

# **Social Stratification, Education, and Mobility in India: A Study of Higher Secondary Schools in Guwahati City**

## **ABSTRACT**

Education is not a homogeneous kind of institution. There is stratification within education. In the education system different hierarchy and different levels of stratification or qualities of education which is available in the market today like different elite or private schools to good government schools or poor vernacular medium government schools. Though some elite schools are most similar, there is also some stratification among those schools. Stratified education has given birth to diverse kinds of education or to produce diverse kinds of human resources. So education is no more equal or no longer equal. Those who are having resources are getting the best education. In reality, education is totally unequally provided.

Education is key in human capital formation. The quality of human resources depends upon the quality of education of a country. Sustainable economic development needs skilled manpower which is raised through productivity and efficiency of individuals that is only possible through education. The diversity of educational institutes reflects the structural inequalities in the social system. All the schools are not accessible to everyone and the education system brings about a division between the elite and the masses and it serves to perpetuate the existing inequalities. Therefore despite all these achievements in India, the dream of an egalitarian society continues to be far from realization. We have still to go a long way to realize the path of equalization of educational opportunity, the universalization of primary education, women empowerment through education, improvement of the cultural environment of the marginalized and oppressed population, solution of the unemployment problem, etc. Widespread inequality of educational opportunity remains despite the introduction of free and compulsory state education

including India. Many children coming from working-class and poor families face several obstacles and disadvantages to success in education, this means that they do not achieve as well as their ability should allow them to. The chances of upward mobility are thus restricted. Those who hold positions of wealth and power can make sure their children have the best available education, and this often leads them to prestigious and lucrative jobs. Hence it is to be said that education is not a homogeneous kind of institution. There is stratification within education. In the education system, a hierarchy and stratification exist which is reflected in the diverse qualities of education which is available in the market today like different elite or private schools to poor vernacular medium government schools. Though some elite schools are most similar, there is also some stratification among those schools. Stratified education has given birth to diverse kinds of education or to produce diverse kinds of human resources. So education is no more equal or no longer equal. Those who are having resources are getting the best education. Hence in reality education is totally unequally provided.

Education has a prominent role to play in the development of modern society. In India, since adopting the liberal economy the education sector has also seen unprecedented growth with large funds infused from the private sector. This process has led to the growth of educational growth and stratification into government and private sectors. With the infusion of funds into the private sector, the improvement in infrastructure and quality of education has led to a competitive atmosphere among the educational institutions for larger visibility. This has been the case in the urban centers in India.

In rural areas usually we see a dismal picture of government schools functioning under administrative and financial shortcomings. Lacunas in infrastructure and pathetic student-teacher ratio etc. have been the common feature in India in general and Assam in particular.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Guwahati being one of the fastest-growing cities in the country has become the educational hub of the state as well as for the North-Eastern region. In Kamrup metro district there are 435 high schools and higher secondary schools, out of 435 schools 66 are higher secondary schools out of which 29 are private schools and 26 are government vernacular medium schools, and 11 central government higher secondary schools. *(Source: RMSA, UDISE REPORT 2016-17, from Guwahati city)*

In Guwahati, the private institutions that are functioning are well equipped with all the modern amenities with smart classroom environments. On the other hand, many government institutions mostly depend on the traditional methods of teaching that lack modern tools of education. As a result, guardians prefer to opt for private institutions while considering the future of their children. Students from the other districts of the state also migrate and enroll themselves in these institutions for pursuing a better career. In the last two decades, we have seen such a general tendency of migration of students from the government to private schools. Only students from the family who couldn't afford to bear the expenditure and higher fees have restricted themselves to the government institutions without having other suitable options. And finally, they are deprived of quality education in comparison to private or elite school students.

These schools differ in infrastructure as a classroom (smart classroom), labs, toilet, and urinal facility, security, playground, library, auditorium, qualification of the teacher, teacher-student ratio, and size of the class. We can also observe the diversity of the working environment and facilities and provided to the teachers in these institutions as salary, working hours, holidays, incentives, parent-teacher association, autonomy to work. Students of diverse socio-economic and intellectual background can also be found in particular categories of school. This is why the government schools are generally preferred by students of lower socioeconomic and intellectual background as they (government schools) generally practice either no criteria for the selection of students or

very liberal mechanism to select students. Whereas the private schools employers different layers of selection as, parent qualification and interview, students entrance test, and students interview, which helps them to select the best students who can afford the high fees asked by these institutions.

The existence of the diverse category of school can also be established by the annual result (2016-18) of the three government and three private schools selected for the present study in Guwahati city.

Category of schools	Name of the schools	Total candidate appeared	1 <sup>st</sup> division			2 <sup>nd</sup> division			3 <sup>rd</sup> division			Fail
			2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	
Private Schools	Gurukul Grammar senior secondary school	(2016)373 (2017)349 (2018)406	373	349	406	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	0
	Srimanta Sankar Academy	(2016)243 (2017)254 (2018)253	234	249	242	9	5	11	Nil	Nil	Nil	0
	Don Bosco pazbazar	(2016)433 (2017)----- (2018)241	431	-----	238	02	-----	03	Nil	Nil	Nil	0
Government Schools	Rajdhar borah hs school	(2016)233 (2017)242 (2018)199	03	06	05	31	26	32	186	167	114	3+43+48(yearly)
	Sonaram H.S school	2016)233 (2017)112 (2018)103	05	05	03	29	15	15	98	64	62	23+28+18(yearly)
	Arya Vidyapith H.S school	2016)214 (2017)226 (2018)235	24	25	20	87	75	76	76	82	101	44+38+27(yearly)

The above table clearly shows that more than a 90percent of the students in private schools scoring 1<sup>st</sup> division whereas a huge majority of the government schools students could pass their exams only in the third division and the significant number of them also fail in their respective examinations.

In such a scenario, it will be pertinent to study this process of social stratification and mobility of students in the context of these various categories of schools. It may bring into focus the quality of education that we get and the success or failure of the education system in fulfilling the expectations of the masses in a global era.

Hence the present study attempts to bring out the major structural as well as the functional differences between the privatized and the public educational sectors which provide the nation with a diverse quality of the human resource. The study is also aimed to find out the problems at different levels confronted by the different categories of schools in the area. Moreover, the study is also important as it will be carried out to find out where the students produced from these diverse qualities of institutions are absorbed?

### **Review of literature**

After going through the literature of comparative study of public and private schools, the majority of the study established the superior quality of education provided by the private schools because of their both physical infrastructure and quality of teachers, and updated curriculum which is affecting the enrollment of students in government schools. (Sing T Surendra;2014, Adeyemi Sunday; 2014, Emmanuel, Vaeskar; 1988, R. P Sing;1988, Britto;1987, Yathirajkumar;1981, Patel S.P; 1981, A Grigard; 1961)

Moreover, the studies on the inequality of educational opportunity hold the social stratification responsible for it rather than the educational system. Hence the reduction in economic inequality will be led to more educational equality. These studies also find a relationship between marginalization and educational inequality as Muslims, SC, ST who are mostly found lagging behind in comparison to their other majority communities. They are also found to choose the Arts stream more than science and commerce. And the further significant gender gap is also realized in many of the studies. Hence these inequalities serve to the creamy layer of the social strata and serve as an instrument of status retention and stabilization.(Sing ;2014, Awasthi; 1992, Mishra; 1991, Saxena; 1989, Beresstein; 1987, Omprakash; 1986, Hasen;1972, Fenshaw; 1970, Radford; 1962)

The studies also highlight one role played by the schools in legalizing and legitimizing cultural values and the environment of the dominant section of the society which is pushing the students of the minority communities to remain isolated and confused leading

to a feeling of inferiority and insecurity.( Jayram;1987, Dandekar; 1977, Boudon; 1974, D'Souza; 1974, Bordieu; 1973, Jencks; 1972, Silberman; 1973)

Many studies also highlighted the role of teachers for the performance of the students and how they most of the time represent high and middle-class values which are reflected from their lectures and way of teachings and their perception of expecting less from the minority class students. (Adeyemi Sunday ;2014, Santanu; 2013, Misbah; 2013, Yathirajkumar; 1981, Clark; 1965, Deauth; 1960)

Studies also highlighted the role of family size and environment, quality of parental interaction, financial position, and educational background of the parents in the educational status and performance of the students. (Roland ;2005, world bank discussion paper; 1995, Benson; 1968, Crane; 1968, Guthrie; 1971, Maya shah; 1981, Prasad;1986, Pritom; 1927,Wesley; 1948, Halsey and Martin; 1957, Miller; 1960, Yathi Rajkumar ;1981, Trivedi; 1987)

Hence after establishing the existence of the different levels of education that is provided in the different categories of the schools which are again for different reasons and hence is effecting society diversely the present study attempts to compare the different levels of stratification in education in the different schools in Guwahati city and in doing so will also find out the problems related to education faced at the schools of different categories in the area. The study will also focus on the role played by the family and the school in the performance of the student and their mobility.

## **Methodology**

The study was carried out to explore the causes that lead to a problem of social stratification, education, and mobility in India: a study of higher secondary schools in Guwahati city. Hence it follows a descriptive research design. The study area is Guwahati city in Kamrup metro district of Assam.

**Universe:** For the present study the universe is the 55 higher secondary schools (private-29 and vernacular medium government-26) taken where a total of 10174 students are enrolled.

Both primary and secondary data are collected for this study.

a) The primary data is collected from students, teachers, management authorities, and parents. A separate interview schedule is prepared for students, teachers, management authorities, and parents. The data are collected from 6 schools out of 55 higher secondary schools (29 private schools+ 26 government vernacular medium schools) Source: RMSA, UDISE REPORT 2016-17, from Guwahati city, which is selected by disproportionate stratified purposive sampling, 3 each from English medium private schools and 3 for vernacular medium government schools to see the comparative status of education and mobility among the students in these schools. The schools are selected based on student enrollment i.e. the highest enrolled schools from both the categories. From each school, 50 students (25 male and 25 female) are selected from the last two batches by simple random sampling. 5 teachers and 5 parents from each school together with the one management officials (Principal) for each school are selected by convenient sampling for interviewing.

**Sample size**

Schools in Guwahati City	Universe (55H.S. Schools)	Sample Size (6)
Private School	29	3
Government School (Vernacular Medium)	26	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>6</b>

Sample Schools selected based on highest enrollment in (Higher secondary level)

SI.No	Category of School	Name of the School	No of Enrollment
1	Private School	Gurukul Grammar Senior Secondary School	509
2		Srimanta Sankar Academy	512
3		Don Bosco School	492
1	Government School (Vernacular Medium)	Rajdhani Bora HSS	526
2		Arya Vidyapith H.S and M.P School	467
3		Sonaram H.SS	316
<b>Total</b>			<b>2822</b>

Source: UDISE (Unified District Information System For Education) Report 2016-17, RMSA, KAHILIPARA GUWAHATI

340 sample of students are selected by using sample size formula

$$Z^2 * (p) * (1-p)$$

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{\quad}{c^2}$$

Where:

Z = Z value (e.g. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p = percentage picking a choice expressed as a decimal  
(.5 used for sample size needed)

c = confidence interval expressed as a decimal  
(e.g., .04 = ±4)



Hence

Sample size=338

Total students =  $\{(57 \times 4) + (56 \times 2)\} = 340$  (170 male + 170 female)

Total teachers =  $5 \times 6 = 30$

Total Parents =  $5 \times 6 = 30$

Total Principal =  $1 \times 6 = 6$

The tools of data collection are interview schedules, voice recorders and camera.

b) The secondary data are collected from different journals, books, seminar papers, periodicals, published, and unpublished materials. The area taken for the study is Guwahati (Metro) of Kamrup district.

### **Statistical Techniques employed**

For the present study, the percentage method was used.

### **The rationale for Selecting the Study Area:**

The reason for selecting Guwahati as the study area for my research is that the city of Guwahati has emerged as one of the fastest-growing cities in the country in general, and the North East in particular. The city has become the educational hub of the State of Assam as well as for the North-Eastern region over time, and in the process, it has provided grounds for the emergence and growth of different categories of educational institutions. Here we can witness different categories of educational institutions from the best to the worst educative value. In other smaller townships of the North-Eastern region we can find only government or semi- government-run educational institutions, whereas, the city of Guwahati presents an array of elite/private educational institutions as well as government and semi-government run educational institutions.

**Objectives:**

- To investigate and compare the diversity in education among the private and vernacular medium government schools in Guwahati city.
- To find out the impact of the family on the performance of the students.
- To find out how the education provided at these different schools affects their mobility.

**Research Questions:**

- What is the socio-economic background of the students studying in these both categories of schools?
- What are the different facilities that these schools are providing to the students?
- What are the challenges that these both categories of schools are facing?
- What is the impact of family on the level of academic performance of the students in these both categories of schools?
- Where are these students absorbed after getting their education in these both categories of schools?

**Operational Definition:**

*Stratification in Education-* is defined as a system by which society ranks categories of education in a hierarchy. The different level of distinction between the quality of education as provided by the public and the private sectors has consequently produced a highly stratified human resource. Hence stratification in education is the hierarchical arrangement of different levels of educational stratification from-

- Private institutions
- Vernacular medium state government schools or schools waiting for government recognition, popularly called Venture schools.

**Education-** in this study refers to the level and quality of education as provided by the different educational institutions to their students belonging from higher secondary level (standard eleven to standard twelve) ie. This level of education consequently determines the future of the students concerned.

**Mobility** – By mobility in the study we mean the mobility of students after getting an education from the different categories of schools, where they are absorbed (whether continuing education or not, if yes, the quality of college they get admission, if no, whether they are opting for a job or not, if yes the type of job they are preferring or doing) after getting the diverse level of education.

### **Significance of the Study:**

Education is an important determinant of the economic and social development of a Nation. The quality of education in a society indicates the quality of its human resources. Expenditure on education is considered as an investment in human resource enrichment, which ultimately adds to the overall socio-economic condition of the Nation at large. The developed countries spend a lot of money for the provision of quality education to its people, while developing countries like India, especially Assam (regionally), also has starting to focus on spending money according to their resources to provide education at minimal cost to the citizens. But we can see that though both the private and the public sectors in the region strive to provide quality education to its students, yet, the former has surpassed the later in fulfilling the proper standards. The difference in the level of education as provided by both the educational sectors has significantly marked a distinction between the qualities of human resources as produced by the respective sectors; the private sector being the dominant educational sector. So it has been evident that the students who belong to the privatized educational sector are better qualified, trained, and updated as compared to the students belonging to the public education sector of the region. This has led the former to gain access to better job opportunities and better standards of living, which has ultimately led them later to either struggle in lower socio-

economic standards in the society, or distress. Thus, this study tries to bring out the major structural as well as the functional differences between the privatized and the public educational sectors which provide the Nation with a biased human resource. The study is also aimed to find out the problems at different levels faced by the different categories of schools in the area. Moreover, the study is also important as it will be carried out to find out where the students produced from these diverse qualities of institutions are absorbed?

#### **Delimitation of the Study:**

1. The study is delimited to only one district of the state of Assam. ( Kamrup Metro)
2. The study is delimited to only higher secondary schools.
3. The study is also delimited to only 340students, 30 teachers 30parents, and 6 principals.
4. Another delimitation of the study is that it is only confined to a comparison of vernacular medium government school and English medium private schools.

#### **The theoretical framework of the research**

After a detailed understanding of the diverse theoretical perspective on education and its role towards society, we can conclude that in the present contemporary society particularly in an underdeveloped country as India, education has an institution has failed to cater to the needs of the people equally and act as an agent of positive change in society( structural-functional theory).in reality, rather education is used to protect the interest of the dominant elite class in the society by legitimizing and reproducing the exploitative norms favoring the dominant elite class ( conflict, hegemony, resistance reproduction theory). Therefore, the present study will take more a critical theory approach to understand the different reasons behind the existence of such an unequal form of educational institutions creating an unequally equipped human resource.

#### **Summary and Conclusion**

**The** present study is focused on testing the hypothesis of the existence of inequality in education provided by the different categories of school. The study is an attempt to

unearth the diversity of sources that is responsible for these inequalities and one of the most important sources of this inequality is the school itself.

In the present study, we can observe from the data that two different categories of schools that are selected for the study are catering to diverse socio-economic backgrounds people. The findings establish that the parents of private school students are higher educationally qualified, holding more secured jobs and also earning much more than the government school parents. Moreover, out of the mothers who are working women are also mostly the parents of private school students.

The study is also focused on unearthing the different facilities and environment related to schooling provided by these two different categories of schools to find out the status of stratification in education. The findings related to physical facilities in the guise of infrastructure as classroom infrastructure, quality of labs and library infrastructure, size of the playground, toilet, and urinal facilities, auditorium, security, teacher-student ratio, proper drainage and sanitary system, proper lightening and ventilation, school environment reveals that private schools are doing visibly better than the government schools apart from charging high fees. Hence it confirms the unequal environment where education is provided to the students who are also socio-economically unequal. Moreover, the perspective of the teachers regarding the syllabus shows that the CBSE syllabus which is mostly followed in the private school is termed as more extensive, rational and covers the diverse aspects of education in the society. Hence the entire debate of education as a potential tool for bringing equality and positive social change based on equality is revealed to be far from reality in the study area.

The quality of the provisions made for the academic and all-round development of the students with more involvement of teachers in the process of delivery of education can be easily observed in the private schools than the government schools where teacher's involvement with the students outside the class is comparatively far lesser. The school's

administrative structure, the personal attributes of the principals, and their perceptions and handling of their school environments also reveal a superior status of private schools. Teachers and the character of teaching and the student's impressions of their school life and home life ultimately affects the kind of schooling that the students receive which is reflected in their overall personality and the findings of the present study show that the different teaching methods together with the engagement of students in extracurricular academic activities as debate, essay writing, and assignment presentation are yielding positive results for the students of private schools. The quality of academic performance of students in the selected schools and their participation and performance in the extracurricular activities offered by the school, their aspirations and plans for their future also reveals similar findings where the private schools are exhibiting better administration by even involving parents in realizing better performance from the students and also providing the environment for engaging students in different extracurricular activities together with inculcating moral values of cleanliness, gender equality, nonviolence, etc. for the overall development of the students, which is reflected in their expectation and performance. Moreover, in a country where command over the English language (which is the medium of instruction in all the private schools studied) is given importance in accessing and also performing in higher education, the students of private schools have a visible advantage over the government schools studied here. The selection process as practiced in the two categories of schools also through light on the ultimate performance of the students. As in government schools don't reject students, but private schools are using different filters as entrance tests, parents interview, interview of the students, parents qualification to choose the best students (Hopper 1971). Hence it is comparatively easier in a private school to confirm better performance from students and more challenging in government schools to make students perform very well. Moreover, it has been found in the study that the evaluation process in private schools is far more rigorous with more involvement of the teachers and the parents which is reflected in their performance. The study also highlighted the close relationship of the teachers with

students which can be gauged from the number of students that can be recognized by the teacher by name or their family background. Moreover, though the study also confirms that most of the teachers of government schools are attending or getting time to attend students' problems during the school hours, but a significant number of teachers reported that they attend students problems even after the school hours as they find the school hours to hectic. One of the important findings of the study is also the size of the class which is very visibly bigger in the case of the government schools in comparison to private schools which restricts the possibility of individual attention of the teachers towards the students.

The involvement of the parents can also be seen in their knowledge of their children attendance, the status of homework, performance, participation in the extra curriculum, and their expectation towards the child and their school, which reveals that private schools parents are not only ready to spend money for their children's private tuitions and participate in the parent-teacher meeting but also keep a keen eye to their performance and participation at every level which is mostly lacking among the government school parents. The infrastructure provided in the house to students as separate seating arrangement, newspapers, magazines and books, etc. together with the environment provided to the students by supervising them either by themselves or any other family members, taking them out and discuss their educational problems is also significantly more visible in the house of private school students in comparison to government schools. The government school students are further held back with more shares of children from large families. In addition to the infrastructural differences, the findings of the study also establish different parental educational and occupational aspirations which are again favoring the private school students. Hence, the study of the home background of the students reveals that the inequality of education provided in the schools is further reinforced by what the home provides towards the schooling of their children.

The present study also confirms that the inequality of education that is provided to both the categories of schools affects their mobility to both the quality of jobs and institutions

to continue their further studies. The feedback of parents and teachers reveals that both in case of expectation and achievement, the private school students are motivated to go for further studies whereas the government school students are encouraged to go for jobs. In the case of students who are opting for higher education, again we can see disparity among the private students who are mostly getting admission in elite government colleges, followed by elite private college whereas most of the government school students get admission in lesser-known government colleges and lesser-known private and government colleges. Moreover, the study also reveals that the poor intellectual capacity of the students as the main reason for not getting admission in best colleges and also not absorbed by the best employers of the country. Therefore, the poor intellectual capacity of the students most in government schools who are handicapped by the less competitive selection procedures of the students and also lack of involvement of teachers and administration to positively effects the performance of the students is emerging as in the present study as the potent cause affecting the mobility of the students to both higher education and jobs that they are doing.

**Gender wise distribution of data:**In terms of relationships with teachers though male students find the role played by the teacher more positively in explaining their mistakes, taking an individual interest in students, but female students also reported that that they feel more comfortable with teachers even to discuss personal problems. Hence, we can observe that male students are overall more positive towards the role played by the teacher and female students have more highlighted the comfortable environment that the teachers create while discussing their problems.

When we look at the attendance in the class female students are performing better which highlights that sincerity towards schooling. Moreover, though female students are participating in extra-curricular activities it is male students who are winning more prizes and awards



The future planning of the students post-schooling shows that more male students want to continue their studies and more female students prefer to start doing a job which is mostly professional jobs, while the male students prefer teaching jobs after their education. Their future planning is also backed up by their parent's motivation which is going in the same line. Hence, male students seem to be more ambitious and serious towards their future plans which is also reflected by their participation in taking more private tuition classes for better covering their academic requirements in the school. In terms of supports from the parents more female students have reported that they are given lesser attention than their siblings by their parents. One of the reasons for it may be because more working mothers are also mothers of female students, who find it difficult to adapt to their professional responsibilities and their responsibilities toward their children.

**Positives for government schools:** Though the overall picture of government schools as reflected by the findings of the study is dismal, there are also some encouraging pieces of evidence captured in the findings of the study. The present study establishes the superiority of teaching qualification and experience of the teachers and the principals in government schools. All the teachers are found to be trained teachers with B.Ed. degree. Moreover, all the teachers of government schools are drawing a higher salary than the private school teachers making their job more stable and secure. We can also observe good performance in government schools in sports even though they are suffering from infrastructural lacuna. The study also confirmed the inclinations of the government students to join the school after holidays, which shows that they enjoy schooling more than the private school students who mostly find it more hectic. Furthermore, the government school seems to inculcate the moral of brotherhood whereas private schools are mostly propagating competitiveness from the ways schooling is provided to them.

**Conclusion:**

The study confirms that a student who experiences inequalities based on the socio-economic background is again reinforced in the school where he/she attains his/her schooling through the diverse levels of schooling provided which suits the different categories of students belonging to different socio-economic strata. It is materialized by devising a partial system of selection in these different types of schools promoting a different quality of school (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985;76). This inequality chases them in accessing the quality of higher education, the quality of the future occupation, and life that they opt for themselves. So a student is a recipient of inequality three times in his/her life pushing him/her to the worst possible extent of marginalization. Hence school which is perceived as an agent of bringing positive social change by molding the behavior of the students according to the society's expectation as Durkheim prescribed (Durkheim, 1956), but in reality reinforce the inequalities of the society and rather act as an agent of fortifying the exploitative hegemony of the dominant class (Gramsci, 1971). Therefore, in the present scenario where unjust social structure, creating a stratified society based on one's socio-economic status, it is furthermore expected from the institution of education to identify and segregate the students according to their potentiality to continue their education or not, or opt for which job (Wallace and Wolf, 1986) and in the process reduce this gap by providing quality education equally to everyone. Hence, in the light of the findings of the present study and the theoretical perspectives used to appreciate the realities depicted by data, it is found appropriate to propose for an alternative education model fundamentally different in content, form, methods, and purpose which could provide an effective answer to the question of equality to which can be appropriately addressed in further study and research.