Summary of Findings and Recommendations:

In the preceding chapter we have seen how the various findings crystallized out of the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the different tools used in the research. But represent as they do the different points of view, namely – the teachers’ point of view, the students’ point of view and the Heads of the Institutions’ point of view they need to be critically assessed further and then summarised and finalized so as to avoid duplication or repetition of some of them as some of the problems got identified by all the three classes of respondents while some others exclusively belonged to one or the other class of respondents rather than to all of them. Thus in this chapter an attempt is made to summarise the findings of the study, put forth some recommendations to concerned authorities and stakeholders and offer suggestions to future researchers etc. And the following are the findings that stand out after the final analysis of the data collected through the tools of the study. In other words the following are the problems of teaching English in the Assamese-medium secondary schools in the district of Kamrup as sorted out by the study.

i) The problem of dearth of trained and competent teachers:

There is an acute dearth of trained and competent teachers in the schools of the district. Though the percentage of trained teachers is 37.79, a large chunk of them (43.07%) have got training of a very short duration (3-15 days) which is
quite negligible. Besides majority of the teachers are weak both in the speaking and the writing skill in English. Professional awareness and competence of most of the teachers are deplorably poor.

ii) The Problem of Large Classes:

Large classes have been a problem in the schools of the district. As the study reveals 78.18% of the schools suffer from the problem of large classes. This problem proves formidable for the schools in view of their infrastructural inadequacies to meet the demands of large classes as well as their teachers' professional and pedagogic incompetence to handle large classes.

iii. The Problem of Inadequate Infrastructure Facilities:

Infrastructure facilities are not adequate in most of the schools. This is the opinion of 41.27% teachers, 63.45% students, and 53.33% Heads of schools. Infrastructure here refers to the physical facilities of the schools like buildings including classrooms, general accommodation, furniture, library facilities and the overall resource status of the schools. 26.74% teachers' claim that there are library facilities in their schools also proved vague as the libraries claimed here contained no books in English suitable for students. As for other supplementary sources of authentic or real language like newspapers and magazines etc. the less said the better.

iv. The Problem of Unsuitable School Environment:

A suitable environment conducive to learning is very essential in any educational institution. This is as much important for learning in general as for
learning English in particular. This is linked to the infrastructure as well as resource status of the school. A good resource-status both human and material in a school contributes to the growth of a healthy and effective teaching learning environment in it – with good teachers, good facilities, healthy practices, ample opportunities for learning and using English and plentiful exposure to the target language. 29.06%, 25.00% and 52.12% teachers, Heads of schools and students respectively have expressed their dissatisfaction with the environment in their respective schools.

v. The Problem of low Aptitude of Students:

This has been yet another problem in the schools under study. On their own admittance 33.89% students lack aptitude for learning English and only 38.76% have claimed mastery in the language skills. Again 58.92% of them can't write English correctly as established by the study. Besides 69.76% teachers and 71.66% of the Heads of the schools mark them as having low aptitude for learning English. Thus low aptitude of students has been a problem in the schools.

vi. The Problem of Unsuitable Teaching Method:

Grammar-Translation Method which is the choice of 70.34% of the teachers is the only method being practised in the schools. This method with its prime focus on translation of the lessons into Assamese and on the writing skill deprives the learners not only of exposure to the target language but also of learning the language properly.
vii. **The Problem of Inadequate Exposure to English:**

Sufficient exposure to the target language is very vital in any second language learning situation. But in the schools of the area under study, students' exposure to English is very poor. In the teaching learning situation of these schools the teacher is the only source of English for the students. But since the teachers hardly use any English in the class or outside of it the students are deprived of even the only source of their exposure to the target language. Another source of exposure is plentiful reading but that is also neither inspired for nor practised by the students. This hampers proper teaching and learning of English.

viii. **The problem of Unsuitable Socio-Cultural Environment:**

The socio-cultural environment around the school also influences language learning and teaching to a significant degree. Social and cultural attitudes have a deep influence not only on the institution of learning but also on the learners. The teaching of English is not an isolated phenomenon of the classroom; it depends upon many more factors vitally connected with it - upon the attitude of the home, the attitude of the teacher and upon the attitude of the society. The socio-cultural environment surrounding the schools under study is not as yet suitable for promoting the learning and use of English. On the average 60.26% of the three categories of respondents - teachers, students and Heads of schools look upon the socio-cultural environment as unsuitable.
ix. The Problem of Curricular Inadequacy:

The curricular framework of the English programme at the secondary stage is not adequate. This is the feeling of 27.71% of the teachers and Heads of schools on the average. Curricular inadequacy here refers to the inadequate provision of curriculum components to help realize the objectives of teaching English at this stage. There should be some more tasks or activities added besides the teaching of the prescribed text-books.

x. The Problem of Insufficient Teaching Time:

Teachers of English and Heads of schools here feel that since English is a foreign language and a difficult one at that, time allotted for teaching the subject should be increased. They think that an increase in the teaching hours of English will lead to an increase in contact length or frequency of the learners with the language and will result in better teaching and learning of it. This is the view of 33.27% English teachers and Heads of Schools on the average.

xi. Teachers' Negative Attitude to Students' Capabilities:

Teachers in general have a negative attitude to students' capabilities. So do the Heads of Institutions. In fact on the average 70.71% of the teachers and Heads of schools have been found to have entertained negative impression of and attitude to student capabilities. Such an attitude stands in the way of successful teaching and learning of English and is hence considered a problem in the situation.
xii. The problem of poor home background, inadequate parental support and inadequate guardian consciousness:

Poor home background of students is another problem in the field. As revealed by the study 36.22% of the students belong to economically poor home background while 13.33% of them are from illiterate parents. This position obviously results in inadequate parental support and guardian consciousness and all this has an impact on learning in general and for that matter learning English as well.

xiii. The Problem of Neglect of Supervision:

Supervision continues to go neglected in the schools. Supervision here means the supervision of the work of the English teachers and not the general kind of inspection done annually or so from the Office of the Inspector of Schools to assess general academic or administrative functioning of the school. As per opinion of 90.45% of the Heads of schools and teachers of English on the average supervision is a non-entity in the schools. Supervision provides corrective feedback to teachers and can thereby help them grow professionally and become effective practitioners in the field of ELT. But absence of this weakens the programme with the result that it fails to deliver the goods.

xiv. The Problem of Lack of a Suitable Teacher Recruitment Policy:

In our system of education at the secondary level any graduate is entitled to teach English. Unlike the mathematics teacher or the science teacher who requires some specialization in their respective subject the candidate for English teaching requires no such specialization. This practice has left the field open to
the access of any graduate that either opts to teach the subject or rises up to the selection of the Head of the school to be designated as the English teacher. This practice has done great damage to the programme of teaching English in the schools. 92.85% of the Heads of schools wish an end to the practice and demand that the Government should formulate a standard recruitment policy with provision for selection and appointment of specially qualified and competent candidates for the job of English teaching.

xv. The Problem of Inadequate Government Initiative to Improve the Programme of ELT:

Government initiative to improve the programme is seen not to be adequate. Except for some amount of curricular reforms brought into the programme in the wake of the implementation of the new education policy of 1986, other initiatives to strengthen the process of implementation of the reforms effected have been rather slow and insignificant. Teacher training which is the only known action undertaken in this regard from the end of the government is also seen to have failed to bring in any perceptible improvement in the situation as even now the percentage of trained teachers is merely 37.79%. The study reveals that 55.55% of the Heads of schools are not aware of any initiative undertaken by the government to improve the teaching of English in the schools of the region during the last ten years. And those (44.45%) who said they were aware of such initiatives referred only to some training programmes, workshops, etc. organized by SEBA, ELTI Assam, and SSA etc. while talking of the initiatives of the government in this regard.
xvi. The Problem of Teachers' Resistance to Change and Reforms:

This is another problem in successful second language teaching and this problem has been noted in the situation under study. On account of certain characteristic reasons some teachers simply feel secure with the way they have been doing things for years, refuse to accept changes that have come into the pedagogic practice and like a status quo position to continue. As revealed in the study 63.33% of the Heads of schools complain of this problem with their teachers. Interviews with teachers and classroom observation have also revealed this attitude on the part of a large number of teachers.

xvii. The Problem of Gap Between Theory and Practice:

This is yet another major finding of the study. There is a big gap between the curricular objectives and specifications of the ELT programme and the real classroom or pedagogic practices towards implementing them in the schools under study in the district. As a result the very objectives of the programme get lost and defeated.

xviii. The Problem of Cultural Constraints:

One more finding of the study is the element of cultural constraints that causes difficulty in the teaching and learning of English. There is an intimate relationship between a language and its culture as the meanings expressed in a language are largely culturally-determined. The teacher must understand this intimate relationship between language and culture to be successful and effective in his teaching. A thorough knowledge of the cultural ethos and
association of the target language with the target situation is therefore an indispensable professional requirement for the teacher. As per the findings of the study 19.18% of the teachers complain of this problem in the situation under study.

xxi. The Problem of Handling Mixed Ability Groups of Students:

The handling of mixed-ability groups of students has also been viewed as a problem by a section of the teachers (7.55%). Though a general problem, the English teachers of the schools of the district have complained of its effect in the English classes as adverse. This creates problems of choosing the right teaching method suitable for learners of all levels of ability to the teachers and thus hampers the pleasure and progress in teaching.

xx. The Problem of Lack of Commitment and Vision on the Part of a Section of the Heads of Institutions:

Another finding of the study is that a section of the Heads of schools is lacking in commitment and vision. These people refuse to depute their English teachers to training programmes, display total lack of concept and vision about what to do to improve the teaching of English in their schools and adopt an unrealistic view of the whole issue. The Heads of the schools have some contributions to make towards the success of the programme of ELT by way of playing their role as administrators and academicians in the right direction while failure to do so simply weakens the programme.
xxi. The Problem of Inadequate Preparation of Students at the Lower Level:

In any language programme it is essential that the learners are taught properly at the initial stage of the introduction of the study of the language. In our system English is introduced from class V onwards. But on account of various reasons English teaching at this senior basic stage remains poor and ineffective with the result that the students enter the high school stage with hardly any grounding in the language. Teaching English to such students is really a problem as well as a challenge. The study finds 33.13% of the teachers complaining about this problem.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made to the various authorities and stakeholders of the programme of ELT and the same are expected to bring in solutions to the problems if implemented in right earnest.

Recommendations to Teachers of English:

i) English be taught as a skill subject rather than as a content subject and the multi-skill approach be followed.

ii) The objectives of teaching English at the secondary stage be clearly understood and teaching be done accordingly so as to help learners achieve those objectives.

iii) Classroom practices be such that they include all the essential aspects of a true and successful ESL class.
iv) The Grammar-Translation Method of teaching English be replaced by the Bilingual Method which is the choice of 93.18% of the students.

v) Students be inspired to practice reading of books and other materials in addition to the prescribed text books.

vi) Interaction in English be promoted and inspired in the English classes.

vii) Suitable environment be created in the class to help the learners feel comfortable with the language of English in order to build their confidence in the language.

viii) Provision be made to ensure plentiful exposure to English for the learners in terms of teachers' use of English, reading materials of diverse kinds and any other exposure-assurance gadgets or activities.

ix) Teachers of English be professionally committed to their job, aware of the need for continuous updating of their professional competence.

x) A department of English be formed in every school with all the English teachers of the particular school grouped together so that the teachers can share their knowledge, experiences, skills etc. with their fellow beings and thereby gain professionally, enhance self-development and become effective practitioners in the field of English teaching. Support of the other teachers (those not teaching English) may also be enlisted in this regard who may also contribute
towards creating a proper environment in the school for the teaching
and learning of English.

Recommendations to the Education Department / Government:

i) The Government should arrange for training in ELT to the practising
teachers of English at the secondary level at regular intervals.

ii) A special recruitment policy be formulated to select and appoint
specially qualified and competent persons for the job of English
teaching at all levels of the school curriculum.

iii) A special course meant for prospective English teachers with
suitable course component be designed to meet the curricular
requirements of the secondary level ELT. Clearance of the course be
made compulsory for all candidates for teachership to teach English
and some special/ extra financial incentives/ perks be given to
competent candidates in this regard.

iv) Supervision of the work of the English teachers be done at regular
intervals.

v) Provision be made either to increase the teaching hours of English or
to adopt the English-across-the-curriculum Policy with the provision
of at least one more subject to be taught through English.

vi) Steps be taken to improve the infrastructure facilities as well as the
resource-status of the schools.

vii) An extra component of spoken and communicative English built
upon an essential service vocabulary and structures relating to the
needs of the day-to-day life of the learners and their basic academic requirements be designed and added to the core English course and taught accordingly.

**Recommendations to Heads of Schools:**

i) Steps/arrangements be initiated to get the teachers of English trained up and professionally updated on a regular basis.

ii) Care be taken in selecting persons for the job of English teaching. Candidates with equal competence in both the writing and the speaking skills in English apart from requisite qualifications be preferred.

iii) Due commitment, dynamism and administrative acumen be displayed towards ensuring a proper environment of teaching and learning of English by way of optimizing the infrastructural and resource status of the schools in collaboration with the government-authority or any other funding authority or agency.

**Suggestions for Future Researchers:**

The present study is expected to provide bases for some future researchers in the field. As this study has been a broad-based one with its focus on the whole gamut of problems of teaching English in the vernacular medium secondary schools in the district of Kamrup, future researchers may choose some narrowed-down areas like – teacher competency, the suitability of the curricular framework, infrastructural and resource-status – their impact on a successful ELT programme, a comparative study of the English-medium versus
Assamese-medium schools with reference to their performance in ELT, implementing CLT in the Assamese medium schools, the Bilingual Method – its feasibility in the Assamese medium schools, or on the other hand may study the same problem in the context of Assam or even some bigger area. And since the present study has, by and large, touched upon some of the above areas either centrally or in a peripheral way, the insights gained from it will prove helpful, it is hoped, to future researchers in carrying on their research into the indicated areas.