on the part of teachers in classroom interaction with students.

Another element of exercising teacher’s control and her authority in classroom interaction are through putting students to task of making them answer to questions discussed in the classroom after being taught such as reading out in classroom as generally followed by majority teachers.

There is cyclical interaction of negotiation in classroom situation. The teacher provides frequent slots for the participation of students asking questions integral to the topic she is expounding, thus using student’s motivation to take part to generate attention and learning sort of. This was seen commonly practised in classroom process of the sample school, most probably due to the fact that teachers cannot control students through pure coercion which is often difficult to achieve.

The classroom encounter was seen constituted by the teacher via the enforcement of certain rules defining student activity that could be identified as knowledge and meritorious, intelligent,
unintelligent and lazy students who either confirm or defy classroom norms. All these myriad classroom culture can be grasped from a classroom setting and that too during teacher’s interaction and students while teaching topic wise lessons. In a situation of such setting, the teacher works to organize the gathering of students in a way that the teacher is the hub, a focal point of attention and interaction. The teacher spends a bulk of her time facing the students, talking to all of them simultaneously while maintaining a balance of attention to all. For this the teacher starts official classroom proceedings by setting the stage for the lesson rather than starting it off straight.

In a conversation of a lady teacher teaching social studies of class V, the teacher begins the chapter related to Hunger Marcher’s Day and Women’s War in Manipur. Let us observe the following conversation:

*Teacher:* (standing right in the middle of the classroom) what’s today’s new lesson? Children.
*Students:* Ma’m, Ma’am, ahh, ahh

Teacher: Com’ on, it’s nothing new. You all know it. What we’re going to discuss is very popular indeed.

Teacher: Pointing to the student sitting in the last row, extreme right, tell me what you remember about today’s lesson, I briefed you all yesterday.

Student: He stands up, keep mum, no utterance of any word.

Teacher: (With sympathetic tone, looks at the student) sit down; be quiet, all of you.

Teacher: Look at Chapter No. 6 ‘An Educational Journey’. (Students open pages, search for the chapter).

Teacher: Got it right! All of you, ok, children. Be attentive, after the lesson, we discus questions at the back, ok, be attentive( two three students sharing the same book snatch the book from each other, immediately place it in middle after small scuffle and remain quiet). The teacher starts reading the text as follows:

In the history of Manipur, 27th August is observed as Hunger Marcher’s Day in memory of those who died in the struggle for food. The policy of rice export was pursued as a part of colonial administration for long. The catastrophe occurred during Moirang Koireng, the first Chief Minister of Manipur in 1965. Before the outbreak of war against hunger, on 12th December in
1939, people of Manipur suffered tremendously due to shortage of food. Yet, the government allowed businessmen to sell rice outside Manipur. Rice was continuously exported and hence the people faced shortage of food for their own consumption. In protest against the unjust treatment, women of Manipur began to hit the rice mills with sticks. That time women used to pound and grind with their own hands. Women marched to the state durbar as a sign of protest against the state. But these women were charged with bayonets (sharp knife stuck to the tip of a rifle). This led to the famous women’s war of 1939 in the history of Manipur. The women’s agitation of 1939 was one of the most important events in the colonial history of Manipur. The deep rooted cause of the movement was directly related to the irregularities and malpractices in the administration of the state. Just after the establishment of the colonial rule, the outside traders gradually began to capture the monopoly of trade which at one time was under the management of womenfolk. Under the free trade policy introduced by the colonial government, the British authority began to export a large quantity of rice from Manipur. Beginning from the period of 1897-98 in 1925, the export policy began to assume a peculiar character and after this the Marwari traders began to take over the monopoly of the export industry from the local traders. As a result of this the price of rice rose up rapidly and it touched a dangerous situation. The immediate cause of the outbreak of the women’s movement was directly related with prevailing the export policy of the authority and milling activities of the Marwari traders. The serious economic problem created by the colonial authority was further intensified by the shortage of food grains due to which many went on hunger without food.

Soon after the text is read out, questions given at the back of the text was discussed. Few questions read by the teacher include:

*Teacher: What is Hunger Marcher’s day?*

*Teacher: She looks at students all around (suggesting students to involve).*

All students remain quiet, no sign of participation, few students look on, and the room is silent.

*Teacher: She goes on reading questions and answering the questions too in a running manner.*

(Students keep turning the pages of the book, trying to catch up and figuring out. The classroom remains silent)
The above method employed in classroom interaction by the social science teacher is one way in which teachers generally try to control classroom interaction by engaging the students in light conversation to attract students’ attention. An interaction of this sort may not demand to test the student’s knowledge or intelligence. In talking to the whole class and engaging them, the teacher is constantly checking the behaviour of signs of intention and attention of the students.

However, sometimes when teacher tries to control classroom interaction through slots of questions, this may not be enough for teachers to command student’s attention and maintain classroom under her control. In such situation a teacher may employ certain parameter such as introducing something but interesting issue to the students apart discussing lesson topics. Such a topic can be well beyond the knowledge of the students but something the teacher is really familiar with.

Beyond the lesson topic, a teacher of English literature in the sample school was found interacting with students about a rare flower found in Manipur and the process of planting and rearing up the plant in a unique way. In a classroom of 14 to 15 dyads (students) of class V111, the teacher was standing at the right hand corner, holding the text book at her hand. She was the hub, the focal point of student attention at that very moment, all eyes of the students glued to the direction where she was standing.

The teacher begins as follows:

*Teacher:* It’s very interesting if you really would like to know the process of planting leihao in your own homes. Leihao is a Joy Perfume Tree, also known as Champa in Hindi. It is a golden yellow flower; grown on a large evergreen tree with a close tapering crown composed of ascending branches with extremely sweet heady fragrance. This fragrance has made leihao a delicate and very popular flower among households in Manipur. They are used in religious offering. First of all, it’s an expensive flower, a rare flower. By planting leihao at your own homes, you can continuously make earning. That way you can generate income continuously. I tell you the very productive method of planting the flower and how to grow it fast. You all can
practice it at home; it's a very simple process. She began the narration of the plantation as follows:

Teacher: You mix soil with gobber and hair. Hair is not to be wasted as we do after cutting it. We often cut our hair and throw them away waste. But you don't know how hair is such an important ingredient in enhancing the fast growth of leihao. If you put some quantity of hair in the soil mixed it with gobber for few days, when the hair starts decaying, it is an excellent fertilizer for the growth of leihao. Once growth takes place, it branches out at a fast speed; the branches can be cut into sections and again grow them in the same process. One can go on with the process in a cyclical manner. Selling the flower on regular basis can generate good amount of income for you without much effort. This way you can easily meet your day to day expenses.

During the above narration, firstly, students found the process of growing leihao in their own homes quite an amazing story to listen to that could be gauzed from the absolute silence maintained in the classroom. It also indicates that the skill or the knowledge of a teacher can be a powerful weapon to exercise her authority in the classroom. And the authority is recognised by her students. Presenting the authoritative appearance and possession of superior knowledge is considered not only normal but also essential with an expectation of students conforming to the claimed status of the teacher. The argument bolters Basil Bernstein’s observation when he argues that every aspect of schooling is part of the controlling process that operates at two levels. Firstly, the teacher has control over students and knowledge in classroom. And the failure to maintain control is to seen as weakness and hence lack of authority and of being exploited by students.

Secondly teachers due to their prolonged proximity with students on day to day basis have legal right to comment on, and hence control the clothing, hairstyles, footwear, language, behaviour and cultural interest of their pupils. In addition, society gives teachers the right to access to what is called, ‘guilty knowledge’ about pupils (Chapman Karen: 1986). The main argument is teachers become too knowledgeable about the pupils and their backgrounds that a particular trait or characteristic can be made for particular students. This leads teachers to unfairly invade to the personal lives of the students and their backgrounds, and chances are that students are treated
differently. This is one of the important observations found in the present study. For example, when the question, ‘if children opt for private tutor or not when they fail to understand much of what is taught in the classroom was put’, the same teacher responded, ‘All children have come from families below the poverty line, their parents continuously struggle for a living, their life is hard, how can it be possible to afford private tutor, not possible, I really don’t think so; I have experienced the situation of paying fees for them since they’re extremely poor; we teachers always contribute’. The opinion is commonly shared by majority teachers though few admit that very less number of children may perhaps opt for private tutor. She further added, ‘These students’re uncared ones by their parents, whether they’re getting education or not is their least priority;’ anyways, parents nowadays’re educated unlike before. But, they’re always busy in search of their food. Clothes worn by these children are unclean, so dirty, no father, no mother cares’.

It suggests that the parents of these students as completely incapable of thinking of children’s education and engagement in anything except survival issues. Though survival issues remain crucial, the observation is to a large extent wary to be believed since the idea does not correspond with the response and opinion of overwhelming parents regarding the education of their children and more significantly, when schooling norm in the region has acquired social dimensions. Another sociological dimension is; in majority households, the middle class value is a reference group for poor households in terms of education, occupation and income and parents are the main communicators to their children for such values though vertical mobility, in most cases, takes the form of inter-generational form.

4.11 Methods of Teaching
A combination of correlated factors such as effective use of teaching-aids, preparation of lesson plans, supervision of class work, correction of home work improves the method of imparting quality teaching in any school (Roy, Jayashree: 2003, p.116). Most common methods, teachers used while teaching in the class are textbooks study, verbal instruction, chalkboard, demonstration, briefings of the lesson to be taught, photo chart, plan book and group assignment. It was found that teachers while using the above methods of teaching in the class gave much time and took pains to make the students understand what is taught in the class.
Most teachers appear to be committed to their profession of teaching and making children gain of such efforts.

Innovative methods such as the use of projector, slides are not used for want of regular electricity supply. All teachers did not use demonstrative methods in science, or social studies classes except that one teacher was found holding up a torn chart while teaching geography of class VIII. Exciting and enriching study methods such as field visits are avoided due to security reasons as explained by the Hindi teacher, ‘We avoid taking children to the field as it's not safe outside; few teachers manage, but hardly anyone of us can manage, I can say’.

The subjects taught in class V111 were Manipuri, English, Hindi, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Teachers were found committed to the traditional roles that practicing teachers usually perform, but, are under severe constraints to deliver the much needed progressive education to the deprived children since the much needed infrastructure and basic facilities are lacking in the sample school. However, all teachers were satisfied with the content of course curriculums arguing that the content of these curriculums were designed locally suitable and relevant for children, though the English Paper 1 of class V111 complained, ‘The content is good but the language is not upto the mark; but I believe it’s ok since we aren’t English speaking community’. Another Hindi teacher complemented the curriculum as, ‘Most relevant since every possible local culture and literature is taken into consideration while making the syllabus. Famous local personalities, historical events and local festivals which are quite memorable ones for the people of Manipur are translated in Hindi’.

While interacting with teachers as to whether children could understand what they were teaching in the class, it differed from individual teachers to teachers though majority agreed that children could understand what were taught in the class as quoted by the lady teacher who is teaching English for class V, ‘Almost 75 percent of my students understand what I teach .

9 Concept of Progressive Education and its application to school education is of extreme significance in making teaching-learning in classroom a meaningful and joyful learning experience. The process has powerful impact on young children since the main orientation of the curriculum in progressive education is focused on the needs and interest of the child, providing ample opportunities for children to choose activities and develop at their individual pace.
discuss in the class; those whose mental faculty is active, unlike those weak students don't find it difficult to understand my teaching’. Yet she admits the fact that combined factors such as school as well as home contribute to the children’s learning capability. The lady teacher who is teaching Natural Science admitted, ‘At least 20 percent of my students don’t understand; these students can’t cope up in whatever way since I teach in such a way that students understand’. The teacher is resentful about the lack of science kits made available for children because of which no practical work can be done in the classroom. This can greatly discourage a child’s learning and comprehension capacity about a particular topic.

4.12 Teachers Beyond the Territory of Teaching as a Vocation

Majority teachers of the sample school show that they consider the job of teaching as serious vocation since a miniscule of them cited convenient reasons for taking up teaching job as their profession rather than as vocation, as one lady teacher expressed, ‘It was unfortunate that I was always keeping unwell because of which I couldn’t go for an alternative job, though I have come from science background, could have joined other profession, but I couldn’t, so my last choice was to take up teaching’. This view suggests teaching vocation as the last resort when one fails to get other job opportunities. This is an idiom in which a teacher expresses the society’s perception about the profession of teaching job as low and thereby less committed to her teaching job. An English lady teacher said, ‘As a woman, I want to take care of my house and teaching job is not tough, manageable and very compatible with family life, yet for this teacher, comfort is not the only matter in her mind’, as she continues, ‘I have passion for the love and affection of children, this is always there with me. School is seen as an extension of family; we direct children since school is a second home for children’. A conscientious teacher who is teaching general sciences said, ‘Teachers’ training sensitises us to the extent that we’re able to cultivate a sense of empathy for students as our own children. This really helps us in changing our outlook and attitudes; these’re great responsibilities shouldered upon us with the teaching job, we can’t think of our school children as someone else’ children’.

Drawn from this observation, for some teachers, teaching could be treated as a vocation taken up for various reasons not solely for the comfort it gives but also the satisfaction it serves to the individual teacher. The Hindi male teacher who is teaching Hindi expressed similar articulation.
He said, 'Through teaching profession one can help the building up of future generations and it's possible to spread the light of education through teaching'. Here the role of teaching as viewed is overwhelming. Societal building through educating generations of children is considered the key role of a teacher. It also conveys how the job of teaching as a vocation, unlike those of others, is profoundly challenging since the destiny of a nation is linked to the vocation of teaching. This also views how teaching as a vocation is perhaps the noblest profession as we traditionally look at it. Others emphasized the importance of the subject they are teaching in imparting knowledge to children, for example, a lady teacher who is teaching Hindi of class V111 expressed, 'I teach Hindi literature. The importance of Hindi as a national language and its usefulness particularly when one travels beyond the boundary of Manipur is a known fact; it's an important discipline'. She seems to be delighted to emphasize the importance of Hindi language and to be a teacher of a discipline as important as the national language. Similarly, a lady teacher who is teaching Manipuri literature expresses that the syllabus covers a good portion of the history of Manipur, sculptor of the region and updating the children with such background and knowledge is quite an amazing experience. Most teachers appear to have made good strides to make students feel comfortable, make them learn something of what they teach and also make them aware of their efforts. The Head Mistress is also vigilant about the teaching-learning process taking place in classrooms by observing while teachers are teaching in class, checking teacher's class notes, examining children's performance in test etc.

All students interacted were found their teachers cooperative, understanding, loving and caring. The relationship between teachers and students in the sample school goes beyond classroom interaction. This could be noticed in the ways how the teachers are concerned in terms of extra attention they give to the students both in material and moral aspects. For example, there were cases when teachers had to pay fees or purchase stationery for students who cannot afford to do so, which is a regular phenomenon. Children do not want to be deprived of; but, to be comforted with necessary items of learning in sufficient amount. But, very often, the school faces shortage of stationery items such as pens, pencils and even the exercise copies since learning for children takes place randomly and in the process one cannot afford to face such shortages. It is the teachers who have to make up for such shortages. Extra activities the Head mistress initiates in the school is the conducting of quiz programmes. This as she expresses adds good taste to
student life and free them from daily monotonous routine life. The programme is organized for every fifteen/twenty days. Any concerned teacher who is interested is involved and money is contributed by all teachers to conduct the programme. Winning prizes on such occasions is a great excitement for students. With delight, she continued proudly, ‘Our students win prizes at state level competitions’.

As observed in the present study, the job of teaching is fairly seen from a social perspective in a fairly wide social context, and hence teachers do not perform a mere classroom job that sees the immediate needs and the precedence of classroom situation of the students. They take into the accounts of families of the students as well. This is more pronounced in a community where there is similarity of ethnic background, homogeneity and a sense of belongingness such as the case of Manipuri society.

Teachers as the sample school suggest seem to be quite knowledgeable about home accounts of students. Teacher’s knowledge of the fabric of social life of the students is developed due to everyday routine face to face interaction and shared understanding what Harold Garfinkel terms as ethnomethodology. It is this ethnomethodology which seems to be unimportant at first turns out to be fundamental to the fabric of social life of the students, which teachers with a sense of humility cannot feign ignorance. It is this very micro level fabric of social life of the students that is needed to be taken into account by policy considerations of macro level institution such as the state.

Influenced by existential condition of their students, it invokes a sense of empathy, considerateness and co-operation in teachers towards the students as the social science teacher narrated, ‘When there’s sudden band and strike in the region, we provide cycles to tribal students who come from a farther distance of seven kilometres to ensure that they reach home safely; I remember we teachers collectively paying school fees for at least about ten students every year; the school admits orphan students and students who top in the class free of cost; we sell stationery items at lower rate than those at market prices; say, the rate of an exercise copy in our school is sold at Rs.7/, which is Rs.10/ at market rate’. Though all teachers seem to be keen on promoting the welfare of children in their small ways, very few teachers stood apart
from the rest in terms of compassion, sacrifice and commitment for their students. The overall observation finds the work of a school teacher as an arena where education and social justice condense when state accountability fails.

At one level the teachers thus command genuine appreciation for all the good strides and the sort of caring and permanent relationship they make with the students. But there is always the fear of what is transmitted in the minds of the students. The 'hidden curricula' that is taught by the school through different ways: the attitudes and values of the teachers towards the students, the atmosphere of the school, the building, the room layouts, the broken furniture, the damaged shabby school wall and the overall environment of the school, not just the official curriculum. To cite a concrete example, it could be said that lack of facilities and poor environment of the sample school is, otherwise, conveniently used by the teachers to partly blame the students' home economic poor background that appears to be reinforcing for each other. On the one hand, the school fails to provide even the basic minimum teaching-learning requirements that is essential to constitute a school, leave alone quality education, and on the other, parents are blamed for their inability to afford even the necessary stationery items required to formally learn at least the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, in a sense, functional education.

What is worrying is, therefore, the impact of the messages, a failed school, transmits to the children. The backwardness and impoverishment of the school environment with which the child interacts daily, gets imprinted in the mind of the child unconsciously, become a part of the self, that affects the perception of the student's self. The teachers' constant reference to children as impoverished ones, who are incapable of escaping from their social-economic position, bears negative images on one's self.

The symbolic character of an attitude of this kind instils a sense of resignation, numb and submissiveness in the students. The idea is, the student, being a person, his sense of his own identity; his feeling that what kind of a place he has in the world depends on how he is being perceived and treated by others such as the teachers in classroom situation and his perception about self is the product of such interaction with other social beings. The teacher as a powerful agency of school processes and the school 'live on' in the child. In this process, the
child is a helpless lot, for he would not be what he is unless he does interact with such agencies. This, according to Ralf Miliband suggest that schools perform a class conforming role for the low income children and instils in the pupils what Emile Durkheim calls society’s fundamental values, which according to Miliband is sanctioned by the dominant forces in society. Both the debates offer contextualised significance.  

A brief examination about the home front of children interacted indicates that different households create environments that influence children’s intellectual growth and educational motivation. Two different environments are created in different ways when one parent ignores the child’s questions of studies but another parent makes a point of reading to the child every day. For a considerable number of children, parental support for children’s education in the sample school is indeed alarming since majority parents, despite having completed certain stage of education continuously struggle for a living, and hence unable to spend quality time with children at home. Going by the occupational status of the fathers of the students, it is revealed that 20% belong to service sector such as peons, chawkidar, clerks in government office, 45% are farmers, 25% are construction workers/carpenters, brick makers, while the remaining 10% do not engage in any gainful occupation. Mother’s occupation reveals that 15% of them are engaged in farming or cultivation, 10% weave, 5% engage in business, 45% are vegetable sellers while the rest 25% does not engage in any economic activity. The educational status of parents reveal that 23% of parents are illiterate, 15% parents have completed primary education, while the remaining 52% have completed elementary education. While looking at study facilities available at home, 60% students have separate rooms for study as against the 40% students who are deprived of such facilities. 95% do not have access to drinking water facility and fetch the same from nearby distance. More than 40% children do not have a separate place or a room to study. In majority households of this type, there is no separate kitchen room and the degree of disturbance in the child’s study is high. 35% of children strongly dislike their home environment due to overcrowding, sibling disturbance and overall dull and uncaring environment.

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10 Because for Durkheim, school children as members of society are subjected to the school regime, for schools transmit both general values providing the necessary homogeneity for social survival, group solidarity and the specific skills demanded by the society.
Presumably, children hailing from such background are difficult to handle. This makes the task of the teachers all the more difficult. Though most children are not first generation learners, do not seem to be academically helped by parents at home despite majority parents have completed certain stage of schooling and education. The fact is, most parents of the sample school children, come back home after hours of hard and physical toil with bodies exhausted and minds dull and sluggish, with worries for the next uncertain day, leaving little possibilities to provide even the much needed moral support for their children's education at home. Coupled with the endless household chores children perform, learning difficulties for these children could also arise from cumulative factors such as poor nutritional intake and poor health, since some children admitted their inability to concentrate on studies because of dizziness caused by low blood pressure and anaemic. In addition, when there is dearth of supply of textbooks, stationery items at school, a child makes constant nagging to his/her parents to supplement his/her stationery items, school tuition fees and school uniforms. For example, a household makes yearly payment of Rs160 per child studying in class V while it is Rs 170 for children studying in class VIII. Yet, the Head teacher shared about the plight of parental poverty, 'Some households still look for school that charges lower rate of tuition fees, we're charging minimal rate but they feel it high, we give stationeries at concessional rate too'. The reality is, free education is not really free; schooling of children is indeed costly and sometimes unaffordable affair for parents who are survivors or earning intermittent income.

Poverty to this extent is certainly a real issue. Everyday life for majority of these social groups is dragged into making both ends meet, living from hand to mouth. An existential situation of this kind deprives their enabling opportunity to fight individually or collectively against the unjust treatment meted out to them, further rendering themselves virtually helpless and socially dislocated. For example, when enquired about the existence and effectiveness of Parent Teacher Association in the sample school, all sampled teachers responded negatively with disappointment. The School Head said, 'With dogged perseverance, I tried to gather parents of

11 Article 51-A (K) of the Indian Constitution as incorporated in the Right to Education Bill, 2005, makes it fundamental duty of every parents to provide every opportunity for their children's education at home which will be read by the courts as the provision of educational facilities being a fundamental duty of the parents/guardians. However the article is under heavy criticism since many individual households live in grinding poverty, failing to provide learning opportunities for children at home.
the school to arrange such a meeting by announcing and inviting the parents on the usefulness and requirements of forming PTA through mike. In her typical expression, she continued, 'My purpose of using the mike is that every parent in the nearby locality could hear my announcement, come together to form PTA.'

The school Head went a step ahead attempting to form PTA so that dialogues of sharing between teachers and parents could be initiated to help better understanding between parents and teachers as responsible partners in school processes. Despite such efforts, no PTA meeting has taken so far, poverty of the parents being the reason. But the reality is that these parents are precisely the social categories to contest the views of the policy makers and implementers on the schooling of their children.

In the context that several households are under the weight of severe economic constraints, greatly undermining their role in school participation, many scholars view the strengthening of school supply factors as most crucial that can positively impact on capacitating both parents and children in school participation. This leads to the more crucial issue, i.e. making basic education functioning for the system to deliver. Hence a more meaningful debate could be on those issues of rights, obligations and duties of the state. Constraints due to poverty of children in school participation can be drastically alleviated by appropriate intervention, most notably by improving the provision of basic education facility that addresses the aspect of quality schooling.

Accountability therefore is the number one factor that can do wonders. Unfortunately, the sample school hardly meets the basic requirements of what constitutes quality aspects of school, if the physical aspects, ancillary facilities and teaching learning aids are taken into consideration. The uncared deteriorated school building, scarcity of textbooks and stationeries, extreme shortage of teaching-learning material aids of all kinds, and worst is the non-functioning of basic convenience and facility such as the school toilet and non-availability of drinking water facility are collectively accounted to demonstrate the level of impoverishment of the sample school. This further demonstrates poverty of public school persistently fail children in poverty by experiencing a pattern of persistent deprivation in the quality of teaching-learning, limited range and depth of learning opportunities. This suggests reasons why children who have completed
basic education and who are currently at the stage of elementary education have not been able to attain much of functional literacy.

In the sample school, the deterioration of teaching-learning standards in the sample school has gone far beyond to be explained. Most children, who were interviewed in the sample school, were found inarticulate, lacked skills for comprehension and interaction were found to be tough and most students were holding back, introvert while some looked blank. The study observed that each student needed to be monitored individually so that some meaningful information could be sought from them. At interval, majority children looked up completely blank and needed to be monitored repeatedly with dogged patience. Even for the simplest and non complicated question, they were required to be explained repeatedly, then, only could one gather some meaningful information from them. The process was assisted by the cook since she was the last person who usually stays back in the school till the last hour. The experience with the children, learning in class VII and Class VIII indicated that even the minimum levels of learning have not been achieved which should have been achieved at the stage of the completion of class V. The more pernicious burden is that of non-comprehension. This may discourage children from attending school regularly. Irregular attendance, repetition, and dropping out of school is a huge waste of resources; since the school is run through public funding and the children attending the school is also from poor background, a situation in which the wastage is greatest where it can be least afforded.

The sample school largely reflects the general failure of the state to deliver with startlingly naïve vision about the educational effects of this kind on future course of life of the students. Deep corruption among state officials and lack of vision among politicians with its circular causation with cumulative effects are the most cited factors. Gunnar Myrdal in his book, 'The Challenge of World Poverty' while describing the post independence era argues that large scale graft by politicians and higher officials spread downward to petty bribery. Corruption is so deeply entrenched to the extent that it is accepted as a rational way of unavoidable functioning as a social fact. T. Tarapot (2005) in 'Bleeding Manipur', describes some political masters in Manipur utterly selfish, opportunist and self centred who are hopelessly corrupt, parochial and
short sighted with no principle or ideology\textsuperscript{12} but do whatever is possible to grab power and come to power.

In the state, there is widespread political violence in the form of corruption that plays the role of oxygen for black money, which in turn provides the oxygen for corruption. And when accepted as a way of life, distorts the social set of values with the damaging consequence for the poor and the poorest of the poor. Corruption and injustice that are interlocking is twin set of values that systematically and criminally neglect quality education; because of which educational right of children in the state remains a remote prospect. For example, distribution of dry rations to schools is almost crippled in the state since grains were reportedly transported to individual private homes of high ranking officials including the chief minister. Similar form of corruption takes place in case of purchase of other necessary items such as furniture of the school, siphoning of school developmental funds etc. In the process the whole issue of quality concerns of education is pushed in the back burner, while it should be the number one issue that could hold the future of the students in good stead.

When accountability fails, school children of poor households are the hardest hit since such action, by striping of reasonable school facilities, denies them even the very limited options that are there for their social mobility through schooling. This also defeats the hopes and dreams of parents and eventually student themselves who regard schooling as a key to higher income and status which is particularly crucial, for social mobility may mean difference between lifelong entrapment in poverty and descent living. If not immediately associated with status and income, an important reality is that exposure to qualitatively better school facility can have other psychological effects too, on individual students who delightfully shares about his/her day to day exciting school experience with the immediate society she/he is such as extended families, friends, neighbourhoods etc.

\textsuperscript{12} Ideology is always associated with a particular mode of social thought whose content includes programmatic elements intended to influence the political activity. It originally belonged to the time of French Revolution and hence mainly associated with reform movement. Maurice Cranston: 1966. Therefore, what kind of social values that holds good for a society much depends on a particular ideology of powerful elites whose vision shapes the state agenda.
4.13 School Education and Violence

School education is caught up like a cobweb in every social eventuality at any given point of time in the state. Putting the issues into perspective, the main approach is to examine what kind of impact conflict and violence has produced on school education.

Interview with the school teachers of the sample school agreed the virtual seizure of regular attendance of children and normal school functioning by violent conflict and other forms of trafficking such as bands, general strikes, economic blockade in the state. Teachers interviewed were administered with the following questions to examine their reflections on the extent of sabotage and damage violence has caused to the sample school.

Table: 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers' opinion on the impact of violence on school education</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. It demoralises both the teachers and the taught</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. It undermines regular functioning of schools</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. School remains closed when violence occurs in the region</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. *School infrastructure is destroyed</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. It affects transport and communication system</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. It creates a sense of insecurity among children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. It forces young children to protest in the street</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. It creates psychological stress among children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. It affects the general academic performance of children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Parents are apprehensive of sending their children to school</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Survey, 2008

*In the recent past violent insurgents used to destroy school property such as computer, school walls, benches, and chairs when schools failed to respond to their demands. Such damage was allegedly committed to unrest the government, since schools are identified with state authority.
Conflict and violence ranging from ethnic clash, economic blockade, closure of National Highway No.39, bloody killings, and disappearance of individuals, students to general strikes, bandhs, hartals and counter insurgency movement by armed forces critically sabotage school education in variety of ways as mentioned above. School teachers unanimously agree on the above issues of school education as highly disrupted by occasional violence which takes in the form of conflict, bands, strikes, and economic blockade. When violence occurs, children have to naturally stop coming to school, experiencing a typical experience of educational emergencies. Violence affects all those participants in school processes- the teacher community, the students and the parents.

13 National Highway No.39 forms the lifeline for the economy of Manipur as it is the only viable road linkage between Manipur and the rest of the country. In the route between Manipur and Dimapur, there is long hill track of Nagaland where insurgents of both Nagaland and Manipur origin operate randomly. The National Highway forms the only mainline where transportation of essential commodities are brought into the state of Manipur from the rest of the country. Transport and communication facilities are very often disrupted by both civil unrest and insurgents to unrest the state government. In times of such emergencies and economic blockades, the position of the state of Manipur and the difficulties encountered by people is critically vulnerable than one could ever imagined.

14 Armed-conflict and counter insurgency movement in the state of Manipur has historical setting. There are more than 20 armed opposition insurgent groups in the state. Their demand ranges from granting separate statehood to self determinism. In the past every factional group used to engage in fights against the Armed forces. These insurgents feel that India has done little for the state, taking away raw materials but doing little in return. The Indian army is like 'an army of occupation'. On the other hand the failure of the Government is evident in the extremely scarcity of job avenues and the young are disillusioned. When these youths are not potentially absorbed, they become easy targets for any of these movements and are reportedly trained in neighbouring countries including the Militant's Defence Academy in Myanmar. There is non stop movement of recruiting youngsters to join such movements. Insurgency is not the only problem in the region. There is jigsaw puzzle that includes tensions between different tribal groups. The infamous ethnic clash the Kuki-Naga conflict has already threatened to grow very big while villages were already burnt down and more than ten thousand people were rendered homeless in less than a month. Each problem seems to be big and caught in a vicious cycle and seems insurmountable. Years of neglect for the people in the region have added further fuel to fire. The growing problem is getting out of control over time. It has resulted in getting problems bigger and bigger to the extent that the writ of the state has seized to exist. Insurgent groups now run parallel governments, making no sense of the elected government for the people of Manipur. The power sharing nexus between insurgents and politicians encourages further growth of insurgents, corruption, extortion and diversion of funds for development while the armed forces are forced to fight a redundant battle in search of the illusive enemy- the insurgents (Parratt John: 2005; Mohammed Asif, Kamal Mitra Chenoy: 1999).

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Violence is a big threat to security to one's life and young children are most vulnerable physically and psychologically. Most horrifying experience is when children, on their way to school or back to home, encounter violence either in the form of gunshots or bloody killings or the sight of armed commandos or army personals chasing suspected youths to be insurgents. If children compulsorily travail a distance of more than 1 kilometre and the particular roadways the child is passing through, it becomes a matter of security concern for children by parents. Educational emergency destabilises regular school activity and is most damaging for children coming from poor households in unique ways. Firstly, when school is perhaps the only hope for the child to pick up certain skills of learning, school closure crashes this hope. Secondly, since the child is temporary withheld from learning taking place, it becomes difficult for the child to pick up afresh when he/she joins school after a time gap. It also becomes rather difficult and challenging task for teachers.

Sharing her experience, a lady teacher who is teaching English of class V expressed her discomfort as also experienced by other teachers, "During bandhs, particularly imposed by factional Organisations\(^\text{15}\), even we, teachers have to defy government order and stop going to school or else we risk our lives" such bandhs can go on indefinitely for days together. Our children are worst affected; for them what they learn in school is the ultimate end itself since there's no academic help available at home. We teachers have to try our best to revise in a manner they understand what they were taught earlier; how it can't be a difficult task since examination is always fixed on time and we have to complete our prescribed course". Citing the most common form of traffic in the state, the teacher who teaches Manipuri literature laments, 'Bandhs are the most frequently observed form of trafficking since observing bandhs can cause inconvenience for all; during bandhs, all important roads are blocked due to which offices and schools are closed. These cause major irritants and frustrations among general population; another great obstacle faced by students hailing from far off such as a distance of 7

\(^{15}\) In Manipur when bands and strikes are imposed by insurgent organisations, it is bound to be compulsorily obeyed by the people since noncompliance to their order will necessarily invite trouble and threat to life since non is held accountable in the court of law when insurgents take away one's life on flimsy grounds. This is precisely the reason why the lady teacher prefers to defy the legitimate order of the government but to obey the order of the insurgents, the legally banned outfits.
kilometers, mostly from hill area is that they commute by tata vehicle while returning our students use bye cycles arranged by teachers. A Hindi Teacher with a chuckle, mockingly commented, 'The nomenclature of Manipur should be changed into Bandpur; learning the ways how to live in whatever situation is the only way out'. These are reflections of frustrations and concerns on some of the disturbing timeless moments experienced by the teacher community. School closure when, it becomes periodical experience of teachers and students, demoralises both the teachers and the taught by obstructing regular, normal dialogical process and shared understanding that is cultivated over a period of time between the teachers and the taught. Bandhs and strikes are symbolic to the state of Manipur and education system gets jeopardized during such seizure of social life. Bandhs, strikes and economic blockades have become the most common form of protest to alarm the government.

Loss for the students caused by violence in school operation is irreversible as lamented by teacher community unanimously. Added to this, is the number of holidays observed by school as part of state holidays. State holiday cuts down the number of days of regular function of school. In the academic session of 2007, the sample school was closed for about 139 days a year including Sundays and holidays for harvesting, summer vacation and Holi. Occasional bands, strikes, and blockades accounted roughly for 28 days and permitted leave for teachers account for around 20 days leave. Another 25 days are spared for non teaching duties at least for 2-3 teachers. As the Head Mistress of the sample school recounts, 'At a time when teachers’re hard pressed to complete the syllabus, at least three teachers are compulsorily given non-academic duty for election duty which coincides in November-December month; any teacher is picked for the duty, this is most unfortunate since final examinations for children starts on the first of December month every year'. The Head teacher continues to lament, 'Taking away teachers for non-academic purpose has been in practice for the past twenty years that also during the most crucial period for children since it's the peak time when children 're to be looked after with constant interest and enthusiasm in their studies; in addition, for every five years, our teachers 're employed for non-teaching duty such as Census; for about twenty days, at least three teachers under SSA 'ere placed on duty to conduct survey on households to find out the educational status of children with the payment of 50 paisa per household which started in the year 2005-2006'.
Therefore the number of days actually worked for the sample school is reduced by an additional holiday of about 65-70 days a year. Secondly on each of the working days, a teacher is supposed to spend about six to seven hours a day so long as the school timing is concerned. But arriving late and leaving early could be noticed; not fully utilizing the time period meant for teaching and school purpose. However casual absenteeism as most common in government schools was not noticed among teachers in the sample school. In fact, few teachers’ sincerity and dedication to improving the state of the school has stood in good stead for the school.

The emerging accounts from the present chapter indicate that there is complete loss of especially political, bureaucratic and generally, the social ‘will’ to improve the deteriorating government schools. The existence of government schools by default remains justified so long its pathology is internalised by the destitute children who have no future in their own society. This has in turn forcibly legitimised the status quo of highly fragmented disparity, discontent and disempowerment of poor children. However, the potential danger is, the complete failure of government schools is reinforced when politicians, bureaucrats, intelligentsia and even school teachers themselves have shifted their allegiance and commitment to flourishing private schools.