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SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN PURBA MEDINIPUR, WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

School governance plays a significant role in determining the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of school education. In India, government and private schools operate under different administrative, financial, and institutional arrangements, which may influence teaching practices, accountability, resource allocation, and student learning. The present study proposes a comparative analysis of school governance and educational quality in public and private schools in Purba Medinipur district, West Bengal. It focuses on administrative leadership, teacher management, institutional accountability, infrastructure, community participation, and academic support systems. The study adopts a comparative analytical framework and proposes a mixed-methods research design involving school heads, teachers, parents, and relevant educational stakeholders. Existing policy documents and research literature provide the conceptual foundation for examining the relationship between governance practices and educational quality. The study aims to identify differences in administrative practices, common institutional challenges, and opportunities for improving school effectiveness. It argues that educational quality should be evaluated through multiple indicators rather than school ownership alone. The proposed research may contribute to evidence-based educational planning and the development of more transparent, inclusive, and accountable school governance systems in Purba Medinipur.

Keywords: School Governance, Educational Quality, Public Schools, Private Schools, Educational Administration, Accountability, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal.

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental instrument of social development, economic progress, democratic participation, and individual empowerment. The quality of school education depends not only on curriculum and classroom teaching but also on the effectiveness of institutional governance. Transparent administration, accountable leadership, adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers, effective monitoring, and community participation are important components of a well-functioning school system.

In India, school education is delivered through government schools, government-aided institutions, and private unaided schools. Although these institutions share the broad objective of providing education, they may differ in their funding arrangements, management structures, recruitment procedures, decision-making processes, and accountability mechanisms.

Government schools generally operate within public administrative frameworks and receive substantial financial and institutional support from the state. Private schools, particularly unaided institutions, often exercise greater managerial discretion over certain operational matters, subject to applicable laws and regulatory requirements. However, the actual degree of autonomy and accountability varies considerably across institutions.

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasises the importance of strengthening public education while encouraging the beneficial contribution of private and philanthropic institutions. It also recognises the need for effective regulation, institutional autonomy, and improved educational outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2020).



Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal provides a relevant geographical setting for examining these issues. The coexistence of government, aided, and private schools offers an opportunity to investigate how different governance arrangements influence educational processes and institutional effectiveness.

The present study therefore seeks to compare the governance practices of public and private schools in Purba Medinipur and examine their relationship with educational quality. Rather than assuming that one type of school is inherently superior, the study considers how administrative arrangements, institutional resources, teaching practices, and socioeconomic circumstances may interact to influence educational outcomes.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the expansion of school education, questions concerning educational quality, administrative accountability, equitable access, teacher effectiveness, and institutional performance remain important areas of educational research.

Public schools are expected to provide accessible and inclusive education, particularly for children from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Nevertheless, individual institutions may face challenges relating to infrastructure, staffing, administrative workload, and resource utilisation.

Private schools may offer different management practices, monitoring arrangements, and parent-school communication systems. However, they may also face challenges relating to affordability, unequal access, teacher employment conditions, and variations in institutional resources.

These differences raise an important research question: to what extent do variations in school governance contribute to differences in educational quality?

A district-specific comparative investigation is necessary to understand these issues in the local context of Purba Medinipur. The central problem of the study is to examine the similarities and differences between public and private schools in their administrative structures, governance practices, institutional accountability, and educational quality.

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1 Governance and educational policy

The National Education Policy 2020 identifies effective governance, institutional accountability, and the improvement of learning outcomes as important priorities for school education. It recognises the role of both public and private institutions while emphasising the need for appropriate regulation and equitable educational opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2020).

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, establishes a legal framework for free and compulsory elementary education for children aged six to fourteen years. The Act is relevant to discussions of access, school responsibilities, and educational accountability (Government of India, 2009).

3.2 Public and private school performance

Kingdon (1996) examined the quality and efficiency of private and publicly funded schools in urban India. The research demonstrated the importance of considering family background and other factors when interpreting differences in student achievement between school sectors.



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Similarly, Kingdon (2020), in a review of private schooling in India, discussed the expansion of private education and its relationship with school costs, teacher salaries, and educational provision.

Research by French and Kingdon (2021) examined differences in learning outcomes between private and government school students in India. Their analysis highlighted the relevance of school attendance and time devoted to homework in understanding achievement differences.

These studies indicate that school ownership alone is insufficient to explain educational outcomes. Student characteristics, family circumstances, school resources, attendance, and teaching practices must also be considered.

3.3 Research gap

Existing research provides important insights into school choice, educational quality, and differences between public and private institutions. However, the governance practices of schools may vary across districts because of differences in institutional resources, local socioeconomic conditions, and administrative arrangements.

A focused comparison of public and private schools in Purba Medinipur can contribute to a better understanding of local governance practices. In particular, research is needed to examine how leadership, teacher management, resource utilisation, parent participation, and institutional accountability relate to educational quality in this district.

The proposed study seeks to address this local research gap through systematic field investigation.

4. Objectives of the Study

The principal objectives are:

1. To examine the administrative and governance structures of public and private schools in Purba Medinipur district.
2. To compare leadership practices and decision-making processes in the two categories of schools.
3. To investigate differences in teacher management, professional development, and classroom supervision.
4. To assess institutional infrastructure, learning resources, and their utilisation.
5. To examine the role of parents and community participation in school governance.
6. To explore the relationship between governance practices and indicators of educational quality.
7. To identify common administrative challenges and suggest measures for improving school governance.

5. Research Questions

The study will address the following questions:

1. What are the major similarities and differences between public and private school governance systems in Purba Medinipur?
2. How do school leadership and administrative practices influence institutional functioning?
3. What differences exist in teacher management, monitoring, and professional development?
4. How do infrastructure and learning resources affect the educational environment?
5. What role do parents and community representatives play in institutional decision-making?
6. Which governance practices are associated with stronger indicators of educational quality?
7. What policy measures could strengthen accountability, equity, and institutional effectiveness?



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6 Data analysis

Quantitative data may be analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Appropriate statistical tests, such as independent-samples t-tests or chi-square tests, may be used where the data and assumptions support them.

Qualitative interview data may be analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns concerning leadership, administrative constraints, accountability, and stakeholder participation.

The relationship between governance and educational quality should be examined cautiously. Differences in school performance cannot automatically be attributed to governance because family income, parental education, student selection, school location, and other contextual factors may also influence outcomes.

7 Ethical considerations

Permission should be obtained from the relevant authorities and participating institutions. Participants should receive information about the research purpose, and their participation should be voluntary. Confidentiality should be maintained, and identifiable school or participant information should not be disclosed without appropriate consent.

8. Comparative Analytical Framework

The following table presents the dimensions that the proposed fieldwork will investigate. It is a framework for comparison, not a statement of verified findings from Purba Medinipur.

Dimension	Public schools	Private schools
Administrative structure	Generally governed through public education authorities and applicable institutional rules	Depends on ownership, management structure, recognition conditions, and applicable regulations
Financial arrangements	Primarily supported through public funding and government programmes, as applicable	May depend on fees, private investment, donations, or other permitted sources
Decision-making	Operates within government rules and delegated administrative authority	May have greater operational discretion in some areas, subject to regulation
Teacher recruitment	Follows applicable public recruitment and service rules	Varies according to management type and applicable employment requirements
Accountability	Includes public administrative oversight and applicable statutory obligations	Includes management oversight, recognition requirements, and applicable statutory obligations
Parent participation	May involve parent meetings and management or development committees	May involve parent-teacher meetings and school-specific governance mechanisms
Educational resources	Availability varies by institution, public provision, and programme implementation	Availability varies according to school finances, management, and local demand
Educational quality	Requires assessment using consistent indicators of access, teaching, learning, and inclusion	Requires assessment using the same indicators, alongside affordability and equitable access

This comparison demonstrates why governance should be assessed as a multidimensional process. Neither public ownership nor private management alone guarantees effective leadership, adequate resources, or strong learning outcomes.



9. Discussion

10. Expected Outcomes and Policy Implications

Because the proposed field investigation has not yet been completed, the following are expected areas of inquiry rather than empirical findings.

The research is expected to provide a clearer understanding of:

1. Differences in administrative practices and decision-making structures.
2. Variations in teacher supervision and professional development.
3. The availability and use of educational infrastructure.
4. The effectiveness of parent participation and accountability mechanisms.
5. Relationships between governance indicators and selected educational outcomes.
6. Administrative challenges shared by both categories of schools.

The findings, once supported by field data, may inform the following recommendations:

- Strengthen leadership training for school heads and educational administrators.
- Improve the transparency and effectiveness of institutional planning and resource allocation.
- Encourage regular professional development and peer learning among teachers.
- Establish clear and accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms.
- Promote meaningful parental participation in school improvement.
- Monitor educational quality through consistent indicators of attendance, retention, learning, inclusion, and student well-being.
- Encourage cooperation between public and private schools in appropriate areas of professional learning and educational innovation.
- Strengthen oversight while recognising the different legal and administrative arrangements governing each school category.

These recommendations should be refined in light of the actual results of the research.

11. Limitations of the Study

The proposed study has several limitations that should be considered during its implementation.

First, findings from a sample of schools may not represent all schools in Purba Medinipur or West Bengal. Second, self-reported information from school heads and teachers may be affected by differences in perception or reporting practices. Third, differences in student achievement may reflect socioeconomic background, family support, prior learning, and school selection as well as governance. Fourth, the cross-sectional design may identify associations but cannot by itself establish causal relationships.

Finally, the quality of the conclusions will depend on the representativeness of the sample, the reliability of the instruments, and the availability of comparable institutional data.



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12. Conclusion

School governance is an important component of educational quality because it shapes institutional leadership, teacher management, resource allocation, accountability, and stakeholder participation. A comparative study of public and private schools in Purba Medinipur can help explain how these dimensions operate within different institutional arrangements.

The central argument of this paper is that the effectiveness of school education should not be judged solely by whether an institution is publicly or privately managed. Instead, educational quality should be evaluated through a combination of governance practices, teaching and learning conditions, institutional resources, student outcomes, and equity considerations.

A systematic investigation of schools in Purba Medinipur would provide evidence for identifying effective practices and common challenges. Such evidence could support better educational planning, strengthen institutional accountability, and encourage improvements across school sectors.

Ultimately, the goal of school governance should be to ensure that every child receives accessible, inclusive, equitable, and meaningful education. A balanced and evidence-based comparison of public and private schools can contribute to this broader objective.

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