

Determinants of School Dropouts in Elementary Education in Manipur

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Article History:

Received 09 February 2018
Received in revised form 15
April 2018
Accepted 21 April 2018

Keywords:

Elementary education,
Dropouts, Socio-economic,
Psychological, School related
and Community level factors,
Logistic regression, Manipur

ABSTRACT

Regardless of the enhancement in government outlays on investment in the education sector for universalizing elementary education, the continual incidences of school dropout remain as a bolt in the face of commendable increase of school enrolment rate in India. Undoubtedly, rate of school dropout children has declined but still pervasive in many parts of the country which needs to have a close look. However, very little attention was paid on issues related to dropouts in the states of north-eastern India. The present study tries to address ground realities of dropout conditions in Manipur. The study will explore the influences of socio-economic, demographic, psychological, school related and community level factors responsible for dropping out and associated policy implications. The analysis is based on the empirical investigation in selected rural locations of the two districts (Imphal West and Churachandpur) in Manipur, which was conducted in 2013. The study clearly reveals that the dropout rate is notably higher in upper primary level than the primary level of education. The study indicates that the primary reasons for dropout of children from the school were school related and socio-economic factors. Moreover, despite the poverty and illiteracy of parents, political instability in the study area is forcing the children to dropout from school. The regression results showed that both parent's education, income of the households, number of family member, age of the child, type and distance from the school, participation in school activities, skipping classes, parent's assistance in teaching at home, help in domestic works at home are the key determinants of dropout from school.

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Introduction:

Elementary education is considered as a fundamental human right as well as an impetus for economic boom and human development in almost all the countries of the world (Okidi et al., 2004). The United Nations Millennium Development Goals II, 2000 is committed to the universalization of elementary education. India is also among those countries who are committed to achieve the goals of universal elementary education for all the children up to the age of 14 years. Comprehending this goal, the Government of India has launched the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for all) in 2000-01 as a key programme to universalize

elementary education. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act was launched in India on 1st April 2010 where all the children (6-14 years of age) have the fundamental Right to Education (RTE). The RTE is a milestone legal stipulation of the educational system in India. In congruence with this backdrop, there has been a massive surge in the number of schools, facilities, and a number of teachers in most of the parts of the country. However, the achievement of this goal involves both enrolment and completion of the full cycle of primary and upper primary school education. Despite the huge increase in enrolment rates, which is almost 100 percent in

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some states, a substantial number of school children are dropping out before and after primary level of education. So now the critical challenge is not only to enroll children in the school but also to see that they do not drop out before the completion of elementary level education.

Regardless of the enhancement in government outlays on investment in the education sector for universalizing elementary education, the continual school dropout phenomenon remains as one of the most important problems in our society. The problems of children in association with school leaving are numerous and wide-ranging and are inextricably intertwined with their own individual needs. It is not completely an educational problem, but a revelation of a number of factors working in a multifarious socio-cultural, economic and political perspective. During the preceding decade, the dropout rate has gone down from 40 percent to 25 percent and from 54.5 percent to 46 percent at primary and upper primary level respectively. At the regional level, some states like Bihar, Assam, Rajasthan, Orissa, West Bengal, Sikkim, Mizoram and Meghalaya have shown more than 60 percent dropout children without completion of upper primary level (MHRD 2002 & 2009). On the other hand, at primary level, more than 40 percent children dropped out in the states of Bihar, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Mizoram while in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh this percentage is more than 30 percent. The situation is significantly better in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand. Thus, the goals of universal elementary education are yet to be accomplished even though dropout rates have decreased, but the rates of dropout still persist at a considerable magnitude.

Children belonging to marginalized sections and low socio-economic status are more prone to school dropout. There are many factors which influenced children to dropout from school. It is multifaceted and mostly associated with the family, school, community and psychological levels of each individual child (Mike et al., 2008; Husain, 2005; Ramachandran et al., 2003; Piyali and Guha, 2002; Sajjad et al., 2012; Pittman, 1986; Jayachandran, 2002; Flisher, 2010). A number of research studies have identified several factors causing of dropout. Some of them are financial constraints, disinterest in studies, unable to cope up or failure in studies, parents not interested in studies, for participating in other economic activities, to work for wage or salary, to attend other domestic chores, to look after younger siblings, school too far,

unmotivated teachers, disability, marriage and others. These factors, together with the low socio-economic status of the households make participation in school a great predicament for a significant number of children. Therefore, children opt to leave school before completing their elementary education.

By quitting school before completing education, most dropouts suffer from grave dearth of knowledge that rigorously limits their economic and social security all through their lives. A significant point worth noting is that school dropouts are generally associated with persistently high levels of unemployment who lack the proficiency, the enthusiasm and the economic, community and intellectual resources that are essential to struggle in the contemporary employment market and to have recognition in modern society. Dropouts also usually experience poorer physical and mental health, less motivated academically and frequently experience personal intricacy and behavioral problems that place them at threat. They are also likely to have histories of academic failure and low educational attainments during the compulsory years of schooling. As a discouraged individual, sometimes, the dropout child is liable to be anti-social and unruly and may perhaps become a juvenile delinquent. These consequences of school dropouts have a negative social impact at all levels of development. It is increasingly understood that retaining children in schools is a more demanding task than enrolling them in school. The problem of dropout is thus disturbing and is a menace for the successful completion of schooling and for achieving the goals of education for all schemes.

Therefore, it is essential to identify the factors that influence the children to dropout in order to combat the problem of universalizing elementary education. In this context, the present study tries to address the ground realities of dropout conditions in Manipur. The study will explore the influences of socio-economic, demographic, psychological, school-related and community level factors responsible for dropping out and associated policy implications.

In Manipur, though enrolment rates have increased tremendously over the years, the dropout rate is quite alarming. School dropout has been inflicting the educational system for decades and is still pervasive until today. The state has a comparatively small population but is very dynamic politically due to poor socio-economic conditions. The population of Manipur is comprised of different ethnic and religious communities. In the state, there are 34 percent

Scheduled Tribes, 7 percent Scheduled Castes and remaining 59 percent are Meeteis and Meetei Muslims. They are interwoven in an intricate manner, exposing their identities that have created a chaotic situation to the state in which education maybe affecting these communities differently and consequently by inference their attitude towards education. Hence, variations in educational participation amongst these communities are not a forgone expectation. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been functional since 2004, but a look at the enrolment rates shows that retention of pupils beyond the primary stage is still a distant dream.

Methodology

Conceptual framework

The dropping out of children from schools over the years reveals the impact of a range of factors; developing from various socio-economic, demographic, psychological, school-related and community level factors. Socio-economic and demographic factors such as educational attainment of parents, household income, household size and birth order influenced the decision of children and the parent to stop education at school. Psychological factors play a great role in influencing the pupils to

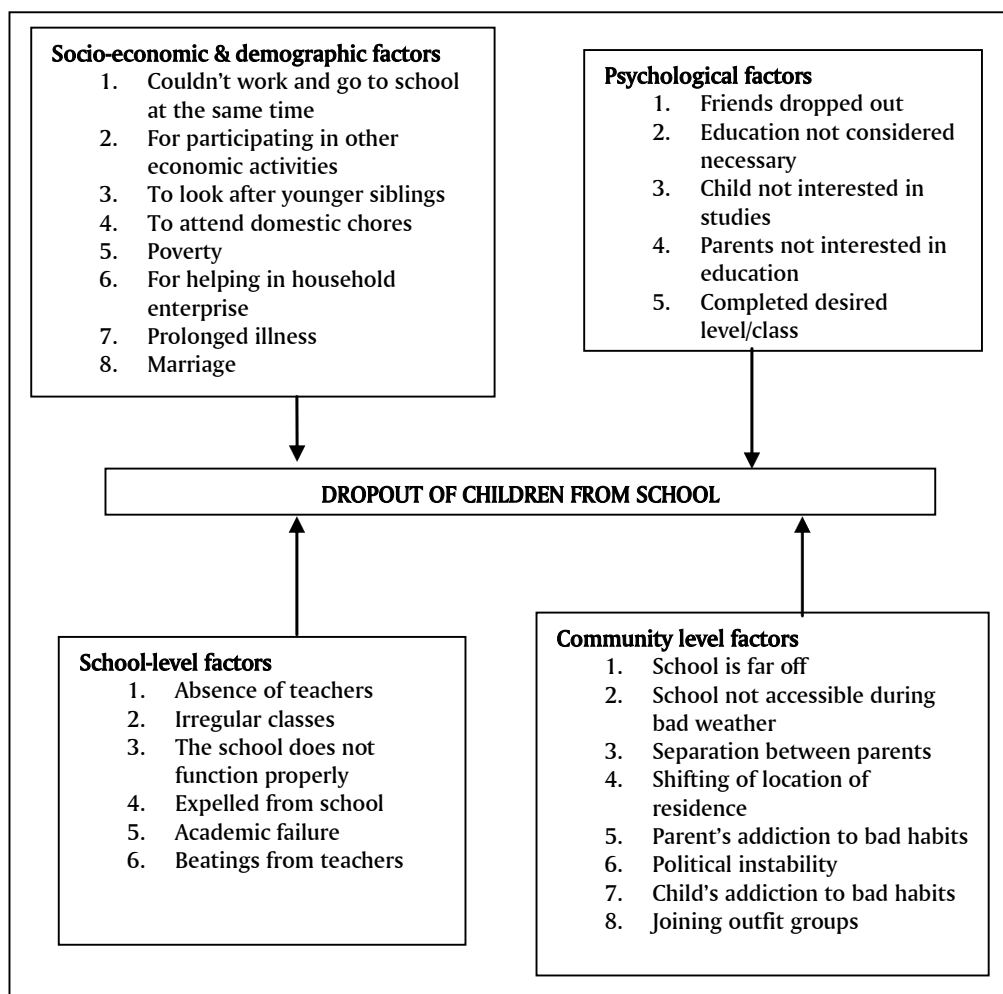


Fig. 1 : Conceptual framework for determinants of dropouts

drop out. The attitude and motivational level of parents towards education also lead to dropping out of school. School-related factors as in motivational level and behavior of teachers, availability of schools, academic failure, and absenteeism also increase the chances of children to leave school. Community level factors as in family relations and the environment contribute a great deal in affecting children to either continue or leave school permanently.

This conceptualization highlights the complication of factors in influencing the children's drop out. Nearly all these factors are intertwined with each other. All of them operate in a separate entity but at the other end of the spectrum, they are dependent on each other as dropping out of school is a process which keeps changing in intensity according to time and space.

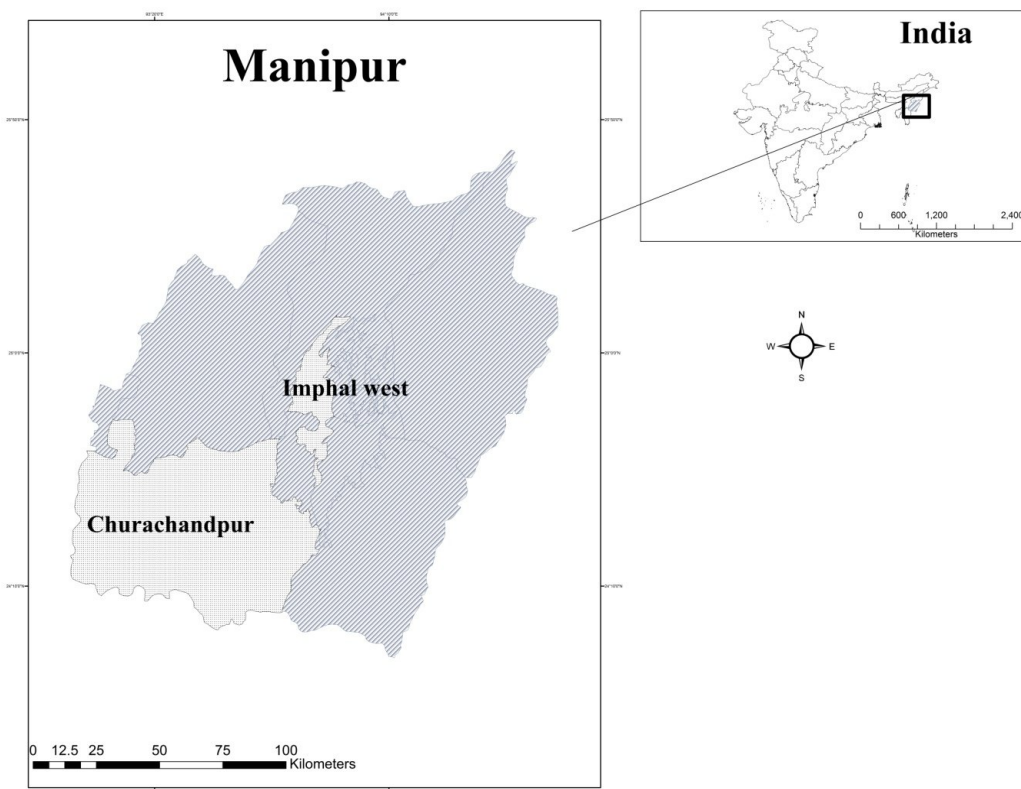
The study was conducted in a holistic manner in order to have a better understanding of a range of interconnected issues relating to school dropout at primary and upper primary levels. The study is based

on empirical investigation conducted in selected rural locations of the identified districts in Manipur – Imphal West and Churachandpur. Districts for studying the dropout phenomenon have been selected by purposive sampling.

For the present study, a household level survey was conducted and a total 700 samples were collected from both the districts (350 samples each district). Out of the 350 samples, 200 dropouts and 150 currently enrolled students in both the districts are selected. Care was taken to draw the sample from different types of schools (government, private and mission) to examine the role of different factors for affecting student's decision to drop out from schools.

Results and Discussion

From the available secondary data, it is not possible to get accurate figure of dropout children at the stage of elementary education, but the dropout rates at different level of education (primary and upper primary) may give us the magnitude of dropouts. The dropout rate for Manipur stands at 53.73 percent,



Map 1 : Location of the study area

while at the national level this figure is 40.79 percent between classes I-VIII in 2011-12. Surprisingly, the dropout rate in Manipur has been increasing over the last decade (Figure 2). Therefore, it is clearly evident that the reduction of the dropout rate is a huge challenge for the state. This needs in-depth analysis in order to understand the dropout phenomenon and the reasons therein behind dropping out at elementary level.

education, indicating the proportion of children who drop out of school increase tremendously with an increase in educational level.

Earlier we discussed the level of education in which children drop out from school, a more detailed table is prepared to show the class-wise distribution of dropout children in the study area. Looking at the table (Table 1), the proportion of children dropping

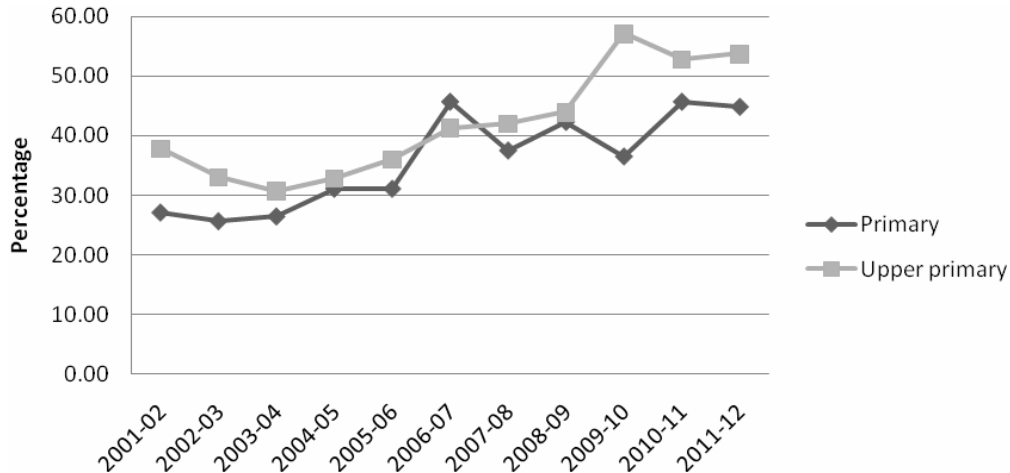


Fig. 2 : Trend of Dropout rate of Elementary Education in Manipur
Source: MHRD, 2001-2012

Dropout Rate by Gender, Educational Level and Class

A discriminatory attitude towards Girl's education is present in the society because of differential societal norms, practice, tradition and beliefs (Colclough, 2000). As mentioned in the methodology section, out of 400 dropouts collected from the two sample districts, male dropouts comprised of 47.50 percent and female dropouts comprised of 52.50 percent. The distribution of dropouts presents a contrasting figure as the proportion of girl dropouts is higher in percentage for Churachandpur district while it is slightly lower for Imphal West district. But overall, the percentage of dropout of girl students was higher than that of boys (Figure 3) which reflects the presence of gender disparity in the study area.

out of school is lesser at the lower classes than the higher classes. The proportion of children dropping out is lowest in Class I (1.46 percent) while it is highest in Class VIII (23.23 percent). Then, from Class II onwards, the number of drop out children keeps on increasing till Class VIII. A notable point is a difference in dropout rates between girls and boys. In all the classes, the proportion of dropout children is higher among girls except class IV, V and VI.

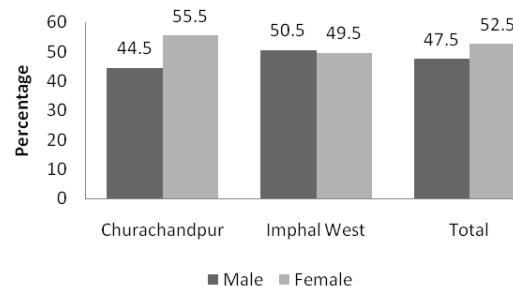


Fig. 3 : Percentage of Dropout by Gender
Source: Primary survey, 2013

Figure 4 shows 41.25 percent children dropped out from primary level of education, while 58.75 percent of children dropped out from upper primary level of education. From the figures it is evident that the proportion of dropout children who completed upper primary level is higher than the primary level

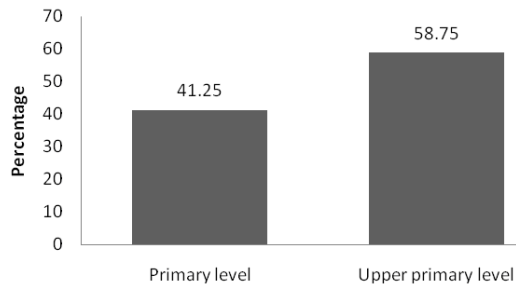


Fig. 4 : Percentage Distribution of Dropouts by Level of Education

Source: Primary survey, 2013

Causes of dropping out

Dropping out of school is determined by a number of factors at different levels of education. Since long, phenomenon of school dropout has been a great concern to the policy-makers in almost all the developing countries. To formulate effective policy interventions, it is necessary to comprehend and identify the essential factors which are causing school dropouts. However, one of the key challenges is that dropout phenomenon is not the outcome of single reason. The decision to drop out from school is influenced by various factors, ranging from individual, social, demographic, economic, school and community level.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Dropouts by Socio-economic Reasons in Elementary Level

Reasons	Primary			Upper Primary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No Response	53.14	42.86	48.00	27.01	13.37	20.19
Couldn't Work And Go To School At The Same Time	3.24		3.24	10.31	0.78	5.55
For Participating In Other Economic Activities				9.84	6.54	8.19
To Look After Younger Siblings		7.14	7.14		8.51	8.51
To Attend Other Domestic Chores		4.29	4.29		13.49	13.49
Poverty	43.63	41.43	42.53	43.26	48.56	45.91
For Helping In Household Enterprise				1.47	1.57	1.52
Prolonged Illness		4.29	2.14	6.54	2.35	4.44
Marriage				1.57	4.86	3.21
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2013

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Dropouts by Class of Dropping out

District	Male	Female	Total
Class I	1.06	1.86	1.46
Class II	4.59	4.11	4.35
Class III	5.71	7.99	6.85
Class IV	9.51	7.65	8.58
Class V	19.09	10.91	15.00
Class VI	19.59	17.54	18.56
Class VII	17.21	26.76	21.98
Class VIII	23.25	23.21	23.23
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2013

Socio-economic factors

The impact of socio-economic factors for dropping out of school is well recognized throughout the world. As most families of dropout children come from low socio-economic status, it is pertinent to explore the nature of prevalence and extent of influence of these factors in the study area.

BOX 1*Case Study 1: Early marriage*

N.Tomba (name changed), from Khumujamba Leikai, Churachandpur district, narrated that due to extreme poverty, he married off his daughter, Ayingbi at the age of 12, to a man who was well-to-do, with the hope that his daughter would get to eat and fill her stomach as he himself was not in a position to provide even her basic needs.

In contrast to the above statement, Saroj (name changed), from Phayeng, Imphal West district, eloped with her boyfriend while she was studying in class VIII. This act of her came as a shocking incident to her family members as they wanted her to complete her study till class X.

Case Study 2: Domestic help

Chingboi (name changed), from Khominthang, Churachandpur district, aged 14, works as a domestic help after passing class V and earning Rs.2000 per month. Her father, a carpenter by profession said that his income was too low to maintain his large family (total 9 children - 6 daughters and 3 sons) and therefore needed additional income so that the sons could at least acquire some education. Besides Chingngaihniang, two daughters, who were elder to her, had been working as domestic help outside the state.

Case Study 3: Hotel waiter

Pradip (name changed), 12 years, from Lamphel Super Market, Imphal West, had to drop out of school after his father died. Now he is working in a small hotel where his mother is also working as a cook. He earns Rs.2000 per month.

Case Study 4: Prolonged illness

Thangpu (name changed), aged 12, from Songtal, Churachandpur district, studied up to class IV only. He discontinued his studies as he was suffering from Schizophrenia. His sickness was creating a lot of problem for those around him and finally he dropped out from the school.

Table 2 shows the socio-economic causes to dropout for both primary and upper primary level. At the primary level, the most common cause of dropout is poverty as 42.53 percent dropouts in the study area reported it as the main cause. Similarly, at the upper primary level, 45.91 percent dropouts in the study area cited poverty as the most common cause. At the primary level, 'couldn't work and go to school at the same time' constitutes 3.24 percent while it is higher in the upper primary level (5.55 percent) in the study area. The reasons which are not cited at primary level but are found to be operating at the upper primary level dropouts are - participating in other economic activities, helping in household enterprise and early marriage. Reason of 'looking after younger siblings' is not found among the male dropouts and the proportion of female dropouts who are under this category is higher among the upper primary level. The reason 'marriage' is found to be higher in proportion among female dropouts than male.

Poverty consigns a significant strain on the family and acts as a major impediment for children to continue their study. Poor children suffer from serious deficiencies relating to health and mental aptitude due to malnutrition which lead them to quit studies as they are unable to cope up with the demands of

schooling. Therefore, a majority of the children in the study area dropped out due to poverty. The propensity of dropping out is higher among the children, who belong to bottom quartile (economically) of the society because - their opportunity costs of schooling are much higher than the high-income families (Tilak, 1979). The prevalence of early marriage is higher among female dropouts than male in the present study. Early marriage while in school is found to have caused some children to dropout as they could not continue their studies after marriage. Education of girls is bound to be restrained by early marriage and the probability of dropping out is very high (Llyod and Mensch, 2000). Most of the female dropouts are engaged in household work and looking after their family. Male, who dropped out in both the sample districts, are found in works of quarrying, stone crushing, ticket collections in public transports, vehicle workshops and hotels to earn money. Among the female dropouts, a very significant number are working as domestic help in and around their villages and some are even outside the state in metro cities.

Psychological factors

Psychological factors here include the attitude of the dropout children and their parents towards education.

As dropping out is caused by many factors, the psychological factors are incorporated in the study to examine if it has a negative or positive impact on a child's school participation. The variables used in the study in order to capture the attitudes of dropout children towards education are shown in Table 3.

A considerable number of dropout children have reported that they are simply not interested in education and thereby they preferred to drop out from the school. At the primary level, share of dropout children for this reason is 36.33 percent while this figure is 39.69 percent at the upper primary level. Regarding the attitude of parents towards education, 16.15 percent dropouts in the study area at the primary level stated that their parents were not interested in education.

and at the upper primary level 2.20 percent students dropped out because their friends had already dropped out. A very peculiar reason for dropping out of school is identified wherein a child is ashamed of his body weight and for this reason, parents could not force him to go to school.

Thus, from the responses given by dropouts and their parents, it can be stated that lack of awareness about the importance of education in both the sample districts is highly prevalent. 'Children not interested in studies' as a reason for dropping out is common as their idea about education is rather narrow. Majority of the dropout children reveal that they are simply disinterested in studies as they do not find any meaning in what they are learning. This can be attributed to the negligence of teachers and their

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Dropouts by Psychological Factors in Elementary Level

Reasons	Primary			Upper Primary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No Response	37.15	44.29	40.72	20.00	30.51	25.26
Friends Dropped Out		2.86	2.86	2.31	2.10	2.20
Education Not Considered Necessary	3.24		3.24	4.81	4.32	4.56
Child Not Interested In Studies	36.94	35.72	36.33	41.43	37.95	39.69
Parents Not Interested In Education	19.44	12.86	16.15	22.06	19.25	20.65
Completed Desired Level/Class	3.24	4.29	3.76	8.58	5.10	6.84
Ashamed Of Body Weight				0.84	0.78	0.81
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2013

Again, at the upper primary level, 20.65 percent dropouts reported that their parents were not interested in their education. Moreover, from the Table 3, it is observed that there are 3.76 percent and 6.83 percent students have dropped out at the primary level and upper primary level respectively because they felt that they had achieved their desired level of education. Further probing was undertaken to identify whether dropout children considered education was important in their aspects of life or not. However, 3.24 percent and 4.56 percent students have dropped out because they consider education is not important for them.

Another reason which dropout children have cited as a reason for their leaving school is peer pressure or friends dropped out. At the primary level, 2.86 percent

unmotivated teaching methods. In order to make school interesting, teachers have a great role to play. The teaching-learning process needs to be child-friendly to attract the attention of the children in study. The concept of joyful learning needs to be incorporated so that children would develop a positive attitude towards education. In the study area, many parents are illiterate and the proportions of parents who had acquired education only up to primary level are very high. All this adds up to the negative attitudes of parents and children towards education.

The attitude and involvement of parents in the education of children is a very important determinant of whether children will continue their studies or not. Children of illiterate parents do not have anyone to help them in their studies as their parents do not

BOX 2*Case Study 7: peer influence*

Hoihching (name changed), from Singat, Churachandpur district, while studying in class V, decided to leave school as her best friend had dropped out of school. She even left her home to work in a nearby village's hotel (Tuima) where her friend was working. Both of them seemed to be very happy with their decision as they earned Rs.1000 per month besides getting food and accommodation.

Case Study 8 & 9: the attitude of parents

Considering the lack of job opportunities and large-scale unemployment scenario in the state Mr. Adamei Kamson (name changed), aged 54, from Tarung, Imphal West, narrates that eight years of schooling is a waste of time as education does not guarantee employment for his children. He is of the opinion that basic education is sufficient and as long as children can read 'The Bible' and knows how to put their signatures on important documents He feels, if children can do that, children had completed their desired level of education.

Mrs. Ibecha (name changed), aged 47, from Kanglatongbi, Imphal West, do not encourage her children to pursue education as she feels it is a wastage of time as the children do not learn anything useful from school. She works in a quarry and takes her children along with her as the money earned by them adds up to the family income. She sent the older kids to follow their father who is a highway driver with the expectation that they would take up their father's footsteps in future.

understand anything about what they are doing or learning. These children who are considered as first generation learners lack the motivation and encouragement from parents and they are more prone to drop out from school. Brock and Kariuki (2012) have also reported the same findings that the likelihood of children to drop out from school was higher when parents were not involved in the education of their children. Considering the large-scale unemployment condition in the state, children also feel that too much education is worthless as they do not find any hope of getting a decent job in future even after completion of schooling. For them, leaving school early does not seem to be a problem as they are yet to realize what education can do for them.

School-level factors

The decision to drop out is impinged upon by schools to a great deal. Schools have an important task of pulling or pushing away children. Availability of schooling facilities does not merely mean children are enrolled and attending schools. A lot of responsibility lies in the hands of school authorities and teachers for enabling children to gain maximum benefit out of education.

The reason for dropping out is different for both primary and upper primary level of education though similarities are observed in the sample areas. School-related variables which are influencing children to drop out at the upper primary level may not affect primary level due to age differences and norms of discipline followed at each level. Table 4 shows that

the most common reason cited by dropouts is 'school does not function properly' in the study area. At the primary level, 19.76 percent and at upper primary level 23.29 percent dropped out students reveal that as schools do not function regularly, they are dropping out from school. Moreover, the table also shows that absence of teachers is one of the important reason for leaving school. 13.67 percent and 15.75 percent students have dropped out due to an absence of teachers at primary and upper primary level respectively. Further, irregular classes are reported to be one of the causes of dropping out and in primary and upper primary level the reported percentages for dropping out because of this reason are 7.57 and 11.23 percent respectively. All the above causes are found to be similar for both levels of education.

Expelled from school, academic failure and beatings from teachers are the causes which are not present among dropout children at the primary level. Expelled from school is cited as a cause of dropping out by 6.99 percent students in the study area. Furthermore, 8.61 percent children have revealed academic failure as a cause of dropping out and beatings from teacher acts as a reason for dropping out by 1.67 percent children (all male).

The frequent absence of teachers, irregular classes and improper functioning of schools is applicable only to government schools in the present study. The existing government schools in this study are in a pathetic state. Therefore, this indicates that the main problem of government schools lies in the hands of concerned authorities and teachers as well. As most

of the poor children could not afford to take admission in private schools, the only hope for them is government-run schools. Negligence on the part of the teachers makes children withdraw themselves from school as teachers do not come to school regularly.

The RTE, 2009 has made it mandatory for all schools to promote all children to the next level of education to ensure universal education for all. But a good number of dropouts cited academic failure as one of the reasons for leaving the school. This indicates that schools in the study area are yet to implement this act. Failure in examinations is a very good predictor of dropping out of school as it entails loss of confidence on the part of children who are vulnerable. The reason for these dropout children's poor academic

another problem of dropping out in the study area. A probe on the matter, however, highlights that some students portray behavioral problems such as truancy, indiscipline etc. which provoke school authorities to take such extreme measures as they called it unavoidable circumstances. Children having such issues of misbehavior with teachers are more likely to drop out from school (Goldsmith and Wang, 1999, Wheelock, 1988). Thus, school-level factors influenced children to drop out in many ways and as such preventive measures to retain students within the system are a much-needed approach in the study area.

Community level factors

The environment in which a child grew up plays a very important role in his overall development. Community

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of Dropouts by School Level Factors in Elementary

Reasons	Primary			Upper Primary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No Response	56.59	61.43	59.01	26.28	40.34	33.31
Absence Of Teachers	14.47	12.86	13.67	16.33	15.18	15.75
Irregular Classes	8.00	7.14	7.57	11.72	10.74	11.23
School Does Not Function Properly	20.95	18.57	19.76	22.90	23.69	23.29
Expelled From School				12.55	1.44	6.99
Academic Failure				8.58	8.64	8.61
Beating From Teachers				1.67		1.67
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2013

achievements is identified as learning handicaps caused by the inability to understand class teachings, inability to memorize and difficulty in concentrating due to problems emanating from family affair. Therefore, children who failed in examinations in the study area are dropping out more than those who are successful. A weak student who did not pass in class I or II has only 20 percent chance of completing education and also who failed in class VIII or IX becomes a deciding factor for children to drop out of school (Schreiber, 1964 as cited in Beck & Muia, 1980). Besides, corporal punishment in any form is prohibited in all schools all over the country. Still, observation in the study area further indicates the failure of schools in following the dictates of the RTE norm as some children are found to have dropped out of school due to beating from teachers. Expulsion from schools is

level factors include the daily affairs taking place in the child's surroundings. Children growing up in a healthy environment develop a positive mental attitude towards life in general in comparison with those who grew up in unhealthy surroundings. The community in which a child is dwelling definitely impacts his ability to either succeed or fail in his studies. The perceived attitude towards education also affects children in a positive or negative way. An exploration was done to identify the level of influence of child's surroundings to their dropout. Moreover, the study is important to highlight whether a child's surroundings is conducive to develop his mental and emotional well-being or not. This is because children who are mentally distressed due to bad influence in their surroundings are more likely to drop out from school than those who are free from mental hassles.

BOX 3

Case Study 10 & 11: expelled from school

Lalbiakmuan (name changed), aged 15, from Zenhang Lamka, Churachandpur, was expelled from his school because of his 'spikey' hairstyle. His mother narrated that, school authorities had warned to cut his hair in a decent style but he did not pay heed to their warning and finally he was expelled from school. His parents tried to send him to another school, but he doesn't want to go back to school and spent most of his time hanging around with friends.

Taorem Saranjit Singh (name changed), aged 16, from Patsoi Part I, Imphal West was expelled from school while reading in Class VIII as he was practicing unfair means during the annual school examination. After this, he completely stopped going to school and now works as a helper in a two-wheeler workshop.

Case Study 12: Beating from teachers

Timothy Kamei (name changed), from Thangmeiband, Imphal West was beaten and humiliated by a teacher while he was reading in class VII for not doing his home assignments. He decided to stop going to school and two years later, he joined one of the outfit groups in the state.

Khamzalian (name changed), from Tuibuang, Churachandpur, was also beaten badly by his teacher. He opted out of school due to this reason. Now he is working part-time basis in a small restaurant.

Both of the above cases happened in private schools.

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Dropouts by Community Level Factors in Elementary Level

Reasons	Primary			Upper Primary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No response	79.05	85.71	82.38	40.79	62.13	51.46
Separation between parents	4.76	2.86	3.81	9.31	4.86	7.08
Shifting of location	6.48	7.14	6.81	11.62	8.39	10.01
Parent's addiction to bad habits	9.72	4.29	7.00	3.87	6.95	5.41
School is far off				11.72	8.51	10.11
School not accessible during bad weather				5.54	6.42	5.98
Addiction to bad habits				7.84	0.00	3.92
Political instability				3.04	2.10	2.57
Joined outfit group				6.28	0.66	3.47
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2013

As shown in Table 5, dropping out due to community-level factors differs at the primary and upper primary level. At the primary level, three variables are found to have an impact on a child's decision to drop out from school while at the upper primary level a lot of variables are found to have an impact. At the primary level, 3.81 percent dropped out because of separation between parents while this figure is 7.08 percent at the upper primary level. Again, shifting of location of residence is cited by 6.81 percent and 10.01 percent

dropouts at the primary and upper primary level respectively. Then, parents' addiction to bad habits is cited by 7 percent at the primary level while this figure is 5.41 percent at the upper primary level.

At the upper primary level, 10.11 percent children reported that distance of school acts as an impediment to continue in their schooling. Then, accessibility to school during bad weather becomes an issue for some children in the study area as 5.98 percent dropouts

stated this as one of the causes of their dropping out. Moreover, 'addiction to bad habits' is cited by 3.92 percent dropouts in the study area. Political instability in the state is an important cause of dropping out of school. In the study area, we found that 2.57 percent children dropped out due to political instability prevailing there in the state. Finally, some children are found to have dropped out of school due to joining outfit groups in the state. It is important to note that the dropout rates among female due to joining outfit groups is less than male (6.28 percent).

Thus, the analysis of community-level factors related to drop out shows that the unfavorable environment that surrounds children has a negative impact on their attitude towards education. Separation between

parents and their addiction to bad habits like drinking, substance abuse etc. negatively influenced children's participation in education. These behaviors of parents have a deep impact by lowering the child's self-esteem and in turn affect their concentration level in study. Children from broken homes and single parent families are more likely to drop out as the families undergo monetary constraints (Fisher, 2010; Kishore, and Shaji, 2012). Besides, parents who are actively involved in substance abuse and alcohol usually do not care about their children's education. Parents who are addicted to alcohol do not send their children to school as they are unable to bear school's expenditures (Rena, 2007). Therefore, a substantial number of children in the study area have dropped out of school due to the irresponsibility of parents. Frequent shifting of

BOX 4

Case Study 13: Distance to school

Lamzaman (name changed), from Lungthul D, an interior part of Churachandpur district, dropped out of school after passing class VII, as no schools are available in his village with class VIII. Government school has ceased to function and to avail the nearest school for class VIII from his village, he had to travel more than 5 km per day on foot which was not feasible. Since his parents could not afford to let him stay in a rented house or in a hostel, he had to drop out of school.

Case Study 14: Addiction to bad habits

Mimin (name changed), aged 17, from Rengkai, Churachandpur district, dropped out while reading in class VIII due to substance abuse. He is now in one of the rehabilitation centers in the town.

Case Study 15: Separation between parents

Athuana (name changed), aged 12, from Guigailong, Imphal West district, dropped out of school as her parents are divorced. She has four younger siblings who she takes care of while her mother sells vegetables at the local market.

Case Study 16: Shifting of location of residence

Kamei Achunga (name changed), aged 12, from Sangaiprou Kabui Village, Imphal West, could not continue her study as her family kept on changing their rented house in different areas in search of a better living condition.

Case Study 17: Parents' addiction to bad habits

Lalzahau (name changed), aged 14, from Pumlawn, Churachandpur district, dropped out of school while reading in class VII. He was ashamed and embarrassed by his father's behavioral problem in the village due to excessive drinking habit. He was one of the brightest students in the school and when teachers persuaded him to continue his studies; he declined their request and preferred to stay indoors all the time.

Case Study 18: joined outfit group

N.Tomba Singh (name changed), aged 16, from Khurkhul Makha Leikai, Imphal West, fought with his father all the time. He doesn't listen to his parents and was not interested in his studies. He left home and after some days his parents came to know that he had joined one of the outfit groups in the state. He was a difficult boy to handle, said the father.

Niangmuankim (name changed), aged 17 now, from Songtal, Churachandpur, failed in Class VIII and did not want to attend school anymore. She now joined one of the outfit groups in the district.

Chinglamniang (name changed), aged 13, from Zenhang Lamka, Churachandpur district, said she could not continue her studies as her parents were involved in heavy drinking every day. Both of them did not care about their children, all they think about is how to get money for buying a drink. Their main concern is only drinking and as a result, ching had to drop out of school as she could not pay her school fees.

location of residence disturbed the child's academic life as getting admissions in new schools is not an easy task especially if the family had shifted during the middle of an academic session. Distance and accessibility to schools in the study area act as a hurdle for children to continue in studies particularly where the schools are located far away from the interior villages. In some cases children are forced to discontinue since the available schools in the study areas are not up to VIII standard. The previous study also found that the probability of dropout is high among the children those who are living in rural and interior areas (Okumu, Ibrahim et al, 2008). Moreover, substance abuse in the study area is quite rampant among school going children. Children become addicted to all kinds of drugs that are harmful and damaged their reasoning and learning ability. Substance abuse among children of school-going age is found to have a negative impact on education as reported by the respondents. Therefore, it can be inferred that substance abuse is a very important predictor of dropping out of school for some sets of the population. Substance users had a low educational desire, their expectation level to continue education is little and usually have a negative notion towards education (Paulson and colleague, 1990 as cited in Dupont et al, 2013 and Abuya, Benta et al, 2012). The prevailing political instability in the form of frequent blockades, bandhs (strike), ethnic conflicts seriously affect children's education. The bandh culture in both the sample district indirectly leads to loss of interest in studies because when a bandh is called for, closure of school follows suit in many cases. Considering the numerous underground groups existing in the sample districts, it is not surprising to find that a substantial number of young children chose to enter this field.

Regression Analysis

To examine the determinants of dropout a regression analysis is done in order to assess the probable factors responsible for causing children to drop out from school. The binary logistic regression adopted because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable. The dependent variable here is the status of the children whether they are dropped out (0) or they are currently attending (1).

The results from the binary logistic regression suggest that the family size is one of the leading factors causing dropout in the study area. An increase in family size lead to decrease in the odds of continuing education which indicates that the children living in larger families are more likely to drop out than children

living in small families. Children living in large households lack basic care as parents find it difficult to cater to the needs of each and every individual child. Parents encourage schooling of fewer numbers of children when the offsprings are more than two (Rena, 2007). Consequently, with larger family size, the financial burden/potential workload is greater; children are less likely to attend school and often dropout (Chugh, 2011).

Educational level of parents (father and mother) is a very important predictor of schooling of children. The result reveals that the probability of children to continue education is higher for parents with higher educational level. An increase in the educational level of father and of mother increases 1.9 and 1.6 odds respectively of children to continue their schooling (Table 6). Thereby it indicates that with the increase in the educational level of the parents, the probability of children to drop out of school decreases to a great extent. These findings are consistent with the research findings conducted by many scholars (Nath et al., 2007; Lloyd et al., 2000; Sengupta and Guha, 2002; Mike et al, 2008; Goldschmidt, 1997; Choudhury, 2006; Brown and Park, 2002). Educated fathers are better informed, more eager to educate their children and also can assist their children in studies, which is not possible for fathers who are illiterate or less educated. On the other hand, educated mothers are also better informed and cultured, they spent more time in monitoring their children's education and are more effective in helping children. They realized the importance of education, as well as the positive returns that the children would get from education. As such, educated mothers have a strong positive influence on the education of children. Therefore, it can be inferred that education of parents exerted a considerable influence on whether children would continue or leave the school.

The effect of household income on the education of children is widely accepted and seen to have higher drop out of children in cases of low-income families (Dutta, 2012; Bloom, 2010). The regression result shows that the likelihood of children to continue education is higher with the increase of income of the households. Households with low income find it difficult to send their children to school because of several direct and indirect costs of schooling. Many a times education of children takes a backseat as expenditure incurred on schooling becomes an unbearable economic burden to poor families.

Age of the child has a significant impact on study at

Table 6. Binary logistic model results for determinants of elementary level dropout

Explanatory variables		No. of observations	exp(b)
Continuous			
Number of family member			0.61***
Father's education			1.94***
Mother's education			1.6***
Household income			1.24**
Age of the child			0.45***
Categorical			
Type of institution	Mission®	121	
	Government	184	4.25
	Local body	69	7.96***
	Private aided	120	2.32
	Private unaided	206	0.45
Tuition fees waived	No®	509	
	Yes	191	7.19
Medium of instruction	Others®	57	
	English	643	0.69
The distance of the school	> 2 kms®	29	
	1 to 2 kms	78	2.44
	0.5 to 1 km	302	9.49**
	Within habitation	291	8.78*
Mid-day meal	No®	182	
	Yes	518	3.44
Participate in school activities	Never®	223	
	Very often	240	2.96**
	Sometimes	237	3.49**
Skip classes	Never®	307	
	Very often	190	0.26**
	Sometimes	203	0.46*
Took tuition	No®	592	
	Yes	108	1.86
Parents teach at home	No®	528	
	Yes	172	1.63**
Work at home	No®	280	
	Yes	420	0.95***

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; Sample size (n) is equal to 700; For dependent variable, drop out is coded for 0 and continuation is coded as 1.

Source: Field survey, 2013

both primary and upper primary levels. The findings indicate that older children are more likely to drop out than the younger ones. In the study area it is observed that a majority of children dropped out of school at the upper primary level. Thus, with an increase in age of the child, the likelihood of dropping out also increases (Llyod et al., 2000).

Depending upon the type of school, teaching methods and disciplinary actions differ from one school to another. In turn, this affects in the study of children. If we look dropout rates by type of school, the figures show that the dropout rates are significantly different according to the type of school. The result indicates that children those who attend local body schools have a higher probability to continue compared to the children of other types of school (Table 6). Local body schools are better managed. In private schools fees are very high and in government schools there are higher incidences of absenteeism of teachers, poor administration and negligence of teacher. These are the causes which prompt higher chances of continuity among children in local body schools.

Several studies have made it evident that the effect of distance to school from the place of residence is crucial for schooling of children (Dutta, 2012; Mike et al., 2007; Chugh, 2011; Colclough et al., 2000; Ainsworth et al., 2005). It is observed in this study that children are more likely to drop out if schools are located at far distances. Distance acts a barrier especially in remote locations where transport facilities are not adequate. In some villages, upper primary schools are not available, so children have to travel long distances to reach school. They ultimately drop out owing to the inconvenience created by distance. It acts a discouraging factor for children and even parents do not encourage their children to attend schools located at such a far distance away from home.

Children who are actively involved in school activities usually develop a likings for their school. In the regression analysis, with regard to the reference category (never), children who often participate or sometimes participate in school's activities are less likely to drop out. This is consistent with other study where it was seen that children who did not participate in extracurricular activities had significantly higher odds of dropping out (Rumberger, 1995).

Dropping out of school takes place due to a variety of school-related factors. Disengagement from school where skipping class is frequent is one of the factors

for children to opt out of school (Fisher, 2010). The results show that in respect to reference category, children who skip classes are more likely to drop out than those who do not skip classes.

Parental involvement in the education of children enhances their participation and success in school (Bridgeland et al., 2006). In this study, children whose parents teach them at home are more likely (1.63 odds) to continue their study than the children whose parents do not teach them at home. The majority of parents were 'not aware' or just 'somewhat aware' about their child's education and these children are more likely to drop out. This is especially worse among first-generation learners where parents are illiterate. Some parents expressed their inability to help them as their own educational level is very low even though they are willing to guide and supervise their children in their studies.

Results further indicate that children who are involved in domestic work are more likely to drop out than those who are not involved. Majority of the dropout children in the study area are working at home and this steals the time they need to devote to their studies. Girls are involved in sibling care and cleaning the house while their mothers are busy working outside. This has a negative impact on their education and as such, they are more prone to drop out of school. Several studies have also found similar results in which children; especially girls are withdrawn from school as they are needed at home to look after the family (Kotwal and Rani, 2007).

Conclusion

Now, the Elementary Education is a fundamental right to all the children aged between 6 to 14 years in India. To bring all the children in the system of school, government of India has introduced a number of schemes. A surge in enrolment rates in elementary education across the country signifies the interest of the parents in sending their children to school. However, merely sending children to school is not sufficient; retaining them until they complete elementary level of education is also important in order to enable them to make an effective literate and educated person. Many schools and parents are not able to hold their children within the school system and thereby incidences of dropout are there. In this study it is recorded that the dropout rate in the state is notably higher at upper primary level than the primary level of education.

In Manipur there are several critical aspects which

are accountable for causing children to dropout from school. The findings of the study indicate that poverty, lack of interest in studies, irregularity and absence of teachers in the school, improper functioning of the school, separation between the parents of the children, change of residence, and parents' addiction to bad habits are the most common reasons reported by the children for dropping out of school. The results of causal analyses using logistic regression brought forward that poor educational level of parents, lower household income, larger family size, age of the child, type of school and distance from the school, non participation in extracurricular activities in the school, skipping classes, lack of parental assistance in the study at home, child's participation in domestic works at home are the key determinants that lead to increase the chances of a child to dropout from school.

Poverty and illiteracy of parents coupled with general apathy towards education is highly prevalent in the study area. The direct and indirect costs of schooling which parents have to incur are still an economic burden for a sizeable number of parents. Accessibility at the upper primary level, proxy teachers and unmotivated teachers impede child's ability to complete their education. The provisions of 25 percent seat reservation in private unaided schools for economically weak students are not yet implemented. Therefore, the current reality highlighted that universal education is merely rhetoric in the study area. Efforts taken by the government to provide free education have not yet been achieved. Consequently, universal education is still a distant dream in the region. Thus, a range of policy implications emerged from the findings, narratives, insights and suggestions from dropout children, parents and teachers to curtail the incidence of dropout problem in the region. The following policy prescriptions can be made based on the findings of the study:

- It is necessary to establish a strong mechanism for ensuring provision of incentives for schooling as envisaged in the scheme for children in the study area. Monitoring of distributed funds and their proper utilization need to be done. Poverty, being the main cause of dropping out of school, receiving free incentives in total would reduce the direct and indirect costs of schooling. This will lessen the financial burden, and thus, poorest of the poor would be able to keep their children in schools on a regular basis combating the problem of dropout.
- Adults are to be made aware and sensitize about

the need and utility of child's education. It is needed to make them literate through organized programmes. This can be carried out through the existing National Literacy Mission even for persons beyond the age of 35 since the targeted official age groups in this mission for adults are between 15 and 35 years, and, in the study area, most of the parents are beyond this age group. Special efforts should be taken to educate mothers since, we know, educational levels of mothers are found to have a great impact on child's education.

- Provision and facilities are to be made to keep teachers to stay in the nearby localities of the school. Lesson of the children should be imparted in an interesting and attractive way. Thereby, teaching techniques should be improved and those are to be child-friendly. So, care should be taken to ensure that the teachers are properly trained. If needed, special teachers' training programme should be organized in the state. Strong action should be taken to stop the practice of hiring proxy teachers. It is observed in this study, next to poverty, disinterest in studies was the most common cause of dropping out. By adopting these prescriptions, it would be easier to retain the children in the school and complete their elementary education.
- Cooperation and participation of parents in the system should be encouraged. Regular Parents-Teachers Meetings (PTM) should be organized to have free flow of exchange about the students' performance and activities in the school and homes and mutual exchange of feed-backs between parents and teachers. Thus, parents will know about class participation, missed assignments, behavioral problems and other issues critical to the children and helping them to keep track on their wards. Parents can also get guidance and know about the things they need to do at home for the improvement of the study of their children.

Dropping out of school is conceived as a vital educational and social problem. It is a huge loss of human resource. To counter the problem, it is required to have an active cooperation of parents, teachers and the community at the grass root level. Children should be encouraged to perceive the importance of education in their personal lives. They need help in their personal crisis during the school years. Now the present educational system needs a paradigm shift

to focus attention more on retention than on enrolment.

Acknowledgements:

In the process of preparing this research output the authors are indebted to several persons/institutions. Heartfelt thanks are due to all the schools and households in the field for their sincere cooperation and help at the time of primary data collection in Manipur. Authors like to extend special thanks to Dr. Sweta Busan for her invaluable assistance and academic support all through this work. This research paper primarily cropped up from the Ph.D. work of the first author and the award of Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (RGNF) eased up the financial constraints during her Ph.D. The authors like to record the gratitude for the same.

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