



Higher Education in Assam : A Situational Analysis

KEYWORDS

Higher Education, Global Challenges, Gross Enrolment Ratio.

Mrs. Noni Rajkhowa

Associate Professor, Department of Education, Jhanji H.N.S. College, Sivasagar, Assam-785683.

ABSTRACT *Education is a powerful instrument for the development of personality and wisdom of people. It is also considered as a vital element of modernization of Society. India's higher education system is the one of the largest education systems in world. But now it is realized that merely increasing the number of higher educational institutions and their respective enrolment will not fulfill the national goals without prior attention to quality and it access to all who desire it. Assam boasts the wide spread network of higher educational institutions in the entire North Eastern region of India. The highest enrolment of students as per MHRD annual report is also in Assam in this region. But still the GER in higher education in Assam is below the national average. This paper highlights the present scenario of higher education in Assam with its challenges and prospective aspects.*

Introduction

Education is the fundamental need of life and its development. It is a powerful instrument which develops the personality and wisdom of people, makes them capable of performing certain economic, political and cultural function and consequently their socio-economic status gets enhanced. It is considered as a effective tool of modernization of a society. It determines not only the level of prosperity of an individual but the welfare and security of the entire nation as well.

The goals and objectives of higher education are to promote, disseminate and generate knowledge, vibrant wisdom, tolerance, adventure, critical thinking and search for truth. Higher education is of paramount importance for all economic, political and social development. It is a step forward occupies a pivotal position in the educational system of any country as it stands at the top of the entire educational structure.

Objectives of the study

The present paper is designed to fulfill the following objectives :-

- To have an overview of the profile of higher educational institutions in Assam;
- To identify the difficulties suffered by the higher educational institutions and its challenges in the global context;
- To study the prospective area to enhance the quality in higher education.

Research Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of information. Primary source includes interaction through discussions and interviews with government officials of education department, academicians, research scholars and student in the state. Secondary information have been collected from government publication, monographs, government reports, magazines, news paper etc. Further internet and websites were also consulted for this study.

Higher Education in India

Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world. The performance of the country from the point of view of educational parameter is commendable. The coun-

try records 702 number of Universities in 2013, a mammoth increase by 20.13 in 1950, that records 30 universities only. The number of colleges offering higher education in different disciplines recorded an increase of 46.80 times from 700 in 1950 to 36,000 by 2013. The number of students enroll in higher education registered and increase of 41.76 times from 3,97,000 in 1952 to 1,69,75,000 by 2011.

Despite this achievements the gross enrolment ration (GER) of higher education in our country 19.4 percent as against around 85% in some of the developed nations RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchator Siksha Abhiyan) 2013. The statistics reveals that only a fraction of population in the age group of 18-23 years is enrolled in higher educational institutions. The country also record a wide gender disparity in higher education that GER for male is 22.8% and for female it is only 15.8 percent (RUSA) 2013.

It is also felt that the merely increasing the number of higher educational institutions and their enrolment capacity will not achieve the national development goal without concurrent attention to quality and it access to all who desire it, is mainly highlighted in the 12th five year plan.

Present Scenario of higher education in Assam

Assam, the largest economy in the north-east, has a relatively well developed and diversified educational infrastructure as compared to other states in the region. As per 2011 census, literacy rate of Assam is 73.18 with male literacy rate 78.81, which is behind the national rate of 74.04 and male literacy rate 82.14 respectively. The female literacy rate with 67.27 stood above the national rate 65.46. In the higher education sector, the state has 10 Universities, 4 government colleges, 189 provincialised colleges, 175 Non-government colleges, 5 adhoc law colleges, 82 provincialised Sanskrit and Pali Tols, 100 non-government Sanskrit Tols and 17 of literary and voluntary organisations.

The state also includes 11 Engineering colleges (including private), 9 polytechnics and 2 junior technical schools under the of directorate of technical education.

The total enrolment in Ph.D in Assam as per 2009-10 is 1207 out of which 595 is female and 612 is male student. The state also enrolled 13,381 students in M.A., M.Sc. and M.Com courses respectively in 2009-10 out of which 5279

is female and 8102 is male students. In degree courses the state also records with an enrolment of 2,13,440 in the state in 2009-10.

The following table 1.01 reveals the enrolment in degree standard and above in 2009-2010.

Table-1.01 ENROLMENT BY COURSES IN DEGREE STANDARD AND ABOVE 2009-2010

Courses	Total Enrolment		Scheduled Caste		Scheduled Tribes	
	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ph.D/D.Sc./D.Phil.	595	1207	40	98	47	103
M.A.	3638	7945	310	607	538	399
I.P.G.	10	85	1	3	0	0
M.Sc.	1401	4165	167	347	192	345
M.Com	240	1271	48	137	21	117
B.A. & B.A. (Major)	64928	148431	5353	19605	6749	17619
B.Sc. & B.Sc. (Major)	5927	32388	628	1412	612	2243
B.Com & B.Com (Major)	2465	16825	423	1945	598	2410
B.E. (Engg.)	980	5132	69	210	29	141
B.Ed. B.T.	970	2395	82	283	140	330
M.B.B.S. (Including Ayurveda/Homeo/Dentistry/Pharmacy/Nurshing	430	1026	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
L.L.B./L.L.M.	1625	7243	2010	629	167	519

Source: Directorate of Technical Education & Directorate of Higher Education, Assam

The Directorate of Higher Education and Directorate of Secondary Education is established to give primary focus on expansion and promotion of Higher Education by granting financial assistance to the needy educational institutions besides implementing various programmes for development of general education and assisting for infrastructure development in general with special focus to rural and backward areas.

The Directorate of Technical Education, Assam prepares, supervises and implements the plans and schemes for overall development of technical education in the state.

The state also includes 16 medical colleges (including Homeo, Ayurvedic, Dental, Pharmacy, and Nursing). The Directorate of Medical Education, Assam is entrusted with the task of generating human resources like Doctors, Nurses, Technicians, physiotherapists, pharmacists and other Health Personnel to meet the growing needs of not only the state but the entire North Eastern region. The table 1.02 shows the physical achievement of Universities, govt colleges, provincialised colleges, Non-government colleges, provincialised Sanskrit and Pali Tols, Non-Govt. Sanskrit Tols, Literary & Voluntary organizations.

Table-1.02 Physical Achievement During the 10th and 11th Five Year Plan.

Institutions	Upto the end of 10 th Plan Period (In Nos.)	Achievement during the 11 th Plan period (In Nos.)	Total at the end of 11 th plan period (In Nos.)
Universities	7	3	10
Govt. Colleges	6	1	7
Colleges Provincialised	188	1	189
Non-Govt. Colleges	142	33	175
Provincialised Sanskrit & Poli Tols	82	-	82
Non Govt. Sanskrit Tools	67	33	100
Literary & Voluntary organisation	14	5	19

Source : Draft Twelfth Five year plan and Annual Plan (2012-13)

Planning and Development Department, Assam.

Challenges of Higher education

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) in Higher education in Assam is a below the national average which is only 12.8% while in Delhi it is 41.2%. The 11th Five-year plan recognized two number of major problems of higher education viz., low enrolment and regional imbalance. The University grants commission report on "Inclusive and Qualitative expansion of higher education" has revealed the main challenges in higher education and suggested reforms for the 12th five-year plan. In the 12th five year plan the government has proposed the national level mission named "Rashtriya Uchchator Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) to achieve quality higher education with access and equity. Shortage of faculty members in higher education of Assam is a common feature. Filling of faculty position is one of the important prerequisite for the state to get fund from the RUSA. A number of teaching posts in the colleges are lying va-

cant in Assam. The state also suffers adequate educational facilities in the Rural and backward areas. High drop-out rate is another problem of Higher education in the state.

Prospective Areas

Higher education needs dynamic attitude and team spirit to encourage new ideas and innovation to influence our education system to fulfill the demand of the global market. Through our higher education in one of the largest system, the issues of access, equity and quality still continue to be the area of concern. The higher educational institutions suffer from large quality variation in so much that a NASSCOM Mackinsey 2005 has said that not more than 15 percent of graduate of general education and 25-30 percent of Technical Education are not fit for employment. The National knowledge commission (2008) has mentioned that "The objective of reform and change in our higher education system must be expansion, excellence and

inclusion. There must not be disparities in educational attainments related to income, gender, region and place of residence." Higher educational institution needs proper infrastructure facilities and should maintain student teachers ratio adequately so that we can maintain quality education. The state and Central Universities should increase the seat capacity in the concerning departments. The course structure of universities needs the upgradation of skills and competencies so as to enhance GER in higher education.

Conclusion :

Higher education is a very important sector for the growth and development of human resource which can take responsibility for social, economic and scientific development of our country. The vision of higher education in India is to realise the country's human resource potential to its fullest with equity and inclusion. The newly centrally introduced scheme "Rashtriya Uchchar Shikha Abhiyan" (RUSA) would be spread over the two plan period (XII and XIII) is a significant scheme for all round development of higher education of our country, we need our time being effort to earn the immense benefited of this scheme "RUSA".

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