



DEVELOPMENT OF FORMAL EDUCATION IN NAGALAND WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MOKOKCHUNG DISTRICT

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Abstract

Formal education in Nagaland was first introduced in Mokokchung district by the American Baptist Missionaries in the late 1900's. However, their main objective was to spread evangelism. Also in 1950's with the rise of Naga freedom movement, the development and quality of education was hampered. As a result, at present day education in Mokokchung district suffers both in qualitative and quantitative aspects. It is the responsibility of all the education stake holders to work towards the improvement of education in Mokokchung district.

Keywords: American Missionary, Formal Education, Mokokchung district

Introduction

The ancient life style of the Nagas took a drastic change with the first exploitation by the British in 1832 and the coming of American Baptist Missionaries in 1872. The uniqueness of the Naga society lies in the fact that the Nagas are seen as free to work out of pattern of life, working traditional values into the necessity to adapt themselves to the modern world (Aier,1996). Nagas are generally egalitarian with strong community spirit. Their traditional institutions which are highly developed since time immemorial, have provided them strong security and a fervent belief in the benefits of the community system (Luithui, 2010). Social institution apart from family and community an establishment known as Morung existed in all Naga inhabited areas where youth (men) were taught on numerous vocational and skill development from war tactics, agriculture, to folk songs and customary laws and ways. However, for young girls there existed no separate establishment as Morung but the house of a decent widow or a

decent couple's house were chosen for the young girls to learn various skills such as handicrafts, weaving, knitting and mostly to groom these young girls to be eligible to get married.

Nagaland is located in the eastern boundary of North East India bordering Myanmar. The state of Nagaland was officially inaugurated on 1st December 1963. It is inhabited by 16 (sixteen) major tribes, each unique to its customs, language and dress. Nagaland has 16 (sixteen) districts and Kohima is the capital of Nagaland. English is the official language of Nagaland. As per the 2011 Census, the state achieved a literacy rate of 79.55 %, which is higher than the national average of 70.04 %.

Mokokchung is one among the 16 districts of Nagaland and the district headquarter Mokokchung town is situated at 1,325 kms above sea level. Mokokchung district is mainly inhabited by the Ao Nagas. The Aos are one of the major Naga tribes of Nagaland.

The arrival of American Baptist Missionaries to Naga Hills

The introduction of formal education in Nagaland is credited to the American Baptist Missionaries who came into the Hills nearly half a century after British. The American Baptist missionaries bold move is highly admirable because of the fact that they decided to enter an unknown territory where head hunting was the hallmark of chivalry, martial decoration and the epitome of accomplishment in a man's life. The missionaries considered the initiation of education to be their main priority since this would facilitate evangelisation (Aier, 1996). Rev. Miles Bronson is reported to be the first missionary to the Naga Hills in January 1939 (Barpujari, 1986, as cited

in Aier, 1996). He came to Namsang, a Konyak Naga village (now in Arunachal Pradesh) but unfortunately after eleven months, the missionary's family was afflicted with severe illness and were forced to abandon the station which marked the end of the Namsang Mission. Thus, the history of the church and education in Nagaland starts with Dr. Clark's arrival to Mokokchung district in 1872 (Aier, 1996; Temjen, 2009).

As per oral narrative, a group of Ao Naga went down to Sibsagar (Assam) for trade, where they saw the printing press at work, lessons being taught from books and slates by the white missionaries to Assamese children caught their attention. The leader of this group who has been recorded as Subongmeren who was inspired by the learning scene, tried to persuade Dr. Edward Winter Clark, the American missionary to come up to his native village in order to teach them how to read and write. In the process, he taught his mother tongue (Ao Naga language) to Godhula Rufus Brown, an Assamese evangelist and Dr. Clark while negotiating with the powerful elders of the village to ensure that these white people were neither "company people" nor "spies". In December 18, 1872 Dr. Clark finally landed at Dekahaimong (now known as Molungkimong), the native village of Supongmeren ("The Creation of the Greater Story: A Priceless Legacy," 2020). However, Dr. Clark did not stay for long in his first visit. He went back to Sibsagar and came again to Dekahaimong on 1st March, 1876 with the intention to stay for long term which can be found in his dairy recorded "*For many months from now, with no hope to see the face of a white man, and leaving behind the pleasures of life, I am leaping out of the world and plunging into a region of ignorance, this day, the first of March.*" (Sharma & Ao, 2000).

In the same year on 24th October, Dr. Clark and the new christian converts in Dekahaimong moved a few kilometers away to establish a new village called Molungyimsen. The reason being, there were disagreements among the villager elders of Dekhaimong to establish a Mission Station and an Educational headquarter within the village; also the christian converts faced opposition from the other members of the village because they refuse to participate in the ceremonies and functions of the village which are usually community activities (Aier, 1996; Sharma & Ao, 2000; “The Creation of the Greater Story: A Priceless Legacy,” 2020). In the following year i.e. 1878, Mrs Mary Mead Clark arrived at Molungyimsen leading to establishment of first formal school where card-board paper cuttings were said to be used while teaching the alphabet. It was a Sunday school and initially for girls. The name of the first batch of girls who were enrolled were *Tongpangkoka*, *Noksangla*, *Jongmayangla*, *Purla*, *Punayula* and *Taripisü* (Kilep, 1976, as cited in Temjen, 2009). The instructional materials were portions of the Bible and Hymns; and students were taught using English, Assamese and Ao Naga language (Aier, 1996) initially and gradually English became the medium of instruction. Some of the scholars have pointed out that, if not for this special attention, the dominance of a written script and developed language over mother tongue would have gradually led to the death of native language. In the meantime, Dr. Clark had started to write an Ao - English Dictionary (which took about fifteen years to complete) and began to translate the Gospels into Ao - Naga language (Sharma & Ao, 2000). In subsequent years, boys were also enrolled and gradually the road map to formal education in Nagaland was created. Rev. L. Kijung Ao records that by the year 1886, there were eight mission schools in eight villages with fifty-six pupils (“The Creation of the Greater Story: A Priceless Legacy,” 2020).

Establishment of Impur Mission Training School

In 1892, Rev and Mrs. S. A. Perrine joined Dr and Mrs Clark in their work which had grown heavier than before. The following year in 1893, Rev and Mrs. F. P. Haggard arrived at Molungyimsen. They helped Clark establish a high grade school for training teachers. The need of finding a new site for the Ao mission field was felt needed because geographically, Molungyimsen was not centrally located and inaccessible to all Naga tribes (Temjen, 2009). Dr. Clark surveyed many villages and finally settled for a site near a lake between Mopungchuket and Sungratsü. He named the place Impur. Thus, in 1894 Rev. Perrine and his wife and Rev. Haggard and his wife moved to Impur. Dr. Clark and his wife remained at Molungyimsen for another three years and joined the new Mission Centre only in the year 1897.

In 1895, Impur Mission Training School was established by Rev. S. A. Perrine at Impur with nine people (Clark, 1978 as cited in Temjen, 2009). By 1899, there were forty students (Downs, 1972 as cited in Temjen, 2009) in the Impur Mission Training School and within a short time, the enrollment rose to sixty. In 1901, the charge of Headmaster of Impur Mission School was shouldered by Rev. W. F. Down, an education missionary. In him was found one of the best educationist of the time (Sharma & Ao, 2000). It was under his guidance and direction that some Naga boys on completion of the course of study at Impur, attended the Mission School at Jorhat.

Gradually, Nagas were appointed as Teachers and Headmasters who worked alongside the American missionaries in the development of education in Naga Hills. Kiremwati (1995) in his book 'Education and the Nagas' have paid tribute to the first four Naga Headmasters for their invaluable contribution towards the growth and continuity of Impur Mission Training School. They were Gwizao Meru Zeliang (1915 - 1917), Rev. Pehlielie Angami (1918 - 1919), Kumbho Angami (1919 - 1927) and Mayangnokcha Ao (1927 - 1940).

In 1919, Impur Mission Training School was upgraded to Middle English (M.E) School and was renamed Impur Mission Training and Middle School and the Government allotted grand-in-aid of Rupees fifty (Temjen, 2009; "The Creation of the Greater Story: A Priceless Legacy," 2020). By 1938, Impur Mission Training and Middle School grew to be the biggest M. E School in Assam (Kiremwati, 1995). The School started offering subjects like Geography, Geometry, English and Grammar. In the year 1950, the School was named as Christian High School with the inclusion of classes till VII, and in 1954, the School was renamed as Clark Memorial High School the same year the School became full-fledged High School and got recognised from the Assam Education Board. The school was upgraded to Higher Secondary in 1999. In the year 2020, Clark Memorial Higher Secondary School attained 125 years of its existence, the oldest surviving American Missionary school in Nagaland.

Education in Nagaland during the rise of Naga freedom movement

In the wake of Indian independence movement, Nagas have expressed their desire as early as 1929 (to Simon Commission) to be restored to the original state of freedom (Aier, 1996). But after the declaration of Indian independence in 1947, Nagas found themselves a part of Indian territory which they disapprove of. Thus, marked the rise of Naga freedom fighters and began a protracted political struggle. In this political turmoil the growth of education was hindered. In 1953, the Naga Federal Government passed an order to close down all Indian Government run schools (Aier, 1996) and banning Naga students from attending such schools (Kiremwati, 1995). As alternatives two National High schools were set up, one at Kohima and one at Mokokchung. However, these schools were short lived due to political compulsions. Naga Hills witnessed total shutting down of all schools between 1956 to 1959. It was during these years that education of the Nagas suffered the most. In the meantime, the American missionaries were compelled to leave Naga Hills because of political unrest. Rev Delano was the last American missionary to leave Naga Hills in 1955.

In the early 1950's Naga Hills witness the entry of Catholic mission in the field of education. The Catholic mission started working with the Lothas and Angamis. Initially Baptist dominated areas did not welcome the Catholic mission but seeing their 'educational professionalism for which the Catholic mission are well known for' (Aier, 1996), they invited the Catholic mission to set up schools in their area. Today, the Catholics stand firm in Nagaland both in the field of education and in religion.

Education in Nagaland from the late 1950's

Activities in education started to resume from the late 1950's. On 8th September, 1959 the people of Mokokchung established the first college in Nagaland, Fazl Ali College (the name Fazl Ali is in honour of the then Governor of Assam and the North Eastern Areas of India) with its motto *Academia Nulli Secundus* (Second to None in Academia). By 1970, schools were all over towns and villages of Nagaland but with low standard. Kiremwati (1995) in his book 'Education and the Nagas' have pointed out some concrete reasons behind the drop in standard of education in Nagaland.

- i.* Both the British and American missionaries kept only short term goals for formal education. The former needed clerks to help them in their administrative work and the latter needed human resource with basic skills in reading and writing to spread evangelism.
- ii.* The nature of dual management by Church and Government was not instrumental in the growth and development of education. This even led to closure of schools in some areas.
- iii.* The political turmoil in Nagaland in the early 1950's was another factor which led to a drop in standard in education in Nagaland.
- iv.* The uncontrolled mushrooming of schools between 1960s and 1970s and the Government's liberal in taking over of schools without checking the quality due to political compulsion.

Until today, Nagaland is experiencing poor quality of education. However, there is a growth of awareness among the Nagas about the importance of quality of education. Government, NGO's and private managements are working towards improvement of quality of education in Nagaland by introducing smart curriculum, innovative medium of instructions, good infrastructure, appointing qualified teachers and providing friendly environment for holistic development of students.

Conclusion

Being the pioneer of formal education in Nagaland, Mokokchung district has a literacy rate of 91.62% the highest in the state with 92.18% among male and 91.01% among female (2011 census). At present there are 14 Pre-Primary Schools, 286 Schools (primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools), 6 Colleges (4 General Colleges, a Teacher Education College and a Law College), 2 Theological Colleges, a Bible School, a DIET centre, an Institute of Communication in Information Technology (ICIT), a National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) extension, an Industrial Training Institute (ITI), an Institute of Higher Studies has been established by Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) in collaboration with Nagaland Gandhi Ashram (NGA). However, Mokokchung district is yet to have a University, Engineering college, Medical college, Agriculture college and other professional institutions.

The Ao Naga society is community centric. It is the moral responsibility of an individual to serve his community as per the Ao Naga custom called *sobaliba*. In Mokokchung district, community has contributed well in the development of education. *Mokokchung Town Baptist Arogo (MTBA)/Mokokchung Town Ao Baptist Church* has established a school and a college viz, Jubilee Memorial School (the only school in Mokokchung district affiliated to CISE, New Delhi) and Jubilee Memorial

College; *Ao Kaketshir Mungdang (AKM)*/ the Ao Students' conference has established the lone Law College in Mokokchung district and provide free coaching to students preparing for HSLC and HSSLC examination every year. In addition, The *Ao Senden* which is the apex social body Ao Naga tribe has established *Ao Senden Literature Board (ASLB)* to promote Ao language and literature and also to educate the usage of uniform spelling on Ao literature. The ASLB also provide three types of courses in Ao literature – a certificate course, a diploma course and a post graduate diploma course.

However, study revealed many drawbacks both in qualitative and quantitative aspects of educational institutions in Mokokchung district. Educational institutions in Mokokchung district still struggles to impart education suitable to the locals; meet the basic TLM needs in a classroom; provide a decent library and laboratory to the students; and teachers are still struggling to cope up with new pedagogy skills. All these led to a setback in quality education. The educational system is too theoretical that it does not give space for the learners to think innovatively and creatively which results to production of unemployable educated graduates.

In this regard sensitisation on need of quality education to teachers, students, parents, education authorities and community should be initiated. Government may come up with smart education policies but it is only with the right attitude and combined effort of all the education stake holders change can be brought.

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