

Re-Evaluating the Bodo Educational Landscape in BTC through Aligning Regional Education with Global Goals

Moumita Dey¹, Dr. Anita Samal²

¹PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of Political Science, Kalinga University, Nava Raipur, India

²Professor, Dept. of Political Science, Kalinga University, Nava Raipur, India

Abstract

Indigenous knowledge and practices are often visible as a core essence between natural resources on the one hand and human intervention on the other hand. Human have the capability to transform their environment to meet their basic needs. According to UNESCO convention, 2005, there is a need to create a conducive environment for production and propagation of varied cultural goods and services that have the strength to exert influence at the local and global levels. The UNESCO contention also underlines the importance of the relationship between culture and development in all countries, especially in developing regions, such as Bodoland Territorial Region. To achieve the entire development of any society, education is the first step for self and societal development. In India, various social and educational developments has been initiated by various personalities who were involved in social reformation, such as Mahadev Govinda Ranade, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar who raised their voices against various social evils. During the colonial period, social-political consciousness emerged in India under the guidance of these educated social reformers. This study seeks to explore the link between traditional knowledge and New Education Policy 2020, with a specific focus on how aligning these frameworks can open doors for inclusive and quality education for Bodo people.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge ¹, Practices ², Natural resources ³, UNESCO⁴, BTR ⁵,

Introduction

Education as a means of imparting knowledge to human society determines human behavior towards achieving individual goals. Education provides a basis for empowerment, social mobility, self- identity, economic stability and. Education symbolizes the quality of human society and is important for balanced development of any region. Thus, ‘educational attainment has been instrumental in enriching elementary freedoms’ [1]. The seeds of development should be implemented at the grassroots level. Every educational institution must offer the right to education without any discrimination. However, with the increasing demand for education and the limited resources available, the education sector faces several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, shortage of trained teachers. These challenges have resulted in unequal access to education, especially for underprivileged section of society like Bodo people.

Review of Literature

Amartya Sen in his valuable compilation, “Development as Freedom”, 2000, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, argues that development is redefined as the expansion of human freedom rather than just the rise of gross national products or industrial growth. Freedom is both the primary end goals and the most efficient means of economic progress. This book emphasizes removing unfree freedom, such as poverty, tyranny, poor education and poor health care and allowing people to act as agents of social change. Another theoretical compilation is Arjun Basumatary’s “Bodo Christians, the Bodo Movement and Nation Building”, (2017, ISPCK, New Delhi). This book deals with indigenous Christian citizens of Bodoland and seeks to understand why Bodo people have slipped into a period of losing their distinctive identity, autonomy and of being strangers in their own land. This book is a clear expression of such marginalized communities, which have been outnumbered by immigrants and whose identities remain vulnerably at stake. Ajoy Kumar Roy’s book “The Bodo Imbroglio” published by, Spectrum Publication in 1995, analyzed the socio- political crisis, ethnic identity movements and political aspirations for autonomy among the Bodo people in Assam. This book deals with some issues relating to land alienation, economic deprivation, immigration pressures, and educational backwardness of the Bodo people and also emphasizes the role of regional student bodies and political organizations in the demand for a separate homeland and autonomous movement.

Data & Study Period

This study used secondary data collected from various articles, newspapers, books, and websites, along with the draft of NEP- 2020 to examine and present a comprehensive analysis of NEP- 2020 and its alignment with ethnic culture and knowledge. Secondary literature reviews were conducted from 2000-2024. Primary data was collected from different website and offices of the concerned organization.

Methodology

This study focuses on examining the educational conditions among Bodo people during the colonial period and after the formation of the BTC government. It also helps to understand the various opportunities and challenges that are encountered while achieving Sustainable Development Goals through the lens of NEP-2020. This study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. More importantly, the myriad dimensions of a problem can be comprehended in a more precise and scientific way through an exploratory study.

Profile of The Study Area

The Bodoland Territorial Council is one of the District Councils in Assam, and it was the result of the rigorous Bodoland Movement launched by the Bodo people in Assam since 1986. The prolonged Bodo movement came to an end after 30 rounds of tripartite talks; held from March 2000 to February 2003 between the representatives of the Government of India, Government of Assam, and Bodo Liberation Tiger. Consequently, a memorandum of settlement was signed on February 10TH 2003, which established the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). BTC consisted of four contiguous districts: Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang, and Udalguri. After the formation of the (Bodoland Territorial Region) on January 27, 2020, the newly formed district, Tamulpur, was attached to the BTR; but again remerged with Baksa district. BTC is a Sixth Scheduled area in the Indian Constitution and has an autonomy arrangement under Articles 244(2) and 275(1) of the Sixth Schedule.

A Historical Overview of Bodo

There are several opinions regarding the term 'Bodo'. The Bodos are one of the sections of the Tibeto-Burman family. The term 'Bodo'. was first used by B. H. Hodgson, as an ethnographic term, refers to the Meches, the Bodo-speaking people of the Darjeeling district in 1846 [2]. According to R. M. Nath, the group of immigrants who followed the Austriacs to North-East India were from the North of Himalayan and North-West China. This country was known as Bod, meaning land of snow, and a section of its inhabitants was known as the Bodosa, meaning Children of Bod country. These Bodosa were subsequently known as Bodos [3].

Educational Development Among Bodos

Social consciousness among the Bodos emerged after the colonial period emerged. The Bodo people felt that they were socially, politically, economically deprived of all the facilities of the government. This led the consciousness of the minds of the Bodo people to look for a solution in the political mileage of safeguarding their land, language, and culture [4]. During the British colonial administration, the entire North-Eastern states, the home of different ethnic communities, directly or indirectly helped in developing identity consciousness [5].

Although the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is rich in natural resources, its human capital has not yet fully aligned with the requirements of emerging industries. Therefore, the region suffers from high unemployment rates and a mismatch in skills with new labor market dynamics. In these situations, education plays a primary role in the social and political consciousness of the Bodo people.

Between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the population of Assam rose from 26.6 million to 31.2 million. They are broadly classified into general caste, SC, ST and OBC households. Among the social groups, the OBC and general caste populations form the majority, among whom a large number speak Assamese, Bengali, and a mix of other languages. According to the 2011 census, the ST and SC populations in Assam constitute 12% and 7% of the population, respectively. There are 23 notified tribes, including Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Rabha, Deori, Naga, and Khasi, who speak their own ethnic languages. Among the tribal population in Assam, Bodo constitutes 41%. Hence, the Bodos constitute a numerically large ethnic group in this state.

Table 1: Literacy Rate, Current Attendance Rate, and Average Year of Schooling by Social Groups from 2004-2005 to 2009-2010

Social Group	2004-2005		Year of Schooling	<u>2009-2010</u>		Year of Schooling
	Current Literacy Rate	Avarage Attendance Rate		Current Literacy Rate	Average Attendance Rate	
ASSAM						
Muslim	75	79	4.54	82	68	5.77
ST	85	76	5.58	85	70	6.44
SC	82	77	4.79	87	76	7.23
OBC	87	76	5.88	91	83	7.02
Others	89	78	7.44	94	77	8.49
All	83	74	5.73	88	76	6.83

WESTERN ASSAM						
Muslim	67	68	4.24	79	68	5.77
ST	79	80	5.31	80	72	6.45
SC	80	85	4.47	91	79	7.23
OBC	82	79	5.86	92	88	7.52
Others	86	77	7.33	90	82	8.49
All	78	73	5.44	85	78	6.77
BTR						
Muslim	---	---	---	72	78	3.77
ST	---	---	---	83	76	5.58
SC	---	---	---	93	89	6.00
OBC	---	---	---	83	93	5.73
Others	---	---	---	93	65	4.85
All	---	---	---	84	85	5.16

Source: [6]

In the first phase of the 20th century, the Bodo people were studying in secondary schools. When education began, their intensions were influenced by different student unions and societal organizations. The different activities under the banner of different Assamese bodies, such as the Assam Chhatra Sanmiloni, had a deep impact on Bodo students. Bodo students thought that the Assamese students often neglected them in the programs organized by the Assamese students. They hardly get the opportunity to participate in programs [7]. In this scenario, the impact of Western education played a significant role in enlightening Bodo students to fight for self-consciousness and opportunity in the political-economic aspects. Apart from these, Brahma Dharma's entry into the Bodo society for socio-religious reforms germinated the idea among some educated Bodos. Besides these, the spirit of the Renaissance; later developed into many Bodo student organizations [8].

Formal Education System: Improving the formal educational system, especially at the primary and secondary levels, is an important step in building a sustainable workforce for the future. This means not only an upgrade in the physical infrastructure of the school but also in the quality of education. This included programs such as teachers training, digital education initiatives.

According to the 2001 census report, in Kokrajhar, 61% of men and 43% of women were literate, which means there was a difference of 17.95% between men and women. By 2011, the percentage of literate men increase to 73.44%, and for women, it increased to 59.54%. This reduced the difference between men and women to 13.90%. In Baksa, (2001) 70.30% of men and 48.33% of women were literate, showing a difference of 21.99%. In 2011, the number of literate men grew to 78.55%, and for women, it was 62.23%, making the difference smaller at 16.32%. In Udalguri (2001), 65.94% of men and 46.34% of women were literate, with a difference of 19.60%. In 2011, the literacy rate for men increased to 73.79% and for women to 59.17%, reducing the gap to 14.62%. Chirang, along with other districts in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), shows marks of improvement from 2001, where male literacy was 61.82% and female literacy was 42.87%. In 2011 census reported an overall literacy rate of 63.55%-64.71%, with 70.24% for males and 56.65% for females [9].

Table 2: Showing the Literacy of Male and Female in BTC of 2001 and 2011

District	Literacy Rate of 2001		Literacy Rate of 2011		Male-Female Gap	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Kokrajhar	61.01	43.06	73.44	59.54	17.95	13.90
Chirang	61.82	42.87	71.35	57.87	18.95	13.48
Baksa	70.32	48.33	78.75	62.23	21.99	16.32
Udalguri	65.94	46.34	73.79	59.17	19.60	14.62
Average	64.77	45.15	74.28	59.70	19.62	14.58

Source: [10]

The above table represents male-female and gender gap between the literacy rate in the Bodoland Territorial Council during the period of 2001 to 2011

According to the 2001 census, the average difference in literacy rates between men and women in these four Districts was 19.62 percent. The 2011 census data, however, show a surprising decrease in this gap to 14.58 percent. Although this is an improvement, it is still insufficient to match the rest of the country. This indicates that the literacy rate for women in the Bodoland Territorial Council is still lower than men in the region.

Vocational & Technical Education

Vocational and technical education trains people to master practical skills and knowledge to work on specific jobs and the present scenario of Bodoland Territorial Region demands economic transformation through vocational education and training aligned with emerging sector like- agriculture based industries, tourism, healthcare, and government services. From traditional agricultural practices to diversified industrial activities, the Bodoland Territorial Region needs employees equipped with sector specific-skills. For example, sustainable farming techniques, agricultural processing and organic agriculture would be directly beneficial. Similarly, because of the increasing demand for eco-tourism and hospitality, training in tourism management, hospitality services, and language skills will be helpful for those preparing for jobs in these sectors. It is important to spread awareness of vocational education among the people in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

Role of Government

The BTC government provides several educational scholarships and financial aid programs aimed at empowering Bodos. Many of these initiatives include the Bodoland Overseas Scholarship Program (BOSP) for higher studies, the Bodofa UN Brahma super 50+ Mission for coaching and monthly financial aid for girl students.

The Director of Education, BTC, Kokrajhar, has launched the Bodoland Overseas Scholarship Program (BOSP), provides a golden opportunity for students and researchers to gain international academic excellence. This program offers financial assistance to talented youth in the BTC region to pursue higher education at the world's top 500 universities. The required qualification for this scholarship is as follows: -at the UG level, candidates must have passed the 12TH grade with at least 60% marks; at the PG level candidates, must have a Bachelor's degree with at least 60% marks; for PhD candidates, Master's degree with at least 55% marks is required; and for Post Doctoral candidates PhD submitted or completed within the last three years is required. The BTC government clear vision for developing this program is to create

globally skilled and socially responsible leaders, researchers and professionals who will contribute to the development of Bodoland.

Another significant program for educational development is Bodofa UN Brahma Super 50+ Mission. BTC Government launched an initiative for residents of BTR, provides free coaching for competitive examinations like- Medical, Engineering, UPSC & APSC to deserving candidates. These initiatives were launched by the former president of the All-Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and a prominent student leader revered as the Father of the Bodos, Upendra Nath Brahma. In case of UPSC coaching the Bodofa Super 50 UPSC Admission Program provides free residential coaching. In BTR those candidates who qualified Common Entrance Test (CET) are applicable for this free coaching. In case of medical aspirants of BTR, BTC Government aims to transform the lives of medical aspirants from economically weaker sections under BTR of Assam. The Government of BTR will provide eleven months of free residential coaching among fifty selected meritorious aspirants.

A new scheme taken by Assam Government named Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni (MMNM) in BTR, aiming to provides financial assistance (Rs.1000/- to Rs.2500/-) to unmarried female students from class XI to the Postgraduate level to prevent dropouts. Each eligible girl student enrolled in class eleven will receive an incentive of Rs.1000/- per month for a maximum of ten months, for a total of Rs.10,000/- per year. In graduation (B.A./B.Sc./B.Com.) 1st year an incentive of Rs.1250/- per month for a maximum of ten months, resulting in a total Rs.12500/- per year will be paid to each of eligible girl student enrolled an incentive of Rs.2500/-per month over a maximum period of ten months, resulting in a total of Rs.25000/- per year, will be paid to each eligible girl student enrolled in Post Graduation 1ST year (M.A./M.Sc./M.Com./B. Ed) [11, 12].

Another significant scheme taken by the Assam Government, including the BTR, is the Dr. Banikanta Kakati Merit Award, under the Pragyan Bharati Scheme, which provides free scooters to meritorious students in Assam who secure 80% or above in the class 12th examination. The scheme is applicable both male and female students. In the year 2025, this initiative supports academic excellence, with over 11,000 scooters distributed to topper students. This kind of award to encourage in higher studies [13].

The Anundoram Borooah Award Scheme (ARBAS) in the Bodoland Territorial Region provides eligible students who passed the 10th standard examination with 1st division or 'star marks' (75%) in the HSLC and high Madrasa examination under SEBA and 10th standard examination held under State Madrasa Education Board, Assam and Sanskrit Board Assam under 'Anundoram Barooah Cash-cum Laptop Award Scheme.' A laptop or financial assistance (cash) of approximately Rs.16000/- to Rs.20000/- are distributed to meritorious students in BTR districts. The scheme is implemented by AMTRON (Assam Electronics Development Corporation Ltd.) to boost digital literacy. The implementing agency will advertise in leading daily of Assam inviting applications from students willing to avail cash award in lieu of laptop package. Interested students will have to apply for the cash award in lieu of the laptop to the Managing Director, AEDC Ltd. (AMTORN), with bank Account No. of the students. Among them whose applications are received on or before the last date specified in the advertisement, will be eligible for cash award under this scheme. This scheme also inspires students to have first -hand experience with Information and Communication Technology [14].

Other initiatives for educational development by BTC Government include:

- A free six months Diploma in Computer Application (DCA) is offered to BTR youth, including girls, to enhance their digital skills. The BTC Government, under his Women & Child Development department, launched this scheme; under this initiative, thousands of students can avail of free DCA

courses across more than forty two centers spread over five districts of BTR. This initiative by the BTC Government aims to provide essential computer training and enhance their empowerment ability under the BTR.

- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs) in the Bodoland Territorial Region are over a dozen residential schools provide quality education and boarding facilities for SC, ST, OBC, and other minority communities, and girl students who belong to the general category but are Below Poverty Line (BPL), from classes VI-XII. These are full-time residential facilities offering free loading, food and education [15].
- Bodoland School Adoption Program is another significant initiative by BTC Government, aims to improve the educational infrastructure for Bodo girls. This initiative started from 15th August, 2022, under the leadership of BTC chief Pramod Bodo. This program is a weekly program that aims to improve academic performance and ensure a holistic and healthy educational system.

Role of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)

The concept of CSR has been applied to various sectors, including education. Collaboration with Governmental educational institutions and NGOs, CSR programs have become a crucial mechanism through which private companies contribute to the social and educational development of the Bodoland Territorial Region. In India, CSR is mandated for large companies under the Companies Act of 2013, which states that large companies must invest a percentage of their profits in social initiatives. According to Lopes & Merino, CSR practices in the education sector can be seen as a way of contributing towards sustainable development by promoting social inclusion, reducing inequalities and enhancing access to education [16]. In BTR, several companies have used their CSR obligations to upgrade educational and skill development programs. NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation) Limited partnered with the BTC government to establish Education Space Labs across Chirang and Kokrajhar district, empowering thousands of students with hands-on space science learning. They also take the initiative to transform digital literacy, science education, and overall campus infrastructure in the BTR. NTPC Bongaigaon collaboration with BTC Government also funded and strategically created education space labs and career development centers across Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur. Each space lab is equipped with more than 30 scientific learning tools and demonstration models, aiming to upgrade these underdeveloped youths with the mainstream of India and create a scientifically knowledgeable society. This initiative has inspired many Bodo youth to pursue careers in science, technology, and research fields in the BTR.

Aligning the National Education Policy 2020 with Educational Development in BTR

The higher education sector in India has expanded rapidly. If we compare this with the Bodoland Territorial Region, in 2017, a large number of educational changes occurred within these 9-10 years, within these periods of time, the BTC Government shifted its educational focus from basic infrastructure and grassroots literacy to comprehensive academic reorganization, flexible study system, sensitization of teachers, and sustainable development. For these purpose BTC government introduced The Bodoland Territorial Council Education (Provincialization of Services and Reorganization of Educational Institutions) Bill 2025 which was deliberated and subsequently passed by the Assembly. Aiming: I) to provincialize venture schools and colleges in the BTC area:

- to reorganize educational institution

- The Government has introduced some measures like - DMIT the Dermatoglyphics Multiple Intelligence Test (DMIT) for class 5-12, compulsory yoga training in college, and Rs. 5 lakh insurance coverage for students pursuing higher education.
- to improve services for teachers-students

Source: [17]

The NEP 2020 represents a new vision for Indian educational system, with a focus on quality, inclusiveness, relevance, and innovation. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the core theme of NEP 2020, with a focus on how NEP 2020 & SDGs alignment can pave the way for introducing quality education in BTR. Aligning the NEP with BTC's educational development also more important in this context. The NEP reflected in BTC's educational policies is more flexible, multi-disciplinary, multiple entry and exit points, emphasizes research and innovation.

New Education Policy 2020, envisages that the 10+2 structure in school education will be modified with a pedagogical and curricular restructuring of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3-18. Currently children in age group of 3-6 are not covered in the 10+2 structure as class 1 begins at age six. But in the new 5+3+3+4 structure, a strong base of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from age three, aiming, at promoting better overall learning, development and well-being [18]. BTC Government also recognized early childhood care and primary schooling, adapting the Foundational Learning modules to local Anganwadi and pre-school centers to lower dropout rates in remote and rural areas [19].

Another significant step taken by BTC Government is the alignment of vocational training with the localized economic needs of BTR, such as, eco-tourism, handloom, and sericulture, which have created a large amount of economic infrastructure in BTR. Along with these local industries under BTR introducing middle and secondary standard students to practical internships, this initiative has reduced school dropout rates under BTR.

The NEP 2020 gives the highest priority to the education system to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools by 2025 [20]. To achieve this goal, teacher vacancies will be filled at the earliest, in a time-bound manner, especially in disadvantaged areas and areas with large pupil-to-teacher ratios or high rates of literacy. BTC government also emphasized foundational literacy and numeracy through targeted, trained teacher recruitment and a proper training system with accessible digital infrastructure.

According to NEP 2020, BTC Government taken a reformative initiative in higher education. BTC govt. has adopted Four-Year Undergraduate Program (FYUGP), under Bodoland University, offering flexible, multidisciplinary degrees with multiple entry and exit points.

In summary, several key challenges hinder effective educational development in the Bodoland Territorial Region, including inadequate infrastructure, culture, linguistic barriers and suitable skills gaps.

Table 3: HRD Landscape in the Bodoland Territorial Region

Indicator	BTR Region (2024) %	National Average %
Literacy Rate	65.3	74
Enrolment Rate in Primary Education	89	92
Enrolment Rate in Secondary Education	52	60
Vocational Training Centres per 100 People	2.10	5.50
Skill Group (Unmet Industry Demand)	40	25

Unemployment Rate	10.20	7.60
-------------------	-------	------

Source: [21]

The above table presents key data that highlight the current status of education, skill development and workforce readiness in the BTR, compared with the national averages for 2024.

Conclusion

Educational programs should be continuously monitored and evaluated to measure their efficiency. Under the Bodoland Territorial Region, educational institutions such as schools, colleges, universities need to adopt an inclusive curriculum design, provide language assistance, sensitize teachers, provide higher education guidance, implement a flexible study system and evaluate students in every aspect. In addition, parents also should promote equal education for both boys and girls and create a supportive study space at home. In the BTR, where access to education has historically been limited, the establishment of schools, colleges, and technical institutions in this kind of remote area is essential to ensure that youth are equipped with the foundational knowledge and skills required for employment. Infrastructural development, skill development, entrepreneurial promotion, public-private collaboration- are some essential initiatives which can build a workplace within the Bodoland Territorial Region that is equipped to meet the demands of a modern educational system with modern economy. Furthermore, specific strategies that focus on reducing the skill gap and improving employability will be crucial for ensuring that the BTR's growing workforce can meet the demands of both local and national job markets.

References

1. Sen A., "Development as Freedom", Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000.
2. Hodgson, B.H., "Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subject", Trubner & Co., London, 1880, 105.
3. Nath R.M., "The Background of Assamese Culture", Gauhati, 1978, pp. 15-16.
4. Basumatary A., "Bodo Christians, the Bodo Movement and Nation Building, ISPCK, New Delhi, 2017,18.
5. Dr. Singh O.R., Basumatary K.R., "Historical Basis of the Bodo Identity Formation", Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2017, 22 (6), 20-26.
6. NSSO's 61ST round employment and Unemployment Survey.
<https://mospi.gov.in>.
7. Roy A., "The Bodo Imbroglio", Spectrum Publication, Guwahati, New Delhi, 1995, 55-56.
8. Ibid.
9. District Census Handbook, Census of India 2001,2011.
<https://www.census2011.co.in>.
10. Statistical Handbook BTC 2011, Population Census (India), Assam.
11. AHE-11/268/2024- HIGHER EDU- Higher Education Department.
12. <https://directoratofofhighereducation.assam.gov.in>.
13. <https://directoratofofhighereducation.assam.gov.in>.
14. <https://education.assam.gov.in>.
15. <https://ssa.assam.gov>.

16. Lopes L.F.T., Merion, E. A. S., “Corporate Social Responsibility in Higher Education Institutions in Brazil and India”. Journal of Business Ethics, 2015, 130(3), 669-683.
17. <https://prsindia.org>.
18. <https://www.education.gov.in>.
19. <https://wptbc.assam.gov.in>.
20. <https://www.education.gov.in>.
21. BTR Educational and Employment Statistics Report, 2024.