

**A Comparative analysis of the problems and prospects of private and public schools upto senior secondary level of BTAD in Assam**

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**ABSTRACT**

The research study undertaken is concerned about the problems and prospects of the private and public schools operating in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). The main concentration was given on the objectives of comparing the problems confronted by the private and public schools in the aspects of finance, teachers, students, parents, school plant and extra-curricular activities. In view of the several obstacles in the process of imparting education by the private and public schools, prospects were also highlighted. The analysis was done on the basis of the primary data collected from sampled schools during 2015-16 using the structured questionnaires and personal observations while interviewing with the head of the institutions and teachers. Percentage method was employed to analyse the processed data. In the concluding remarks, the comparative analysis of private and public schools on the extent of problems and prospects revealed that few problems are common to both while several problems are different and severe on the part of the private and public schools. Private schools revealed better educational environment and wider choice of schools. The author has recommended the policy implications to the authority concerned which would eradicate the problems and improve the efficiency and productivity of the private and public schools.

**Keywords:** Education, Problems, prospects, private and public schools

**1. Introduction**

Education is the key in determining the quality of life and productive factors. It is especially the primary and secondary education which is imparted either through private or public schools are the foundation stone to pursue higher education which promotes economic growth and development. It affects economic development directly or indirectly. The direct effects of education are observed in productivity, employment, composition of labour force, division and mobility of labour while the indirect effects are like thrift, savings, limitations in the size of family, formation of the right kind of attitudes and skills. So, it serves as an important tool for social welfare as well as an engine for the economic development of the nation as a whole. Nevertheless, it is achieved only through the efficient and smooth functioning educational institutions having the adequate infrastructural facilities, trained teachers, financial resources and modern

equipments. But, the private and public schools operating in the BTAD region are not well equipped with those resources rather they have different problems of their own some of which are common to both and some are uncommon. These differences and the similarity of their obstacles must be discovered. In spite of their variety of problems, both have their own prospects too.

Comparative study between private and public schools and their effectiveness has been the topic of a large number of studies. Several studies have been conducted in all over the world to compare the various features of public and private schools. Many researchers have taken various measures and compared between the two to show the preferences over the other. **Chittaattukalam (1999)** observes that most of the privately managed schools are preferred for admissions than those funded and managed by the government directly or indirectly. The parents had shown indignation to the government managed schools due to the poor services offered by these schools. **Tooley, J. et. al (2005)** pointed out that private school students outperform their public school counterparts even after controlling for the schools' student intakes. **Gbadegesin et. al (2015)** pointed out that students in private schools did better than their counterparts in public schools academically. The wellbeing of teachers had a significant impact on the students' performance in both private and public schools. Those in private schools had a better edge than those in public schools. There was availability of more materials in private schools, which added the level of understanding of students and this invariably improved their academic performance compared to those in public schools. Though many researchers have undertaken several comparative studies between the private and public schools, however, the comparative aspects of the problems and prospects has been ignored and left aside. Therefore, it has attracted the attention of the author to make a deep insight into it.

### **1. i. Operational Definition of the Key terms used in the study**

The basic operational definition of the key terms used in the present study are given below-

**(a) Private Schools:** Private schools, in the present study are meant to include those schools which are owned and managed by private individuals, private partnership, religious body or society (like Christian missionaries, etc). It will consists both private aided and unaided.

**(b) Public Schools:** In this study, the public schools would mean those schools of state government and central government. These schools are controlled and administered by the headmaster or principals who were the state or central government employees abiding the rules and regulations imposed by the government. The government salaried teachers cooperates the headmaster or principal in the matter of administration.

### **2. Statement of the problem**

The comparisons of the problems and prospects between the private and public schools is imperative because during this era there is a mushrooming growth of the private schools and a

popular indignation over the public schools despite huge financial resources devoted in the provisions of education by the concerned state authority. Private and public schools operating in the BTAD region suffer from several problems. In view of the various obstacles confronted by both private and public schools, they also have prospects. Therefore, it is in need to investigate and compare the problems and prospects of private and public schools.

### **3. Objectives of the study**

This study is conducted to analyse the following objectives:

- (i) To examine and compare the problems faced by both the private and public schools in imparting quality education to the pupils.
- (ii) To highlight the comparative prospects of both the private and public schools, and
- (iii) To provide policy recommendations in overcoming the problems faced by both the private and public schools.

### **4. Methodology of the study**

The present study is mainly based on primary data that are collected from both the private and public schools, established and developed within the study region. The primary data is based on field observations, structured questionnaires and personal interview with the head of the private and public schools. The BTAD consists of four districts namely; Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. The total number of schools operating in BTAD region is the total population. The total number of schools in each district is divided into two types, viz., public and private. Considering the total size of population, 5 % from public school and 10 % from private schools from each district are selected randomly resulting 298 schools as the sample size from the total of 5909 public schools and 82 schools as sample size from the total 780 private schools in the entire BTAD. For the analysis of the processed data, percentage method has been employed.

### **5. Analysis and discussions**

Private and public schools both have their own problems. Some of the problems confronted by the private and public schools which are observed while interviewing with the head of the institutions are illustrated as under the following heads.

#### **5.1.i: Finance Related Problems**

Finance is the most vital element for undertaking any business activity or welfare provisioning activity, be it in the private sector or the public sector. Most of the private schools are confronted with the problem of deficiency in finance to which the public schools are not. This inadequacy of finance on the part of the private schools acts as a stumbling block for the smooth functioning of the administration and progress of the school. This also hampers the development of the schools. Lack of adequate fund on the part of the administrators of the school leads

concentration on day-to-day difficulties leaving too little time and energy for the large scale and efficient planning that is required. Some of the conspicuous problems that are confronted by the private schools in relation to finance are highlighted below-

**(a) Low salaries of teachers:** The teachers of private schools are paid a very meagre amount of salary which is less than half of the salaries of public schools. The average salary of private school teacher ranges from Rs. 6000 - Rs. 9000 per month where as its counterpart ranges from Rs.22000 - Rs. 25000 per month. The average salary of non-teaching staff in the private schools ranges from Rs. 3000 -6000 per month, but its counterpart in the public school gets on an average of Rs. 14000 – Rs. 17000 per month. The low salary of teacher is one of the most important reasons why the teachers working in the private schools always search for better jobs. This is also one of the most important factors that discourage the working spirite of the private school teacher hampering the performance of the private schools. However, this problem is not confronted by the public schools.

**(b) Irregular payment of students' dues:** Private schools face acute financial problem when there is irregular and delay of student's fees payment. Teachers too, have to suffer the same problem because private schools rely on student's dues for the payment of teachers' salary. On the contrary, public schools do not face this problem.

**(c) Non-availing of government grants and aids:** Most of the private schools do not receive any government grants and aids for the administration of the school nor for the payment of the teachers' salary. This is due to the lack of funds or limited allocation of funds for the education sector on the part of the state government. Whereas the public schools receive teachers' salary from the state government, besides they also receive government grants and aids for the construction of buildings and administration of the schools.

### **5.1.ii. Teacher Related Problems**

Teachers are the real dynamic force of the school and play a vital role in the destiny of mankind. There is a greater need for the strong, determined and qualified teachers for the younger generation than the cause of education today. Though much quality is expected from the teachers, some of the major problems are cited below-

**(a) Shortage of teachers with professional qualification:** Most of the private and public schools suffer from the problem of acute shortage of trained teachers or teachers with professional qualification. The average number of teachers per school with professional qualification in the private school during 2014 is only 1 and in the public school it is 2. The reason behind this fact is the obvious low salaries of teachers in the private schools and lack of recruitment policy in the public schools.

**(b) No Definite Rules for the Appointment of Teachers:** It is found that, there is no definite rule for the appointment of teachers in the private schools. Teachers in the private schools are appointed randomly without any bond or commitment during their appointment. There is no any uniformity of rules for the appointment of teachers among different private schools. This paves

the way for easy exit from the service. Therefore, in the middle of the year; teachers in the private schools can leave the schools even without reason or when they feel like to be out of the teaching profession. But, teachers in the public schools are appointed with certain rules and regulations. There is uniformity in the rules for the appointment of teachers in the public schools.

**(c) Overload of Works on the Teachers:** Teachers in the private schools are over loaded with the excess number of periods as it is told by the teachers working in the private schools. This makes exploitation of the teachers. But teachers in the public schools are free from this exploitation rather in most of the public school's teachers enjoy the leisure with a very limited number of periods. This is very much clear from the fact that the average number of periods per teacher per day is 6 in private school while it is only 4 for the public school teachers.

### **5.1.iii: Student Related Problems**

**(a) Indiscipline behaviour of students:** Most of the teachers, 42 per cent of teachers in the public schools and 15 per cent of teachers in the private schools, opined that, the head of the school is responsible for maintaining discipline. However, the class teachers also have an important role in maintaining discipline among the students. It is observed that only 8 (eight) per cent of the private schools do face the problem of indiscipline behaviour of the students. Discussion with the head of the institutions also reveals that, the indiscipline behaviour of the students also creates obstacles in the administration of the school. On the other hand, it is observed that 58 (fifty eight) per cent of the public schools confronts with the problem of indiscipline behaviour of the students. Discussions with the head of the institutions of the public schools reveals that lack of introduction of moral science subject in the public school is the main cause for growing indiscipline behaviour in the students. They (head of the institution) also pointed out that the parents of the pupil schooling in the public school are not conscious with their children's behaviour. Further, indiscipline behaviour is also one of the important reasons for the unsatisfactory performance in the public school.

**(b) Varied economic backgrounds:** Varied economic background also brings obstacles on the school authority. The school as an educational institutions have to admit an army of students from varied economic backgrounds. Some students come from the rich family and some from the poor family. Some students come from the decent family while some do not. It is reported from the interview made with the head of the institutions that in the private schools 56 per cent of students admit from the high salaried guardians, 33 per cent from the middle income class and 11 per cent of the students from the low income class while in the public schools, the case is almost opposite, 70 per cent of the students admit from the poor and lower income class, 20 per cent from the middle income class and only 10 per cent from the high income class. This obstacle creating variations in income class of parents and students enrolment in private and public schools is shown in the table-i.

**Table-i: Income (Y) class of parents and students enrolment**

Income (Y) Class of Parents	STS enrolment in PRS	STS enrolment in PUS
High (Y): above 250000 p. m	56.0 %	10.0 %
Middle (Y):16,000-24000 p. m	33.0 %	20.0 %
Low (Y): below 15000 p. m	11.0 %	70.0 %

Source: Primary, 2016.

Note: Y= Income, STS= Students, PRS= Private School, PUS= Public School.

### **(c) Student Enrolment Problem**

Public schools are more likely to face the acute shortage of student enrolment. Kavi mentioned that lack of students in government schools is considered a major problem in the North Eastern Indian State. Mushrooming growth of the private schools and people's fondness for them have made the future of elementary schools much uncertain. According to DISE (2014), a total of 153 primary schools in the state are running without a single student in the academic year of 2014-15. Nevertheless, these schools having reported with adequate infrastructures and teachers, they were forced to shut-down because they had no students. On the other hand, the report (DISE) also said that a total of 141 schools have less than five students and 760 primary schools are with less than 10. The deplorable state of those schools in the hands of the Elementary Education Department has become a cause of great concern. This problem of student enrolment is free on the part of the private schools. **Kingdon (1996)** pointed out that the popularity of fee-charging private schools in India is explained by their superior quality.

#### **5.1.iv: Parent Related Problems**

Parents are the determining factor in educating the child in the school. Close coordination between the administrators, teachers and the parents are very much essential for a fruitful result in moulding students' future.

**(a) Critical View of the parents:** In the present day context, modern schools have been under the trap of critical view. Many parents look with a suspicious eye at what the modern school is doing. They always feel contradictory with their ancient school days of teaching. They criticize for the poor quality of teaching. They feel the modern educational policies and procedures defective as it involves teaching of crafts, activity methods, audio visual instructions, excursions, etc. They also blamed for absence of religious and moral instructions in the school, poor discipline, extra-curricular activities, etc. Most of the criticisms are destructive, only few are constructive. At the same time, parents can't be blamed because they are ignorant of the trends of modern education. Despite this fact on the part of the private school, public schools are different from this critical view. Parents schooling their children in the public schools do not even inspect the way their children have been thought. This fact is also due to the illiteracy and lack of consciousness of the parents.

**(b) Illiterate Parents: Illiterate** parents are not conscious about the rules and regulations imposed upon them and on their children and do not cooperate with the school authority. They feel hesitation to participate in the parents-teachers meetings and rather complaint about certain changes. The problem of illiterate parents is more on the part of the public schools as most of the literate and high income parents preferred private schools.

**(c) Absolute Dependence of parents on Teachers:** Most of the illiterate parents don't care about their children's home study. They (parents) totally depend on teachers at school. They don't evaluate the progress of their children in their study. They do not understand the need for providing the separate study room and other essential environment for their children to study at home. This problem is also more often to children of public schools as the parents of private schools are more conscious of schooling their children.

**(d) Irritation of School Practices on Parents:** Sometimes the practices of modern private schools also irritate parents. Stringent demands and requests on some special occasions like costumes for a dance and drama, examination fees, laboratory charges, late fines, etc. Parents often react negatively when these demands and requests are put forth. They blame the school authority as if for being its selfishness and profit motives which they seem to be without any base.

#### **5.1.v: School Plant Related Problems**

The school plant is a comprehensive term which includes buildings, furniture, play ground, apparatus and other equipments. The expansion of the plant to meet the rising demands of the education stands a serious problem among the private entrepreneurs. Some of the confronting problems are given below-

**(a) Safe drinking water facility:** Drinking water facility is almost available in both the private and public schools. Both the private and public schools have 100 percent safe drinking water facility. However, the hygienic system in the private schools is better than that of the public schools.

**(b) Toilet facility:** Toilet facility is also almost available in both the private and public schools. There is separate toilet facility for both the boys and girls in the private and public schools, 98 percent of the private schools have separate toilet facility for both girls and boys while 96 percent of the public schools have separate toilet facility for both boys and girls. This is because of the scheme of the SSA, Assam that provides separate toilet facility for boys and girls.

**(c) Electricity facility:** Every private school under the sampled school study is well connected with the electricity facility. They (private school), 86 (eighty six) per cent, provide ceiling fan facility in the classrooms as well as in the hostel for those schools having the hostel facility. This implies that 86 percent of the private schools are well connected to the electricity. However, only 35 per cent of the public schools are well connected to the electricity facility. Contrary to its counterpart, 65 (sixty five) percent of the public schools do not have the ceiling fan.

**(d) Science laboratories:** Both the Private and public schools up to the high school level do not have the provision of science laboratories as the school curriculum do not make the essence of

science laboratories up to the 10 (ten standard). However, in the senior secondary level with science stream, science laboratories are available in both the private and public schools, but one fact has been observed while visiting the schools that the science laboratories in the private schools are well equipped than that of the public schools.

**(e) Library buildings:** Library building is one of the most important components of the school plant as it is one of the determining factors of the performance of the school. So, every schools, be it private or public, must have the separate library buildings with adequate number of books. It is observed that none of the public schools have separate library buildings but only few 15 (fifteen) per cent of the public HS and HSS have separate library rooms with less than 3000 number of books while few private schools 12 (twelve) percent have separate library buildings and 45 (forty five) per cent of it have separate library rooms with more than 3000 number of books. Thus, both the public and private schools do not have the sufficient library facilities.

**(f) Hostel/boarding facility:** Almost, every private school has boarding facility in the study area. They (private schools) have separate hostel facility for boys and girls, 90 per cent of the private school have hostel facility with basic amenities of life. However, its counterpart is completely opposite, as public schools do not have the hostel facility; 100 per cent of the public school do not have the boarding facility.

**(g) Modern equipments:** In the era of globalised education scenario, modern equipments are most essential. It helps in better understanding to the students as well as makes easier to the teacher to expose and impart more knowledge to the students. Modern equipments like digital installed in the classroom helps the teacher to teach more easier and also creates long lasting effect in the minds of the students. Observation revealed that only 10 (ten) per cent of the private school has digital classroom and that too inadequate in number while none of the public schools do not have any digital classroom. This is one of the very important factors on the part of the government for its failure to improve the quality of education despite its huge educational expenditure.

**(h) Furniture:** Furniture includes chairs and tables for the teachers, desks and benches for the students and blackboard in the classrooms. This furniture should be available in sufficient quantity to accommodate the students and to create the congenial learning environment in the class rooms as well as in the school premises. It is observed that 95 (eighty five) per cent of the private schools in all the categories of the school have sufficient quantities of furniture. But, in the public schools, 24 (twenty four) per cent of the public schools more particularly high schools and higher secondary schools are overcrowded with the excessive number of students which have insufficient quantities of desks and benches to accommodate the students in the classrooms while the other categories of the public schools have also adequate quantities of furniture.

#### **5.1.vi. Extra-Curricular Activities Related Problems**

**(a) Lack of physical education teacher:** Physical education is the part and parcel of curricular education. Physical education helps to develop sound body and mind. It is found that only 5 per

cent of the private schools have physical education teacher while none of the public schools have physical education teacher.

**(b) Inability of students to exposure of study tour/excursion:** Study tour or excursion is also one of the important parts of curricular education. It is observed that only few private HS and HSS (10 per cent) provide study tour or excursion to the students. On the other hand, it is found that no public schools provide facility of study tour to the students. This is due to the fact, as reported by the head of institutions that, public schools do not have the fund facility to such an excursion while the few private schools do with the students' fees collection.

**(c) Educational guidance:** The success of student's career also very much depends on the educational guidance. It is observed that only few private schools (20 per cent) provide educational guidance. Disappointing fact on the part of the public schools in all the categories is that, they do not provide any educational guidance (career counselling, finding in-depth student's interests on the particular subjects, etc) to the students. The private schools also goes in the same line except 20 (twenty) per cent of the private secondary schools.

## **5.2. Prospects of the private and public schools**

Private and public schools operating in the BTAD in particular and of Assam in general, both have their prospects. These prospects vary from region to region and from country to country.

**Agi, Ugochukwu K. (2013)** referring to Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria, ESSPIN (2011) revealed the following prospects of private schools in River State, Nigeria:

(i) The population trend shows that a large market exist for Private Schools providers. As they remain active players in the education industry, parents and guardians are making informed choices of schools to send their wards or children.

(ii) More financial institutions are available to assist with facilities and instrument. Private education providers in Rivers State stand to benefit from the technical and professional expertise available in Government.

(iii) There are International Agencies e.g. UNSECO, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Base Organizations (CBOs) ready to collaborate with Private and Public education providers ready to lend themselves to best practices.

(iv) The existence of a friendly industrial environment in Rivers State.

(v) Avalanche of education interactive form are actively promoted by the Rivers State Government and Private education providers can be availed such opportunities.

(vi) Private education providers can capitalize on available National and State policies on education as well as the Nigeria Roadmap for education sector to strengthen their programme base.

(vii) Private sectors stand to benefit from state regulation of education that will in turn enhance their performance necessary for attracting large clients.

**5.2.i Educational Environment:** Private schools provide better educational environment than that of the public schools as the private schools' students are trained with disciplined behaviour through the introduction of moral science subjects and even with religious class in the Christian missionary schools and other religious and community managed schools. The students of public schools are less discipline in their behaviour, this is due to the fact that the public schools do not provide moral science subject in their curriculum. They (public schools) also do not have any religious class like that of the Christian missionary and religious schools which also develops spirit of self control, confidence, courage and discipline in the behaviour of students.

Private schools authority also organizes the parents-teachers meeting annually. They make the parents of their students to attend the meeting compulsorily where they make counselling to the parents to take appropriate guidance to their ward and also to provide peace and calm study environment in their home. Public schools, though they also organize the parents-teachers meeting, can't make the parents of their ward to attend the meeting compulsorily and hardly few public schools organize this meet. Thus, private schools provide better educational environment than that of the public schools.

#### **5.2.ii: Wider Choice of Schools**

The mushroom growth of the private schools provides wider choice to the parents to send their ward. It (private schools) provides as an alternative for parents of the wards (students) who are dissatisfied with public schools or have other reasons to send their children to the private school. Within the private schools, parents can choose a range of medium (Bodo, English and Assamese) and affiliated (SEBA and CBSE. While parents of students in the public schools can sometimes choose or exert influence over the school where their ward attend. In addition, parents can indirectly choose among public schools for their children to the extent that where they choose and prefer to live.

#### **6. Limitations**

The author has limited the area of investigation to the problems only in the aspects of finance, teachers, students, parents, school plant and extra-curricular activities. The prospects are also limited only to the area of educational environment and choice of schools. Academic performance of the students couldn't be included in the analysis. The stakeholder is confined only to the head of the institutions and teachers.

#### **7. Summary of findings and conclusions**

It is observed that both the private and public schools have their own several problems and prospects. From the above analysis and discussions, the following facts were found:

(i) Private schools face more financial related problems like low salaries of teachers, irregular payment of students' due and non-availing of government grants while its counterpart is free from

it.

(ii) Both the private and public schools face acute shortage of teachers with professional qualifications as the average number of teachers with professional qualification for private schools is only 1 (one) and for that of the public schools is also only 2 (two).

(iii) Private schools do not have definite rules for the appointment of teachers while public schools have certain definite rules for the appointment of teachers.

(iv) Teachers in the private schools are overloaded with works while the teachers in its counterpart are free from it.

(v) Private schools face less illiteracy of guardians while the public schools face more illiteracy of guardians.

(vi) Both the private and public schools have safe drinking water facility and separate toilet facilities for boys and girls.

(vii) Private schools are better connected to the electricity than the public schools.

(viii) Science laboratories in the senior secondary levels of private schools are well equipped than that of the public schools.

(ix) Both the private and public schools do not have sufficient library facilities.

(x) Almost all the private schools have hostel facility while the public schools do not have the hostel facility.

(xi) Only few private schools have digital classrooms while all the public schools do not have digital classrooms.

(xii) Almost all the private schools have sufficient furniture while few of the public high schools and higher secondary schools do not have sufficient furnitures.

(xiii) Private schools performed more extra-curricular activities than that of the public schools.

(xiv) Private schools are less confronted with student related problems than that of the private schools.

(xv) Private schools provide better educational environment and wider choice of schools than that of the public schools.

Thus, it is concluded that there are several problems which are confronted by the private schools during the process of imparting quality education. Public schools also face certain obstacles and there are few hindrances which are common to both the private and public schools. In some areas, private schools performed better than its counterpart and thus provide greater prospects than the public schools.

## **8. Policy recommendations**

The following points are recommended to eradicate the problems confronted by both the private and public schools which would help in imparting quality education and enhancing the greater prospects.

(i) The government of the state concerned should formulate schemes for assisting the financial

needs of the private schools because education imparted either through private or public contributes to the development of the society.

(ii) Both the private and public schools should recruit more number of teachers with professional qualifications.

(iii) Private schools should formulate definite rules for the appointment of teachers to make continuity in their service periods.

(iv) Both the private and public schools should increase the use of modern equipments in the classrooms and library facilities.

(v) Public schools should do more in providing electricity facilities and conducting extra-curricular activities.

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