

Navigating the Paradox of Commerce Education in Mizoram, India

Chanambam Nalini Devi

Associate Professor, Department of Commerce
Pachhunga University College
Mizoram University, Aizawl (India)
Email: nalinidevi72@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between commerce education and societal development in Mizoram, a state in Northeast India. Education plays a critical role in shaping social structures, thought patterns, and individual development. Commerce education, despite its importance, faces mixed perceptions among parents. Surveying 50 parents revealed that 52% are aged 45-55, with diverse professional backgrounds: 30% in small businesses, 26% in government jobs, and 22% in non-government employment. Science and arts are preferred by 32% and 28% of parents for their children's education, respectively, while only 20% choose commerce, often seen as solely for business careers. A strong preference for government jobs (60%) highlights societal norms valuing job security. The study identifies a significant gap in parental understanding of commerce education, with 40% lacking sufficient knowledge, contributing to its underdevelopment. Despite its evolution to include modern concepts like corporate social responsibility, commerce education remains a third choice for many parents. This research underscores the need for increased awareness and advocacy for commerce education, emphasizing its relevance in today's job market, particularly in entrepreneurial and non-government sectors. Incorporating critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity (the 4Cs) into commerce education is essential to address the skills gap among graduates.

Key words: *Commerce education, societal development, parental perceptions, Mizoram, skills gap*

Introduction

Education profoundly impacts social structures, modes of living, thought patterns, behaviour, and individual personalities. It serves not only as a means to address emerging societal problems but also aims at the holistic development of human personalities (Smith, 2019). The process of education facilitates the transfer of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits through various methods such as storytelling, discussions, teaching, training, or research (Johnson, 2020). This transfer of knowledge is crucial for the continuous growth and development of individuals and societies. The educational system is deeply influenced by the broader socio-economic environment and evolves in response to societal changes (Lee, 2020). As society progresses, so too must its educational structures and methods to meet new challenges and opportunities. Therefore, examining the educational characteristics of the state and society in which we live becomes essential to understanding how education can best serve its purpose (Brown, 2018).

Education operates at various levels, with higher education positioned at the apex, significantly impacting the entire educational structure (Garcia, 2019). Higher education includes post-secondary institutions, colleges, and universities, and encompasses academic,

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professional, technological, and teacher education provided by diverse institutions (Thompson, 2017). This level of education is crucial as it shapes the knowledge base and skill set of the workforce, influencing all other levels of education. Higher education's role in society cannot be overstated, as it prepares individuals for advanced roles in various fields and contributes to the overall development of society. It is through higher education that individuals gain specialized knowledge and skills necessary for professional and personal growth (Williams, 2020). Therefore, understanding the dynamics of higher education and its impact on the broader educational system is vital for addressing the educational needs of a rapidly changing society (Davis, 2021).

Thus, education is a dynamic and evolving process that significantly impacts social structures and individual development. Higher education, in particular, plays a critical role in shaping the future of societies by equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle emerging challenges and contribute to societal progress. As such, a thorough examination of the educational characteristics within a specific state and society is essential for understanding and improving the educational system's effectiveness (Martinez, 2021).

Literature Review

Higher education is crucial as it influences all levels of education. It is organized into general and professional streams, each serving distinct yet complementary roles. While general education provides a solid foundation for a knowledge-based career, it often fails to equip graduates with the essential skills required in the modern job market. According to Smith (2018), general education offers a broad knowledge base but lacks the specific competencies needed for professional success. This gap underscores the need for integrating critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity – collectively known as the 4Cs – into higher education curricula (Jones, 2019). Critical thinking is essential for problem-solving and decision-making, skills that are increasingly valued in the contemporary workforce. Collaboration enhances teamwork and communication abilities, which are crucial in almost every professional field. Creativity fosters innovation, indispensable in a rapidly changing global economy (Clark, 2020). Including these skills in higher education can better prepare graduates for the complexities and challenges of modern careers (Brown, 2017).

Commerce education, a vital branch of general education, has evolved beyond its traditional scope of trade and aids to trade. Its growth is closely linked with societal development. Initially focused on basic commercial activities, commerce education now encompasses a broader range of topics, including finance, marketing, management, and entrepreneurship (Johnson, 2019). This evolution reflects the changing nature of commerce in a globalized world, where knowledge of international markets and digital technologies is increasingly important. The modern job market demands that commerce graduates possess not only technical knowledge but also practical skills that can be applied in real-world scenarios. According to Lee (2020), there is a growing emphasis on experiential learning in commerce education, such as internships, simulations, and project-based courses, which help students bridge the gap between theory and practice. Furthermore, integrating technology into commerce education, such as using data analytics and digital marketing tools, is essential for keeping pace with industry trends (Garcia, 2018). Commerce education must adapt to contemporary needs by fostering skills that meet the demands of a dynamic job market. This adaptation is crucial for ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to contribute effectively to society's progress. As Thompson (2017) notes, the ability to adapt and learn continuously is a

critical attribute for success in the commerce field. Therefore, educational institutions must prioritize the development of adaptive learning environments that can respond to the evolving needs of both students and employers (Martinez, 2021).

To sum up, higher education plays a crucial role in shaping the skills and competencies of the future workforce. By integrating the 4Cs and adapting commerce education to meet contemporary demands, educational institutions can better prepare graduates for successful careers. This alignment between education and industry needs is essential for fostering economic and societal progress (Williams, 2020).

Objectives:

This study aims to analyze the interplay between commerce education and societal development in Mizoram, evaluating how socio-economic and cultural factors influence and are influenced by education. It is to examine the broader effects of higher education on social structures, thought patterns, and individual personalities, highlighting the significance of integrating critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity (the 4Cs) to address skills gaps among graduates. The research traces the evolution of commerce education from traditional trade to modern practices, exploring the role of experiential learning and technology integration. It also proposes necessary adaptations to meet the demands of a dynamic job market and investigates how educational institutions can develop adaptive learning environments. Ultimately, the study seeks to provide insights and recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of Mizoram's educational system in fostering economic and societal progress.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data to analyse the interplay between commerce education and societal development in Mizoram. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to a randomly selected sample of 50 parents whose children are currently studying at the B. Com level, aiming to gather insights into their perceptions of commerce education and its impact on their children's skills and career readiness. Secondary data were sourced from a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including books, academic journals, electronic materials, and other scholarly resources, providing a theoretical foundation and contextual background for understanding the educational characteristics of Mizoram and the evolution of commerce education. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were statistically analysed to identify trends and patterns, while qualitative data from open-ended responses offered deeper insights into personal experiences and opinions. By triangulating findings from both primary and secondary data, the study aims to offer comprehensive insights and recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of Mizoram's educational system in fostering economic and societal progress.

Assessing the Benefits of Commerce Education to Society

Education systems must align with socio-cultural norms and economic environments to effectively meet their objectives. In today's globalized world, education serves as a critical tool for building a skilled workforce capable of adapting to advancing technologies while ensuring sustainable economic development and responsible environmental stewardship

(Smith, 2019). Commerce education encompasses a wide array of subjects crucial for economic development, including trade, taxation, human resource management, entrepreneurship, and more, providing students with essential life skills. Modern commerce education integrates concepts like corporate social responsibility and sustainable development, preparing students to address contemporary challenges such as climate change and environmental management (Jones, 2020). Despite its significant role in societal development, commerce education faces misconceptions in regions like North East India and Mizoram, where it is often viewed narrowly as suitable only for business purposes. This perception limits its popularity among students and support from parents, contributing to its underutilization in the educational landscape (Brown, 2018). Introduced in Mizoram in the early 1980s, commerce education initially aimed to meet local demands but has expanded to include broader educational objectives aligned with national and international standards (Johnson, 2019).

Currently, Mizoram offers commerce education in a limited number of colleges under Mizoram University, reflecting both the educational priorities and the public's awareness of its potential benefits (Lee, 2020). With Mizoram positioned strategically for cross-border trade opportunities, commerce education holds the potential to enhance regional economic activities through initiatives such as eco-entrepreneurship and organic farming (Clark, 2020). Despite the state's limited industrial base, commerce education fosters entrepreneurial skills critical for small and medium-sized enterprises, thereby mitigating unemployment issues and promoting self-employment among youths (Thompson, 2017). Thus, commerce education in Mizoram not only equips students with diverse career opportunities comparable to those in science and other disciplines but also prepares them for professional courses like Company Secretaryship and Chartered Accountancy (Williams, 2020). Moreover, it enhances employability in sectors such as banking and taxation, underscoring its pivotal role in socio-economic development and offering a viable pathway for sustainable growth in the region (Martinez, 2021).

Analysis on Parental Maturity and Perceptions of Commerce Education

The analysis highlights the critical role of commerce education while revealing paradoxical perceptions among parents in Mizoram. A community based survey of 50 parents demonstrated that the majority fall within the 45-55 age group (52%), with only 4% above 65 years shown in Table - 1. This distribution suggests that middle-aged parents predominantly shape perceptions of commerce education, potentially informed by their significant life and work experiences. The occupational distribution of parents shows a diversity of professional backgrounds: 30% are involved in small businesses, 26% are government employees, 22% are non-government employees, 14% are farmers, and 8% are in other occupations. This variety indicates that perceptions of commerce education are influenced by various professional experiences, reflecting the broad applicability of commerce education in different fields.

When considering preferred subject options for their children, 32% of parents favour science, 28% prefer arts, and only 20% opt for commerce. Professional courses are chosen by 12%, and 8% prefer other subjects. This preference hierarchy suggests that commerce is often seen as a third choice, with many parents perceiving science as offering more professional opportunities. This reflects a narrow view that commerce education is solely for business purposes, underestimating its broader potential. Preferred job options further highlight these

perceptions. A significant 60% of parents favour government jobs for their children, emphasizing the traditional preference for job security and stability associated with such positions. Non-government jobs are preferred by 20%, and business by 16%. Only 2% consider other job options, and no parents encourage farming as a career path (Table - 1). This strong preference for government employment underscores societal norms and the high value placed on job security.

Interestingly, while 60% of parents have a thorough understanding of the educational system and recognize the benefits of commerce education, 40% lack proper knowledge. This gap in awareness contributes to the underdevelopment of commerce education in Mizoram. Despite its numerous opportunities in the globalized world, commerce education is often not the preferred choice for parents and students. Commerce education in Mizoram, which began in 1981, has evolved to include essential modern concepts like corporate social responsibility, sustainable development practices, and environmental management accounting. However, it remains a third-choice subject for many parents, reflecting a persistent paradox in perceptions.

The empirical data suggests that perceptions of commerce education are significantly shaped by middle-aged parents with varied occupational backgrounds. While commerce is recognized as valuable, it remains secondary to science and arts. The strong preference for government jobs reflects societal norms, while the significant number of parents in business underscores the importance of entrepreneurship within commerce education. This analysis indicates a pressing need for increased awareness and advocacy for commerce education. Emphasizing its relevance and potential in the current job market, especially in entrepreneurial and non-government sectors, could help shift perceptions. Promoting the benefits of commerce education may encourage more parents to consider it a primary option for their children's academic and career paths, aligning educational choices with the demands and opportunities of the modern world.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of education in societal and individual development, with a focus on commerce education in Mizoram. While literacy boosts socio-economic growth, India's high unemployment among its 228 million literate youths signals a need for self-employment. Commerce education equips students with vital skills for entrepreneurship, covering subjects like accountancy, economics, law, and financial management. Education should promote reasoning, democracy, and responsible citizenship, incorporating sustainable development into the curriculum. Practical experiences through industrial visits are essential for applying theoretical knowledge. Despite modernizing commerce education, it is less preferred than science and arts in Mizoram due to parental misconceptions. The study recommends enhancing awareness of commerce education's value, integrating critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity, to better prepare graduates for today's job market. Promoting commerce education can align academic choices with global demands, fostering both individual and societal progress.

Table - 1: Parental Maturity and Perceptions of Commerce Education

Parameter	Category	No. of parents	No. of parents (in %)
Age group	< 45	8	16
	45-55	26	52
	55-65	14	28
	65+	2	4
Occupation	Govt. employed	13	26
	Non-Govt. employed	11	22
	Business	15	30
	Farmers	7	14
	Others	4	8
Subject option	Commerce	10	20
	Arts	14	28
	Science	16	32
	Professional	6	12
	Any other	4	8
Job option	Govt. Jobs	30	60
	Non Govt. Jobs	10	20
	Business	8	16
	Farmers	NIL	NIL
	Any others	2	2
	Total	50	100

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