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## A study on management practices of model schools of tea garden areas of Assam

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### **Abstract**

The tea garden regions of Assam, known for their unique socio-economic and geographical characteristics, have recently witnessed the establishment of model schools as a means to enhance educational access and quality for the local communities. The present study focuses on the management practices of newly established model schools situated within the tea garden areas of Assam, aiming to assess the challenges and strategies associated with their effective functioning. This study employs a qualitative approach, combining self-structured questionnaire and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders such as school administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders. Through a comparative analysis of different model schools and their management approaches, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the diverse challenges faced by educational institutions in tea garden areas and recommend effective management strategies. The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on educational management in challenging and unique contexts, shedding light on the complexities of running schools in remote and economically marginalized regions. The insights gained from this research can help policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in understanding critical factors that need to be addressed to ensure the successful operation and sustainability of model schools in the tea garden areas of Assam.

**Keywords:** Model schools, management practices, tea garden areas

### **1. Introduction**

National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE 1986) suggested universal Provision of facilities for Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) and to fulfill and implement the UEE, Right to Education Act 2009 (RTE 2009) came into being. It provided the way for Free and Compulsory Elementary education up to the age of 14 years. But the education of the tea garden areas remained neglected under the tea management authority. The report of Education Secretary of Assam in Project Approval Board (PAB) meeting in 2007 informed that 10-11% population belong to tea garden areas and students of tea garden areas try to get employed in tea gardens at early age which leads to low enrolment (Saikia, 2007) <sup>[17]</sup>. In 2001, Government of Assam tried to bring the tea garden areas under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and implement the schemes of SSA in the tea gardens, but the management did not cooperate. Several series of meetings were conducted but the Government failed to convince the tea Estate owners to impart quality education in the tea garden areas. The Plantation Labor Act (PLA) 1951 was not fully implemented in the tea garden areas of Assam and as a result, till 2009, tea garden areas remained neglected in imparting quality education as well as Higher education to the children of tea garden workers. Special Focus Group (SFG) for tea garden under SSA and some special schemes were implemented to uplift the education of tea gardens for Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) of all social categories (DPEP, 1996) <sup>[25]</sup>. Various initiatives were also taken under SSA and RMSA. Among them the Model School concept is very significant. The concept of Model School is to provide infrastructure and facilities at least of some standard as in Kendriya Vidyalays and with stipulation on pupil-teacher ratio, ICT usage, holistic educational environment, appropriate curriculum and emphasis on output and outcome.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020, the Government of Assam took a step to build 119 Model High Schools in the major tea growing districts of Assam in a Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode. The estimated cost for construction of school was Rs. 142.5 Crore. In May 2022 Ninety seven (97) Model Schools were inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Assam along with the Cabinet Ministers in various tea growing districts of Assam. The remaining 22 schools were inaugurated in May-June 2023.

These schools are expected to bring a holistic change among tea garden workers and children by providing quality education in these model schools. The present study is an attempt to study the management practices of these Model Schools in the tea garden areas of Lakhimpur District, Assam.

## 2. Review of related literature

### 2.1 Studies conducted abroad

Kaora (2001) <sup>[11]</sup> conducted a study on "Promoting Inclusive Education in Neluwa, a Tea Plantation Area in Sri Lanka". The study highlights the role of the Plantation Sector Education Development Program which in association with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency aimed to improve the access to education and quality of education in the schools of the plantation areas. The study also found inequalities between plantation schools and mainstream schools and gender inequalities among women working in the tea plantations.

Kabir (2007) <sup>[10]</sup> conducted a study on "Tea Plantation workers and its circumstances: a micro-level study" of Bangladesh found that factors such as socio-cultural and religious barriers, geographical isolation have contributed to very low education and poor health status of workers.

Ahmed *et al.* (2015) <sup>[11]</sup> conducted a study on "Socio-Economic and Educational condition of Tea Workers at Sylhet in Bangladesh of Sylhet division". The study revealed that, because of illiteracy the garden workers are still lagging behind socially, economically and culturally and they are unaware of their rights. It is the duty of the society, government and all other agencies related to tea gardens, to make them literate, culturally rich and economically stable so that they can live an acceptable life without being deprived of human rights.

### 2.2 Studies conducted in India

Quadir, A. (2001) <sup>[16]</sup> conducted a study on Problems of Universalization of Primary Education in the Tea Gardens of Assam and found that a considerable number of children attaining school going age were left out (not enrolled) in the tea garden primary schools. Inadequate, improper and non-implementation of the schemes and program of literacy of government and non-governmental agencies are responsible for failure of universalization of primary education.

State Institute of Education (2004) <sup>[21]</sup> conducted a study on "Status of literacy among Tea Tribes of Assam: A critical appraisal" for NLM and MHRD. Some of the major findings of the study were literacy rate of 15+ age group population is 55.4 per cent out of which 70.3 per cent are male and 39 per cent are female.

Goswami (2009) <sup>[8]</sup> conducted a study on "Absenteeism among the Tea Garden laborers. A Case Study on the Mancotta Tea Garden. The result of the study revealed that the rate of absenteeism among the labourers of the Mancotta tea garden is very high. One of the major causes of absenteeism of labourers in the garden was the bad health of the workers or their family members.

Sarma, N. (2011) <sup>[20]</sup> conducted a study on "Universalization of Elementary Education among Tea Tribe of Assam with special reference to Jorhat District". The study found out that all the tea gardens has at least one primary school within the garden and there is a middle school outside the gardens within 3km. For girls it would be more convenient if the middle school is inside the garden.

Basumatari & Goyari (2013) <sup>[5]</sup> conducted a study on the topic "Educational Status of Tea Plantation Women Worker in Assam: An Empirical Analysis." The findings of the study reveal that female literacy was found to be less than that of male worker. Economic backwardness, negligence of girl's education, early marriages and unavailability of educational infrastructures, etc. were found to be important reasons for low literacy among women workers.

Baruah & Daimari (2017) <sup>[2]</sup> conducted a study on "Education of Tea Tribe Children: A Case Study of Udalguri District" and found that the children are mostly educated up to primary level and the number declines for both male and female beyond the primary level of education.

Chetia (2021) <sup>[6]</sup> conducted a study on "Education among The Tea Garden Laborer, A study based on Eight Tea Gardens of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia Districts of Assam". The major findings of the study was that most of the parents are able to educate their children only up to higher secondary level due to unavailability of adequate opportunities towards higher education in their area, lack of funds to afford their children to get educated in towns and urban areas.

### 3. Significance of the study

The schools in the tea gardens are run by the Tea Garden management and these schools are seen to be in poor condition with very poor infrastructure facilities such as single classroom, lack of drinking water facilities and proper toilet facilities etc. (Gogoi, 2015) <sup>[7]</sup>. The compulsory elementary education has also not been executed in the tea gardens areas of Assam. Due to limited number of elementary schools in the teagarden areas, low enrolment in elementary schools is very common. (Saikia 2017) <sup>[17]</sup>. There is no secondary and higher education institution in and around the tea garden areas (Begum, 2021). Hence, dropout rate is highest among the children of tea garden workers (Saikia, 2016) <sup>[18]</sup>. The tea garden management is not interested in educating the tea garden labors therefore no government schemes are allowed to extend to the tea gardens unless No Objection Certificate is provided by the management.

The Assam government took a revolutionary step and established 119 Model schools in the tea garden areas of Assam. This is a new initiative by the Govt. targeting an area where no such programs were implemented before. With this new program, many new challenges may appear in the smooth running and management of the newly established Model Schools.

Keeping all this in view, the researcher has attempted to study the managerial practices of the newly established Model Schools of Lakhimpur District, Assam. It is also an attempt to study the limitations in the managerial practices and draw out proper measures and initiatives needed to overcome the limitations which might be helpful to improve future programs related to the education in the tea garden areas.

### 4. Objective of the study

**4.1** To study the management practices of Model Schools of tea garden areas of Lakhimpur District, Assam.

### 5. Method of the study

Descriptive survey method was used in the present study.

**5.1 Population of the Present Study**

The population of the present study comprises all the Model Schools of the tea garden areas of Lakhimpur District, Assam. There are 3 Model Schools offering Classes from

VI- X. The population of the present study comprises all the Headmaster/ Headmistress and School Management and Development Committee (SMDC) members of the academic session 2022-2023.

**Table 1:** Population of the present Study

Name of the district	Name of the model schools	No. of heads	No. of SMDC Members
Lakhimpur	Mukti Yoddha Gajadhar Kurmi Adarsha Vidyalaya (Dejoo T.E.)	1	5
	Mukti Yoddha Mahabal Gorh Adarsha Vidyalaya (Seajuli T.E.)	1	5
	Ananda Tea Estate Model School	1	5
Total	3	3	15

**5.2 Sample of the Present Study**

To conduct the present study 2 out of 3 Model Schools in the tea garden areas of Lakhimpur district have been selected by the researcher through purposive sampling technique.

The sample of Head of the Institution comprises 2 Heads of the institutions from the 2 sampled Model schools in the tea garden areas of Lakhimpur District, Assam.

For the sample of School Management and Development Committee (SMDC) members 60% of SMDC members (6 out of 10) members, 3 members from both Model schools have been selected through purposive sampling technique.

**Table 2:** Sample of the present study

Name of the District	No. of Model Schools	No. of Heads	No. of SMDC
Lakhimpur	2	2	6

**5.3 Tools of Data Collection**

Following tools were used to collect data regarding the management practices of Model Schools in the tea garden areas of Lakhimpur District, Assam.

a) Questionnaire for the Heads of the Institution (it

consisted 25 questions)

b) Questionnaire for SMDC members (it consisted 15 questions)

**5.4 Collection of Data**

In order to collect data for the present study the researcher visited the 2 sample schools and took permission from the Head of the Institutions to collect data and personally distributed the questionnaire to the Heads and SMDC members. For this the researcher had established a good rapport and explained the instructions and requested them to fill the questionnaire.

**5.5 Statistical technique used for the analysis and interpretation of the data**

The statistical technique used in the study was percentage only.

**6. Analysis, interpretation and findings of the study**

**6.1 Analysis of the responses given by the Heads regarding management practices of Model Schools in the tea garden areas of Lakhimpur District, Assam**

Areas	School 1	School 2
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Classrooms are well furnished and well ventilated.</li> <li>b. Electricity facilities are available</li> <li>c. Ramp without hand rail is provided.</li> <li>d. Library is unavailable but few story books and magazines are provided and kept in the Heads office.</li> <li>e. No computer and Science labs are available</li> <li>f. Separate toilet blocks for boys and girls are present but no special facility for CWNS</li> <li>g. Toilet and drinking water supply is available through taps.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Well furnished and well ventilated classrooms are present.</li> <li>b. Electricity facilities are available.</li> <li>c. Ramp with hand rail is provided.</li> <li>d. Extra books are kept in the cupboard of Head's office in the absence of library.</li> <li>e. Science and computer labs are absent.</li> <li>f. Separate toilet blocks for boys and girls are present but not for CWSN.</li> <li>g. Toilet and drinking water supply is available through taps.</li> </ul>
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Mother tongue (Sadri) is used along with Assamese as a medium of instruction.</li> <li>b. Hybrid Model has not been started.</li> <li>c. Teachers have not been provided any training to teach in Hybrid Model.</li> <li>d. Once a week period is allotted for games and sports.</li> <li>e. Evaluation is both formative and summative</li> <li>f. Festivals and programs are celebrated in the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Only Assamese is used as medium of instruction.</li> <li>b. Hybrid Model has been started in Classes VI-X</li> <li>c. Teachers have not been provided any training to teach in Hybrid Model.</li> <li>d. Co- curricular activities are held frequently.</li> <li>e. Evaluation is mainly summative.</li> <li>f. Festivals and programs are celebrated in the school.</li> </ul>
Student Related Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Absentees and Irregular students are tracked and suitable interventions are provided.</li> <li>b. Remedial classes are not provided to the weak children</li> <li>c. Pupil-teacher ratio is not maintained in Classes VI, VII and VIII</li> <li>d. Records of the students are maintained manually as well as digitalized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Parents are informed about absentees and irregularities of students.</li> <li>b. Remedial classes are given to weak students.</li> <li>c. Pupil-teacher ratio is not maintained in Classes VI and VII.</li> <li>d. Record keeping is done manually.</li> </ul>

Mid-day meal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Midday meals are provided every school working day.</li> <li>b. Kitchen is temporarily made.</li> <li>c. Kitchen garden is present in the school premise.</li> <li>d. Egg is provided every alternative day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Midday meals are provided every school working day.</li> <li>b. Kitchen is temporarily made.</li> <li>c. Kitchen garden is present in the school premise.</li> <li>a. Protein based meals are provided.</li> </ul>
Teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Not enough subject teachers.</li> <li>b. Teachers are not sent for refresher courses and workshops for Hybrid Model of Education.</li> <li>c. No recruitment of Physical Training teachers, Music Teachers, Computer teachers, Vocational education teacher, Special education teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Not enough subject teachers.</li> <li>b. Teachers are not sent for refresher courses and workshops for Hybrid Model of Education.</li> <li>c. No recruitment of Physical Training teachers, Music Teachers, Computer teachers, Vocational education teacher, Special education teachers.</li> </ul>
Hygiene & safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provision for disposal of solid and liquid waste.</li> <li>b. Fire extinguishers are available in the school.</li> <li>c. Boundary wall is unavailable.</li> <li>d. Cleanliness drives are conducted whenever necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. No provision for disposal of liquid wastes.</li> <li>b. Fire extinguishers are present.</li> <li>c. Boundary wall is present.</li> <li>d. Cleanliness drives are conducted twice a week.</li> </ul>

**6.2 Analysis of the responses given by the SMDC members regarding management practices of Model Schools of Lakhimpur District, Assam.**

SMDC	School 1	School 2
Govt. Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. School does not receive grants for Sports Club, Eco Clubs.</li> <li>b. No follow up from the Government can be seen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. School does not receive grants for Sports Club, Eco Clubs.</li> <li>b. No follow up from the Government can be seen.</li> </ul>
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. SMDC conducts Parent-teacher meeting every month.</li> <li>b. One member from the Tea garden management is selected as the Chairman/ President of SMDC</li> <li>c. SMDC works with District Administration to provide textbooks, uniforms, midday meals etc.</li> <li>d. Parents and community involvement is not very active. Tea garden management should provide leave to attend parent-teacher meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Parent-teacher meetings are conducted whenever necessary.</li> <li>b. Manager or personnel from Management is appointed as the Chairman/President of the SMDC</li> <li>c. SMDC and District Administration work together to provide the requirements of the school.</li> <li>d. Few parents are regular and active in Parent-teacher meetings but majority of parents/guardians fail to be present in the meetings.</li> </ul>

**7. Implications of the present study**

**7.1 The findings of the present study bear following educational implications**

1. The study can highlight the specific needs and challenges faced by the Heads and SMDC in managing the newly established Model Schools of the tea garden areas.
2. The findings can be used to advocate for the expansion of model schools and similar initiatives in other disadvantaged regions
3. The findings can be disseminated through reports, conferences, policy briefs, and media platforms to engage a wider audience and garner support for educational initiatives in tea garden areas.

**8. Conclusion**

In the present study it was found that there is room for improvement for the management practices of model schools in the tea garden areas of Assam. Enhancement can be made in terms of infrastructure, teacher training for Hybrid Model, introduction of vocational education, promotion of Holistic development, parental and community involvement, involvement and active participation of the Tea Garden Management, Government Grants, scholarship programs, technological integration, etc. However, establishment of model schools in the tea garden areas of Assam is a relatively new initiative and there may pose various difficulties in management and proper functioning. Through this research we can find out the drawbacks and the measures that can be taken by the government which

will enable the policy makers to improve the management of the schools and remove the bottle neck problems. The study will also act as an enabler to recognize the advantages of Model Schools in the tea garden areas and its effect on the community as a whole.

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