

## Emerging Concerns of Quality Education in Assam: A Study on the Issues and Challenges Faced by the School Heads in Sonitpur District

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### Abstract

*Quality education is a multidimensional construct encompassing student performance, teacher competence and pedagogy, school culture and environment, infrastructural adequacy, community engagement, and effective leadership. Achieving these dimensions, however, becomes challenging when schools encounter various hindrances ranging from student absenteeism to systemic and structural deficiencies. The nature and intensity of these issues vary across localities, shaped largely by demographic and socio-cultural contexts. Persistent challenges have constrained the state education system in attaining the desired learning outcomes, as reflected in national assessments such as NAS, Gunotsav, and ASER. Despite repeated emphasis on educational quality in successive National Education Policies, the expected outcomes remain elusive. It is therefore imperative to acknowledge that unresolved issues—whether minor or major—undermine the broader goal of ensuring quality education. A coordinated effort among all stakeholders is essential for diagnosing the key obstacles and developing effective, evidence-based interventions that strengthen school education at every level.*

*This study identifies emerging issues and challenges affecting school education and proposes strategic measures to address them. The findings offer pathways for systemic improvement, with the ultimate aim of enhancing the overall quality of education in schools.*

**Keywords-***Quality education, issues and challenges, school education, learning outcomes.*

### Introduction

#### Overview

Concerns surrounding the achievement of universal quality education in India have persisted since the introduction of the first National Education Policy in 1968. Although significant progress has been made in expanding access to schooling, a wide range of systemic issues continue to hinder the realization of meaningful and equitable educational outcomes. Initially, challenges emerged around the universalization of elementary education; over time, these have evolved into deeper concerns regarding

the quality and effectiveness of schooling. Numerous research studies confirm that unresolved issues – whether administrative, infrastructural, pedagogical, or socio-cultural-directly undermine learning outcomes and the overall functioning of the education system.

Goswami (2020) emphasizes that educational development rests on three pillars: access, equity, and quality. While India has substantially improved access to schooling across levels, quality indicators remain weak. Persistent problems such as high dropout rates, insufficient infrastructure, inadequate teacher availability, low attendance, and suboptimal learning achievements are still widely prevalent. The urgency of addressing these concerns is heightened by India's demographic advantage. According to Gautam et al. (2016), India's youthful population – averaging 29 years of age in 2020, positions the country to reap a demographic dividend, with one-fourth of the world's workforce projected to be Indian by 2040. However, leveraging this potential effectively depends on the strength and inclusiveness of the education system.

At the state level, particularly in regions such as Assam, disparities in educational quality remain pronounced. Despite significant central government support for school infrastructure development, Konwar (2017) notes that Assam lags behind other states on several performance parameters. Although primary-level enrolment statistics such as the GER (98.8) and NER (92.2) appear encouraging, these numbers mask deeper issues related to quality of teaching, inadequate facilities, and insufficient preparation of learners for higher grades.

Globally, quality education is understood as a holistic process encompassing social, emotional, mental, physical, and cognitive development. Morrison et al. (2022) highlight that true educational quality must be inclusive of learners' diverse backgrounds and needs. Yet, several structural challenges persist in India: limited emphasis on physical education and sports, inadequate sex education, insufficient focus on ethics and character development, and overcrowded classrooms that hinder individualized attention. Prameela further observes that teacher shortages, affordability barriers, outdated pedagogical methods, infrastructural gaps, excessive theoretical content, and a bulky curriculum continue to weaken the education system.

Secondary education, as highlighted by Parbin (2022), plays a crucial role in shaping the foundation for higher education and future capabilities. Despite government initiatives, secondary education in many regions remains weak due to inadequate infrastructure, poor classroom conditions, absence of well-equipped laboratories, insufficient furniture, and limited opportunities for holistic development. Students often lack proper guidance and counseling, further widening the gap between curriculum expectations and actual learning levels. Rohman (2012) similarly notes that secondary education in Assam fails to meet national objectives because it does not

adequately address students' interests or societal needs, nor does it prepare them for higher education or the demands of modernization.

Suhrid (2022) acknowledges India's progress in expanding literacy and primary education attendance rates. However, persistent concerns remain across all levels of schooling, such as learning gaps, teacher absenteeism, peer-influenced misconduct among students, inadequate infrastructural support, high student-teacher ratios, and absence of career counselling. Sinha (2022) further stresses that preparing the younger generation for emerging social and economic challenges requires deep attention to every dimension of educational provision—administration, curriculum, teaching, and community involvement.

At the national level, the Indian education sector—comprising nearly 1.5 million schools, more than 265 million students, and over 11 million teachers—plays a pivotal role in the country's socio-economic transformation. Reports from UDISE+ indicate improvements in basic school facilities, yet persistent challenges such as high dropout rates, uneven GER across stages, and poor foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) continue to impede progress. These shortcomings highlight the urgent need for systemic reforms aimed at strengthening school governance, teacher preparedness, infrastructural adequacy, and community engagement.

Overall, the introduction underscores a critical reality: India's long-standing aspiration for universal quality education remains a work in progress. Structural gaps, socio-economic disparities, administrative weaknesses, and pedagogical limitations continue to challenge the nation's educational goals. Addressing these issues comprehensively is essential for building an education system capable of supporting India's developmental aspirations and preparing its youth for future challenges.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The quality of school education, particularly student learning outcomes in schools of Sonitpur District, is unsatisfactory. This is evident from the findings of the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021, now known as PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan.

### **Objectives of the Research**

1. To identify the key factors influencing the teaching-learning process in schools, with a focus on understanding how these factors shape classroom practices and student learning outcomes.
2. To examine the issues and challenges encountered by schools that hinder their smooth and effective functioning, particularly those affecting academic performance, administrative efficiency, and the overall educational environment.

3. To propose evidence-based measures and leadership strategies aimed at addressing the identified problems, strengthening school functioning, and enhancing the educational outcomes of students.

## **Rationale**

The basic premise or the base of conducting this study is the report of National Achievement Survey 2021 wherein the performances of the students in Sonitpur District are very poor in the key-grades (VIII and X) and across the key-subjects (MIL, Mathematics, Science, Social Science and English).

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

**Cognitive Learning Theory:** Cognitive Learning Theory posits that a student's learning is shaped by a dynamic interaction between internal and external factors. Initially conceptualized by thinkers such as Plato and Descartes and later systematically developed by Jean Piaget in the 1930s, the theory emphasizes that learning is an active, mental process influenced by prior knowledge, perception, and cognitive development. Over time, it has become widely recognized that internal cognitive factors are significantly affected by external conditions within a learner's environment.

These external influences include physical, emotional, and behavioural elements arising from interactions with peers, teachers, school leaders, parents, and the broader community. Consequently, the functioning of a school-its climate, resources, practices, and relationships-directly and indirectly impacts students' learning experiences and outcomes.

In this context, the present study seeks to identify the internal and external factors, along with the emerging issues and challenges within schools, that either facilitate or hinder the teaching-learning process. Understanding these factors is essential for improving educational practices and enhancing student achievement.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Method**

This research employs an exploratory approach to identify and examine the underlying issues and challenges prevalent in the school education system of Sonitpur district, which contribute to the poor academic performance of students and schools. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of these concerns, the study incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, which were systematically collected and analysed throughout the research process.

**Population of the study**

This study covers a total of 78 secondary and senior secondary schools from Sonitpur District, and considered the Head Teachers/ Principals as respondents.

**Research Tools**

This study utilizes questionnaire, interview schedules and focus group discussion for collecting the required data.

**Data Collection**

The data – both qualitative and quantitative, have been collected by field visits, google forms, focus group discussions and observations.

**Emerging issues and challenges faced by the Schools****Administrative**

Most of the reasons identified by school heads are related to administrative aspects, which have emerged as alarming issues and challenges for their schools. These causes hindering the growth and development of schools in various academic endeavours.

School heads identified a wide range of administrative issues that significantly hinder the growth, development, and academic functioning of their institutions. These challenges limit effective governance, obstruct smooth operations, and adversely impact the quality of education. The major administrative concerns include:

- Lack of adequate financial support
- Shortage of teachers
- Poor or non-existent infrastructure
- Need for immediate repair and maintenance work
- Unavailability of sufficient desk–benches
- Absence of boundary walls
- Lack of kitchen facilities for mid-day meals
- High levels of student absenteeism
- Outstanding electricity bills
- Inadequate annual grants
- Absence of ICT teachers
- Student indiscipline
- Vacant Assistant Head Teacher/Vice Principal posts
- Shortage of non-teaching/support staff
- Insufficient number of classrooms
- Lack of administrative or financial (DDO) powers at the school level
- Poor maintenance of science and ICT laboratories
- Absence of an auditorium or activity hall

- Teacher irregularity
- Teachers taking leave without proper permission or prior information
- Lack of parental involvement in students' education
- Irregular release of funds or inadequate time for fund utilisation
- Need for training on record-keeping and financial management

### **Academic/ Teaching Learning**

Several academic issues – both direct and indirect, are hindering students' learning processes and achievement levels. Many of these issues overlap with administrative challenges, amplifying their negative impact on classroom transactions and overall student outcomes. The key academic and teaching-learning challenges include:

- Majority of students being first-generation learners
- Significant learning gaps due to irregular attendance
- Shortage of teachers adversely affecting learning outcomes
- Infrastructural deficiencies obstructing effective classroom teaching
- Teachers requiring more training in modern teaching methods
- Low awareness among parents and communities regarding the value of education
- Need for subject-specific teachers
- Unavailability of need based vocational courses despite demand
- Compulsory celebration of multiple events reducing instructional time
- Lack of internet connectivity
- Non-implementation or non-sharing of training learnings by teachers
- Overcrowded classrooms
- High student dropout rates
- Poor socio-economic backgrounds of students, affecting learning continuity
- Language barriers and issues related to medium of instruction

### **Major Findings of Issues and Challenges in School Education**

This study reveals a complex and interlinked set of challenges confronting school education in the district, cutting across teacher management, leadership, pedagogy, governance, infrastructure, parental engagement, and socio-linguistic contexts. These issues collectively impede the smooth functioning of schools and undermine students' academic outcomes. The findings, organized thematically, are presented below.

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### **Teacher Shortage and Ineffective Teacher Management**

One of the most critical problems affecting school education is the shortage and unequal distribution of teachers. Many schools operate with an extremely high Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR), sometimes reaching 1:80, while other schools have an excess of staff, with more than 70 teachers serving around 1000 students. Such disparities lead to inefficiencies and unequal learning opportunities for students.

Schools also face an acute shortage of subject-specific teachers, particularly in Mathematics, Science, English, and Hindi. Because these subjects require specialized pedagogical knowledge, assigning them to general teachers results in compromised learning outcomes. ICT-related teaching becomes dysfunctional when ICT teachers take leave, as schools rarely assign alternative staffing arrangements to manage ICT classes. Additionally, teacher attachments are often done without considering subject backgrounds, leading to mismatches between teacher expertise and classroom needs. At the foundational stage, the absence of ayahs or caretakers poses serious challenges in managing young children safely and effectively.

### **Ineffective Implementation of Vocational Education**

Vocational education, though introduced to align schooling with livelihood-oriented skills, remains largely ineffective. Course transaction is weak, and the curriculum does not provide a meaningful pathway to higher studies or employment. The absence of regular vocational teachers in many schools leads to student disinterest and high dropout rates from vocational streams. As a result, the programme is unable to fulfil its intended purpose of equipping learners with practical competencies.

### **Issues Related to Training and Professional Development**

The professional development landscape also suffers from several structural challenges. The absence of a comprehensive training calendar leads to overlapping training schedules, causing disruption in teaching-learning processes. Training venues often lack basic infrastructure, including adequate seating, sanitation, and functional training halls, reducing the quality and effectiveness of training programmes.

Moreover, many teachers show reluctance to attend trainings. This reluctance stems from repeated deputation of the same teachers, lack of motivation, and limited perceived relevance of training content. Without proper participation, the impact of capacity-building initiatives becomes restricted.

### **Leadership and School Governance Gaps**

Effective leadership is central to school improvement, yet many schools lack a clear institutional vision and direction. Several schools do not have a School

Development Plan (SDP), and where SDPs exist, implementation is weak due to limited understanding of their purpose. Knowledge-sharing practices are also absent; teachers rarely disseminate insights from training programmes, resulting in stagnation of collective professional growth.

Resource mobilization is another weak area. School heads and teachers seldom engage with alumni, NGOs, community leaders, or other stakeholders to generate resources for institutional development. This reluctance limits the schools' ability to enhance infrastructure, student support systems, or co-curricular resources.

### **Teaching-Learning Challenges**

The quality of classroom processes is hampered by multiple issues. ICT integration is minimal, and teachers rarely employ ICT-based pedagogy despite infrastructural investments. Library resources are underutilized, reflecting low reading motivation among students and a poor reading culture.

A significant challenge is the poor foundational learning of students, particularly in foundational literacy and numeracy. Socio-economic disadvantages faced by families further widen learning gaps, which persist as students move to higher grades. Teachers often fail to share students' academic progress with parents, even during Parent-Teacher Meetings, resulting in limited parental support for learning.

Chronic absenteeism is prevalent in tea garden and minority-dominated areas. Such absenteeism leads to cumulative learning deficits that negatively affect learning continuity and academic performance.

### **Governance and Administrative Issues**

Several governance-related issues further weaken the school ecosystem. Many high schools were upgraded to higher secondary levels without appointing Post Graduate Teachers or providing necessary laboratory facilities. Such partial upgrades compromise the quality of higher secondary education.

Schools also experience misuse of school property, including vandalism, substance abuse on campuses during holidays, and theft. Electricity bills often exceed annual grants, creating financial pressure on schools. Moreover, governing bodies like SMCs/SMDCs sometimes become autocratic when members remain in positions for extended periods, creating conflict with head teachers and hindering school functioning.

Low student enrolment, partly due to unregulated mushrooming of private schools, has led to the amalgamation of schools. Student indiscipline, including consumption of tobacco and alcohol and use of foul language, is widespread, affecting school climate and moral development.

Teacher workload distribution is also problematic; responsible teachers are repeatedly burdened with additional duties, while others evade responsibilities, creating an imbalance and workplace dissatisfaction.

### **Issues Related to the Siksha Setu App**

Although the Siksha Setu App aims to streamline administrative processes, its implementation faces several obstacles. Teachers apply for leave online without informing school heads, and higher authorities approve such leaves without local verification, disrupting school management. Many teachers lack orientation in using the app, and technical issues – particularly with face recognition and poor internet connectivity – further hamper attendance recording.

### **Infrastructural Inadequacies**

Infrastructure remains a persistent concern across many schools. Persistent issues include shortages of classrooms and furniture, inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of separate toilets for boys and girls, and absence of disabled-friendly toilets. Several science stream schools function without laboratories, and many lack boundary walls, making them vulnerable to vandalism.

Menstrual hygiene management systems are either absent or improperly maintained due to prevailing social taboos. These infrastructural deficiencies significantly constrain quality learning environments and impede the functioning of schools.

### **Challenges in Higher Secondary Education**

Higher secondary schools face acute shortages of teachers. Despite possessing postgraduate qualifications, many graduate teachers refuse to conduct higher secondary classes because such engagements increase workload without additional compensation. Vacancies for higher secondary teachers remain unfilled for years, affecting curriculum coverage and academic outcomes.

Higher secondary schools also lack adequate support staff, even though administrative responsibilities increase at this level. Furthermore, schools do not receive timely reimbursement of fees for free admissions, unlike colleges, creating financial strain. Funds are often released at the last minute, making judicious utilization difficult.

Gunotsav, the major school evaluation initiative, remains largely outcome-centric and does not include teacher assessment or systematic intervention mechanisms, limiting its potential to drive school improvement.

### **Challenges in Tea Garden Schools**

Schools in tea garden areas face some of the most acute challenges. Due to lack of qualified teachers, tea garden management often appoints office workers as makeshift teachers, resulting in severe learning gaps. Parental awareness is extremely low, with many parents disengaged from children's education and affected by alcoholism and difficult home environments. Students frequently remain absent or drop out. The acute shortage of teachers and negligible government support exacerbate the crisis.

### **Challenges of Multilingualism**

Language barriers are prominent in tea garden areas, char-chapori regions, and Bodo-medium schools. Many students understand only their home languages, and teachers posted from other districts often lack proficiency in local languages. This hinders classroom communication, reduces student confidence, and limits participation. DIKSHA content also lacks adequate resources in local languages, restricting digital learning opportunities.

### **Issues of Parental Awareness and Community Support**

Low parental awareness is a recurring theme across schools. Many parents do not monitor their children's attendance, academic progress, or behavioural issues. Adolescents often face emotional instability, early marriages, substance abuse, or violent behaviour without adequate parental guidance. Community involvement is also minimal unless their own children are enrolled in the school. As a result, communities show little concern for school property, environment, or functioning, leading to deterioration of school ambience and learning conditions.

### **Summary of Suggestions and Policy Recommendations**

Improving the quality of school education requires a multi-pronged, systemic approach addressing teacher management, vocational education, training systems, leadership, parental engagement, classroom processes, governance, technology integration, infrastructure, and community participation. The following summary synthesizes the policy recommendations into a coherent framework, highlighting their intent, underlying rationale, and expected impact.

### **Teacher Management and Deployment**

A central concern is the irrational distribution and ineffective deployment of teachers across schools. To resolve this, the recommendations emphasize teacher rationalization, ensuring equitable allocation, particularly transferring surplus teachers from advantaged schools to those facing shortages.

A critical strategy is the appointment of subject-specific teachers, especially in Mathematics, Science, English, and other key subjects where learning deficits are severe. Maintaining PTR alone is insufficient; schools must ensure subject-wise teacher availability, and any temporary attachments must align with the institution's academic needs.

To incentivize teacher participation in higher classes, the government should introduce additional allowances for teachers with advanced qualifications who take senior secondary classes. Moreover, expeditious recruitment of Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs) through special drives is essential to fill long-standing vacancies.

The policy also recommends posting teachers closer to their home districts, reducing psychological stress and improving their engagement and productivity in school activities.

### **Strengthening Vocational Education**

There is a strong recommendation to streamline vocational education, which currently suffers from poor implementation and uncertain career pathways. Schools must appoint full-time vocational instructors and ensure job stability to encourage quality teaching.

To strengthen continuity, vocational courses should be offered seamlessly from the secondary to the higher education level, adopting interdisciplinary pathways. Introducing a vocational stream in every school can expand livelihood opportunities for students, especially in rural and marginalized communities.

### **Improving Training Systems and Professional Development**

Teacher professional development is a major lever for improving classroom instruction and learning outcomes. A comprehensive annual training calendar – developed collaboratively and released at the start of the academic year, is essential to avoid overlap and disruption of teaching time. The schedule should avoid examination periods and incorporate stakeholder input.

Residential training programmes are encouraged to allow teachers to fully focus on learning without external obligations. The calendar must prioritize critical areas such as pedagogy, inclusive education, ICT integration, life skills, ECCE, FLN, school health, and TLM development.

To strengthen the effectiveness of training, there must be an outcome-based assessment system, including assignments or examinations, instead of relying solely on pre- and post-tests. Training venues should meet basic infrastructural standards to ensure participant comfort and engagement.

Further, teachers should be able to enrol in choice-based professional development courses that enhance their skills without affecting classroom teaching time.

### **Strengthening Vision, Mission, and School Development Plans**

Every school must develop a clear Vision Statement and School Development Plan (SDP) that guide institutional goals, resource planning, and performance monitoring. These should be publicly displayed, collectively created, and implemented in alignment with the School Leadership Development Programme (SLDP).

To reinforce accountability, these components should also be integrated into Gunotsav indicators, ensuring regular monitoring and adherence.

### **Enhancing Parental and Community Awareness**

Since parents and communities significantly influence student attendance and behaviour, there must be dedicated awareness drives focusing on the importance of regular attendance, long-term benefits of education, prevention of substance abuse, and parental support for learning.

Such campaigns should be led by DIETs, CTEs, Normal Schools, and BTCs in collaboration with local leaders, with special emphasis on tea-garden communities where educational awareness is comparatively lower.

### **Improving Classroom Processes and Teaching-Learning Practices**

Effective pedagogical practices are crucial for raising learning outcomes. Schools should adopt mandatory teaching aids, monitored by educational officials, and integrate them into Gunotsav. Classrooms may be converted into chair-free learning spaces, enhancing teacher mobility and student engagement.

Teachers require continuous training in modern pedagogy, ICT-integrated teaching, and multilingual classroom strategies. SSA's ongoing pilot projects on multilingual education – especially in tea-garden regions, should guide scalable implementation.

### **Enhancing Teacher Motivation**

Teacher motivation is indispensable for improved performance. Schools should collect anonymous student feedback on teacher performance and operationalize mentor-mentee systems.

Preference should be given to deploying local teachers, as they tend to demonstrate stronger commitment and community rapport.

### **Minimizing Non-Academic Burden on Teachers**

Teachers should be shielded from excessive non-academic responsibilities, enabling them to focus on classroom instruction. Administrative and clerical burdens must be redistributed or minimized.

**School Safety and Security**

Schools must adopt stronger safety measures, including installing CCTV cameras, connecting alarms to local police stations, and activating Village Defence Parties for night surveillance. These steps are crucial to prevent vandalism, theft, and drug-related incidents.

**Focus on Tea Garden Schools**

Tea garden communities face multiple barriers including low parental awareness, poor infrastructure, and acute teacher shortages. To address these issues:

- A separate teacher cadre for Tea Garden Model Schools should be created.
- Government should consider taking over tea-garden managed schools.
- Norms and minimum standards must be enforced rigorously.
- Awareness drives must address alcoholism, education, and student welfare.
- All government schooling benefits should extend to tea garden schools.

**Ensuring Regular Student Attendance**

Schools must implement creative and engaging strategies to make learning joyful, while a policy-level intervention is needed to ensure consistent attendance. Parents must be sensitized with support from local administration, NGOs, alumni, and education institutions.

**Student Guidance and Counselling**

Schools or school complexes should establish Career Guidance and Counselling Cells staffed with experts to support students academically, emotionally, and psychologically. Programs promoting adolescent empowerment must be conducted regularly.

**ICT Integration in Teaching and Administration**

All teachers, not only ICT instructors, must be trained to use digital tools and ICT-integrated pedagogy. Computer literacy should be promoted among students.

**Collaborative Learning Among Teachers**

Teachers must be required to share training outcomes with colleagues, fostering a culture of collective learning and capacity-building.

**Addressing Electricity-Related Constraints**

To reduce financial burden, the government should offer electricity bill subsidies and implement solar energy systems across schools.

### **Strengthening School Management Committees (SMC/SMDC)**

Periodic rotation of committee leadership is necessary to prevent autocracy. SMCs/SMDCs must be held accountable for ensuring effective school functioning and learning outcomes.

### **Promoting Library Use**

Schools should adopt innovative initiatives such as library walks, regular library periods, and recognition schemes like Best Reader Awards. The government should appoint librarians—at least at the higher secondary level or cluster level.

### **Strengthening the Foundational Stage**

Primary and foundational learning must be bolstered through:

- supervision by nearby secondary school principals
- competency-based teaching
- joyful learning methodologies
- ensuring class-wise teacher availability
- creation of a dedicated foundational-stage teacher cadre
- appointing caretakers/ayahs

These interventions are essential to improve foundational literacy and numeracy.

### **Improving Student Discipline and Conduct**

Schools must establish mechanisms such as anonymous reporting systems through complaint boxes to monitor harmful behaviours and promote accountability.

### **Enforcing Minimum Standards for Private Schools**

A strong regulatory framework, aligned with NEP 2020 and SARTHAQ recommendations, must be implemented through a state-level authority (SSSA) to ensure that private schools maintain minimum standards and contribute positively to educational outcomes.

### **Strengthening the Siksha Setu App**

To improve digital administration:

- Leave approval must be restored to school heads.
- The app needs technical upgrades for reliability, accuracy, and offline functionality.
- Provision for group photo attendance should be introduced.
- Orientation programs should be conducted for teachers.

**Ensuring Internet Connectivity**

Areas beyond network coverage must receive enhanced connectivity, as data collected through Gunotsav can inform precise interventions.

**Identifying and Addressing Student Behaviour Issues**

Action research and case studies should be encouraged to analyze behavioural concerns and develop responsive strategies.

**Infrastructure Development**

Schools must receive adequate classrooms, desk-benches, boundary walls, science laboratories, and clear guidelines on receiving community donations. Infrastructure deficiencies must be addressed systematically to support quality teaching-learning.

**Ensuring Tobacco- and Alcohol-Free School Environments**

Stricter enforcement, supported by local bodies and NGOs, is needed to eliminate the sale and use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs around school premises. Awareness programmes should reinforce these efforts.

**Strengthening Financial Management**

Government must ensure timely release of funds, proper utilization mechanisms, and prompt reimbursement of free admission fees. School heads and office assistants require hands-on training in financial management.

**Enhancing Gunotsav Effectiveness**

Gunotsav should evolve from an evaluation-only exercise into an intervention-oriented initiative. Academic experts should accompany evaluation teams to provide real-time support. The evaluation must consider school context, include teacher assessment, and refine indicators through expert consultation.

**Conclusion**

The quality of school education is intricately linked to how effectively systemic challenges are addressed. Small issues, if ignored, escalate into major barriers to achieving meaningful educational outcomes. Therefore, continuous, collaborative, and innovative leadership is essential at all levels – school, community, and government. Sustainable improvement demands active participation of all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, community members, and administrative bodies. Empowering these groups through structured interventions, shared responsibilities, and strong policy support is critical for building a resilient, efficient, and equitable school ecosystem.

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