1. **INTRODUCTION**

The State of Meghalaya is situated at the location of a latitude of 20.1' N and 26.5' N and a longitude 85.49' E and 92.52' E with an area of 22,429 Sq. Kms. It is a land of beautiful landscapes with virgin forests, high plateaus, tumbling waterfalls, crystal clear rivers and meandering streamlets. Meghalaya emerged as an Autonomous State on 2nd April 1970 and as a full-fledged State on 21st January 1972. It is bounded on the north by Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong districts, on the East by Karbi Anglong and Cachar districts of Assam and on the south and west by Bangladesh.

Meghalaya is subject to the vagaries of the monsoon. The climate varies with altitude. The climate of Khasi and Jaintia Hills is pleasant and bracing but over the plains of Garo hills the climate is warm and humid except in winter. The Meghalayan climate seldom remains free of clouds. The Cherrapunji-Mawsynram range the wettest place in the world receives 12000 millimetres of rain annually, whereas Shillong the capital city situated about fifty kilometers receives an average rainfall of 2200 mm annually.

The Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos are the major ethnic groups of the State. The Kochs, the Hajongs, the Rabhas, the Mikirs and other minor tribes inhabit the State. Assamese, Bengalees, Nepalese, Punjabi, Biharis and other Hindi speaking communities have also settled in the State. 86 per cent of its population is tribal.

Khasi and Garo are the main spoken languages with English as the official language. While English is used for communication with different communities and tribes, Hindi is also widely spoken. The medium of instruction is the mother tongue at Primary level and English in higher levels.

As per the 2001 Census, Meghalaya has a population of 23,18,822, out of which 11,79,087 are males and 11,42,735 are females. About 80% of the population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture for their livelihood.
The basis for the administrative set up is the district. The seven districts are East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, South Garo Hills and Ri-bhoi.

The literacy rate is below the national average of 65 per cent. The literacy rate of Meghalaya is 62.6 with 65.4 for males and 59.6 for females. The literacy rate urban areas is 86 per cent while the rural areas it is 56.3 per cent.

Although it is over 160 years ago since the Christianity and education came, Meghalaya still has a very high illiteracy rate in comparison with other North Eastern States and an alarming school drop out rate (72%).

2. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Elementary education from Class I to Class VIII is the first years of formal, structured education that occurs during childhood. In most Western countries, elementary education is compulsory for children to receive primary education though in many jurisdictions it is permissible for parents to provide it. Primary elementary education generally begins when children are four to seven years of age. The division between primary and secondary elementary education is somewhat arbitrary, but it generally occurs at about twelve years of age (adolescence). Source: Internet

Elementary Education is the base of the whole educational structure. In India it is now recognized as the period of compulsory schooling vide the constitutional amendment making education a fundamental right. The commitment of the nation in this regard is enshrined in the Article 45 of the Constitution, which states "The country shall endeavour to provide universal, free and compulsory primary education to all children of the age 6 to 14 years within a period of ten years."
The beginning of this period marks the formal introduction of the child to reading and writing, culminating in the introduction of the formal disciplines such as the sciences and social sciences, towards the end of elementary school. The period of eight years is one of tremendous cognitive development and shaping of reason, intellect and social skills and attitudes necessary for work. (National Curriculum Framework 2005)

As the effort to achieve Universal Elementary Education (UEE) is stepped up, the elementary school grades now cater to a vast variety of children of the school going age. Plurality and flexibility without compromising on standards needs to be become the hallmark of education for this period. Education during this period must be of an integrated character, enabling children to acquire facility in language and expression and grow in confidence in themselves as learners, both within and outside school. (National Curriculum Framework 2005).

The Christian missionaries including the Baptists, the Methodists, the Lutherans and the Catholics have played a monumental role in the progress of education in the North East.

The Catholic missionaries have given the greatest impact to educational development in the Region. The network of educational institutions they have established have brought about the light of literacy to various sectors of the population and transformed its social-cultural and developmental pattern which otherwise would not have been achieved if the Catholic missionaries had not arrived.

In view of the above, the investigator felt the need for a study on the Role of the Catholic Church in Elementary Education in Meghalaya. Again, no earlier researchers have undertaken any study on the same subject. Hence the present study is justified.

The present study will throw light on the Role of the Catholic Church in Elementary Education in Meghalaya and investigate into the related problems and suggest measures for improving Elementary Education in the Church-run schools and in the State in general.
3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem for the present study has been stated as follows:

"Role of the Catholic Church in Elementary Education in Meghalaya."

4. DEFINITION OF THE TERMS USED IN THE PRESENT STUDY

Elementary Education in the present study means an education in the State of Meghalaya comprising Class I to VII, ages 6-14.

Role in this Study refers to the contribution made by the Catholic Church in the development of elementary education in Meghalaya.

Catholic Church has reference to a group of Christians whose chief character is catholicity, embracing all people of the world of all times and places, races, tribes and colour.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To study the background and development of the Catholic Mission-run schools in the State of Meghalaya at elementary level.

2. To assess the extent of the contribution made by the Mission towards development of elementary education.

3. To identify the strengths and weaknesses and uniqueness features, if any, of these institutions and their influence on school education.
4. To suggest measures for improvement of elementary education in the State of Meghalaya.

6. **DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:**

1. The study is limited to a sample of heads of schools, a sample of teachers and selected retired teachers from deficit, private-aided and private primary/elementary schools run by the Catholic Church in Meghalaya.

7. **METHODOLOGY**

The investigator followed the descriptive survey type method, which primarily describes the position of Elementary Education in Meghalaya under the management of the Catholic Church. The descriptive survey method of educational Research is that method of investigation which attempts to describe and interpret what exists at present in the form of conditions, practices, processes, trends, effects, attitudes, beliefs and others.

(a) **Design of the Study:** Since the study has been designed as a survey type requiring description of what exists, the investigator had to decide on the sample and tools to be used in the study.

(b) **Population:** The population of the present study comprises all elementary schools managed by the Catholic Church in the State of Meghalaya. These schools fall under the following categories.

(i) Deficit schools receiving grants from the Government

(ii) Private-aided schools receiving financial assistance from the Government

(iii) Private schools receiving no grant at all from the Government
The information regarding the total number of elementary schools was obtained by
the investigator after consulting statistical records, relevant books, Directory of the
Catholic Church, North East India and other documents maintained at the Catholic
headquarters in Shillong and Tura and Catholic churches in Meghalaya. From the
records it was learned that there were 1205 elementary schools run by the Catholic
Church. All the heads and the teachers working in these schools formed the
population of the study.

(c) Sample: The sample for the present study was drawn from the
elementary Schools (Classes I-VII) managed by the Catholic Church
in the State of Meghalya. There are 1205 Elementary Schools run by
the Church. The investigator has selected 290 schools for the present
study. The investigator followed the stratified random sampling
method which included the school strata as Deficit, Private-Aided and
Private-Unaided as proportionately as possible.

However, data could be collected from 265 schools only. Finally these
265 schools formed the sample of schools for the study. All the heads
of these 265 schools were included in the study and one teacher from
each of these 265 schools was also included in the sample of teachers.
Besides, some retired teachers who were readily available were also
involved in the data collection process by the investigator. They
numbered 13 in all.

(d) The Tools

For collecting data for the present study the following tools were used.

(i) A questionnaire for the heads of elementary schools.

(ii) A questionnaire for assistant teachers

(iii) Interview schedule for retired teachers.
(i) **Questionnaire** – The investigator developed two questionnaires, one for the heads and the other for the assistant teachers of elementary schools to collect information. The questionnaires included the following broad areas: general information, historical background, physical resources, human resources, financial resources, welfare measures, management of the schools, structure, functions, record, planning of work, uniform of students, medium of instruction, supervision and inspection, examination and evaluation, contribution of the school, strengths and weaknesses of the school, problems and suggestions. Many items were common to both but many were also different.

The draft questionnaires were then submitted to five experts from the Department of Education, NEHU, for ascertaining content validity of the questionnaire. The experts were requested to judge the content and forms of the questions used in the questionnaire and give their comments and suggestions for improvement of the draft questionnaire. The experts gave useful suggestions for improving the questionnaire and accordingly the questionnaires were modified. Some questions were removed while some were added as per the suggestions given.

The questionnaires were finally constructed and photocopies were made ready for the collection of data.

(ii) **Interview Schedule:** The investigator also drafted an interview schedule for the retired teachers. The interview schedule was also submitted to the same experts. On their suggestions, the interview schedule was modified by reducing the number of questions to 20. Five questions were removed as suggested by the experts in order to avoid overlapping. The investigator also realized the same and accepted the suggestions given by the experts.

All the tools were then finalized and adequate numbers of copies were made for administration to the respondents.
SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Primary and secondary sources were used in the collection of pertinent information regarding the elementary education in schools run by the Catholic Church in the State of Meghalaya.

(i) The investigator used all the primary sources such as records of Basic Information on Education in the Office of the Elementary and Mass Education (DEME), Shillong and Directorate of Educational and Research and Training (DERT), Shillong. Data were collected from the 265 heads, 265 assistant teachers by means of the questionnaires and 13 retired teachers through the interview schedule.

(ii) Relevant records, files, information, reports and statistic handbooks of Meghalaya published by Economics and Statistics Department as well as records and statistics available from the Church Headquarters were also consulted. Books written on the topic were also consulted.

8. COLLECTION OF DATA

After having made the copies of the tools, the next step for the investigator was to distribute them among the respondents. The investigator first proceeded to the Garo Hills District and distributed the questionnaires to the heads of the selected schools either personally or through messengers. Some of the questionnaires however, had to be mailed. Each respondent was provided with a stamped envelope for returning the questionnaire duly responded. After having distributed the questionnaires in the Garo Hills, the investigator distributed the questionnaires to the heads and assistant teachers of selected schools in the Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills in the same way either personally or through messengers. Besides, in some cases questionnaires were sent by post. Stamped envelopes were sent to the respondents for returning of the questionnaires.
The respondents were requested in writing as well as through telephones and personal contacts to return the questionnaires as early as possible. They were also requested to feel free to respond to each question since their responses would be treated as confidential. The distribution of questionnaires took about three months’ time and the investigator had to keep on reminding the respondents to return the questionnaires. In some cases questionnaires had to be supplied for the second time.

The data collection process, which included the administration of the aforesaid questionnaires and the interviews of selected 13 retired teachers required almost one years’ time. Even with repeated requests and reminders, only 265 heads and 265 assistant teachers returned the questionnaires. Since it had already taken a long time and since non-receipt of questionnaires from 25 respondents did not affect the representativeness of the same, the investigator decided not to pursue the 25 respondents and analyzed the 265 questionnaires for the purpose of the study.

9. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data collected through the questionnaires from 265 heads and 265 assistant teachers and the data collected through the interview schedule from 13 retired teachers were tabulated and analysed using simple descriptive statistics by the calculation of the percentages. Conclusion and findings were drawn after analyzing and discussing the data. While interpreting the data, the findings were compared with the findings of relevant early studies wherever necessary.

10. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

BACKGROUND

1. The study revealed the highest percentage of qualifications of the teachers was HSLC / SSLC (26.30%). However it was interesting to note that a small percentage of B.Ed passed (15.09%) and M.Sc and M.Ed qualified (2.26%), were teaching in rural schools.
2. It was found that 91.69 per cent of managements in the sample comprising 11.69 per cent Deficit Schools, 61.13 per cent and 18.86 per cent were serving in rural areas.

3. The responses of assistant teachers revealed that the educational status of teachers was 46.79 percent trained and 53.20 percent untrained teachers.

4. 91.69 percent categories of management - deficit (11.69%) Private Aided (61.13%) and Private (18.86%) are situated in rural surrounding. It appears that the major beneficiaries are the weaker section of society.

5. The study found that the primary objectives of these schools as perceived by the heads were 'to meet the educational needs of people' (72.45%), 'to improve their standard of life' (61.88%) and to cater to the well being of the people (53.20%).

6. According to the assistant teachers, the primary objectives of the school were preparing youth for a career (73.96 %), promoting mission work (71.69 %) empowering people (70.56 %) uplifting the poor (69.25 %) providing basic and elementary education (61.54 %) and providing moral/spiritual development of the young (53.85 %).

RESOURCES OF THE SCHOOL

1. All the elementary schools (100 %) in the sample run by the Catholic Church possessed their own land and building.

2. It was found that all the schools (100%) in the Study operated in permanent school buildings and there were no thatched buildings in the sample. That is to say, that the permanent building included both concrete buildings and buildings with the roof having C.I. sheets (Assam Type).

3. It was revealed that in general, almost all schools provided the following basic facilities such as Blackboard, chalk and dusters ((90.95%), chairs and tables for teachers (90.96%), benches and desks for pupils (90.94%).
4. It was found that the following facilities such as room for the Head teachers (56.22%), office room (55.84%), teachers’ common room (51.69%), pupils’ common room (56.60%), science laboratory (83.77%), auditorium (89.43%), library (83.77%), computer room (82.77%) and storeroom (75.03%) were not provided by majority of school.

5. The Study found that the majority of the sample schools made provision for classroom with adequate space (58.11%), proper ventilation and lighting (76.22%) and that classrooms (57.74%) were also made attractive with charts, pictures etc.

6. Regarding the provision of suitable and adequate books for reading it was found that 61.50 per cent of the schools did not provide this facility.

7. Most school in the sample did not provide modern facilities like radio (84.53%) and television (93.97%).

8. The Study found that the majority of schools (64.15%) provided playground.

9. It was also found that though playgrounds were provided 65.66 per cent were not sufficiently large.

10. It was found that (50.56%) of the schools provided Boarding/Hostel facilities.

11. The benefits a child received by being in the boarding/hostel were better in academic opportunities (26.41%), preparation for life (32.83%), physical development (21.56%), intellectual development (15.84%) and spiritual development (15.84%).

12. It was found that the preference in hostel admission was given to orphans (81.50%), handicapped children (71.69%), economically underprivileged (67.92%) and children from far away places (47.54%). It appears that he weakest and the socially and economically disadvantaged, therefore, were given due consideration.
13. It was found that majority of schools (76.23%) provided drinking water. And 53.96 per cent provided sanitation. Provision of the following facilities were far from being adequate, first-aid (30.19%), medial check-up (16.60%) and sick room (10.56%).

14. It was revealed that most of the schools (74.33%) provided adequate number of teachers while 25.67 per cent did not have adequate number of teachers. In some schools therefore teachers had the burden of extra workload.

15. In the case of 60 percent of the schools in the sample, the Governing Body of the schools gave appointments of teachers. These schools were deficit schools. In the case of private-aided or purely private schools appointment of teachers was done by the Headmaster who was also the administrator and financier of the school.

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

1. It was found that 57.36 per cent of the schools did not have a parent-teacher association (PTA).

2. It was revealed by 69.43% respondents that the parent-teacher association was found to be helpful in maintaining the school discipline.

3. In the opinion of the large majority (61.14%), the parent-teacher association played an important role in improving the quality of education in the schools.

4. There was a high degree (69.43%) of consultation by the parents with the teachers regarding the education of their children.

5. It was revealed by 67.17 per cent of the respondents that the teacher-parent meeting was held as and when required, which may be inferred that there was cooperation between teachers and parents.
STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

1. Responses of Assistant teachers indicated that a friendly relationship existed between students and teachers. 81.50 percent mentioned that they praised children when they did well.

2. 70.56 % of the teachers revealed that they instilled confidence in students when they failed.

3. Regarding interaction with students outside classrooms, it was found that 46.41 % interacted with the students always and 30.04 % interacted often.

4. It was found that teachers monitored the progress of children through class work (89.43 %), home work (85.66 %), weekly tests (46.16 %) and monthly tests (49.81 %).

FINANCE

1. It was found that the main source of income (67.56%) of deficit schools was Government Grant. The sources of income of Private-Aided schools were Government grants (53.20%), Church contribution (26.74%) and the rest came from fees, donations and other items. The total outlay (100%) of Private-unaided schools was borne by the Church.

2. The types of financial assistance received by the schools were Government grant-in-aids for salary of teachers (66.03%), non-recurring grants for buildings, (41.88%) furniture (33.96%). Besides, book grants, scholarships grants for students and library grants were sanctioned by the Government from time to time.

3. Regarding the preparation of the school budget, it was found that in 40 percent cases it was prepared by the managing committee, in 33.96 percent by the headmaster/headmistresses, in 17.74 percent by the office clerk

4. A large majority of the schools (75.09 %) did not have a reserve fund.
5. It was found that auditing of the schools in the sample was carried out by local auditors (15.47%), by internal auditors 14.71%) and by chattered accountants 12.84%)

WELFARE MEASURES

1. Majority of teachers (68.30%) pointed out that midday meal was provided in schools, thereby contributing to the implementation of the midday meal scheme at the lower primary level and greater retention of children in schools.

2. It was found that regarding free textbooks (84.52%) and uniforms (96.22%) and transport (98.86%) were not provided by the sample schools.

3. It was found that a large majority (62%) provided opportunities for teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and orientation courses.

4. Regarding that deputation of teachers for the study found that 47.16 per cent of the heads sent their teachers for training.

5. A large majority (70.99%) of the respondents could not avail themselves of the opportunity to attend orientation programmes because of heavy work in the schools.

6. The study found that schools fostered creative talents of teachers in the teaching-learning activities. Majority (64.52%) of the teachers revealed that the school encouraged the use of innovative techniques in classroom teaching.

7. It was found that 76.98% of heads took their teacher into confidence in dealing with important matters.

8. With regard to salary, the study found that the majority of assistant teachers (59.24%) were not satisfied with their salary. In majority of the schools (61.88%) payment was regularly made every month. The mode of payment was mostly cash (84.15%).
9. It was found that 52.07 per cent of schools provided annual increment to teachers. In large majority of cases (74.33 %) teachers were not provided house rent allowance and 74.47 did not enjoy medical allowances.

10. The facilities of provident fund (9.43%) and gratuity (7.54%) were provided by very few schools. In almost all cases 96.98%, the facility for pension was not provided except in the case 3.01 percent schools were found to provide pension benefit.

11. With regard to leave benefits, a large majority (72.45%) provided casual leave and majority (55.09%) provided maternity leave. Other leave benefits such as medical leave, maternity leave and commuted leave were not provided by almost of all schools.

MANAGEMENT

1. It was found that in almost all the schools (94.71 %), a duly constituted managing committee was in operation.

2. 84.90 per cent of the schools in the sample revealed that the managing committees were of three years' duration.

3. The study found that 87.16 per cent respondents revealed that Managing Committee included representatives of both teachers and parents.

4. Regarding Parents' representatives in the Managing Committee, 87.16 per cent respondents revealed that parents were included. Parents were thus enabled to exercise their primary and undeniable right and duty for educating their children.

5. The meeting of the Managing Committee was held regularly (63.77%) and the Minutes Books (76.98 %) were maintained.

6. The responses from the head teachers (87.16%) showed that the Managing Committee had great influence in framing school policies and played an active part (78.49 %) in maintaining the academic quality of the school.
7. The managing Committee also rendered assistance to the school through cooperation (63.01%), guidance 52.07%, consultancy 43.39% and finance 29.05%.

8. It was found that the majority of schools maintained the following requisites:

   (a) Students' Attendance Register 96.60 %
   (b) Teachers' Attendance Register 92.07 %
   (c) Admission Register 84.90 %
   (d) Students' Marks Register 75.84 %
   (e) Teachers' Acquaintance Register 56.98 %
   (f) Transfer Register 55.84 %
   (g) Account Books 51.69 %
   (h) Teachers' Service Book 37.73 %
   (i) Proceeding Register for guardians' meeting 34.71 %
   (j) Scheme of Work Book 19.24 %
   (k) Student Conduct Register 23.39 %

9. The teachers (82.26 %) felt that the management of the schools was democratic.

PROCESS

1. Strategic planning is essential for achieving objectives. It was revealed that majority of schools (62.64 %) had long term and short term plans for sustained development of the schools.

2. The study revealed that admission procedure in Catholic schools was on first-come-first-serve basis (44.75 %) and interview (35.60 %). Depending on the situation other considerations were also given as and when necessary.

3. The study found that admission (91.69 %) in Catholic schools was open to all.

4. In majority of schools (51.69 %), children were admitted at the age of four though in some cases (26.41 %) they were taken at the age of three and even five (21.88 %).
5. The study found that a large majority (75.84 %) of head teachers were of the opinion that the school uniform was of great benefits to the students.

6. The views of the respondents regarding the benefits of having uniforms in schools were the following:

(a) The school uniform promoted a sense of equality between the rich and the poor students. (78.49 %)

(b) It generated a sense of identity in students. (65.28 %)

(c) It encouraged cleanliness and neatness. (67.92 %)

(d) It prevented misbehavior on the part of students or misbehaviors towards them. (49.05 %)

CURRICULUM

1. It was found that the majority (57.73 %) of the respondents were of the opinion that the Board of Elementary Education developed the curriculum. In actual practice the Education Department of the Government Of Meghalaya has currently entrusted this responsibility to the Directorate of Education Research and Training (DERT).

2. The study found that the majority of head teachers (64.52%) were satisfied with the present curriculum. The same question was asked to the assistant teachers and 73.96 per cent of them indicated that were satisfied with the curriculum.

3. The reasons given for dissatisfaction included: (i) the curriculum did not cater to the needs of the pupils (11.69%). (ii) It was too bookish (13.56%) and theoretical (12.83 %). (iii) It was too heavy (13.58%). Such a curriculum may place too much burden on the young minds and does not allow children to enjoy their childhood and benefit from the normal pace of physical and psychological growth.
4. It was found that almost all schools (97.35 %) provided religious/moral education for their pupils. This indicates that one of the chief characteristics of Catholic school education is a diligent teaching of its values to catholic students and education in moral values to students of all other communities.

5. The view of the heads was sought on the importance of religious/moral education. 97.73 percent expressed that religious/moral education was very important in the life of the children.

   Education helps to draw out the ethical dimension in the child. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan ‘...Man is here to be honest, to be decent, and to be good. Whether you get a prize post or not, it is open to you to be useful to your fellows and to work for truth, not because you hope to win, but because your cause is just’.

6. It has been found that almost all schools (95.09%) have included SUPW (Socially Useful Productive Work) and majority (72.07%) has included Work Experience (WE) in the syllabus. 24.52 per cent schools taught craft and only 16.60 per cent of schools provided computer education.

7. Most respondents (89.81%) pointed out that schools did not provide vocational training at elementary stage. However, it may be mentioned that the catholic missionaries were the pioneers of vocational training. As far back as 1907, they saw the danger of producing an ever-increasing number of educated youth at that time and took measure to address this need. Vocational training was provided to youngsters in trade schools (printing, carpentry, shoe making, smithy) in Shillong. Skills in agriculture were imparted to the youth.

8. The present ‘Don Bosco Technical School’ of Shillong has developed from the trade school that began in 1907. This is a unique technical institution not only in Meghalaya but also in the whole of the North Eastern Region. A similar technical school was set up in Gauhati in 1969.

9. With regard to the medium of instruction, it was found that 86.03 percent imparted elementary education in the mother tongue.
10. The study found 55.84 per cent of assistant teachers opined that the workload of teachers was heavy. In addition to class-room teaching, they were also involved in framing the time-table (83.77%), planning the school work (67.18%), examination duties (80%), library duties (28.67%), co-curricular activities (59.24%) maintaining order and discipline (99.22%) and in the parent-teacher association (PTA 72.07%). The inadequate number of teachers (25.67% shortage) in the schools might have been responsible for the workload being heavy.

11. With regard to the methods of teaching, it was found that the most used was the question-answer method (84.52%) the play-way method (69.05%), the textbook method (64.15%), the lecture method (51.32%) and the discussion method (48.67%).

12. It was found that teaching aids were used by a vast majority of teachers (86.03%) who had also opined that the use of teaching aids made the teaching-learning process more effective.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

1. In the Lower Primary Stage, the following co-curricular activities were largely organized for Art activities like drawing, colouring and painting (71.69%) singing competition (66.41%), dance competition (54.33%) and recitation (40.75%).

2. At the Upper Primary Stage, the following co-curricular activities were organized quiz (50.56%), and essay writing (40.37%). Others were team system (30.18%), debate (25.28%) and extempore speech (14.52%).

3. Majority of schools having been set up in rural areas, games and sports like jumping (76.77%), tug of war (49.81%) and cock fight (24.15%) were organized. Other games were also organized like basketball (31.32%), cricket (30.56%), volleyball (16.60%) and badminton (10.94%).

4. Physical education was not provided in most school (88.30%) and no physical instructor was provided. However, it was found that respective class
teachers organized physical exercises such as drill (88.30%), parade (64.52%), gymnastics (2.26%) and others (9.38%).

5. It was found that the following co-curricular activities were not popular among rural schools of they were not feasible. They were organized only to a small extent, like Boy Scouts (11.69%), Girl-guides (10.18%), NCC (2.64%) and Bull-bull (1.50%).

6. The study revealed that creative expression at the upper primary stage consisted of singing (80%), dance (63.01%), painting (56.22%) and competition in essay writing (41.13%), extempore speech (33.20%) dramatization (29.43%), debates (22.26%), and recitation (4.15%).

7. The schools (61.50%) were also found to participate in inter-school and interstate sports.

SUPERVISION

1. It was found that the majority of heads (59.24%) made a daily round of the classes. 26.03% per cent revealed that occasional visits to the classes were also made due to specific needs.

2. Inspection by the Inspector of Schools was not regular (77.73%) and it was gathered that the schools were not inspected for many years.

3. It was found that whenever inspection by the Inspector of schools was undertaken the following areas were examined: academic achievement (23.77%) of the students, infrastructure facilities (23.77%) and effectiveness of the administration (27.16%).

4. The study found that in order to improve the examination system, the examination paper included a combination of objective type questions, short answer questions and essay type question (69.81%). The short answer type was also used (51.32%). The least popular was the essay type question (34.33%).
5. A large majority of schools carried out the final assessment of students’ achievement on the basis of their performance in the annual examination (82.26 %) and the half yearly examination (77.35%). In some schools monthly tests and quarterly examinations were also made use of in evaluating the performance of students.

6. It was found that attainment of pass marks was the condition for promotion to higher classes (67.92%).

CONTRIBUTION OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The respondents had indicated the contributions of the school to the development of elementary education. The most common ones are listed below:

1. Raising the literacy rate in the state 69.43%
2. Improving the standard of life of the people 69.43%
3. Helping to make ‘primary education for all’ available 63.39%
4. Uplifting the poor 78.49%
5. Producing leaders for society 72.83%
6. Producing enlightened citizens 79.62%
7. Preparing professionals like teachers, doctors, lawyers, social workers and others. 79.62%

PROBLEMS OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Regarding problems of the school administration 79.24% heads revealed that ‘lack of funds’ as the biggest problem. Other serious problems were uneducated parents (75.09%) and lack of trained teachers (56.60%). It was also found that non-cooperation of parents (24.90%), indiscipline (10.56%) and non-cooperation of teachers (5.66%) were problems faced by the schools.
STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOLS

The strengths of the Catholic Schools as revealed from the present study are given below:

1. *Contribution to the development of the people:* The majority (68.76%) of the respondents had revealed that contribution to the development of the people was the strength of the schools. The education that these schools provided had prepared the people to cope with the changes that took place after Independence. The development in free India would have remained outside the reach of the people of State and the Region if were it not for the education imparted to young people by the Church.

2. *Teachers acting as resource persons:* In the opinion of head teachers (52.07%) the schools had produced teachers who served as resource persons, in their respective localities and willing to insert themselves into the life of the people. They had produced numerous social and political leaders who have become agents of change and transformation of their people. The excellence demanded in these institutions and the leadership qualities fostered in them have empowered them to take their place in society.

3. *Popularity of the Schools for the good education they impart:* It was found that 63.39 per cent of the respondents had revealed that the Catholic schools were widely known for their popularity. The quality of these educational institutions was borne out by their considerable reputation.

4. *Involvement in Literacy activities in rural areas:* The study found that 91.69 per cent of catholic elementary educational institutions were in rural Meghalaya. It may be pointed out that 55 per cent of Catholic educational establishments in the entire country were situated in villages. Apart from increasing literacy in the State these schools were also the nurseries for the

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1 Arch. Menampurampil, T., Catholic Church and the Church’s Concern for the Marginalized, 2006, 27.
number of young boys and girls pursuing higher studies in local universities and outside the region.²

5. **Availability of school facilities for the community.** 55.84 per cent of the respondents had revealed that the school facilities were made available for use to the community.

6. **Hostel/boarding facilities:** 50.56 of the respondents had revealed that hostel/boarding facilities were provided. It has also been the Church’s policy from the beginning to attach a boarding to a school.

7. **Resource Centres of Training:** It was found that 76.60 per cent of the school heads had revealed that the schools were resource centers of training to all categories of people. It has been seen that the enlightenment the people have received in these institutions has taught the people to assert themselves. They are able to understand their role in the present day society. They are able to see, weigh and act in order to express their demands for what is their just due in development and social justice.

8. **Preserving one’s identity:** As perceived by the respondents (62.64%) the education received in these schools has aroused in the young a sense of their identity. Amidst all the social pressures and changes, the education they have received has made them keenly aware of their unique identity.

9. **Commitment:** It was found from the records maintained by the Church and some relevant books that the missionaries were committed to the people and their uplift. They could do it because of their selfless dedication. In the words of Gandhi, ‘The first thing needful is sufficient number of self-sacrificing people who would devote themselves to educational work as a labour of love’. The Church had people of this caliber who were qualified and ready to render academic education in all levels, to all people, in good conditions and in difficult conditions.

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10. Involvement in literacy activities in villages. 76.60 per cent respondents revealed that literacy activities of the Catholic Church has contributed to the rise in the literacy rate in the State. Retired teachers revealed that the literacy rates in their localities at the time of the establishments of the schools were between 10 percent and 40 percent and that presently the literacy rates ranged between 50 per cent and 95 per cent depending on the location.

UNIQUE FEATURES

The Study revealed Catholic elementary schools the following unique features:

1. **Religious/Moral Education**: An outstanding feature of education in Catholic educational institutions is religious/moral education. Without the development of spiritual intelligence the all round development of the individual cannot be achieved. On the part of parents 97.93 per cent of them favoured this aspect of education in schools. This appears to be unique about the Catholic-run Elementary schools.

2. **Hostel/Boarding**: From the very beginning hostels/boardings have been attached to Catholic mission centers and they have rendered an immense service for the education and the formation of future leaders. These institutions were run on charitable bases with no profit motive. ‘... The Roman Catholic Mission started Boarding-cum-Orphanage convents which no other missions had attended to before’. In the absence of road links and transport facilities in villages, the only way to enable the young to continue education was to open boarding facilities for them.

3. **Missionary Commitment**: A Missionary commitment is one of the hallmarks of the Catholic Church. Religious personnel who voluntarily and freely committed their lives to the uplift and development of peoples have animated the Catholic educational institutions. This was found to be a unique feature of these schools.
4. **Technical Schools**: In order to help educated youth gain employment a trade school was started as early as 1907. This trade school today has become the Don Bosco Technical School, a unique institution of its kind not only in the Northeast but also in the whole of India. Later another technical school was opened at Maligoan (1969) 10 km from Guwahati.

5. **No thatched buildings**: According to the responses of the retired teachers 23.07 per cent of the original buildings were thatches. Since their inception, the schools had developed the infrastructure so that it was found that all schools (100%) in the sample conducted the education in concrete buildings.

6. **Rural Education**: 91.69 per cent of the Catholic-run elementary schools have been set up in rural areas, thereby playing an important role in promoting education in rural areas.

7. **Pursuit of Excellence**: It may be pointed out that consistently good academic performance was found to be a unique feature of the schools under study.

8. **Discipline**: One of the primary reasons for the parents and guardians both from the rural and urban areas for preferring to admit their wards in a Catholic-run Educational institution is the superior discipline that is prevalent in these institutions.

**WEAKNESSES**

In spite of the many positive aspects, there are weaknesses which should be attended to. These include

1. Improvement of the professional qualification of teachers needed to be addressed. As per the response of assistant teachers 53.20 percent of teachers at primary level were not trained.

2. Though the management paid the teachers regularly, the responses (59.24%) indicated that they were not satisfied with their salary, implying that the salary paid to the teachers should be enhanced.
3. Facilities like separate room for the head teacher, office-room and teachers’ common room were provided by a number of schools while a vast majority 77.96% did not provide requisite rooms like pupils’ common-room, Science Laboratory, Library, Computer room and store-room.

4. In some cases, more classrooms and more teachers were needed.

5. Though the majority of schools (64.15%) were provided with playgrounds, they needed to be adequately developed. Other infrastructure aspects that needed to be developed included sanitation and adequately spacious classrooms.

6. Provident fund, gratuity and pension benefits were not adequately provided by the majority of schools.

7. Suitable and adequate books were not provided.

8. 75.09 per cent of the schools did not have reserve fund.

9. It was found that there were fewer incentives for teachers, like medical allowances, house-rent allowances, etc.

11. **SUGGESTIONS**

On the basis of the findings of the study the following suggestions are offered for improvement of elementary education in the Catholic schools:

1. Having numerous elementary schools under its jurisdiction, the Church may undertake at this point of time an evaluation and critique of its educational activities particularly at the elementary level, which is the base of the entire education edifice.

2. Much has been done. However there is the need for forward planning for the work that still remains to be done.
3. Another area that needs to be mentioned is the quality of teaching in some of the primary schools under the auspices of the Church throughout the State.

4. Efforts may be made by the schools to send teachers for in-service training to help them keep abreast of the latest development in the methodology of teaching. Sustained professional growth of the teachers can be ensured only through in-service trainings.

5. Steps must be taken to ensure that on the completion of elementary education, children have acquired the competencies and the skills to live a decent human life in this fast changing global world.

6. The standard of teaching needs to be improved. Arrangements may be made for getting the teachers trained.

7. Efforts should be made by the Government to reorganize the pre-service training programme as well as the system of recruiting teachers in such a way that regular appointment is given only the successful completion of the pre-service training. Only the trained teachers may be recruited from now onwards so as to reduce the backlog of untrained teachers.

8. Government also should bear responsibility in quality improvement by extending adequate financial assistance to all private-aided schools and bring the private schools under the purview of its financial plan. This would be beneficial to all, as it would enable the Church to use it resources for the uplift of the poor and underprivileged particularly in rural areas. We cannot forget that ‘India lives in its villages’.

9. The Government may ensure release of the salary of teachers in Government and deficit schools while he pay of teachers in time. It is justice that should not be delayed. School managements should introduce time scale of pay for the teachers working in private-unaided schools.
10. Schools with inadequate number of teachers must make arrangements for recruiting more teachers.

11. Workload of teachers should be equally distributed. The number of periods to be taken by teachers per week should be uniform in all schools. The inspectorate may prescribe the total number of periods to be taken by the teachers per week.

12. Study leave facilities should be extended liberally to teachers who wish to pursue higher studies. Teachers may also be encouraged to undertake various courses under open learning system so as to equip themselves better.

13. The inspectorate may ensure regular inspection of the schools. The inspection should include both the administrative and academic activities of the schools.

14. The school curriculum should be revised from time to time, at least once in five years. The school board may do the needful in this regard.

15. Communitization must be part and parcel of the education policy in which the community is facilitated to share responsibility for the education of its members as well as the beneficiary of the education its members received.

16. The schools should reach out to the community in the neighbourhood with beneficial activities, like literacy programmes, non-formal education, balwadis, street plays and activities leading to removal of difficulties in getting essential needs fulfilled.

17. Unaided private schools may be elevated to the status of Government deficit schools by the Stage Government on a phased basis.

18. If Education for All (EFA) and Universal Elementary Education (UEE) are to become a reality, there is need for community participation all the way.
19. If India lives in its villages, there is needed to build more schools and provide infrastructure facilities for them. There is therefore, the need for networking with other agents of education.

20. Special attention must be given to the education of the weakest, socially and economically disadvantaged, all those who are victims of new forms of poverty. 'India’s main problem of inequality is not in income but education'. (Swaminathan Anklesaria Aiyar)

21. More centers for the training of retarded children and those in need of special attention are required. It will be of great benefit to our entire population if the Government comes in with more substantial assistance to the already existing centers.

22. Steps should be taken for inclusive education to provide opportunities for children with disabilities to join the main stream of education.

12. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCHERS

1. The present investigator conducted the study on the elementary schools run by the Catholic Church in Meghalaya. Similar studies may be undertaken on the elementary schools run by other missionaries and non-missionary bodies.

2. Again studies maybe undertaken on the secondary schools run by the Catholic Church as well as other organizations in the State.

3. Some other topics that could be undertaken by other researchers are given below:

(a) A study of the pre-vocational/vocational courses in the elementary education programme in Meghalaya.

(b) A study on the problems of education of the girl students at the elementary level in Meghalaya.
(c) Investigation into the problems of Wastage and Stagnation at the Elementary school levels in Meghalaya.

(d) A study of the socio-economic problems of elementary school teachers in Meghalaya
13. **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**


