



PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION SCENARIO OF ASSAM

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Abstract:

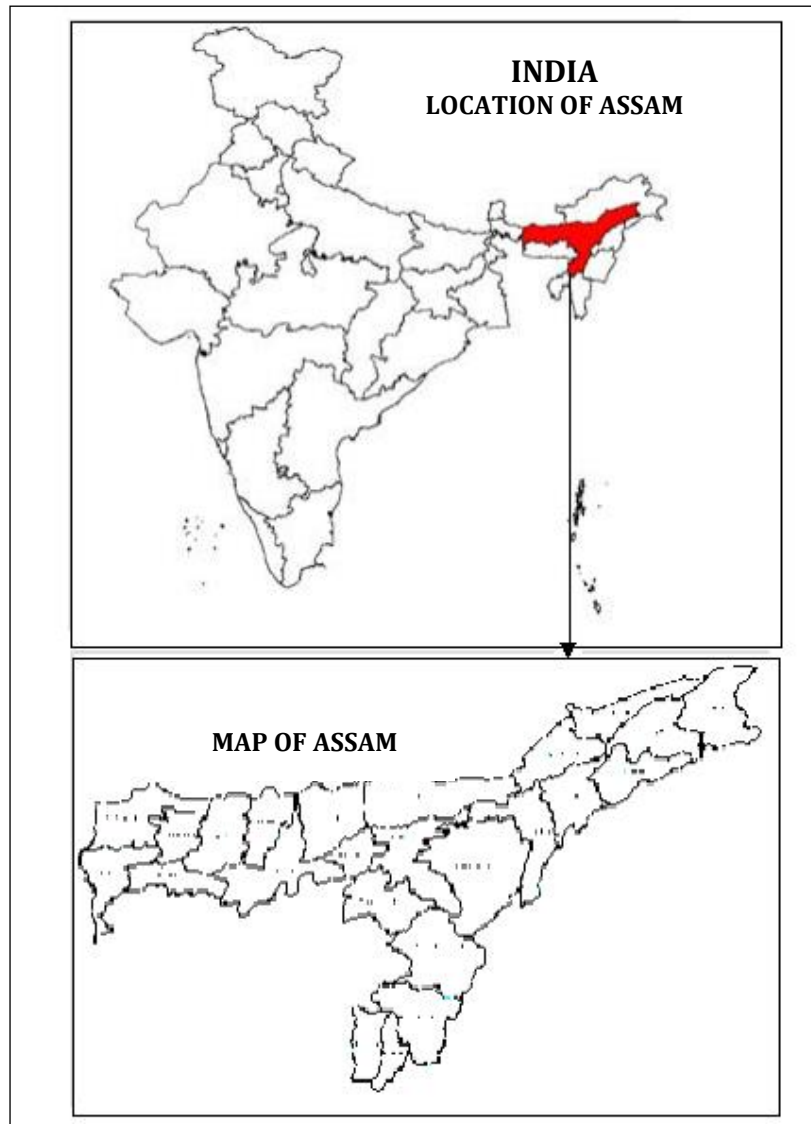
Achievement of human development in a sustained and equitable perspective is a subject of great challenge in the present Indian society. Although notable progress has been observed over all the aspects, deprivation of a large section of the society from education, health care facilities and other economic resources due backwardness and poverty is hindering the human resource development of the state. Higher education is a most crucial mandate to bridge the gap between knowledge and man. It is one of the most crucial indices for socio-economic development. A good sound beginning in the field of higher education is important for overall flourishing of the socio-political sphere. However, Higher Education sector in India in general and in Assam in particular, has not been able to contribute its outmost role in the sphere of Human Resource Development. Higher education scenario in Assam has changed in past 10 years. A proper commitment to this sector can bring a much-needed change which in turn may revolutionize the overall growth and development. In this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight the changes observed in the higher education scenario prevailing in Assam. The study also identifies the problems and prospects of with a special reference to the higher education sector of Assam.

Keywords: Higher Education, challenges, socio-economic Development.

Introduction

Assam is one of the seven states of Northeast India. Geographically the state extends from 22°19' to 28°16' N Latitude and 89°42' to 96°30' E Longitude between foothills of the Eastern Himalayas and the Patkai and Naga Hill Ranges. The state is bordered in the North by Bhutan and in the East by Arunachal Pradesh. Along the south lie Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. Meghalaya lies to the South-West, West Bengal and Bangladesh to the West.

Fig: 1 Location of the study area



Objectives:

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the problems and changes of the higher education sector of the state in a global context
2. To suggest measures for overcoming these aforesaid loopholes

Methodology and Database:

The methodology adopted to study higher education scenario of Assam, necessitated the use of primary observation and secondary data. The observation has been confined within the study area of the state of Assam. Both primary observation and secondary data have been collected in order to arrive at a clear conclusion.

Secondary information were also collected from various sources like Census Of India, government publications, academicians, educational institutions, etc.

Finally, the conclusion of the study have been drawn on the basis of the findings derived from the analysis of both primary and secondary data and also from personal observations in the field, and a report was prepared on the basis of all data collected from the field.

Findings and discussions:

Significance of Higher Education in Assam:

The North-Eastern Region of India, the land of the seven sisters, with the educational hub of the region, Assam, is facing a hindered developmental progress which is impeded by certain inherent disadvantages of its location such as inadequate infrastructure, adverse climatic conditions and rugged topography. Higher education is prerequisite for creation and development of skilled human resources. Development inside the class of better training, in Assam, will assist to avoid the natural resource constraints in Assam and help decorate the advent of knowledge infrastructure towards self-empowerment of the human beings. Despite the latest reforms, Assam is not up to the marks in Terms of the Enrolment Ratio in higher education. As consistent with the recent “Annual status of higher training in States and Union Territories 2013” (ASHE) prepared with the aid of the Ministry of Human Resource improvement (MHRD), the GER in better training is 13.4 % for Assam while the value of all-India GER of 19.4%. In terms of GER among all the states, Assam ranks 28th among all states and Union Territories (UTs) in India.

Higher education in Assam:

The education system in Assam is the best among the other states of North-East Region. Before independence of India, there were only 16 colleges in the northeastern region [3]. Maximum of the changes and traits inside the educational area have occurred on account that independence in 1947. After Independence the government has taken important steps in education sector because it turned into the crucial component for countrywide development and progress.

In terms of schooling, Assam has evolved right into a top instructional hotspot at the kingdom as well as on national level. To enhance the current status of Assam's education, the implementation of many progressive education polices are done. Assam, the most important economy in the north-east, has a rather well developed and diversifies educational infrastructure compared to different states within the seven sisters states. Literacy rate of Assam in 2011 was 73.18 with male literacy rate 78.81, which is way below the national rate of 74.04 and male literacy rate 82.14 respectively. The female literacy rate with 67.27 stood above the countrywide rate of 65.46 [1].

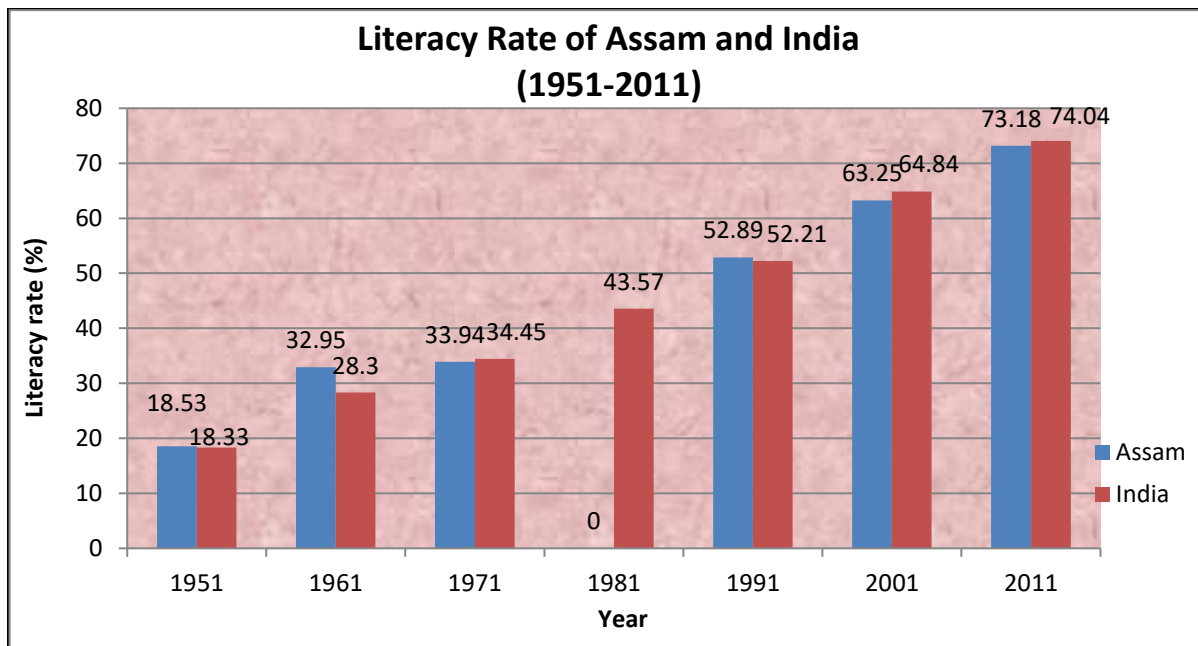
Literacy Rate in Assam and India 1951-2011

Year	Person		Male		Female	
	Assam	India	Assam	India	Assam	India
1951*	18.53	18.33	28.01	27.16	7.58	8.86

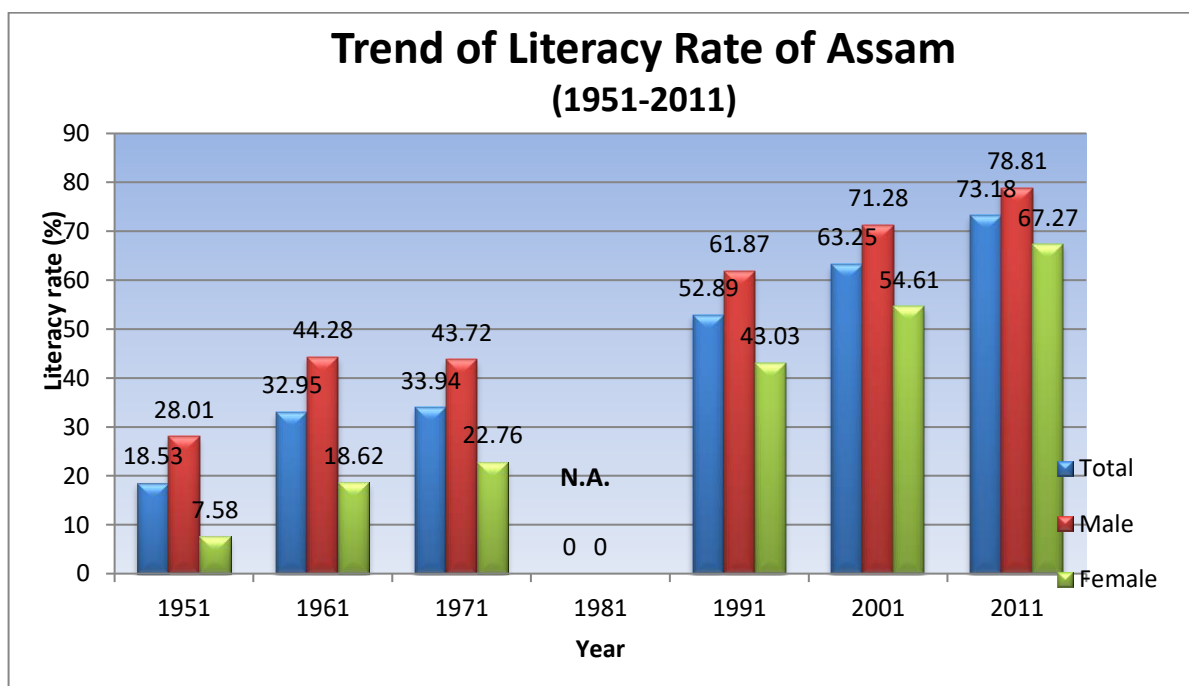
1961	32.95	28.30	44.28	40.40	18.62	15.35
1971	33.94	34.45	43.72	45.96	22.76	21.97
1981**	--	43.57	--	56.38	--	29.76
1991	52.89	52.21	61.87	64.13	43.03	39.29
2001	63.25	64.84	71.28	75.26	54.61	53.67
2011	73.18	74.04	78.81	82.14	67.27	65.46

* Excluding Jammu & Kashmir, ** Excluding Assam

Source: Provisional Population. Census of India, 2011



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Major changes in the recent years:

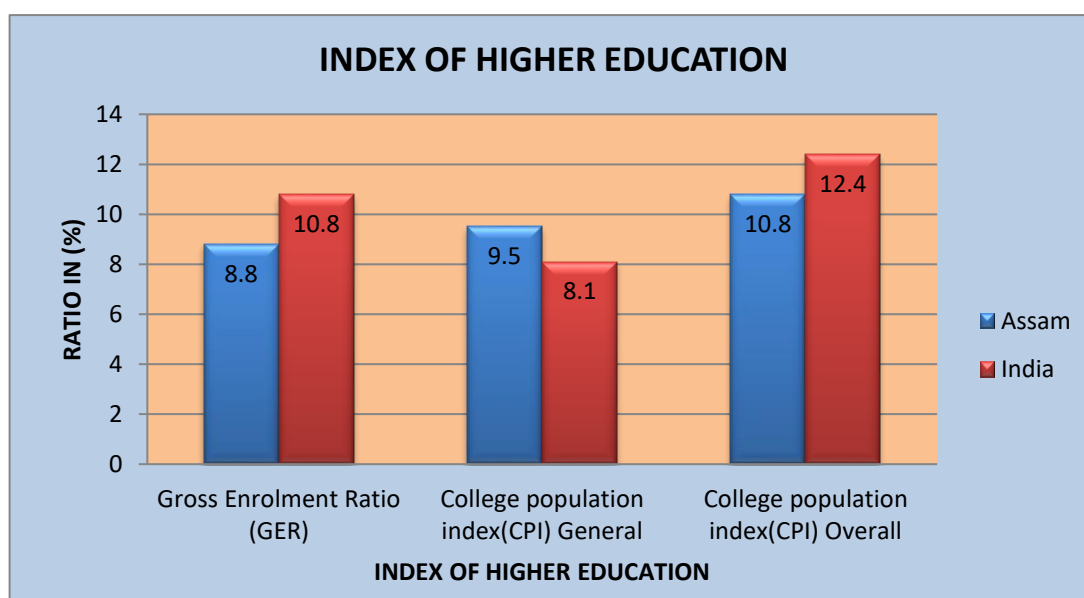
The field of Higher Education has undergone radical changes. These changes are so much that it has replaced the colonial style of education in which higher education remained within the custody of selected individuals.

The challenges before Higher Education Sector in Assam:

Despite of the great revolutionary changes in the educational sector of Assam, issues involving access, equity and quality still are in an urgent need to be addressed. The challenges in the higher education of Assam are:

1. Lack of opportunities due to geographical isolation: The location of the entire north-east India in isolation to the Indian Territory is a major disadvantage in its developing educational sector. Furthermore this sphere is not given due prominence and treated with negligence central as well as state government.

2. The problem of Access to higher education: The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education in Assam is 8.8% against the national rate of 10.8% as per UGC Report on Higher Education in India- 2008. College population Index (The availability of colleges i.e. number of colleges per lakh population in the age-group of 18-23) of general education in Assam is 9.5 against national average of 8.1. However, as a whole the C-PI index in Assam is 10.8 against the national average of 12.4. These figures indicate the great challenge of widening the access of higher education in general and technical and professional education in particular in Assam [5].



Source: UGC Report on Higher Education in India- 2008

3. That a vast majority of teachers of rural colleges have lack of information about technological advancements which has put them at a long distance from the emerging trends of higher education. The dearth of records centers in the centers is developing a serious trouble concerning the gap most of the instructors, students and college authorities in maximum of the rural institutes of Assam.

4. Every other essential aspect contributing to indifference of faculties to research activities is the shortage of faculty.
5. The problem of insufficient transport facilities in rural regions also seriously impact the enrolment and continuation of the courses.
6. The colleges need to be satisfied with admission of best of those students who are willing to pursue a degree programmes but cannot afford to move a long way far from home due to financial troubles.
7. More and more private institutions are emerging that provide industry oriented courses while, the standard of these courses are up to the mark.
8. Challenges in adaptation to new on-line education like- poor community connectivity, inadequate content material/ substances, loss of technical resources, time control, not able to attain out to all of the institutes, accelerated stress on content delivery etc have turn out to be the brand new regular and pose risk to the daily activity of teaching.

Suggestions:

- 1. Examination and grading system:** The examination pattern, credit grading system, academic standard and adequate coverage of the syllabus need to be ensured throughout the curriculum.
- 2. Better amenities for Research and Technological Development:** Research and technology developments are inseparable components of any University. Proper amenities and funding, scholarships are necessary for the development of this sector.
- 3. Establish job-oriented courses:** Universities and colleges are in urgent need to enhance job-oriented programs thus, in turn, providing a sound career opportunity for the students.
- 4. Proper infrastructure and access to funds:** The educational backward districts of Assam should be given an urgent appraisal for improvement in its educational sector.
- 5. Focus on e-learning:** E-learning and smart technologies should be introduced in higher education in Assam which will reduce the gap between the unaccessible resource and the students.

Conclusion:

Assam is lagging behind in quality education and lack of constructive higher educational institutions as compared to other regions of India. Despite of increase in number of colleges and universities, the quality of education imparted is not up to date. Mushroom growth of educational infrastructures and institutes have taken place over the past few decades, but due to lack of attention in systematic educational planning, quality higher education is not up to the mark. Institutions of higher education in Assam, with crying needs for basic amenities and infrastructure, are hardly ready for competition in the global educational sphere. Problems like lack of financial assistance, regional backwardness, political negligence and poor administration in higher educational institutes in the state is driving the entire sector in the doom. With more higher education institutions that have wider reach beyond the state and regional borders, one can hope to build a more competitive environment that will breed leaders in science, technology, businesses, entertainment, and

politics who could compensate for political under-representation and can make Assam's voice heard at the national level [4]. 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 its access to all who desire it [5]. We are in an urgent need to save the human resource in Assam from becoming a bane on the economy of the state, and for that a well thought policy of higher education combined with adequate govt. funding and proper monitoring and control over the standard of higher education is required for a remarkable change.

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