



Elementary Education in Assam, India- Examining the trend and Progress

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Abstract- Primary education (or elementary education) is the building block of the entire education system in India and the first step of formal education for a child. In this study, an attempt has been made to examine the state of elementary education in Assam for the period 2006 to 2016. Progress of elementary education in the state over a decade is evaluated in terms of certain selected indicators based on secondary data. For reference or comparison purpose, we take the national average of the different parameters. For educational inputs we have taken school indicators and teacher indicators and for output we have taken enrolment indicators for Assam and then compared that with the national level i.e. with India. Further, we analysed the percentage enrolment as per the different social groups in Assam. Graphs and tables are used as tools to support the discussion.

Keywords- elementary, education, enrolment, school, primary

I. INTRODUCTION-

In the literature of economic growth, recent theories place utmost importance on education and good health as components of human capital, which are regarded essential components of growth of a nation. Education helps economic growth as it increases productivity of labour. Education is not only used as means to improve productivity of labour to be used in production purpose, but also used as an end. Different countries today give more importance on human development index (where attainment of education is taken as one of the major variable) rather than economic growth to reflect the prosperity of a country.

Primary education, also called as elementary education is the first step of formal education of a child. It is the foundation stone in which the entire education system rests. As today's child are the future of tomorrow, to build a solid infrastructure of human capital, naturally we need to strengthen the education at the base level that is at the primary level. Primary education gives basic knowledge to children about counting, word formation, understanding of environment and ethics. "The progress of primary education is an index of general, social and economic development of the country as a whole, (J.P. Naik, 2004).

Providing education to all has been the priority of the successive governments of India since independence. But education, particularly elementary education received colossal importance after launching 'SarvaSikhaAbhijyan' (SSA) in the year 2000. In fact access to primary education has become a fundamental right in India since the enactment of Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2009. In India elementary education or primary education is from class I to class VIII. Up to class V is classified as lower primary and VI to VII is termed as upper primary. In India, the primary or elementary education faces innumerable problems which vary from state to state. Education mostly being the state subject in India, so a state specific study regarding the progress in attaining success in different parameters of Primary education deserve more attention. The present study chooses Assam, as a case study. With around 2.57 percent of the total population of the country, Assam is one of the north-eastern states of India. In this study, Assam has been chosen because with a literacy rate of 73.18 percent, It almost represents the national average which is 74.04 percent (Population Census, 2011) and also very recently Assam has been placed among the top 5 states in terms of achieving highest literacy rate, (NSO report, 2020). The present study is a modest attempt just an attempt to make a comprehensive study in the status of elementary education of Assam in the last 10 years

II. OBJECTIVES

The basic objective of the present study is to examine the state of elementary education in the state of Assam since 2007-08

III. DATA AND METHODS-

The study is a descriptive one. Secondary data have been used for the analysis. Following source are being used-DISE, MHRD, Government of India, Census reports 2001 and 2011, Annual Status of Education (ASER), Reports, and many other government reports and publications.

Progress of elementary education in the state over a decade is evaluated in terms of certain selected indicators. For reference or comparison purpose, we take the national average of the different parameters. Graphs and tables are used as tools to support the discussion. Study period is chosen from 2007-08 to 2015-16, according to the convenience of data availability.

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1. School Indicators

Almost a constant trend is observed (figure 1) regarding the number of the government schools in India during the reference period of the present study. The slight increase in the line showing total schools towards the end of the study period is mainly due to the increase in the number of private schools in India. But in case of Assam (Figure 2) we have seen some fluctuations particularly in case of Government schools. Whereas in case of private schools there has been slight decrease. Table 1 shows the school indicators of Assam. When comparing with the national average we have found that primary schools per thousand population actually declines towards the ending year whereas for upper primary it increases in the initial years then again declines with slight improvement in the ending years.

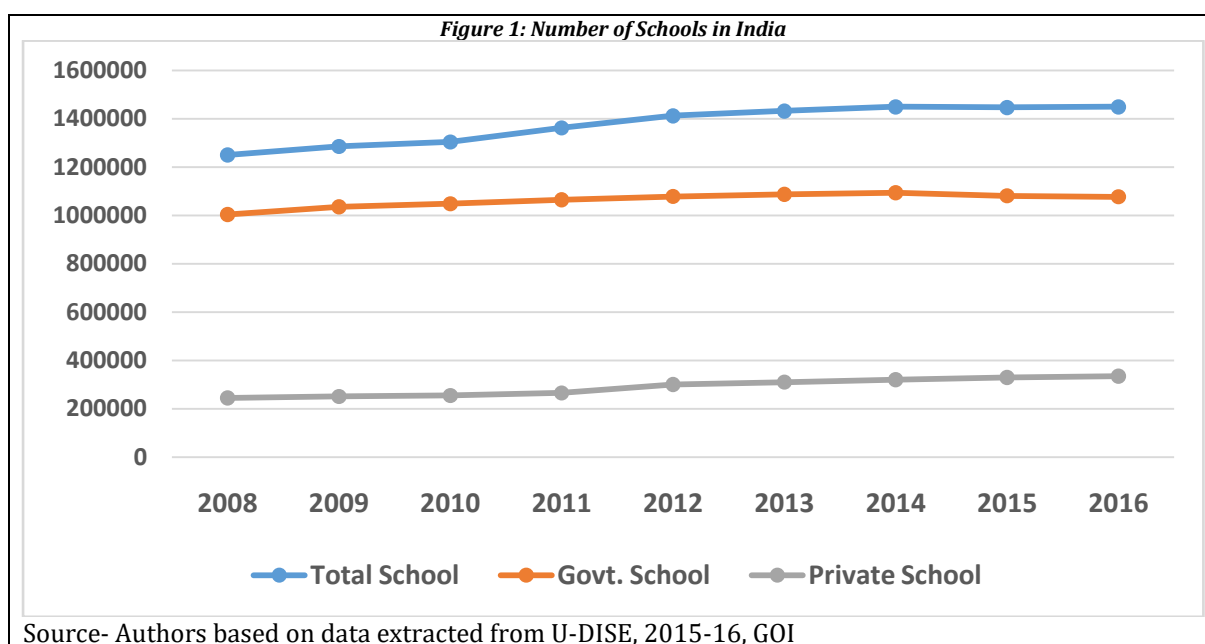


Table 1: School Indicators- Assam vis-à-vis India

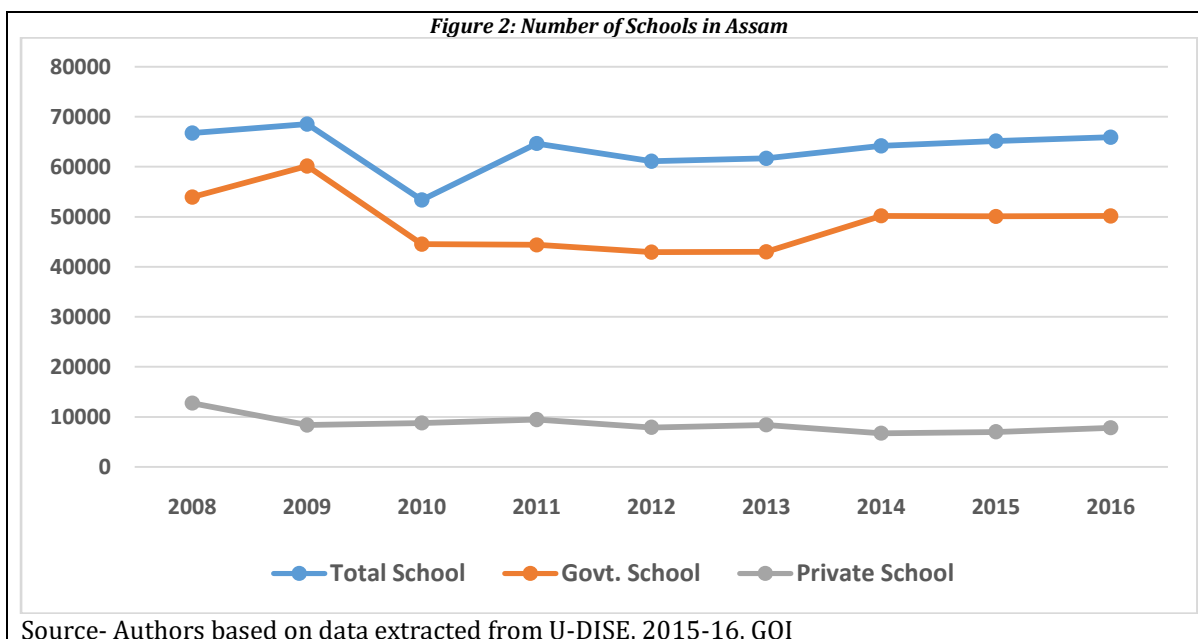
		Year								
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
India	Indicators									
	Primary school per 1000 child population	9	7	10	10	10	10	9	9	9
	Upper primary /secondary school per 1000 child population	6	9	7	8	8	8	8	8	8
Assam	Primary school per 1000 child population	17	9	13	16	16	16	14	15	15

Upper primary /secondary school per 1000 child population	8	17	7	10	8	8	8	9	9
Source- Authors based on data extracted from U-DISE, 2015-16, GOI									

4.2. Enrolment and Drop-out status

Table 2 gives a glance of the enrolment and dropout rate for the study period in India. For India girls' enrolment in lower primary is almost found constant whereas for girls' enrolment in upper primary is slightly increasing. Ratio of girl's enrolment to boys (at primary level) also found constant during the entire period. But the ratio for girls' enrolment to boys at upper primary level has been found increasing over the years. Dropout rate at primary level substantially decline from 9.4 to 4.1. Same finding is also observed for the state in girls'

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Indicators									
% Girls Enrolment: Primary Level	48.2	48.4	48.5	48.4	48.4	48.4	48.2	48.2	48.2
% Girls Enrolment: U. Primary Level	47.0	47.6	48.1	48.4	48.6	48.8	48.7	48.6	48.6
Ratio of Girls Enr.to Boys: Primary	0.93	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.93	0.93
Ratio of Girls Enr.to Boys: Upp. Primary	0.89	0.91	0.93	0.94	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95
Avg. Drop-out Rate: Primary Level	9.4	8.0	9.1	6.8	6.5	5.6	4.7	4.3	4.1
Source- Authors based on data extracted from U-DISE, 2015-16, GOI									



Enrolment, both at primary and upper level (Table 3). But the ratio of girls' enrolment to boys is relatively higher in Assam than that of national average (Table 3) which is a good sign for the state and over the years it is found increasing. But dropout rate in the state is observed increasing which is definitely not a good sign.

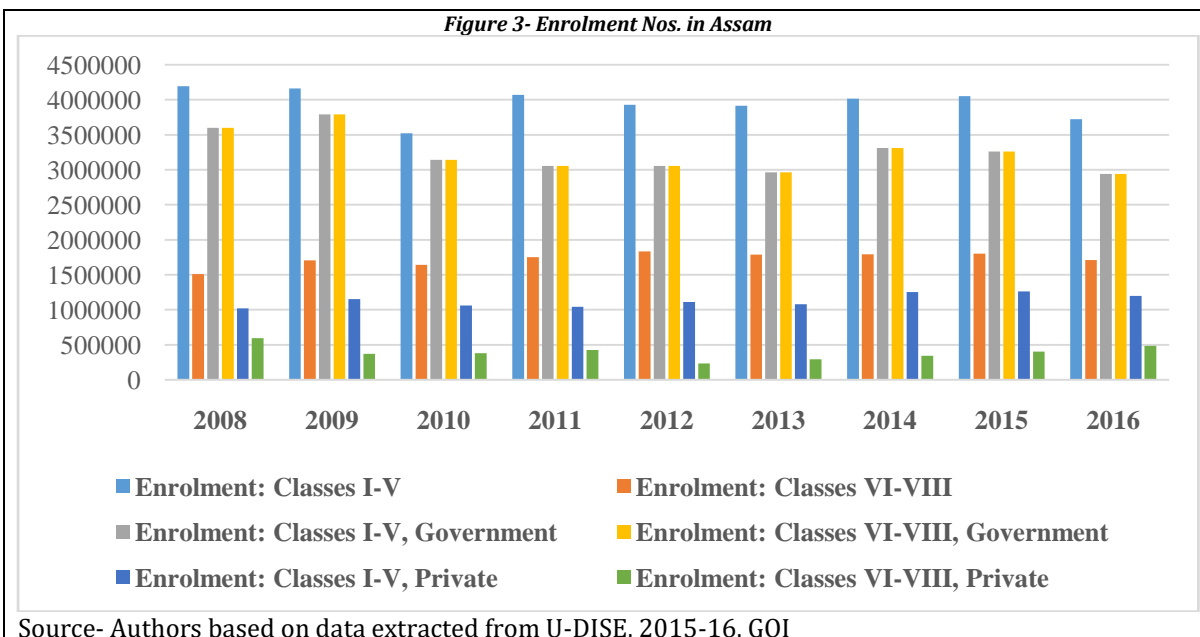
Table 3- Enrolment Indicators- Assam

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
% Girls Enrolment: Primary Level	49.4	49.4	49.7	49.5	49.6	49.7	49.7	49.6	49.6
% Girls Enrolment: U. Primary Level	50.1	50.7	51.2	51.4	51.3	51.5	51.6	51.8	51.6
Ratio of Girls Enr. to Boys: Primary	0.97	0.97	0.99	0.98	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.98	0.98
Ratio of Girls Enr. to Boys: U. Primary	1.01	1.03	1.05	1.06	1.05	1.06	1.07	1.07	1.07
Avg. Drop-out Rate: Primary Level	13.5	12.7	9.6	8.6	11.7	8.8	6.2	7.4	15.4

Source-Authors based on data extracted from U-DISE, 2015-16, GOI

Figure 3 shows Enrolment indicators of Assam during the study period 2008 to 2016. Enrolment from class I to V, VI to VIII in total, government and private schools are taken. From the figure, it is clear that the highest enrolment is seen in case of government schools of Assam and lowest is seen in case of private school with enrolment in private schools from class VI to VIII being the least. There is high number of total enrolment as evident from the graph which is mainly caused due to higher enrolment in government schools of Assam. However, the overall trend in enrolment indicators is more or less constant over the reference period.

Figure 3- Enrolment Nos. in Assam



4.2.1. Access to education by social group-

This section tries to explore the status of primary education in the state across social groups. While for India (Table 4) we have found that SC enrolment percentage is constant over the years. ST enrolment percentage is also more or less constant with a slight decline in the year

Table 4- Enrolment by social group India

year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Indicators									
% SC Enrolment: Classes I-VIII	19.8	19.7	19.8	19.1	19.8	20.2	19.7	19.8	19.8
% ST Enrolment: Classes I-VIII	11.0	11.0	10.9	10.7	10.9	10.9	10.6	10.5	10.4
% OBC Enrolment: Primary Level	42.4	42.4	42.2	40.1	42.8	42.9	44.1	44.4	45.1
% OBC Enrolment :Upp. Primary Level	41.9	41.9	42.0	40.3	43.3	43.7	44.4	44.7	45.2

Source- Authors based on data extracted from U-DISE, 2015-16, GOI

Table 5- Enrolment by social group in Assam

year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Indicators									
% SC Enrolment: Classes I-VIII	9.7	9.8	9.7	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.9	8.7	8.6
% ST Enrolment: Classes I-VIII	15.6	15.2	15.2	15.3	15.1	14.5	14.7	14.6	14.3

% OBC Enrolment: Primary Level	23.3	23.2	25.2	24.9	25.0	25.2	24.8	25.1	25.9
% OBC Enrolment: Upp. Primary Level	26.5	26.6	27.2	27.3	26.8	26.5	26.6	26.8	27.3
Source- Authors based on data extracted from U-DISE, 2015-16, GOI									

2016. India has progressed in terms of percentage of OBC people enrolled both in lower and upper primary level. Table 5 offers a detail picture on access to primary education in Assam by social group. As we can see percentage of both SC and ST people enrolment got decreased during the reference period. Assam is a diverse state with home to many scheduled tribe and castes. So declining ST enrolment in the state is an issue of concern. However the state has progressed in terms of enrolment of OBC group.

4.3. Availability of Teachers-

Finally we consult some data regarding teachers' availability at elementary level. Table 6 shows percentage of teachers both at government and private level have declined in India. Pupil teacher ratio is also found declining. Same also holds true for the state of Assam. Declining pupil teacher ratio has two perspectives. One it shows a good sigh with lower burden to teacher paving the way for quality education. On the other hand either low admission or high dropout rates at the elementary level is the culprit.

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
% Teachers: Government	69.3	68.6	68	65.6	64.1	61.5	59.7	58.8	57.9
% Teachers: Private (Aided)	10.4	10	8.8	8.4	8.1	9.1	9.1	8.6	8.5
Pupil-Teacher Ratio : Elementary	33	32	32	30	30	27	26	25	24
Source-Authors based on data extracted from U-DISE, 2015-16, GOI									

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
% Teachers: Government	73.2	76.5	73.6	61.6	61.9	65.5	71.7	70	67.7
% Teachers: Private (Aided)	15.5	17.7	19.4	19.4	17	15	9.7	9.1	9.1
Pupil-Teacher Ratio : Elementary	24	22	23	21	25	21	20	20	18
Source-Authors based on data extracted from U-DISE, 2015-16, GOI									

V. CONCLUSION

The present study is descriptive in nature. We have found a few observations in the present paper. First against a national trend of increasing private schools, number of private schools slightly decreased. Secondly primary schools per thousand child population also experience a downward trend during the reference period. Thirdly the ratio of girls' enrolment to boys is relatively higher in Assam than that of national average. Fourthly, percentage enrolment of people belonging to ST has gone down. Finally, the percentage of teachers both at government and private level (aided) have declined both at the national and state level. Again, in case of number of enrolment is Assam in government school and private school,

we found that the highest enrolment is seen in case of government schools of Assam and lowest is seen in case of private school with enrolment in private schools from class VI to VIII being the least. However, the overall trend in enrolment indicators is more or less constant over the reference period. Overall, Assam is doing well in case of education by being one among the top five states of India having highest literacy rate. Our study conforms to the statement as we have found the same in case of elementary education as well. The present study, however, has not made any rigorous attempt to investigate the underlying causes behind the aforesaid findings related to the state of Assam.

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