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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TEACHER STRIKES AND LABOR RELATIONS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION: A NARRATIVE STUDY IN MEGHALAYA

Brenda D Marak¹ and Abhishek Belbase²

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Management ICFAI University, Meghalaya, Tura.
2. Student, MBAICFAI University, Meghalaya, Tura.

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Abstract

Teacher strikes in public education are frequently framed as disruptions to schooling rather than as expressions of labor-relational conflict. This paper reconceptualises teacher strikes as relational events embedded in asymmetric negotiations between educator and the state. Drawing on narrative interviews with teachers, students, parents, NGO members and administrators in Meghalaya, the study examines how strike action emerges from accumulative institutional silence, delayed remunerations and constrained grievance channels. Using narrative inquiry, the analysis demonstrates that teacher strikes function as acts of compelled visibility-efforts to render labor conditions publicly undeniable. However, such collective action simultaneously produces moral-labor tension, as teachers navigate competing expectations of economic justice and professional care. The findings further introduce the concept of aspirational fragility to explain how recurring labor conflict subtly destabilizes educational futures for students and families dependent on public schooling. By integrating labor process theory, moral economy scholarship and sociology of education, this study extends labor relational analysis into peripheral public sector governance contexts. It argues that teacher strikes must be understood not merely as industrial disputes but as structurally embedded relational phenomena with consequences that exceed the workplace and reverberate into community trust and intergenerational mobility.

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Introduction:-

Teacher strikes occupy a contentious space within public disclosure. While labor unions frame them as legitimate collective bargaining mechanisms, communities often experience them as interruptions to learning continuity. Much of the empirical literature has focused on measureable academic outcomes—attendance, test performance and instructional days lost—thereby narrowing strike events to educational disruption metrics. Such approaches overlook the relational dynamics that produce and sustain collective labor action in public education systems. This study examines teacher strikes in public education sector of Meghalaya, a Northeastern Indian State where public schooling remains a crucial vehicle for social mobility. In this context, teachers frequently encounter delayed

Corresponding Author:-Brenda D Marak

Address:-Assistant Professor, Department of Management ICFAI University, Meghalaya, Tura.

salaries, administrative opacities and limited negotiation mechanisms. Rather than treating strikes as episodic breakdowns, this study conceptualizes them as cumulative responses to institutional silence and asymmetrical labor relations. The research asks: How are teacher strikes narrated and interpreted as labor-relational events? How do such events reshape moral expectations surrounding teachers? And how do they influence perceptions of educational futures among students and parents? By centering narrative accounts, this study moves beyond outcome-based evaluation and situates teacher strikes within broader frameworks of labor process theory, moral economy and aspirational sociology. It advances three key contributions: (1) conceptualising strike action as compelled visibility in peripheral public sector regimes; (2) identifying moral-labor tension within professionalised care work; and (3) introducing aspirational fragility to explain how labor conflict destabilizes educational imaginaries.

Literature Review:-

Teacher Strikes & Labor Relations:-

Taken together, these studies suggest that teacher strikes are embedded in broader negotiations over compensation, working conditions, and educational quality. In Meghalaya, where salary delays and administrative constraints are recurrent, these dynamics are particularly salient. Economic research traditionally frames strikes as conflicts between workers and firms surplus (Card 1990; Cramton and Tracy 1992; Krueger and Mas 2004 and mas 2008). Sustained disruptions caused by strikes can compel firms to disclose information regarding their profit margins and capacity to enhance compensation (Cramton and Tracy 1992). However, firms in the public education sector (e.g. districts) are not profit maximizing actors that adjust their budget based on the marginal revenue product of labor. Instead, district budgets are a function of the local propensity to fund education through municipal taxes, the size and allocation of state education aid and funding programs. Teachers can improve their welfare by advocating for a larger allocation of the district budget and they can lobby local, state and elected officials to relax the district budget constraint by increasing funding for public education. Strikes in this context serve dual purposes: direct bargaining leverage and broader signaling to policymakers and voters about service provision and funding priorities (Lyon and Kraft 2024). A second key difference is that in maximising their welfare, teacher strikes have the potential to positively or negatively affect the education production processes (Brunner et al. 2019). The use of additional funds to increase teacher compensation can benefit student achievement through changes in the composition of the teacher workforce and the effort teachers expend on the job.

Efficiency wage theory suggests that if teachers are compensated at their marginal product, then any increase in compensation should lead to increases in teacher productivity (Akerlof 1982; Shapiro and Stiglitz 1984). Higher wages can expand teacher supply (Edwards et al. 2024) and improve morale and retention (Hendricks 2014). Additionally, almost one in five teachers nationally works a second job outside the school system (Will 2022). Strike-induced salary increases may make secondary jobs less necessary, leaving teachers with more time and energy to dedicate to instructional effort. It is also possible that any increased teacher compensation secured via strikes might not translate into improved student achievement. Prior studies have found that across-the-board pay raises for teachers have not resulted in improved achievement (Cook et al. 2021; De Ree et al. 2018). Wage gains alone without corresponding investments in on-the-job skill development may leave teachers who are motivated by newly won compensation without a productive pathway for improving their performance (Murnane and Cohen 1985). If strike-induced contract concessions are funded by reallocating funding instead of expanding the education funding pool via new resources, then their effects again depend on whether any funding allocated to increased teacher compensation and school inputs is rent-seeking or efficiency-enhancing (Hoxby 1996).

The temporary school closures leave families struggling with disrupted childcare arrangements and may have important consequences for the labor market outcomes of parents. This is especially the case for more vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, such as low-income mothers who may find it particularly difficult to secure alternative childcare options. Unfortunately, a lack of exogenous variation in teacher strikes linked to parental labor market data has precluded a detailed analysis on this topic. As a consequence, we lack complete understanding of how families are affected by the childcare crises that emerge from school closures, hindering the design of effective policy responses. Identifying the effect of teacher strikes on parents is difficult due to the potential existence of contemporaneous shocks or policies. Specifically, strikes may be correlated with other events that also affect the labor market outcomes of the parents. In the study by Jaume & Willen 2021, they found that teacher strikes negatively impact the labor market participation of mothers and that this translates into a significant reduction in earnings. The transitory nature of the effects is important to highlight when considering the policy implications of the results. In contrast to its impact on mothers, teacher strikes have no effect on the labor market outcomes of fathers in general. However, they do negatively impact the supply of fathers with lower predicted

earnings than their wives. This suggests that the labor supply response of parents depend, at least in part, on the relative income of each parent (Blundell et al. 2005; Apps and Rees 2012; Cherchye et al. 2012). Belot and Webbink (2006) report that teacher strikes in Belgium had a negative impact on students' subsequent labor market earnings. Jaume & Willen 2017, said in their study they found evidence that teacher strikes worsen future labor market outcomes. The prevalence of teacher strikes in Argentina means that the effect on the economy as a whole is substantial. They even said that being exposed to the average incidence of teacher strikes during primary school leads to a 0.70 percentage point increase in unemployment.

Evidence was also found that teacher strikes cause individuals to sort into lower-skilled occupations later in life. Education production provide clear predictions about the consequences of reduced instructional time: lower academic achievement (Cahan and David 1987; Cahan and Cohen 1989; Lee and Barro 2001; Gormley and Gayer 2005; Cascio and Lewis 2006; Luyten 2006; Hansen 2008; Leuven et al. 2010; Fitzpatrick et al. 2011; Goodman 2014). Teacher strikes may have important effects on non-educational outcomes. The reason is that teacher strikes reduce effective instructional time. Unless parents can make alternative educational arrangements this will lead to an increase in leisure time and to an increase in the risk of engaging in bad behavior and criminal activity (Anderson 2014; Henry et al. 1999). This can directly impact the future education and labor market outcomes of children.

Core Labor & Industrial Relations:-

These theoretical perspectives help explain how teachers in Meghalaya respond collectively when institutional arrangements constrain their autonomy, recognition, and bargaining power. The workplace is fundamentally the site of conflict and negotiation between labor and management, rather than a purely cooperative environment. Industrial relations evolve through different systems of managerial control---- such as simple control, technical control and bureaucratic control---developed by employers to manage workers and maintain productivity. Within this framework, the concept of core labor emerges as workers who possess stable employment skills and strategic importance to the organization, giving them relatively greater bargaining power in industrial relations. However, even core workers remain part of a broader contested terrain, where management strategies and labor responses continually shape power dynamics, workplace authority and labor relations over time (Edwards, R. (1979)). Under monopoly capitalism, management increasingly seeks to control and deskill labor through scientific management and technological systems, separating the conception of work from its execution. This process transfers knowledge and decision-making power from workers to management, thereby reducing workers' autonomy and bargaining power. As a result, labor becomes more fragmented and routinized, contributing to the degradation of work and reinforcing managerial dominance within industrial relations. Restructuring of labor processes is central to understanding workplace power dynamics, labor control and the changing relationship between workers and employers in modern industrial economies (Braverman, H. 1974).

Protests are guided by "moral economy"--- a set of widely accepted social norms and expectations about fairness, justice and the proper functioning of markets. Ordinary people believed that authorities and merchants had a moral obligation to ensure fair prices and protect the community from exploitation, especially during times of scarcity. When these expectations were violated—such as when traders hoarded grain or raised prices excessively—the crowd reacted collectively to restore what they considered economic justice (Thompson, E. P. 1971). Organization culture plays a crucial role in shaping employee voice, determining whether workers feel empowered or discouraged from participating in decision-making processes. They emphasize that workplaces with open, participative cultures encourage dialogue, trust and collaboration between management and employees, while hierarchical or rigid cultures often suppress worker expression and limit participation. Employee voice is not only a formal institutional mechanism (such as unions or grievance system) but also a cultural phenomenon embedded in everyday workplace practices, power relations and communication structures within organizations (Blackler, F., & Kennedy, A. 2004). Modern labor processes do not rely solely on coercion or managerial authority but instead create conditions where workers "consent" to their own exploitation through workplace games, incentive systems and internal competition. These practices make workers feel engaged and rewarded while simultaneously increasing productivity and maintaining managerial control (Burawoy, M. 1979).

Sociology of Education & Aspirations:-

In Meghalaya, recurring disruptions in public schooling may shape how students and families imagine educational mobility, making aspirations more fragile under conditions of uncertainty. In *Class Strategies and the Education Market* (2003), Stephen J. Ball examines how middle-class families strategically navigate education systems shaped by market-oriented reforms such as school choice and competition. Ball argues that the expansion of the "education

market” allows families with greater social, cultural and economic capital to better position their children within desirable schools and educational pathways. Through informed decision-making, networking and the mobilization of resources, middle-class parents are often able to secure advantages that reinforce existing social inequalities. The book highlights how education markets do not necessarily create equal opportunities but may instead reproduce class divisions. Ball’s work contributes significantly to the sociology of education by demonstrating how parental strategies, policy reforms and market mechanisms interact to shape educational access and social mobility (Ball, S. J. 2003). Education systems play a crucial role in reproducing existing social inequalities rather than simply promoting meritocracy.

The authors introduce the concept of cultural capital, referring to the knowledge, skills, language and cultural competencies that students inherit from their families. Schools tend to value and reward the cultural capital of dominant social classes, which gives students from privileged backgrounds a significant advantage in academic success. As a result, educational institutions unintentionally legitimize social hierarchies by presenting these inequalities as outcomes of individual ability or merit (Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. 1977). The ability to aspire for a better future is deeply shaped by cultural and social contexts. Aspirations are not merely individual desires but are socially and culturally constructed capacities that develop through experience, opportunity and access to resources. In many marginalized or disadvantaged communities, the “capacity to aspire” may be limited because individuals have fewer opportunities to imagine or pursue alternative futures. Therefore, development and social policies should focus not only on economic resources but also on empowering people to articulate their goals, participate in decision-making and expand their aspirations (Appadurai, A. 2004).

Teacher Work & Professional Identity:-

These insights illuminate the moral and professional tensions experienced by teachers in Meghalaya when they balance care for students with the need to advocate for fair employment conditions. Teacher identity is not fixed but is socially constructed through policy frameworks, professional norms and institutional expectations. Sachs (2001) brought out two approaches; the managerialist discourse and the democratic professional discourse. The managerialist approach, often associated with accountability reforms and performance measurement, positions teachers as technicians who implement externally designed curricula and standards. In contrast, the democratic professional discourse view teachers as reflective practitioners, collaborators and active participants in educational reform, are emphasizing professional autonomy, collegiality and commitment to broader social and educational goals. The dominance of managerialist policies may narrow teachers’ professional roles and reduce their autonomy, whereas democratic professionalism encourages teacher agency, collaboration and professional learning communities. There is an importance of supporting professional environments that allow teachers to develop identities grounded in critical reflection, collaboration and social responsibility (Sachs 2001).

Teaching is deeply emotional and relational work, where teachers’ commitment, resilience and sense of purpose are crucial for sustaining effectiveness. Day and Gu (2010) demonstrate that supportive school leadership, collaborative cultures and opportunities for professional development help teachers maintain strong professional commitment even during periods of policy pressure and reform. Conversely, high accountability demands, workload stress and lack of institutional support can weaken teachers’ morale and professional engagement. Sustaining teacher quality requires attention not only to training and accountability but also to teachers’ well-being, professional identity and career-long support systems. It is important to nurture the conditions that allow teachers to remain motivated, resilient and committed to student learning throughout their careers (Day & Gu 2010). The nature of the teaching profession has evolved over time. Hargreaves (2000) identified four historical phases of teacher professionalism, each reflecting changes in educational policy, institutional expectations and professional learning practices.

First, the pre-professional age was characterised by limited teacher training and minimal professional standards, where teaching relied largely on personal experience rather than formal professional knowledge. Second, the age of autonomous professionalism emerged in the mid-20th century, when teachers gained greater independence in their classrooms and professional decision-making. Third, the age of collegial professionalism emphasized collaboration among teachers, encouraging teamwork, professional learning communities and shared responsibility for student outcomes. Finally, the post-professional or postmodern age reflects contemporary educational reforms marked by strong accountability systems, managerial control and performance monitoring, which may challenges teachers’ autonomy and professional judgement. While collaboration and professional learning are essential for improving education, excessive managerial reforms may undermine teacher professionalism by reducing teachers to implementers of externally designed policies (Hargreaves 2000).

Teacher Strike Case Studies & Comparative Contexts:-

Comparative evidence underscores that teacher strikes are both labor and policy events, offering a useful lens for interpreting the Meghalaya case. Teacher strike generally does not produce significant long-term declines in student achievement. Although strikes temporarily disrupt classroom instruction, schools often compensate for lost instructional time through schedule adjustments, additional assignments or extended learning activities. As a result, students tend to recover academically once regular schooling resumes. Papay & Kraft (2016) suggests that teacher strikes often emerge from broader issues such as teacher salaries, working conditions and school resources. Addressing these issues can ultimately contribute to improved teaching environments, which may benefit students in the long run. Therefore, the authors argue that while strikes may cause short-term disruptions, they do not necessarily harm educational outcomes and may highlight systematic problems in education systems that require policy attention (Papay & Kraft (2016). As private unionization has declined in many countries, public sector unions- such as those representing teachers, healthcare workers and government employees have become increasingly important in sustaining collective labor action and advocating for workers' rights. Public sector unions contribute to the revival of labor activism through collective bargaining, political engagement and social mobilization.

In sectors like education, unions play a key role in negotiating wages, working conditions and professional protections while also shaping debates about education policy and public services. The public sector unions often extend their advocacy beyond workplace issues to broader social concerns such as community welfare, educational quality and public accountability. The growing activism of public sector unions demonstrate their potential to reinvigorate labor movements and strengthen democratic participation in policy-making, particularly in sectors where workers play a critical role in delivering essential public services (Cornfield, D.B., et al., 2015). Teacher industrial action is often a response to policy reforms perceived as threatening teachers' professional autonomy and working conditions. Disputes between teachers' unions and governments frequently arise from disagreements over pay structures, workload, pension reforms and accountability measures. These actions are not labor disputes but also reflect broader tensions between educational professionals and policy-makers regarding the direction of education systems. Teacher strikes serve as a form of collective voice, allowing educators to influence education policy and draw public attention to challenges within the teaching profession. While industrial action may temporarily disrupt schooling, it also reflects deeper structural issues in education governance and labor relations (Zilliacus H 2011).

Teacher Strikes in Meghalaya:-

Teacher protests in Meghalaya have periodically occurred as part of broader labour struggles within the education system. One notable example involved a large-scale strike by teachers in government-aided schools who protested against delayed salaries and demanded pay parity with government school teachers. Approximately 14,000 teachers participated in the strike, affecting more than 4,500 schools across the state, highlighting the influence of teacher mobilization in Meghalaya's education system. The protest was organized under the Joint Action Committee of All Teachers' Association of Meghalaya and reflected long-standing grievances related to unequal salary structures between government and aided schools (Indian Express 2016). This event illustrates the structural complexity of Meghalaya's educational workforce, where teachers are employed under multiple administrative categories such as government teachers, deficit teachers, ad hoc teachers, job security and benefits, thereby creating fertile ground for collective action. One of the most significant factors driving teachers' strikes in Meghalaya is the prevalence of ad hoc and contractual employment arrangements. A substantial portion of the teaching workforce in the state is employed on temporary or honorarium-based contracts rather than permanent government appointments. Ad hoc teachers typically receive fixed monthly honorariums without access to service benefits such as pensions, promotions or job security.

Recent protests organised under the Federation of All School Teachers of Meghalaya (FASTOM) highlight the grievances associated with these employment conditions. Ad hoc teachers have repeatedly organized demonstrations demanding regularization of their services, salary increments and inclusion in the deficit system of government funding. Teachers participating in these protests argued that despite performing the same responsibilities as regular teachers, they continue to receive significantly lower wages and lack employment benefits (India Today NE 2025). Salary disparities remain a key issue. Reports indicate that ad hoc teachers receive approximately ₹18,000 per month at the lower primary level and up to ₹ 33,000 at the higher secondary levels, amounts significantly lower than the salaries of regular government teachers (ETEducation 2025). These disparities contribute to feelings of marginalisation among teachers and have become a major trigger for strikes and protest movements. Teacher unions and professional associations play a central role in organizing strikes and protests in Meghalaya. Organizations such

as the Federation of All School Teachers of Meghalaya (FASTOM), the All Meghalaya SSA School Teachers Association (AMSSASTA), and other teacher groups have mobilized educators to demand better working conditions and policy reforms. For example, teachers under the All Meghalaya SSA School Teachers Association (AMSSASTA), organised a 21-day-sit-in-protest demanding significant salary increases and improved working conditions. The protest was eventually suspended after the state government assured teachers that their demands would be considered and that salary revisions would be examined (Northeast News 2024). These mobilizations demonstrate how teacher unions function as important platforms for articulating collective grievances and negotiating with the state government. The ability of these organizations to mobilize large numbers of teachers also indicates the widespread nature of dissatisfaction within the education workforce. Policy reforms related to teacher recruitment and qualification standards have also contributed to teacher protests in Meghalaya.

In recent years, debates surrounding the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) have triggered protests among teachers who feared that new certification requirements may threaten their job security. Some teachers in Meghalaya joined nationwide protests against mandatory TET requirements, arguing that such policies place additional pressure on teachers without adequately existing employment challenges (Meghalaya Times 2025). This situation highlights a broader tension between education reforms aimed at improving quality and the employment realities faced by teachers. While policies such as TET are intended to enhance teacher quality, they can inadvertently create anxiety among teachers who are already working under insecure contractual arrangements. Teacher strikes in Meghalaya often take the form of peaceful demonstrations, rallies, sit-in-protests and hunger strikes rather than prolonged work stoppages. For instance, ad hoc teachers have organised indefinite sit-in demonstrations demanding policy changes related to salary structures and services conditions (Hub News Assam 2025). These protests frequently serve as negotiation strategies aimed at drawing the attention of policymakers and the public to the challenges faced by teachers. In several cases, strikes have led to dialogue between teacher associations and government authorities, resulting in promises of salary revisions or policy reviews. For example, after sustained protests by ad hoc teachers, the state government proposed a revised pay structure that included basic pay, dearness allowance and retirement benefits such as provident fund contributions (Meghalaya Monitor 2025).

Such outcomes suggest that industrial action functions as an important mechanism through which teachers attempt to influence education policy and improve their working conditions. Teacher strikes in Meghalaya raise important questions about the relationship between labour relations and educational governance. On one hand, strikes can disrupt teaching activities and temporarily affect students' learning experiences. On the other hand, they also highlight systemic issues such as underfunding, inequitable employment structures and inadequate teacher support system. The persistence of teacher protests indicates that structural reforms may be necessary to address underlying problems in the education system. These reforms could include standardizing teacher recruitment policies, improving salary structures, and ensuring equitable treatment across different categories of teachers. Despite the frequency of teachers protests in Meghalaya, academic research on the topic remains limited. Most available information comes from journalistic reports and government statements rather than systematic scholarly investigations. As a result, there is a need for in-depth qualitative and empirical research examining the causes, dynamic and long-term consequences of teacher strikes in the state. Future research could explore teachers' perceptions of labour rights, the role of unions in mobilization and the broader socio-political factors influencing teacher activism in Meghalaya. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of labour relations in the education sector and provide insights for policymakers seeking to balance educational reforms with teacher welfare.

Moral Economy & Public Work Sector:-

The peasant does not revolt simply because they are poor; rather rebellions occur when traditional social arrangements that guarantee minimum subsistence and economic security are threatened. Rural societies historically operated under a subsistence ethic, where landlords, local elites and the state were expected to ensure that peasants had enough resources to survive during times of crisis such as crop failures or economic hardship. This expectation formed a moral framework governing economic relationships. When colonial policies, market expansion or taxation systems disrupted these traditional protections, peasants perceived such changes as violations of the moral economy, leading to resistance and collective protest. The collective action often arises not merely from economic deprivation but from perceived injustice and the breakdown of established social norms governing economic relations. The concept of moral economy has been widely applied to analyze various forms of social protest, including labour movements, food riots and worker strikes (Scott J.C 1976). In his expanded version of Scott's concept, Andrew Sayer in his book *Moral Economy and Public Policy 2009*, provides an important theoretical framework for understanding teacher strikes in Meghalaya.

Scott argues that collective protest arises when communities perceive that established norms of fairness and subsistence have been violated by authorities. Sayer extends this by emphasizing that economic policies and labour relations are embedded in moral judgements about justice, dignity, and fairness. Applying these ideas to the education sector, teacher strikes in Meghalaya can be interpreted as responses to perceived violations of the moral expectations governing employment relationships between teachers and the state. Issues such as salary disparities, delayed payments, and lack of job security among ad hoc or contractual teachers may be viewed as breaches of this moral economy, prompting teachers to mobilize collectively. From this perspective, teachers are not merely economic disputes but also expressions of moral claims for fair treatment, professional recognition and equitable public policy in the education system.

Public Sector Labour & Education Policy:-

Effective education systems depend heavily on continuous professional learning, supportive leadership and collaborative school cultures. Teachers who have access to professional development opportunities, mentoring and collaborative learning environments tend to demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction, self-efficacy and instructional effectiveness. Conversely, heavy workloads, lack of professional autonomy and limited institutional support can negatively affect teachers' motivation and well-being. Improving education systems requires policies that strengthen teacher support structures, professional learning opportunities and working conditions. By recognizing teachers as lifelong learners and key contributors to educational improvement, the report underscores the need for governments to create environments that sustain teacher professionalism and engagement (OECD 2019). UNESCO emphasizes that achieving inclusive and equitable quality education requires strong support for teachers and education professionals. The framework highlights that teachers are central to improving learning outcomes and therefore calls for policies that ensures adequate training, professional development, fair remuneration and supportive working conditions. It also stresses the importance of empowering teachers through professional autonomy and continuous learning opportunities in order to strengthen education systems globally. In the context of teacher labour relations, the declaration suggests that improving teacher welfare and working conditions is essential for maintaining teacher motivation and sustaining the quality of education (UNESCO 2015).

Table 1: Summary of Reviewed Literature

The following table presents a summary of key studies reviewed in this chapter, including their methodology and major findings.

S. No.	Author(s)	Year	Title of Study	Methodology	Key Findings	Source
1	Mawthoh & Rani	2018	An inquiry into the education system of Meghalaya: A comparative analysis	Secondary data analysis of education indicators	School access improved but infrastructure gaps limit education quality	International Journal of Applied Research
2	Bhattacharjee	2011	Teacher Education in Northeast India—Status, Weaknesses and Alternatives	Policy review of education and teacher training	Teacher education needs strengthening to improve quality	US-China Education Review A
3	Britton & Propper	2016	Teacher pay and school productivity: Exploiting wage regulation	Econometric analysis using national school data and wage gap comparison	Lower teacher wage competitiveness reduces school performance	Journal of Public Economics
4	Leigh	2012	Teacher pay and teacher aptitude	Econometric analysis using national university admission data (1989–2003)	Higher teacher salaries attract more academically capable individuals	Economics of Education Review

5	Nonglait & Myrthong	2018	A Study on Social-Emotional Competency and Teaching Effectiveness of Secondary School Teachers in Meghalaya	Descriptive survey using standardized competency and effectiveness scales	Social-emotional competency improves teaching effectiveness	International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts
6	Bascia & Osmond	2012	Teacher Unions and Educational Reform: A Research Review	Policy and institutional analysis	Teacher unions influence policy and protect teacher rights	National Education Association
7	Muralidharan & Sundararaman	2011	Teacher Performance Pay: Experimental Evidence from India	Randomized controlled trial in rural Indian schools	Incentives improve student learning outcomes	Journal of Political Economy
8	Valente et al.	2020	The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence Ability and Teacher Efficacy	Survey	Emotional intelligence improves teaching and classroom management	Universal Journal of Educational Research
9	Puertas Molero et al.	2019	Influence of Emotional Intelligence and Burnout Syndrome on Teachers Well-Being: A Systematic Review	Systematic review of 36 studies	Emotional intelligence reduces stress and improves teaching quality	Social Sciences
10	Béteille	2009	Absenteeism, Transfers and Patronage: The Political Economy of Teacher Labor Markets in India	Survey data and political economy analysis	Political factors weaken teacher accountability	PhD Dissertation
11	Dey	2013	Regional Imbalance in Teacher Education in India — An Analysis of Eastern Region including North Eastern States	Secondary data analysis and regional comparison	Northeast faces shortage of teacher education institutions	Journal of Educational Planning and Administration
12	Hanushek & Rivkin	2006	Teacher Quality	Research review	Teacher quality strongly affects student learning	Handbook of the Economics of Education
13	Dohmen & Falk	2010	You get what you pay for: incentives and selection in the education system	Laboratory experiments and field data analysis	Incentives influence who enters teaching	The Economic Journal
14	Qin	2021	Country effects on teacher turnover intention: a multilevel, cross-national analysis	Multilevel statistical analysis using international data	Working conditions affect teacher turnover	Educational Research for Policy and Practice

15	Ramachandran et al.	2005	Teacher motivation in India	Policy review, stakeholder interviews and survey	Workload and salary issues reduce motivation	Educational Resource Unit
16	Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez	2011	If you pay peanuts do you get monkeys? A cross-country analysis of teacher pay and pupil performance	Cross-country analysis	Higher pay improves teacher quality and retention	Economic Policy
17	Bennell & Akyeampong	2007	Teacher Motivation in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia	Literature review	Low salary reduces teacher motivation	DFID Education Paper
18	Kingdon & Teal	2010	Teacher unions, teacher pay and student performance in India: A pupil fixed effects approach	Econometric study	Union membership increases pay but reduces performance	Journal of Development Economics
19	Vegas & Umansky	2005	Improving Teaching and Learning through Effective Incentives	Policy analysis	Incentives improve recruitment and retention	World Bank
20	Woessmann	2011	Cross-country evidence on teacher performance pay	Cross-country analysis using PISA data	Performance pay improves student achievement	Economics of Education Review
21	Béteille et al.	2016	Teacher Unions in India: Diverse and Powerful	Analytical study using secondary data	Teacher unions influence reforms and accountability	Cambridge University Press
22	Kingdon & Sipahimalani-Rao	2010	Para-teachers in India: Status and Impact	Critical literature review and survey	Low pay and insecurity affect teacher conditions	Economic & Political Weekly
23	Gupta	2013	Perspectives of Teachers' Unions on Challenges to Education in India	Qualitative study based on interviews	Focus on salary issues & working conditions over learning outcomes	CCS Working Paper
24	Jaume & Willén	2019	The Long-run Effects of Teacher Strikes: Evidence from Argentina	Difference-in-difference analysis	Strikes reduce long-term educational outcomes	Journal of Labor Economics
25	Lyon et al.	2026	The Effects of Teacher Strikes on Compensation, Working Conditions, and Productivity	Event study analysis	Strikes improve pay but may reduce short-term learning	CALDER Working Paper

Theoretical Framework:-

This study integrates three theoretical strands.

Compelled Visibility:-

Compelled Visibility refers to collective action undertaken after prolonged institutional silence. When routine grievance mechanisms fail, workers escalate conflict to force recognition. In this framework, strike action is not impulsive but accumulative.

Moral-Labor Tension:-

Teachers navigate dual identities: contractual employees and moral agents. Strike action generates tension between economic claims and professional self-conception. This tension shapes emotional narratives of guilt, justification and ambivalence.

Aspirational Fragility:-

Aspirational Fragility describes the subtle weakening of confidence in institutional futures caused by recurring instability. In this study, the concept is treated as an emergent theoretical proposition. While participants expressed concerns about students' long-term educational prospects, the concept warrants further empirical testing in future research.

Conceptual Framework:-

This study conceptualizes teacher strikes as relational processes shaped by structural labor conditions and interpreted through narrative meaning-making. This framework emphasizes interaction rather than linear causality.

TEACHER STRIKES AND LABOR RELATIONS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION:
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**Structural Labor Conditions:-**

This framework begins with the structural labor conditions that shape teachers' professional lives in the public education system of Meghalaya in India. These conditions include issues such as low wages, delayed salary payments, and the widespread use of contractual or ad hoc teaching positions. Such structural factors create uncertainty and dissatisfaction among teachers and influence their perceptions of fairness, job security, and professional recognition. When these issues persist without adequate policy responses, they may contribute to tensions between teachers and educational authorities.

Collective Action (Teacher Strikes):-

In response to unfavourable labor conditions, teachers may engage in collective action, often in the form of strikes or protest movements. Teacher strikes typically involve work stoppages, demonstrations, and mobilization through professional organizations or unions. Teacher associations such as the Federation of All School Teachers of Meghalaya and the Meghalaya Government School Teachers' Association play a crucial role in organizing these actions and representing teachers' demands in negotiations with government authorities. Collective action thus becomes a strategy through which teachers attempt to address structural inequalities within the education system.

Community Moral Negotiation:-

Teacher strikes do not occur in isolation; they also affect students, parents, and communities. As a result, strike movements often generate community-level moral negotiations, where different stakeholders evaluate the legitimacy of teachers' actions. Some members of the community may express support for teachers' demands, recognizing the need for fair working conditions. Others may express concern about the disruption of students' education. This dynamic creates tensions involving trust, conflict, and ethical dilemmas regarding the balance between teachers' rights and students' educational needs.

Narrative Meaning-Making:

Within a narrative inquiry approach, the experiences of strikes and labor negotiations are understood through the stories teachers tell about their professional lives. Teachers interpret and reflect on their participation in strikes, describing how these events affected their identities, motivations, and relationships with the community and the government. Through narrative meaning-making, teachers construct personal accounts of struggle, resilience, and hope for change. These narratives provide insight into how individuals make sense of complex labor conflicts within the education system.

Reimagined Educational Futures:

The final element of the framework focuses on reimagined educational futures. Through their experiences and reflections, teachers often express hopes, fears, and aspirations regarding the future of public education in Meghalaya. These perspectives may include visions for improved labor policies, stronger collaboration between teachers and policymakers, and a more equitable education system. By examining these narratives, the study seeks to understand how teachers envision possible pathways for educational reform and professional recognition.

Definition of Key Terms

Teacher Strike:-Collective work stoppage by public school teachers as a form of labor protest.

Labor Relations: Institutional and relational interactions between employees (teachers), unions, and the state regarding working conditions rights.

Public Education: Government- funded schooling institutions operating under state regulation.

Narrative inquiry: A qualitative research methodology focusing on lived experiences through storytelling.

Educational Futures: Stakeholders' perceptions, aspirations and expectations concerning long-term educational trajectories.

Methodology:-

Context of the Study:

Public Education and Labor in Meghalaya Public education in Meghalaya occupies a central place in the state's development trajectory. Given limited private sector penetration in many districts, government and aided schools remain primary avenues of formal education for large segments of the population.

Teachers in these schools operate within a complex labor environment characterized by:

- Variations in permanent and contractual employment
- Dependence on state funding allocations
- Administrative Centralization
- Periodic salary delays
- Negotiations between unions and government authorities

In such contexts, labor instability directly affects institutional continuity. However, the impact of strikes extends beyond administrative disruption. They influence:

- Student morale and aspirations
- Parental trust in state schooling
- Teachers' professional self-understanding
- Public perception of education as a stable social institution

Thus, teacher strikes in Meghalaya are not merely labor disputes; they are socially embedded events with long-term implications for educational futures.

Statement of the Problem:-

Teacher strikes in Meghalaya have recurred in response to labor grievances, particularly concerning salary delays, service regularization and employment security. Existing discussions and policy responses largely conceptualise these strikes as administrative interruptions or political bargaining tools.

However, three critical gaps remain:-

- Labor-Relational Gap: Limited scholarly attention has been given to understanding teacher strikes as manifestations of labor relations within public education.
- Narrative Gap: The lived experiences and interpretations of teachers, students and parents during strike periods remain underexplored.
- Future-Oriented Gap: Little research examines how labor disputes in education reshape perceptions of long-term educational futures.

By neglecting these dimensions, prevailing approaches risk oversimplifying complex relational dynamics. Teacher strikes are embedded within broader negotiations of power, legitimacy, and moral responsibility. They may simultaneously represent resistance, vulnerability and institutional strain. Therefore, there is need for a qualitative narrative study that explores how teacher strikes in Meghalaya are experienced, interpreted, and meaningfully constructed within the context of public sector labor relations.

Research Objectives:-

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To explore the lived experiences of teachers participating in strike movements in Meghalaya
- To examine how teachers, construct and express their professional identities during periods of conflict.
- To analyse how narratives reflect tensions between labor rights, moral expectations and workplace control.

Research Questions:-

Primary Research Question:-

How are teacher strikes in public education narrated and understood within the broader context of labor relations in Meghalaya?

Sub-Questions:-

- 1) How do teachers describe the labor conditions that lead to strike action?
- 2) How do educators construct moral justification for collective action?
- 3) How do students and parents interpret teacher strikes as labor disputes?
- 4) How do strike experiences reshape perceptions of trust in public education?
- 5) How do such labor conflicts influence narratives of educational futures?

Research Design:-

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is particularly appropriate for examining teacher strikes as labor-relational events because it prioritises lived experiences, temporality and meaning-making. Rather than treating strikes as isolated events, narrative inquiry allows exploration of how stakeholders construct, interpret and reconfigure experience over time. Teacher strikes are not only structural actions but also socially embedded experiences that unfold across past, present and anticipated futures. A narrative design enables the study to examine how teachers, students and parents interpret labor conflict within public education and how these interpretations influence perceptions of institutional trust and educational futures.

This design aligns with the study’s theoretical orientation in labor process theory, moral economy and narrative identity theory. It allows attention to power, relational dynamics and aspirational reconstruction.

Research Paradigm:-

This study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist approach assumes that social reality is constructed through interaction and meaning-making rather than existing as an objective entity independent of participants. Teacher strikes, within this framework, are understood as socially negotiated phenomena. Their meaning emerges through narratives constructed by teachers, parents, and students within specific historical and institutional contexts in Meghalaya. The epistemological stance is constructivist: knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participants during the interview process. The ontological position is relativist: multiple interpretations of strike events are considered valid and contextually grounded.

Research Setting:-

The study is conducted in selected public schools across urban and rural districts of Meghalaya. The state’s public education system is characterized by:

- Government and government-aided schools
- Mixed permanent and contractual teacher appointments
- Diverse socio-cultural communities
- Variable infrastructural conditions

The inclusion of both rural and urban settings ensures variation in labor experiences and community responses to teacher strikes.

Participants and Sampling:-

Sampling Strategy Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who had direct experience with teacher strikes in public schools.

The sampling strategy was criterion-based, focusing on individuals who:

- Experienced at least one strike event within the last five years
- Were directly affected as teachers, students, or parents
- Represented varied socio-economic and geographic contexts

Maximum variation sampling was also used to capture diverse labor conditions and community interpretations.

Participant Profile:-

- The study includes 20 participants:
- 10 public school teachers (ad hoc, deficit, and government)
- 4 students (secondary and higher secondary level)
- 4 parents or guardians
- 2 NGO/union representatives

This distribution enables examination of labor relations from multiple relational positions.

Table 2: Narrative Interviews

For transparency, the full interview protocol is presented here; however, the questions were used flexibly as part of a semi-structured narrative interview guide.

Background Information	1) What is your age?
	2) What is your gender?
	3) What type of teacher are you? (Ad hoc/Deficit/Government)
	4) How many years have you been teaching?
	5) Where is your school located? (Rural/Urban/District)
	6) What subjects/classes do you teach?
Professional Journey	7) Can you tell me about your journey into the teaching profession?
	8) What motivated you to become a teacher?
	9) How would you describe your role as a teacher in your community?

Work Conditions and Institutional Experience	10) Can you describe your daily work responsibilities?
	11) How has your workload changed overtime?
	12) What kind of administrative or non-teaching duties do you perform?
	13) How would you describe your level of autonomy in teaching?
	14) What challenges do you face in terms of salary, job security, or promotions?
	15) Do you feel there are differences between ad hoc, deficit and regular teachers? Please explain.
Experience of Strike Participation	16) Can you tell me the story of how you became involved in the strike?
	17) What are the key events or turning points during protest for you?
	18) How did you feel during your participation (emotionally and professionally)?
	19) What were the main demands or issues that motivated the strike?
Moral Belief and Social Expectations	20) How do you think society views teachers in Meghalaya?
	21) Do you think teacher is seen as a profession or a moral duty? Why?
	22) How did people (family, community, media) react to your participation in the strike?
	23) Did you feel any conflict between your responsibilities as a teacher and your role as a protester?
	24) How do you justify the strike in relation to students' welfare?
Identify and Meaning-Making	25) How has your experience in the strike changed how you see yourself as a teacher?
	26) Would you describe your participation as a struggle for rights, dignity, or something else?
	27) What does "being a teacher" mean to you now compared to before the strike?
	28) Can you share a moment during the protest that was particularly meaningful to you?
	29) How do you think these experiences will shape your future?
Collective experience and Solidarity	30) How do you describe the relationships among teachers during the strike?
	31) Did you feel a sense of unity or shared identity? Please explain.
	32) What role did unions or groups play in shaping your experience?
Reflection and Closing	33) Looking back, what does the strike mean to you personally?
	34) Do you think the strike achieved its goals? Why or why not?
	35) What challenges would you like to see in the education system in Meghalaya?
	36) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?

Table 3: Data Collection Overview Table

Method	Purpose	Data Collected
Interviews	Capture narratives	Life stories, strike experiences
Observation	Contextual insight	Behaviors, interactions
Documents	Supplement data	Media, union texts

Data Collection:-

Methods In-depth Narrative Interviews:-

The primary data collection method consists of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. These interviews are designed to elicit detailed personal narratives related to: The interview guide contained 36 indicative questions organized by theme. These questions served as a flexible topic guide rather than a fixed questionnaire, and not all questions were asked in every interview. Interviews were adapted to the participant's role and experience.

- Entry into teaching profession
- Experiences leading up to strike participation
- Key events during protests
- Reflection of identity, dignity and professional values.

Document and Media Analysis:-

Secondary data sources are used to supplement primary data, including:

- Newspaper articles
- Union Statements
- Social Media Contents

These materials provide contextual background and help situate individual narratives within broader public discourse.

Data Analysis:-

The study employs thematic narrative analysis which integrates thematic coding with narrative interpretation. The analysis follows these steps.

- Transcription of interview data
- Coding for recurring themes such as
 - Employment precarity check and inequality
 - Moral tensions and social expectations
 - Identity construct and dignity.
- Examination of narrative structures, including plot, sequence and turning points
- Interpretation of findings in relation to theoretical framework

Trustworthiness of the Study:-

To ensure rigor and credibility, the study adopts the following strategies:

Credibility: Through prolonged engagement

Reflexivity: Continuous reflection on the researcher's role and potential biases.

Thick Description: Providing rich, contextual accounts of participants' experiences

Triangulation: Use of multiple data sources to validate findings

Ethical Considerations:-

Ethical principles are strictly followed throughout the research process:

- Informed consent is obtained from all participants
- Participants' identities are protected through anonymity and pseudonyms
- Confidentiality of data is maintained
- Sensitivity is exercised when dealing with emotionally and politically charged experience

Data Analysis and Interpretation (With Narrative Evidence):-

Profile of Participants:-

The study includes 20 participants comprising ad-hoc teachers, deficit school teachers, government teachers, and NGO members. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms (e.g., Participant A, B, C) are used throughout the chapter.

Overview of Emerging Themes:-

Three major themes emerged from the analysis:

1. Employment Precarity and Structural Inequality
2. Moral Tensions and Social Expectations
3. Identity, Dignity, and Professional Recognition

Theme 1: Employment Precarity and Structural Inequality:-

Participants consistently highlighted unstable employment conditions and systemic inequality.

One ad-hoc teacher described:-

“I have been teaching for eight years, but still there is no job security. Every year we wait, not knowing if we will continue or not.” (Participant A)

Another participant emphasized financial instability:-

“Sometimes salaries are delayed for months. We have families to support, but there is no certainty. It feels like we are invisible.” (Participant D)

A deficit school teacher added:-

“We do the same work as regular teachers, but we are not treated equally. This inequality pushed us to protest.” (Participant F)

These narratives reflect how employment precarity is not only an economic issue but also a deeply emotional and structural concern, leading teachers to collective action.

Theme 2: Moral Tensions and Social Expectations:-

Participants expressed strong moral dilemmas regarding strike participation.

One teacher shared:

“As a teacher, I feel responsible for my students. Going on strike was very difficult for me.” (Participant B)

Another reflected societal pressure:

“People say we are neglecting students, but they don’t understand our struggles. We are also fighting for a better future for education.” (Participant H)

A government school teacher explained the internal conflict:

“It is painful to stay away from the classroom, but sometimes raising our voice becomes necessary.” (Participant K)

These quotes reveal how teachers constantly negotiate their dual roles—as caregivers and as workers demanding justice—highlighting the moral complexity of strike participation.

Theme 3: Identity, Dignity, and Professional Recognition:-

Participants’ narratives strongly emphasized the need for recognition and dignity.

One participant stated:

“We are teachers, but sometimes we don’t feel respected. Our work is not valued the way it should be.” (Participant C)

Another shared a turning point:

“When my salary was delayed for months, I realized we had to stand up for ourselves. That was when I joined the protest.” (Participant G)

An NGO member observed:

“The strikes are not just about money; they are about dignity and recognition of teachers’ contributions.” (Participant N)

These narratives show how participation in strikes becomes a means of reclaiming professional identity and asserting dignity.

Narrative Structures and Meaning-Making:-

Participants’ stories often followed a similar narrative trajectory.

For example, one participant described their journey:

“I joined teaching with passion and hope. But over time, the challenges kept increasing. The strike was a turning point where I felt I had to act.” (Participant E)

Another reflected on transformation:

“Before, I thought protests were unnecessary. Now I see them as important for change.” (Participant J)

These accounts illustrate how individuals reinterpret their experiences over time, linking personal struggles to broader systemic realities.

Discussion of Findings:-

The inclusion of narrative excerpts highlights the depth and complexity of participants’ experiences.

- Employment precarity is experienced as both material insecurity and emotional distress.
- Moral tensions reflect the ethical burden of balancing professional duty with personal rights.
- Identity construction emerges through resistance and collective action.

As one participant summarized:

“We are not protesting because we want to, but because we have no other choice.” (Participant L)

This reinforces the argument that teacher strikes are deeply embedded in issues of justice, identity, and structural inequality.

Employment Insecurity and Precarity:-

One of the most consistent issues that emerges from the analysis is the problem of employment insecurity, particularly among ad-hoc and SSA teachers. Secondary data indicates that many teachers have been working for long periods without permanent status, regular salary revision, or access to service benefits. In some cases, teachers have continued in service for decades without significant improvement in their conditions. From a narrative perspective, such conditions reflect more than just structural inequality. They shape how teachers understand their roles, their future, and their place within the education system. The uncertainty associated with temporary employment creates a sense of instability, which in turn influences collective actions such as protests and strikes.

Salary Delays and Financial Stress:-

Salary-related issues appear as one of the most immediate and visible triggers of teacher unrest in Meghalaya. Reports consistently highlight delays in salary disbursement, sometimes affecting thousands of teachers at a time. Instances of withheld salaries and irregular payments indicate that the issue is systemic rather than occasional. These financial challenges extend beyond the workplace and affect teachers’ everyday lives. From a narrative standpoint, such experiences contribute to frustration and dissatisfaction, influencing how teachers perceive their profession and their relationship with the state. Salary delays, therefore, become not only an administrative issue but also a lived experience that shapes decision-making, including participation in protests.

Protest as a Response to Long-standing Issues:-

The findings suggest that teacher strikes in Meghalaya are rarely sudden or isolated events. Instead, they emerge from long-standing grievances related to salary stagnation, delayed payments, and lack of recognition. For example, reports indicate that some teacher groups have demanded salary revisions after several years without enhancement, leading to prolonged protests and sit-in demonstrations. These protest movements often disrupt classroom activities and affect students across the state, highlighting the scale and seriousness of the issue. However, the analysis also suggests that such actions are generally taken after other avenues have been exhausted. In this sense, strikes can be understood as a collective response to unresolved issues rather than impulsive decisions.

Government Response and Policy Interventions:-

Another important theme that emerges is the role of government responses in shaping the dynamics of teacher strikes. Secondary sources show that protests have often led to policy actions such as salary enhancements, financial allocations, and the introduction of monitoring and administrative systems. For instance, initiatives like attendance monitoring systems and digital salary platforms have been introduced to address concerns related to accountability and payment delays. While these measures indicate responsiveness, they also suggest that interventions are often reactive, occurring after sustained protest rather than through preventive planning.

Inequality within the Teaching System:-

The findings also highlight differences within the teaching workforce, particularly between regular government teachers and those working under ad-hoc or SSA arrangements. The latter group appears to face more challenges in terms of salary, job security, and access to benefits. This internal inequality contributes to dissatisfaction and reinforces the need for collective action. It also reflects broader structural issues within the education system, where different categories of teachers operate under unequal conditions despite performing similar roles.

Impact on Students and the Education System:-

Teacher strikes have direct and visible impacts on students and the functioning of schools. Reports indicate that protests often result in teachers leaving classrooms, affecting the continuity of learning for a large number of students. At the same time, the analysis suggests that these short-term disruptions are linked to deeper systemic issues. Teachers' demands for improved working conditions are often connected to the long-term quality of education, indicating that the effects of strikes cannot be understood only in immediate terms.

Repetition of Protests and Institutional Trust:-

A recurring pattern observed in the data is the cycle of protest and response. Teachers engage in protests, the government responds with assurances or partial measures, and similar issues arise again over time. This pattern points to a lack of sustained resolution. Such repetition reflects growing frustration and limited trust between teachers and institutional authorities. It suggests that while temporary solutions may be implemented, underlying concerns remain unaddressed, leading to repeated mobilisations.

Table 4 summarizes selected news reports used as contextual secondary evidence to complement the interview narratives and illustrate the recurring nature of teacher labor unrest in Meghalaya.

Table 4: Summary of News Reports on Teacher Strikes in Meghalaya

The following table presents a summary of selected news reports highlighting teacher strike events in Meghalaya.

Sl No.	Title	Year	Journal/Source	Key Findings
1	Meghalaya SSA Teachers Begin Indefinite Protest Against Govt's Failure to Enhance Salary for 8 Years	2024	Syllad News	Salary not enhanced since 2016; 100% hike demanded; teachers left classrooms affecting thousands of students statewide
2	Meghalaya SSA Teachers End Protest After Govt Promises Salary Hike	2024	Northeast News	21-day sit-in ended after Cabinet Minister promised salary hike; TMS app introduced to monitor teacher attendance and address absenteeism
3	Meghalaya Education Minister: Govt Drafting Plan for SSA Teachers' Salary Enhancement	2024	India Today NE	13,000+ SSA teachers demanded hike; association wrote to PM Modi; Education Minister admitted financial difficulty in meeting salary demands
4	Meghalaya SSA Teachers Demand Immediate Salary Release Amidst Non-Teaching Staff Protest	2024	Ukhrul Times	July salary of 12,000+ SSA teachers withheld; MSSASA invokes Articles 21 and 300A demanding immediate release of withheld salaries
5	Meghalaya: Hundreds of Ad-hoc Teachers Hold Protest; Demand 5% Salary Hike, Retirement Age of 65	2025	Careers360	Ad-hoc teachers paid ₹18,000–₹33,000/month with no service benefits; protest for regularisation and 5% annual increment; government failed on 2023

				promises
6	Meghalaya Govt Fulfills Demands of Ad-hoc Teachers by Approving Enhancement of Salaries	2022	India Today NE	Cabinet approved salary enhancement for all ad-hoc teacher categories; annual financial impact ₹100 crore; decision triggered by indefinite sit-in protests
7	Education Commission Submits Interim Report on Salary for Adhoc Teachers	2024	Highland Post	Meghalaya State Education Commission submitted report on adhoc salary; teachers serving since 1993 without pay upgrades; demands equal pay for equal work
8	MegSIMS to Address Delays in Teachers' Salary	2025	Meghalaya Monitor	Government introduces MegSIMS portal to eliminate salary disbursement delays; delays confirmed for adhoc and GIA teachers across Meghalaya
9	ABVP Meghalaya Called for Revision of Salaries for Govt School Teachers	2024	Syllad News	ABVP submitted memorandum to Governor demanding timely salary disbursement; primary teacher salary structures inadequate; dropout rates linked to poor teacher quality
10	Meghalaya Teacher Salaries Doubled	2017	EducationWorld	CM approved 100% salary hike retrospectively from Jan 2017 for 7,000 primary teachers; ₹63.34 crore allocated; acknowledged teachers' challenges

The above table highlights how teacher strikes in Meghalaya are closely linked to issues such as salary delays, job insecurity, and unequal working conditions. The news reports show that these strikes are not isolated incidents, but develop over time as a response to unresolved concerns and limited institutional support. From a narrative perspective, these events reflect the growing tension between teachers and the state, where strikes become a way for teachers to express their experiences and demand recognition of their rights and working conditions.

Discussions:-

Salary Issues and Teacher Motivation:-

One of the central findings of the study is that salary-related issues, including delayed payments and lack of regular revision, play a major role in triggering teacher strikes in Meghalaya. These findings strongly align with existing research that highlights the importance of teacher pay in shaping motivation and performance. Studies such as Britton and Propper (2016) and Leigh (2012) have shown that teacher salaries directly influence both the quality of teaching and the attractiveness of the profession. Similarly, Dolton and Marcenaro-Gutierrez (2011) found that countries with better teacher pay tend to have better student outcomes. The findings of the present study support these arguments, showing that when teachers experience financial instability, it affects not only their motivation but also their ability to function effectively in the classroom. In this sense, salary issues are not merely economic concerns but are closely linked to the overall quality of education.

Employment Insecurity and Structural Inequality:-

Another important theme that emerges from the study is the issue of employment insecurity, particularly among ad-hoc and SSA teachers. The findings indicate that many teachers work without permanent status, service benefits, or clear career progression.

This is consistent with studies such as Dey (2013), which highlighted regional imbalances in teacher education and workforce distribution, and Mawthoh and Rani (2018), which pointed out structural weaknesses in the education system in Meghalaya. The presence of multiple categories of teachers with unequal conditions reflects a broader structural problem. This inequality not only affects teacher morale but also contributes to dissatisfaction and collective action.

Teacher Motivation and Working Conditions:-

The study also shows that poor working conditions, combined with salary issues, significantly affect teacher motivation. This finding is in line with Ramachandran et al. (2005) and Bennell and Akyeampong (2007), who found that inadequate pay, weak incentives, and poor working environments lead to low levels of teacher motivation. In addition, emotional and psychological aspects also play an important role. Studies such as Valente et al. (2020) and Puertas Molero et al. (2019) emphasize that emotional well-being is closely linked to teaching effectiveness. The findings of the present study suggest that teachers in Meghalaya operate under considerable stress due to financial and professional uncertainty. This affects not only their performance but also their perception of the teaching profession.

Teacher Unions, Power, and Collective Action:-

The role of teacher unions and collective action is another key aspect of the study. The findings indicate that protests and strikes are often organized responses to long-standing issues, supported by teacher associations. This aligns with studies such as Bascia and Osmond (2012), Kingdon and Teal (2010), and Béteille et al. (2016), which highlight the influence of teacher unions in shaping educational policies and labor relations. However, the findings also reflect the complexity of union activity. While unions help in securing better conditions for teachers, they may also create tensions between accountability and professional responsibilities.

Teacher Strikes as Labor-Relational Events:-

A key contribution of this study lies in understanding teacher strikes as labor-relational events rather than simply disruptions in schooling. The findings suggest that strikes are deeply rooted in issues of economic survival, institutional inequality, and lack of recognition. This perspective is supported by studies such as Jaume and Willén (2019) and Lyon et al. (forthcoming), which show that teacher strikes have complex effects, including both benefits for teachers and challenges for students. From a theoretical standpoint, the findings reinforce the idea that teachers are not only educators but also workers who negotiate their rights within a broader labor framework.

Moral Tensions and Professional Identity:-

The study also highlights the tension between teachers' professional responsibilities and their need to protest. Teachers are often expected to prioritise students' learning, but at the same time, they face economic and institutional challenges that push them towards collective action. This reflects a deeper issue related to professional identity. Teachers are positioned both as caregivers and as workers, and these roles can sometimes conflict with each other. From a narrative perspective, these tensions are part of how teachers make sense of their experiences. Their participation in strikes can be seen as an attempt to balance these competing expectations.

Government Response and Institutional Trust:-

The findings show that government responses to teacher protests are often reactive rather than proactive. While protests sometimes lead to policy changes, such as salary increases or administrative reforms, these actions are usually taken after prolonged pressure. This pattern creates a cycle of protest and response, which indicates a lack of sustained trust between teachers and the state. The repetition of similar issues over time suggests that underlying problems are not fully resolved.

Theoretical Implications:-

Labor Process Theory:-

Labor Process Theory mainly looks at how work is controlled and how workers respond to that control. When we look at the findings of this study, this idea becomes quite clear. Many teachers, especially those working on an ad-hoc or SSA basis, do not have much control over their work conditions. Things like delayed salaries, lack of job security, and uncertainty about the future show that teachers are working in a system where decisions are mostly made from the top.

In this situation, teacher strikes can be seen as a form of response. They are not just about demanding money but about pushing back against a system that does not give teachers enough control or stability. So, in a way, the findings of this study show that teacher strikes are also about resistance — a way for teachers to make their voices heard.

Moral Economy Framework:-

The Moral Economy Framework helps us understand the tension between what people are expected to do and what they actually need to survive. Teaching is often seen as a noble profession. Society expects teachers to be dedicated, patient, and committed to students no matter what. But the findings of this study show that the reality is more complicated. Teachers are dealing with salary delays, financial stress, and job insecurity. This creates a difficult situation. On one hand, teachers feel responsible for their students. On the other hand, they also have their own needs and responsibilities. When they go on strike, they are sometimes criticised for not doing their duty, even though they are fighting for basic rights. So, the study shows that teacher strikes are shaped by this tension between moral expectations and economic reality. Teachers are not ignoring their responsibilities; they are trying to balance them.

Narrative Identity Theory:-

Narrative Identity Theory focuses on how people make sense of their experiences and how they see themselves.

The findings of this study suggest that teachers do not see themselves in just one way. They see themselves both as educators and as workers. These two roles do not always go together smoothly. During strike situations, this becomes more visible. Teachers have to think about who they are — whether they should focus on teaching or on standing up for their rights. This creates a kind of inner conflict. From a narrative point of view, these experiences are important because they shape how teachers understand their own identity. Participating in strikes becomes part of their story — something that defines how they see their profession and their place in society.

Rethinking Teacher Strikes:-

One of the important points that comes out of this study is that teacher strikes should not be seen only as disruptions. Usually, strikes are discussed in terms of lost class time or impact on students. While that is important, it does not tell the full story. The findings show that strikes are connected to deeper issues like working conditions, inequality, and lack of recognition. So, instead of seeing strikes only as a problem, they can also be understood as a response to long-term issues within the system.

Suggestions for Future Research:-

Future research can build on this study by collecting more detailed primary data, especially through interviews, to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences and perspectives. This would help in capturing the personal and day-to-day realities of teachers more clearly, particularly in relation to issues like job insecurity and salary delays. At the same time, comparative studies across different regions can provide a broader understanding of how labor relations in education vary in different contexts. Further research can also examine how policy changes influence the relationship between teachers and the state over time, and how these changes affect the frequency and nature of teacher protests.

Conclusion:-

This study demonstrates that teacher strikes in Meghalaya are best understood as labor-relational events rather than temporary disruptions to schooling. Employment precarity and delayed salaries produce compelled visibility, where teachers resort to collective action after prolonged institutional silence. The findings also reveal moral-labor tension, as teachers negotiate competing obligations to students and to their own economic survival and professional dignity. Finally, the study advances aspirational fragility as an emergent concept describing how recurring labor conflict weakens confidence in the future of public education among teachers, students, and families. Policy recommendations include establishing a transparent salary disbursement monitoring system, creating a structured pathway for regularization of ad hoc teachers after a defined period of service, and strengthening formal grievance redress and consultation mechanisms. Future research may examine the long-term effects of strike participation on teacher retention and professional identity, compare labor relations across northeastern Indian states, and further test the concept of aspirational fragility using longitudinal and mixed-method designs. In conclusion, this study shows that teacher strikes in Meghalaya are closely linked to ongoing issues such as salary delays, job insecurity, and unequal working conditions, particularly among ad-hoc and SSA teachers. These problems are not isolated incidents but reflect deeper challenges within the education system and the way teachers are positioned within it.

The findings also suggest that these strikes usually develop over time, after repeated concerns remain unresolved. Rather than being sudden disruptions, they are responses to continued financial and professional uncertainty. From a labor-relational perspective, this highlights an imbalance in the relationship between teachers and the system, where expectations are high but support remains limited. Overall, the study indicates that unless these underlying issues are addressed, similar patterns of protest are likely to continue. Improving basic working conditions, ensuring timely salaries, and creating more stable employment structures can help strengthen this relationship and support a more stable education system in Meghalaya.

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