



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Higher Education Research

STATUS AND GROWTH OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRIPURA

KEY WORDS: Higher Education, Student-Teacher Ratio, Degree Colleges.**Bimal Kanti Ray***IPS(Rtd). Chairman, Indian Red Cross Society, Tripura State Branch
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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary era, higher education plays a pivotal role in fostering self-fulfilment as well as driving the economic growth and development of a nation. It facilitates the systematic acquisition of knowledge, skills and wisdom, thereby transforming individuals into valuable human resources. As a vital input for socio-economic progress, higher education carries the responsibility of empowering communities, particularly in backward regions. Tripura, one of the less developed states of India in terms of economic advancement, underscores the significance of strengthening higher education for regional growth. Against this backdrop, the present study critically examines the growth of higher education in the degree colleges of Tripura during the period 2010-11 to 2023-24. The study relies exclusively on secondary data collected from authentic sources. To analyse and interpret the findings, statistical software, along with other appropriate tools and techniques, has been employed. The discussion primarily focuses on providing a comprehensive understanding of the status and growth of higher education in Tripura.

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-changing world, higher education plays a vital role in shaping individuals and building a nation's future. It not only helps people gain knowledge and skills but also contributes significantly to the economic growth and social development of a country. By empowering individuals through systematic learning, higher education transforms the population into valuable human resources who can drive progress in all sectors. Tripura, a state nestled in the North-East region of India, presents a compelling case study for examining the role and impact of higher education in a geographically disadvantaged and historically underserved area (Boruah, 2018). Bordered by Bangladesh on three sides and connected to the rest of India through a narrow corridor, Tripura faces unique socio-economic and infrastructural challenges that significantly influence its educational landscape (Roy & Reang, 2018). The higher education system in Tripura is critical for fostering socio-economic development, addressing regional disparities and empowering its predominantly tribal population (Tripura, 2020). However, delivering accessible and quality higher education remains a significant hurdle, demanding careful consideration of existing problems and creative, context-specific solutions (Roy, 2020). The state's higher education sector is essential in cultivating human capital, which can, in turn, address local issues and hasten overall development (Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014). This study aims to critically analyse the growth of higher education in the degree colleges of Tripura.

Objectives of the Study

- (i) To study the present status of higher education in Tripura.
- (ii) To analyze the growth trends of higher education in degree colleges of Tripura.

Literature Review

The current body of research emphasizes numerous significant obstacles that stand in the way of tribal girls' education, including a lack of reliable sources of income, poor health, a lack of parental motivation, socio-cultural norms surrounding behavior and marriage, gender inequalities and a lack of infrastructure. The adoption of a dual administrative system is one of the main obstacles to tribal education at the planning level (Kishore & Babu, 2023). This perspective emphasizes how crucial it is to address these issues in order to promote tribal girls' education (Thamminaina et al., 2020). Current policy may not be effective enough in promoting greater participation and may even go against the stated goal of ensuring greater equity (Rupavath, 2016). Lack of awareness of possibilities following education, stereotypes held by students from other communities and language of instruction issues also contribute to these obstacles

(Thamminaina et al., 2020). Because of their socio-economic position and parents' illiteracy, tribal children experience educational inequality. In Tripura, the dropout rate is very high among tribal students, especially girls (Tripura, 2020). This may be because of several reasons, including a lack of infrastructure, instructor shortages and a curriculum that does not correspond to the requirements and aspirations of tribal communities. A study found a link between a family's socioeconomic status and its members' academic performance (Tripura, 2020). When parents are illiterate, it has a direct negative impact on their children's education, which is especially true for children from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. (Jadhao, 2018) The usage of the mother tongue, or home language, as the medium of instruction in the early stages of education has been strongly supported, particularly for tribal children whose mother tongue is frequently very different from the state's or region's major languages (Pattanaik, 2020). The study emphasizes the necessity of culturally sensitive teaching strategies and curricula that take into consideration tribal students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. (Manas, 2020)

Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the current status and growth trends of higher education in Tripura. The study is primarily based on secondary data collected from authentic and reliable sources such as reports published by the Ministry of Education (Government of India), All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), University Grants Commission (UGC), National Statistical Office (NSO). Relevant data from the Economic Review of Tripura and Tripura State Government's Department of Higher Education have also been consulted to ensure the credibility and comprehensiveness of the research.

To study the present status of higher education in Tripura, data related to the number of institutions, student enrolment and teaching staff have been compiled and analyzed. various indicators such as the availability of universities and degree colleges across districts, student-teacher ratios and enrolment by gender have been examined to understand the state's preparedness and performance in the higher education sector. For analyzing the growth trends in higher education, time-series data from 2002-03 to 2023-24 have been used to capture the longitudinal progression in the number of institutions, enrolment rates and gender-wise participation in higher education. Statistical tools like percentage growth rate and compound annual growth rate (CAGR) have been employed to understand the changes over the years.

Present Status of Higher Education in Tripura

Higher education is essential for both personal and societal development, providing individuals with the knowledge, skills and critical thinking abilities needed to navigate daily life and solve complex problems. It opens up opportunities, promotes economic growth and helps communities adapt to an increasingly complex world. In Tripura, the Department of Higher Education manages and regulates post-secondary education, with its roots tracing back to 1947 through the establishment of Maharaja Bir Bikram College. Over time, the department has focused on upgrading infrastructure in technical and professional institutions and is introducing job-oriented and specialized courses to meet the changing needs of students and the job market. As of now, Tripura has 25 government-run general degree colleges under the Higher Education Department. Notably, three new colleges were established in the academic year 2022-23 in Agartala, Panisagar and Old Agartala. Among them is the 'Shri Aurobindo General Degree College (English Medium)', designed specifically to cater to students from English-medium backgrounds. In addition to expanding public institutions, the State Government is actively encouraging private participation in higher education. This has led to the establishment of two private universities-Techno University in Agartala and Aryavarta International University in Dharmanagar. Furthermore, the state marked a milestone with the inauguration of the National Law University (NLU) in Agartala on October 12, 2022. Looking ahead, the State Legislature is working towards setting up an International Buddhist University in Sabroom, showcasing Tripura's commitment to diversifying and strengthening its higher education landscape.

The table-1 provides a comprehensive overview of the state's higher education infrastructure, reflecting a mixed model of government, central and private involvement in institutional development. The total number of higher education institutions in Tripura stands at 83, with government-run institutions forming the majority (51), followed by private (23) and central government institutions (9). In terms of universities, Tripura has three in total-one each from the state government, central government and private sector-demonstrating a balanced distribution of academic authority. The presence of premier national institutions like the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) and CIPET marks the state's strategic focus on technical and professional education, particularly through central support. General degree colleges are primarily managed by the state (25 out of 29), suggesting a strong governmental role in foundational undergraduate education. Engineering education is represented by one state-run college (Tripura Institute of Technology) and one private institution (Techno India), while polytechnic institutes-all six of them-are government-run, highlighting state efforts in vocational and technical training. The presence of two medical colleges (one each from the state and private sectors) signifies the development of healthcare education, while the existence of 19 professional colleges catering to arts, law, music, nursing and B.Ed. programs reflects a diverse and inclusive higher education system. Moreover, professional training in pharmacy, agriculture, veterinary sciences and fisheries is supported through dedicated colleges, showing the state's intent to develop sector-specific human resources. Additionally, specialized institutes such as the National Law University, Central Sanskrit University, Centre of National Forensic Science University and the National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology

indicate Tripura's growing role in offering niche academic and research opportunities. The inclusion of private universities like Aryavarta International University and Techno University points to an emerging trend of private investment in higher education, aiming to supplement public sector capacity. Overall, the data paints a picture of a small but steadily diversifying higher education ecosystem in Tripura, balancing accessibility, specialization and inclusivity through a tripartite governance model.

Table-1: Higher Education At-A-Glance 2023-24

Item	State Govt.	Central Govt.	Private	Total
Universities	01	01	01	03
National Level Institute (NIT)		01		01
Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT)		01		01
No. of General Degree colleges	25		04	29
No. of Engineering College	01 (TIT)		01 (Techno India)	02
No. of Polytechnic Institutes	06 (including TIT in Diploma Level)			06
No. of Medical Colleges	01		01	02
No. of Professional Colleges (Art & Craft, Music, Law, Drama, Nursing, B.Ed.)	11	01	07	19
No. of B.Ed. Programme	02		04	06
No. of Pharmacy College	01		02	03
No. of Agriculture College	01			01
No. of Veterinary College	01			01
No. of Fishery College		01		01
No. of Paramedical College			01	01
Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET)		01		01
National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology		01		01
Central Sanskrit University, Lambuchhara		01		01
Centre of National Forensic Science University, Agartala		01		01
National Law University	01			01
Aryavarta International University			01	01
Techno University			01	01
Total	51	09	23	83

Source: Analyzing Trends a Statistical Review of Higher Education (2005-2020), Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Tripura pg.281-282

Table-2: District wise No. of Colleges in Tripura

Items	West	Khowai	Dhalai	Unokoti	North	Sepahijala	Gomati	South	Total
Universities	02 (State-1 & Central-1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	02
General Degree	08	02	03	02	03	02	02	03	25
Engineering (TIT)	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Polytechnic	03	-	01	-	01	-	01	-	06
Law College	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01
Art College	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	01

Music College	01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	01
B.Ed.	01	—	—	01	—	—	—	—	02
Grand Total:	18	02	04	03	04	02	03	03	39

Source: Analyzing Trends A Statistical Review of Higher Education (2005-2020), Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Tripura pg.286

The table-2 titled "District-wise Number of Colleges in Tripura (2023–24)" presents a comprehensive overview of the geographical distribution of higher education institutions under the control of the Higher Education Department of Tripura. It reflects the state government's efforts to ensure access to diverse academic disciplines across all eight districts. A total of 39 colleges are distributed among various categories including universities, general degree colleges, engineering, polytechnic and specialized institutions. The West Tripura district clearly emerges as the educational hub of the state, housing 18 institutions, nearly half of all such establishments in the state. It hosts both of Tripura's universities-one state university and one central university-as well as the only engineering college (TIT) and the state's only law, art and music colleges. This centralization is likely due to the district's urban character and presence of the state capital, Agartala, offering better infrastructure and accessibility. In contrast, districts like Khowai, Sepahijala, Gomati and South Tripura have more modest educational infrastructures, each housing between 2 to 4 institutions. These districts mainly comprise general degree colleges, reflecting basic undergraduate education access but limited exposure to technical, professional or specialized fields. Districts such as Dhalai and Unokoti, despite being in relatively remote areas, have made some strides. For instance, Dhalai has four institutions, including a polytechnic and three general degree colleges, showing a balanced attempt to combine technical and general education. Unokoti and South Tripura each have three institutions, with Unokoti notably having a B.Ed. college, indicating targeted efforts toward teacher education in select areas. Tripura has 25 general degree colleges, demonstrating a strong focus on undergraduate general education across all districts. However, the presence of only one engineering college, one law college, one art college, one music college and two B.Ed. colleges suggests limited scope for professional and creative disciplines across most of the state. Polytechnic education, which bridges academic and vocational training, is relatively more dispersed with six institutes, present in four districts-West, Dhalai, Gomati and North.

In conclusion, the table-2 underscores the uneven distribution of higher educational institutions across Tripura. While West Tripura dominates in terms of variety and volume, other districts are still developing their capacities. To ensure balanced regional growth and inclusive access to higher education, further expansion in technical and professional institutions in underserved districts would be essential. This data serves as a valuable tool for planning resource allocation, educational policy and regional development in Tripura's higher education sector.

Table-3: Student Enrolment (2023–24)

Sl. No	Items	No. of Institutions	Boys	Girls	Total
1.	General Degree Colleges	25	33,775	35,984	69,759
2.	Engineering College (TIT)	01	749	371	1,120
3.	Polytechnics	06	1,134	626	1,760
4.	Professional Colleges	05	497	858	1,355

Source: Analyzing Trends A Statistical Review of Higher Education (2005-2020), Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Tripura pg. 286

The table-3 titled "Student Enrolment (2023–24)" presents a comprehensive overview of student enrolment across four

categories of higher educational institutions: General Degree Colleges, Engineering College (TIT), Polytechnics and Professional Colleges. It includes data on the number of institutions in each category, along with the number of enrolled boys and girls and the total number of students. General Degree Colleges dominate the landscape, both in terms of the number of institutions and student enrolment. With 25 institutions, these colleges have enrolled a total of 69,759 students, making up the overwhelming majority of students represented in the table. What stands out here is the near parity between boys and girls, with girls actually outnumbering boys slightly-35,984 girls compared to 33,775 boys. This indicates a healthy trend toward gender inclusivity in general higher education, reflecting either growing awareness of the importance of education for women or improved access and support systems for female students. The data reveals clear gender patterns across different types of technical and professional institutions. The Engineering College, with 1,120 students, shows a significant gender imbalance, with boys (749) far outnumbering girls (371), reflecting a common trend in engineering due to societal norms and limited female representation. Polytechnics also have a male majority-1,134 boys to 626 girls-but show relatively better female participation, likely influenced by the practical nature of their programs. In contrast, Professional Colleges reverse this trend, enrolling more girls (858) than boys (497), suggesting these fields are either more appealing or traditionally associated with female career paths such as nursing, education, or social work.

Overall, the table reflects both progress and continuing challenges in higher education enrolment. While general education is more inclusive and widely accessed, technical and engineering fields still exhibit gender imbalances. The data underscores the need for targeted efforts to promote gender equity across all educational streams and to expand institutional capacity, especially in technical and professional sectors, to meet diverse student needs.

Table-4: Degree Colleges in Tripura: Year-wise Data

Year	No. of Institutions	Enrolment	No. of Teachers (indicates Visiting /Guest Staff)	Student-Teacher Ratio
2002-03	14	18390	326 (356)	56.41
2003-04	14	19137	326 (345)	58.70
2004-05	14	19210	334 (362)	57.51
2005-06	14	20,231	309 (362)	65.47
2006-07	14	20,698	293 (315)	70.64
2007-08	15	20,844	303 (311)	68.79
2008-09	15	25,763	388 (299)	66.40
2009-10	15	24,294	383 (371)	63.43
2010-11	16	27,206	613 (91)	44.38
2011-12	16	28,966	698 (170)	41.50
2012-13	22	30409	720 (193)	42.23
2013-14	22	37,526	674 (289)	55.68
2014-15	22	37,392	740 (352)	50.53
2015-16	22	39,741	740 (340)	53.70
2016-17	22	39,699	721 (418)	55.06
2017-18	22	42,584	735 (315)	57.94
2018-19	22	44,357	714 (352)	62.12
2019-20	22	47,249	697 (350)	67.79
2020-21	22	53,305	657 (389)	81.13
2021-22	22	59,433	645	92.14
2022-23	25	64193	678 (568)	94.68
2023-24	25	69759	675 (558)	103.35

Source: Some Basic Statistics of Tripura-2022, Directorate of Economics & Statistics Planning (Statistics) Department, Government of Tripura, Pg.64

The analysis of student-teacher ratio in degree colleges of Tripura over the years reveals a concerning upward trend (table-4). From a relatively balanced ratio of around 50 to 60 students per teacher up to the year 2015-16, the situation has gradually worsened. Post-2019-20, the ratio began to rise sharply, crossing 80 and eventually exceeding 100 by 2023-24. This sharp increase indicates a mounting pressure on the available teaching staff, which may adversely affect the quality of education, student engagement and academic outcomes. The growing imbalance between student enrolment and faculty strength underscores the urgent need for strategic recruitment of qualified teachers and policy intervention to maintain a healthy academic environment in higher education institutions across the state.

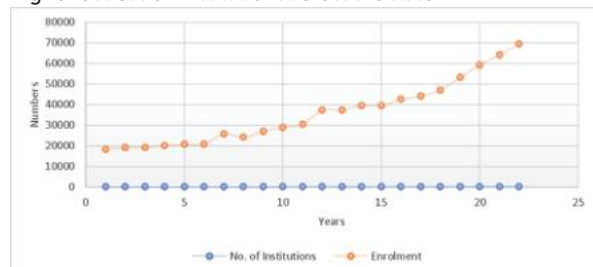


Figure-1: Growth Trends of Higher Education in General Degree Colleges of Tripura

Source: Author's observation

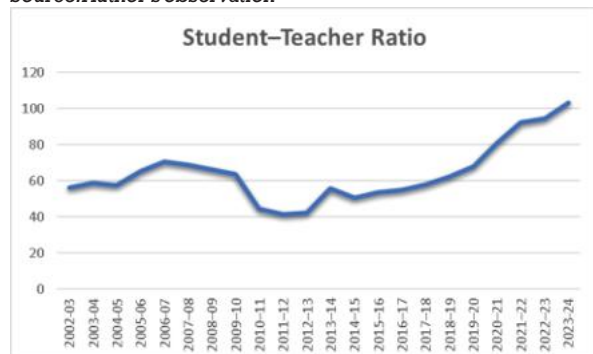


Figure-2: Student-Teacher Ratio in General Degree Colleges of Tripura

Source: Author's observation

Based on the data from 2002-03 to 2023-24 (a 21-year period), the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) for higher education in Tripura is as follows:

- CAGR of Institutions: 2.80%
- CAGR of Enrolment: 6.55%
- CAGR of Teachers: 3.53%

Over the 21-year period from 2002-03 to 2023-24, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for higher education in Tripura reflects a consistent upward trajectory. The number of degree colleges has grown at a moderate pace with a CAGR of 2.80%, while the growth in student enrolment has been more pronounced, registering a robust CAGR of 6.55%. In comparison, the number of teachers has increased at a slower rate, with a CAGR of 3.53%. These trends collectively highlight that although the infrastructure and faculty strength have expanded over the years, the rate of student enrolment has outpaced both, suggesting a rising demand for higher education and a potential strain on academic resources. This imbalance points to the need for more strategic planning to align institutional and faculty growth with the growing enrolment pressure in the state.

CONCLUSIONS

The study underscores that higher education in Tripura has made notable strides over the past two decades, evidenced by an increase in the number of institutions, enrolment rates and a gradual improvement in gender parity. The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of student enrolment (6.55%) significantly outpaces that of institutional and faculty expansion, indicating a growing demand that is straining existing infrastructure and teaching capacity. However, the growing student-teacher ratio and regional imbalances in access to technical and professional education suggest a pressing need for policy interventions. Strategies must include targeted faculty recruitment, infrastructure development in underserved districts and initiatives to uplift the participation of marginalized communities and female students. In essence, while Tripura's higher education landscape remains challenged by disparities and resource constraints, the upward trends and alignment with national growth trajectories present a hopeful outlook. Continued investment, inclusive policy design and region-specific strategies will be critical to harnessing higher education as a transformative force for socio-economic development in this backward region of India.

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