

Educational Efforts of Catholic Missionaries in Nagaland since Pre-Independence: An Exploratory Study

Fr Johnson, Research Scholar,
Department of History, St. Joseph University, Chumukedima: Nagaland
Dr Avinuo Chupuo, HoD, Assistant Professor,
Department of History, St. Joseph University, Chumukedima: Nagaland

ABSTRACT

The Catholic church is renowned for its commitment to providing high-quality education and has made a significant impact on society. The primary aim of the Catholic Church is to spread the Love of God, a mission they support by establishing educational institutions to provide excellent educational opportunities. Thousands of priests, nuns, brothers, and sisters are actively involved in missionary work, teaching students, and overseeing schools. This paper sheds light on the significant role of these missionaries in managing educational institutions in India, particularly in the North East region and specifically in Nagaland. Through the use of secondary data gathered from various research efforts focusing on the expansion of education, the study explores the early establishment of Catholic missionary schools in Nagaland. The arrival of Catholic missionaries predates Indian independence and was motivated by the desire to spread the message of God, recognizing that education was fundamental to achieving this goal. As a result, they established numerous schools across Nagaland, focusing on rural areas and underserved communities, aiming to provide quality education to those in need. Today, the Catholic missionaries have established 107 schools, 6 colleges, and 1 university in Nagaland, all of them dedicated to delivering high-quality education. Besides these, they also run orphanage homes, health centers, rehabilitation centers, old age homes, seminaries, skill-empowering centers, and various training centers for different purposes. The missionaries gave equal importance to education, worship, and social services, recognizing the importance of social interaction in the overall development of individuals and society. They believe that service to humanity is service to God, a belief that has led to significant improvements in the lives of many.

Key Words: Catholic Missionaries, Quality Education, Word of God and Value Education

Introduction

Catholic education plays a crucial role in the diverse educational landscape worldwide, with its institutions reaching across continents and embracing various cultures. **Catholic education encompasses a wide range of educational institutions, including preschools, primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities.** These institutions are operated by religious orders, dioceses, and lay organizations (McKinney, 2016). **The principles underlying Catholic teaching emphasize the significance of moral values and ethical standards in fostering the development of individuals.** These institutions foster an environment that encourages respect, tolerance, and open dialogue among students of various backgrounds. Catholic schools are dedicated to offering high-quality education to marginalized and disadvantaged communities as part of their commitment to serving those in need (Rossiter, 2003). **Catholic institutions are known for their well-structured administration,** which emphasizes discipline in the day-to-day operations of the schools (Sepich, 2020). **The vision of the Catholic Church is to spread the message of God to the general public in order to promote peace within the society.**

Hence, hundreds of priests, nuns, brothers and sisters dedicate their lives to spreading the message of God for the benefit of society (Dive, 2020). Education is believed to enable the general public to understand the message of God better than preaching to them with scripture. As a result, priests, nuns, brothers, and sisters have taken on the mission of running educational institutions to spread the message of God and bring about spiritual and societal change (Dive, 2020). They come across several problems in running schools. Despite of facing various challenges, Catholic education continues to exert a strong and influential presence in the global educational sphere. Its focus on values-based education, academic excellence, and service to others continues to resonate with students, families, and communities around the world.

Review of Literature

The literature on Catholic missionaries highlights their multifaceted goals, which extend beyond the primary aim of strengthening faith in God to include significant humanitarian work, particularly in education and social services. This diverse approach underscores the comprehensive impact of Catholic missionaries on both spiritual and societal levels. McKinney (2016) delves into the perspective of Catholic education, illustrating how it is structured to promote academic excellence and spiritual and moral growth. Rossiter (2003) explores how Catholic education fosters the spiritual and moral development of pupils, emphasizing the integration of religious values into the educational curriculum. Sepich (2020) examines the deepening of Catholic identity through a focus on mission and school culture, particularly under lay leadership, showing the evolving role of non-clerical leaders in Catholic educational institutions. Camps (2000) investigated the Catholic Missionary Movement from 1492 to 1789, detailing its transformative effects on societies in Asia through both religious conversion and cultural exchange. Bevans (2013) provides a comprehensive overview of the Catholic mission's work from 1910 to the present, highlighting its sustained contributions to religion, education, and health services. Stransky (1982) discusses the evangelization and social action of Catholic missions, emphasizing their dual role in spreading the faith and engaging in social justice. Shapiro (1981) identifies the ideologies of Catholic missionary practice in a postcolonial context, examining how these missions adapt to changing political and cultural landscapes. Grace (2015) outlines the challenges faced by Catholic educators in integrating faith-based education within broader societal contexts, noting initial resistance that eventually gave way to acceptance due to the perseverance and dedication of missionaries. Toppo (2008) and Hembrom (2015) study the Catholic Church's role in Northeast India, focusing on its educational and nation-building initiatives in the region. Roy (2008) and Ketholesie (2015) explore the educational development and arrival of the Catholic Church in specific areas like Northeast India and Nagaland, respectively, highlighting the localized impact of missionary efforts. Wadman (2015) assesses the quality of Catholic education, drawing connections between the values instilled by Catholic schools and their broader societal benefits. Sammons, Hillman, and Mortimore (1995), along with Card and Krueger (1992), identify the key characteristics of effective schools, including Catholic institutions, focusing on their distinct approaches to holistic education. Dolton and Vignoles (1999), Dearden, Ferri, and Meghir (2002), and Dolton, Levacic, and Vignoles (2003) explore the economic effects of school quality, providing evidence that high-quality education, including that provided by Catholic schools, positively impacts labor market success and educational attainment. Kelly (1967) and Hambye (2001) explore early Christian history and the travels of Jesus and His apostles, providing foundational context for the missionary efforts that followed. Menachery (2000, 2010) examines the history of the Indian Church, particularly focusing on the arrival and influence of St. Thomas Christians in India, highlighting the long-standing presence and impact of Catholicism in the region.

This comprehensive review underscores that Catholic missionaries have played a crucial role not only in spreading religious faith but also in contributing to educational, social, and cultural advancements across various regions and historical periods. Their efforts in education and social services reflect a broader mission of humanitarian work, driven by the values of compassion and community service intrinsic to Catholic teachings.

Objective of the Study

The Catholic missionaries played a significant role in promoting education among the Nagas. Catholic missionaries' efforts in establishing schools in the Naga Hills have been recognized as valuable contributions to the region. Various scholarly studies have shedding light on the challenges and achievements in establishing Catholic

churches in Nagaland. The present study explores the growth and development of Catholic Education in India, North East India and the present education scenario of catholic schools in Nagaland. Thus, this research set the following as its main objective:

[1] To explore the ‘**Growth and Development**’ of Catholic Education in India, North East India and particularly in Nagaland.

Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative approach, drawing data from an extensive review of literature to examine the growth and development of Catholic education in India, with a specific focus on North East India and Nagaland. It delves into the historical trajectory of Catholic education, tracing its origins and expansion across different regions. The research highlights pivotal moments and influential events that shaped the spread of Catholic educational institutions. In India, Catholic education began with the arrival of Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century, who established schools alongside churches to educate the local populace. In North East India, the spread of Catholic education was marked by the efforts of missionary groups such as the Salesians of Don Bosco in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who founded numerous schools and colleges, significantly contributing to literacy and higher education in the region. Nagaland, with its unique cultural and social landscape, witnessed the advent of Catholic education through the dedicated work of missionaries in the mid-20th century, who established schools that have since become cornerstones of educational development in the state. This study meticulously documents these historical developments, providing a comprehensive overview of the influential role played by Catholic education in these regions.

Result and Discussion

India is a diverse and multicultural nation that provides equal opportunities for all religious institutions to contribute to the development of society. Catholic schools of the 21st century is called to form hearts, build minds and transform lives for future generations. The church’s contribution over the years in the field of education has had a direct impact on the social and cultural aspects of Indian society. As per the Census of India, 2011, the total population of India is 1,210,569,573 (1.21 Billion), of which Hindus are 966.2 million (79.80 %); Muslims are 172.2 million (14.23 %); Christians are 27.8 million (2.30 %); Sikhs are 20 million (1.72 %); Buddhist are 8.443 million (0.70 %); Jains are 4.452 million (0.37 %); Other Religion 7.938 million (0.66 %) and Not Stated are 2.8 million (0.24 %) (Dixon & Reid, 2013). In 2024 approximately 3.3 Crore or 33 million people are Christians in India. In the northern states of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Manipur, Christianity is a predominant religion, while in Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Andaman Nicobar Inland they make good sizable population.

Origin of Catholic Education in India

In the beginning, around 50AD, the disciples of Jesus Christ were called Christians for the first time by others. The disciples of Jesus Christ went to different parts of the world to spread the message of Jesus Christ (Kelly, 1967). According to the Zyro-Malabar Christians, St Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, was the first to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to India around 52 AD (Hambye, 2001). For centuries, Christians in India were confined to the narrow strip of the Malabar Coast. Christianity spread to other parts of India only after Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer, discovered the sea route to India at the end of the 15th century (Menachery, 2010). The arrival of the Portuguese and their possession of Indian territories made the introduction of Christianity broader and faster. In those days, people were not highly educated, and there were no formal schools like today. Education was based on religious scriptures and life skills. Hence, educating people became the first mission work of Christian missionaries before introducing Christianity.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India oversees 171 Dioceses, which are divided into 14 Ecclesiastical Regions. Each Ecclesiastical Region has a Regional Council of Bishops, and the National Office for Education and Culture of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India is located in Delhi (Menachery, 2000). The national office is headed by a Chairman Bishop, two member Bishops, and an Executive Secretary and staff. Furthermore, each of the 14 Ecclesiastical Regions in India has a Regional Office for Education and Culture headed by a Bishop in Charge, an Executive Secretary/Director, and staff. Additionally, each of the Dioceses has a Diocesan Executive

Secretary/Director and staff that take care of all matters concerning Education under the supervision of the Bishop (Wadman, 2015). This three-tier organizational setup is responsible for the Education Ministry of the Catholic Church in India. Catholics are covered by 10,715 parishes, 22,451 priests serve in 5764 religious' institutions.



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All educational institutions, including Universities, Colleges, Schools, or other Training institutions, whether run by the Dioceses or by the Religious Congregations, come under the jurisdiction of the CBCI Office of Education and Culture. According to statistical data from Catholic institutions in India (2013), there are 26,104 institutions run by Catholics. Of these, 15,780 are educational institutions, 6,603 are social welfare centers, 2,692 are health service units, 668 are media-based organizations, and 360 are spiritual service centers. Table 1 provides an overview of the status of Catholic educational institutions in India (Catholic Directory of India, 2013). Besides these they have four Catholic universities in India, namely Christ University, Bangalore, Xavier University, Bhubaneswar (XUB) and Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati and St. Joseph University, Nagaland.

Table No: 1		
Statistical Data on Catholic Educational Institutions in India		
SL.No	Name of the Institutions	No of Institutions
1	Ecclesiastical	1633
2	Professional colleges	449
3	Degree colleges	232
4	Junior colleges	1782
5	High schools	3578
6	Middle schools	2123
7	Primary schools	4078
8	Pre-primary schools	979
9	Special schools	245
10	Vocational training centers	681
	Total	15,780

Source: Data collected from Catholic Directory of India, 2013

These institutions are managed by Catholic missionaries who consider spreading the word of God and serving general public by offering medical care, education, skill training (particularly for women) to develop the society is a real service to God (Taithe,2012).

Origin of Catholic Education in North East India

The introduction of Catholicism to Northeast India can be traced back to the arrival of European missionaries during the colonial period (Toppo, 2008). Portuguese Jesuit missionaries were among the first to venture into this region in 16th century, followed by other European missionaries from countries like

France and Italy. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Catholic missionaries, particularly members of religious orders like the Jesuits, Salesians, and Franciscans, played a significant role in spreading Catholicism in Northeast India (Hembrom, 2015). They established churches, and schools, often in remote and challenging terrain. They founded numerous schools, especially in rural areas, providing quality education to children with limited access to formal schooling. Catholic education in Northeast India has often focused on serving the needs of indigenous communities, including various tribal groups such as the Khasi, Garo, Naga, Mizo, and others. Missionaries worked closely with local leaders and adapted educational programs to respect and preserve indigenous cultures and languages. The establishment of Catholic educational institutions in Northeast India led to the formation of indigenous religious congregations dedicated to education and social service. The arrival and spread of Catholicism and Catholic education in Northeast India have left a lasting impact on the region, shaping its educational landscape and contributing to its socio-cultural development. The first Catholic school in the Northeastern region of India was St. Edmund's School, Shillong, established in 1916. It was founded by the Christian Brothers, an international Catholic religious congregation, in the then Assam Province. As for the first Catholic college in the region, St. Anthony's College in Shillong is often considered as one of the earliest. It was founded by the Salesians of Don Bosco in 1934 (Roy, 2008).

Origin of Catholic Education in Nagaland

Today, Education in Nagaland has reached new heights. The literacy rate of Nagaland is 80.1%, it is above the national average level. Education was introduced by the missionaries in 1880s, the literary rate of Nagaland was very negligible. The Catholic role can't be ruled out in improving the literary rate. There are around 107 schools established and run by Catholics across Nagaland, and these schools are still working to ensure quality education.

There are records of earlier visits by Catholic priests, with Fr. Marcellinus Molz reaching Tamlu (in today's Longleng district) in 1908. The permanent presence of the Catholic Church has begun after World War II. In 1948, Sister Margarita Cifre and Sister Velasco Guadalupe, along with Chaplain Fr. Emmanuel Bars, arrived in Kohima to staff the newly built Naga Hospital. This marked the start of sustained Catholic missionary work in Nagaland (Ketholesie, 2015). Catholic education in Nagaland, has its roots in the missionary activities of Catholic religious orders and organizations. Among the earliest missionaries were members of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), the Salesians of Don Bosco, and other Catholic religious orders. Catholic missionaries in Nagaland established missions and schools intending to provide education and spread the Christian faith.

Only after the Independence of India, the Catholic Church could work freely in Nagaland. A six-year contract had been signed between the Governor of Assam, Akbar Hyder and Bishop Stephen Ferrando of Shillong (the Catholic Church) on 14th July 1948 to work in the Naga Hospital, Kohima. The Congregation of the sisters of Christ Jesus obliged to the request of the Bishop and on 31 December 1948 Sisters Margarita Cifre and Guadalupe reached Kohima along with their chaplain Mgr. Emmanuel Bars (Mgr. Bars). The sisters and their chaplain were forbidden from exercising any pastoral ministry other than medical care (Kottuppallil, 1990). The sisters expressed the need to have a chaplain for their spiritual care. Mgr. Bars was the first resident Catholic priest in Nagaland. Since their arrival, Naga Hill was open to the Catholic Church. They were accompanied by one John, a Naga boy who had studied in Shillong, pursuing his studies in Kohima agreed to help them. This boy was S. John Longyao who worked with Fr. Maroccchino and Fr. Mgr. Bars for a short time in Kohima. It was quoted in the diary of Sr. Margarita Cifre (1949, January 2). From 1948 onwards Catholic Church began to exist in Nagaland and the first Catholic Church was established at Kohima for Angamie tribe, then at Wokha for Lotha tribe. Several educational institutions were established by Catholic missionaries in these areas, which later became centers of learning in Nagaland (Thomas, 2000).

The first Catholic priest who visited the Naga Hills was Fr. Freyccenon of Dacca in 1847, and then Salvadorian Father Marcellinus Molz visited these hills in 1908. He stayed with the Aos for some time in Tamlu village. Later, Fr. Angar Koenigsbauer the first Catholic missionary of Manipur visited this area on the way to Imphal in 1912. However, none of these priests could stay long enough in Naga Hills and as such their visits did not bear much result. Mgr. Emmanuel Bars, SDB was the first catholic priest to enter and reside in the Naga Hills in

1948. He came to India in January 1922 with the first group of Silesian Fathers and Brothers. He first worked in the Khasi Hills as a teacher and later as Administrator Apostolic of Krishna Nagar in Bengal and Vicar of Shillong for forty years. He left Kohima in 1952. When Fr. Bars left Kohima, his place was taken by Fr. Hubert Marocchino who was earlier stationed at Tezpur. The same restriction of movement and work was imposed on him. They were slowly permitted to extend their area of their medical work to Kohima village, located just above the town. On 14th December 1952 Fr. Marocchino baptized John Kevipele who was the son of Paulus Kevipralie. On this day the Catholic Church was born in Kohima and in the whole of Nagaland and this day was regarded as a '*red letter day*' in the history of Catholic Church. The day Fr. Marocchino arrived in Kohima in 1951, there were no Catholics but when he left Kohima in 1963, there were 609 Catholics whom he baptized in his 12 years of stay in Kohima. In the meantime, the Catholic faith began to take root in another part of Nagaland, among the Lotha tribe, who were close to Assam. In 1952, some Lotha Baptists from Lakhuti village contacted the Catholic priest at Golaghat, and very soon, a Catholic community was established there despite stiff opposition from the Baptists.

In 1957, Fr. Joseph James Felix worked as a catholic priest and educator in Hundung, Tankhul area of Manipur, and came to Kohima in 1962 and ministered at the Christ King Parish till 1965. He established 7 English medium schools in different parts of Nagaland. Holy Cross School Dimapur, St. John School Tuensang, All saints School, Peren, and Don Bosco School, Khonoma. At first, the diocesan priests concentrated their efforts in Dimapur and later in Tuensang. The Jesuits moved to the Chakhesangs and southern Angamis while the Salesians worked among the Angami and Lotha tribes. From Dimapur, Fr. Mani ventured out to do pioneering work among the Zelang and the Bongmel tribes, and he established a centre at Jalukie which has now grown into a parish with a high school, boarding, convent, a minor Seminary and a non-formal training school run by the CST Brothers. In Short, within 30 years, the Catholic faith has taken firm roots among all the major tribes of Nagaland, such as the Angami, the Ao, the chakhesang, the Lotha, the Rengma, the Yimchunger, the Sangtham and the Chang. The heroic beginnings have produced tangible results. The diocese currently has 30 parishes/centres with great work possibilities, given proper personnel and resources. The entire northeast was the then Assam. The beginning of the Catholic Church in the northeast had only one diocese called Shillong. The diocese of Shillong was the first diocese to be set up in the North East in 1934. Rt.Rev.Louis Mathas SDB was the first bishop of Shillong. Later in 1951, the diocese of Shillong was bifurcated and the Diocese of Dibrugarh was created. Rt.Rev.Orestes Marengo SDB was appointed the first bishop of Dibrugarh. The Diocese of Kohima was part of the Diocese of Dibrugarh until 1973 when the states of Nagaland and Manipur were separated from the Diocese of Dibrugarh and made into the Diocese of Kohima – Imphal. Bishop Abraham Alangimatathil, SDB, DD, the then Vicar General of the Diocese of Dibrugarh, was appointed its first Bishop. Later, on June 29 1980, the Diocese of Imphal was separated from the Diocese of Kohima – Imphal. Today the Church has grown to the strength of 62,000 Catholics in 36 parishes and 21 quasi parishes and number of institutions. This rapid growth of the Church is the result of selfless and committed life and work of priests, religious and lay leaders. These missionary efforts often involved collaboration with local communities and leaders to address the educational needs of the Naga people. Catholic educational institutions in Nagaland emphasized the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages and cultures. Many schools offered instruction in local Naga dialects alongside English and other subjects, contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage. Numerous Catholic schools operate in Nagaland, catering to primary and secondary students. These schools are often run by Catholic religious orders such as the Salesians of Don Bosco, Holy Cross Sisters, and others, as well as indigenous religious congregations.

Table No: 1

Numbers of Schools Management By Catholic Missionaries In Nagaland

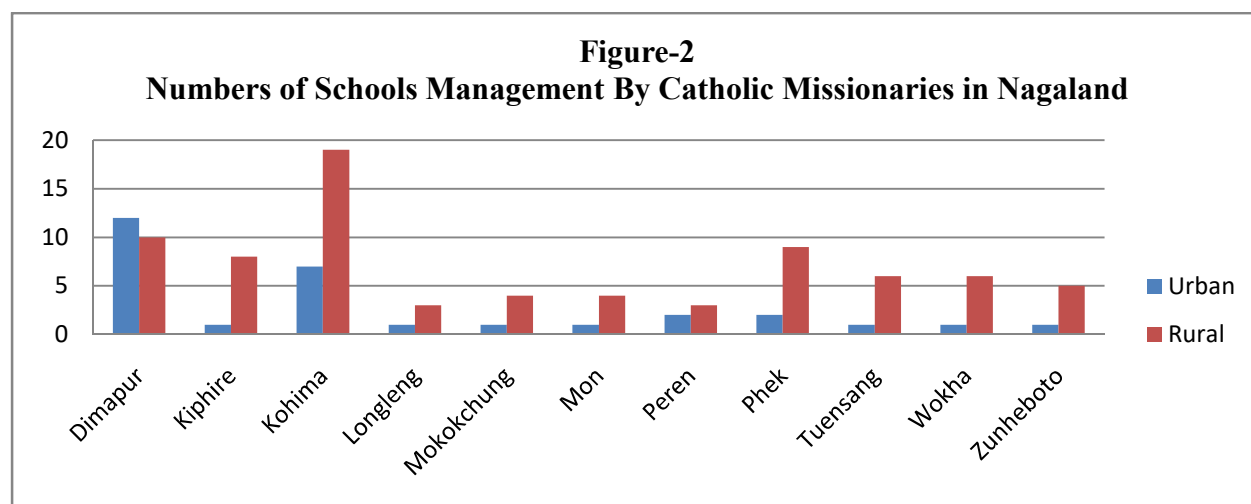
Sl.No.	District	Urban	Rural	Total No. of Schools
1	Dimapur	12	10	22
2	Kiphire	1	8	09
3	Kohima	7	19	26

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4	Longleng	1	3	04
5	Mokokchung	1	4	05
6	Mon	1	4	05
7	Peren	2	3	05
8	Phek	2	9	11
9	Tuensang	1	6	07
10	Wokha	1	6	07
11	Zunheboto	1	5	06
	Total	30	77	107

Sources: Survey of Education Commission, Diocese of Kohima, 2015-2016

The table provides information about the number of schools in urban and rural areas of Nagaland. It shows 30 urban schools and 77 operational schools. The accompanying figure visually represents this data.



Source: Compiled from survey data

In Figure 2, it is evident that Catholic schools have a higher presence in rural areas than in urban areas. This is a commendable effort to cater to the underprivileged and marginalised communities residing in these areas. They also provide employment to several people. The table below presents a detailed overview of teachers employed in Catholic schools.

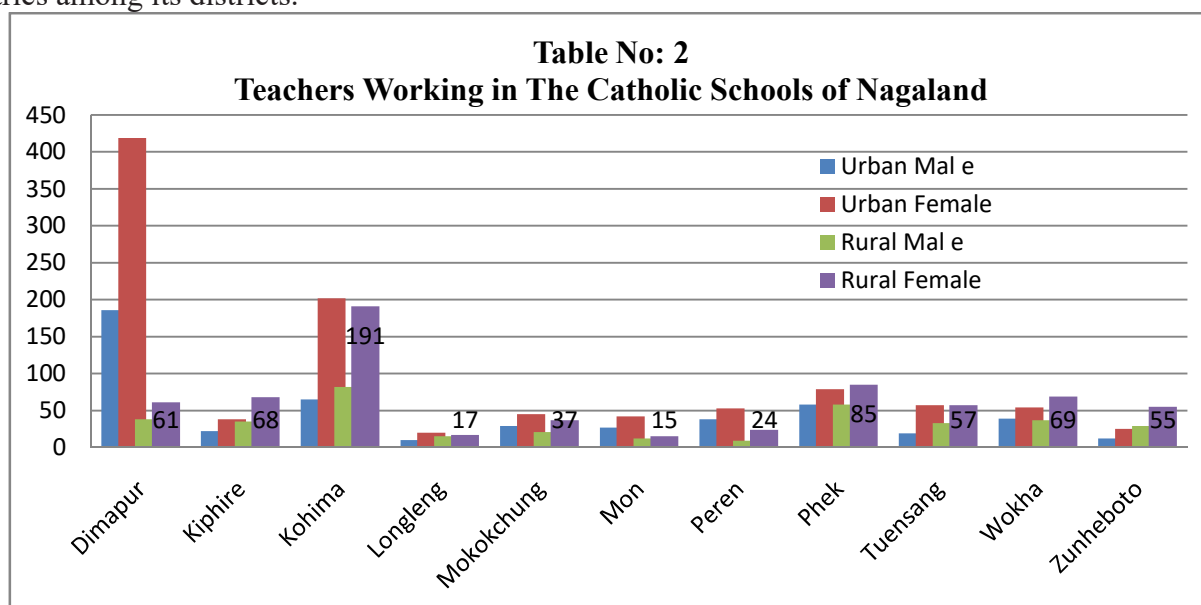
Table No: 2						
Teachers Working in the Catholic Schools of Nagaland						
Sl.No	District	Urban		Rural		Total No. of teachers
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
1	Dimapur	186	419	38	61	704
2	Kiphire	22	38	35	68	163
3	Kohima	65	202	82	191	540
4	Longleng	10	20	15	17	62
5	Mokokchung	29	45	21	37	132
6	Mon	27	42	12	15	96

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7	Peren	38	53	9	24	124
8	Phek	58	79	58	85	280
9	Tuensang	19	57	33	57	166
10	Wokha	39	54	37	69	199
11	Zunheboto	12	25	29	55	121
	Total	505	1034	369	679	2587

Source: Compiled from survey data

The table 2 depicts the distribution of teachers across urban and rural areas in the Catholic schools of Nagaland varies among its districts.



Source: Compiled from survey data

Figure 2 depicts the students enrolled in the schools of Nagaland. Notably, Dimapur hosts the highest number of teachers, with 419 females and 186 males in urban areas, and 61 females and 38 males in rural settings, summing up to 704 teachers overall. Similarly, Kohima also boasts a substantial teacher population, with 202 females and 65 males in urban zones and 191 females and 82 males in rural regions, totalling 540 teachers. Phek, Tuensang, and Wokha also showcase significant numbers of educators, reflecting the state's commitment to education. Conversely, comparatively fewer teachers are present in some districts, such as Longleng and Mon. The former has 10 males and 20 females in urban areas and 15 males and 17 females in rural regions, making a total of 62 teachers. Likewise, Mon has 27 males and 42 females in urban zones and 12 males and 15 females in rural areas, summing up to 96 teachers. These statistics delineate the heterogeneous educational landscapes across Nagaland's districts, with concerted efforts towards ensuring equitable access to quality education. This is presented in the following figure.

Limitations

The present study is based on literature reviews and secondary data collected from various published sources. It should be noted that primary data from the perspectives of the different stakeholders involved in Catholic missionary work and the functioning of schools in Nagaland have not been considered for this study.

Conclusions

When evaluating the quality of education Catholic schools provide, it's important to consider various service components. A strong education is a solid foundation for a student's academic future, instils positive values, and can lead to career success. The presence of dedicated and inspiring mentors with a fair-minded, passionate, honest, well-mannered, skilled, and supportive approach is crucial for a school, as they can positively influence

both the school environment and students' attitudes and personalities (Sammons et al., 1995). The catholic schools set an example for quality. The characteristics of quality schools are better infrastructure, improved performance of the students, producing the best result in the board exams, important and development skills, cultivating discipline, honesty, punctuality and sincerity among students' attitude and having a positive impact on society (Card and Krueger, 1992 and Dolton and Vignoles, 1999). These have been seen in the achievement of students. Quality schools provide quality teaching and produce quality students, finally creating value which is shared among the stakeholders of education. It has been observed that these quality-ensuring components are provided by Catholic Schools better than other private schools in the state; hence, Catholic Schools are quality schools. It has been found that students from quality schools perform better than those from other schools, as stated by Dearden and Meghir (2002) and supported by Dolton and Vignoles (2003). Quality Schools have appropriate skill-oriented courses, no gender disparity, provision for the expansion of infrastructure, equipment, educational materials and resources, scholarships, and a competent teaching force. Good leadership at all levels is also essential for a high-performing school. Catholic fathers and sisters are exemplary leaders of Catholic schools who teach students human values and create good leaders for society (McVicar, 2001).

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