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A Study on Higher Education in Assam

Dr. Minakshi Duarah, *Asst. Prof, Eastern Karbi Anglong College, Assam, India*

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Abstract

Socio-economic development of a country depends on education, which shapes the human resources of a country. Although the present education system of India was born during the British period, India has had education centres since ancient times. In the Middle Age, great educational centres like Takshasila, Nalanda and Bikramsila are some of the higher education centres of the Sanskrit medium. Cotton College, the first institution of Higher Education in Assam and also North east India, was established by the British government in 1901. The Higher Education Department of the government of Assam has been playing an important role in the expansion and quality development of the Higher Education sector through the universities and colleges. The state Government has provided adequate funds for infrastructure development of these educational institutions as well as establishing new universities and colleges, and introducing additional streams to existing colleges to enhance access to Higher Education. The study attempts to know the present status of higher education in Assam, as well as to know the recent initiatives undertaken by the Government of Assam for development of higher education in the state. It is a descriptive method based on secondary data collected from Government publications, websites, etc.

Keywords: higher education, initiatives, etc.

1. Introduction:

Education is a major aspect that affects the socio-economic development of a country at its grass root level. After independence, India became a democratic country with the adoption of the Constitution of India in 1950. Our Constitution has made every possible provision on education emphasising on the diverse socio-economic and demographic scenario and condition of, so that every citizen of the country can develop his or her capabilities and live a healthy and prosperous life irrespective of caste, race, religion and size of population. Higher education is the most important stage of education for economic development than any other stage of education. Higher education provides the specialist knowledge to the youth which can directly affect their working style. Although the present education system of India was born during the British period, India has had education centres since ancient times. In the Middle Age, great educational centres like Takshasila, Nalanda and Bikramsila are some of higher education centres of the Sanskrit medium. Muslim rulers also established many colleges in the Arabic medium in North India. During the early

British period, also institutes of oriental type like Calcutta Madrasa and Hindu College, Calcutta were established where a student can access quality English learning. The education system created by British rule in India, lacked in inculcating Indian values and ethos. Cotton College, the first institution of Higher Education in Assam and also North East India, which was established by the British government in 1901, the credit of its establishment mainly goes to Manik Chandra Baruah, who made a strong case for it. In the year, under the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi, the Gauhati University trust Board was formed for public donation for the university.

2. Objectives of the study:

The study is based on objectives like;

- 1) To know the present status of higher education in Assam
- 2) To study the recent initiatives undertaken by the Government of Assam for the development of higher education in the state

3. Methodology:

The study is descriptive in nature, using secondary data collected from Government publications, websites, etc.

4. Discussion:

The present status of higher education in Assam is studied using parameters like Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), Total Number of HEIs, Number of Institutions accredited by NAAC, etc.

4.1 Present status of higher education in Assam:

4.1.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio:

Gross Enrolment Ratio is a statistical measure used in the education sector to determine the number of students enrolled in school at several different grade levels (like elementary, middle schools and high schools). GER of Higher Education in Assam was 15.4 in 2015-16, while the national ratio was 25.4. In the same period, GER of males and females in higher education in Assam was 16.2 and 14.7, respectively. On the other hand, the national average of GER for males and females were 25.4 and 23.5, respectively. Table 1 shows the GER of Assam, including different states of North East India and of the nation.

Table 1: Gross Enrolment Ratio of Higher Education in North- Eastern States

Serial No.	State	Male	Female	Total
1	Assam	16.2	14.7	15.4
2	Nagaland	14.2	15.6	14.9
3	Manipur	35.3	33.1	34.2
4	Arunachal Pradesh	28.8	28.5	28.7
5	Tripura	19.9	14.0	16.9
6	Mizoram	25.2	23.0	24.1
7	Meghalaya	20.4	21.1	20.8
All India		25.4	23.5	24.5

Source: Educational statistics at a glance, 2018

Table 1 states that among the North -Eastern States, Manipur has the highest GER, greater than the national average of 24.5. All other states except Nagaland has better GER as compared to Assam.

4.1.2 Gender Parity Index (GPI):

Gender Parity Index is the ratio of Gross Enrolment Rate of female students enrolled at Tertiary levels of education to the corresponding ratio of male students at that level, which provides a picture of gender equality in education. A higher GPI means higher gender equality in an education system. Table 2 shows Gender Parity index of Higher Education in North- Eastern States.

Table 2: Gross Parity Index of Higher Education in North- Eastern States

Serial No.	State	Male
1	Assam	.90
2	Nagaland	1.10
3	Manipur	.94
4	Arunachal Pradesh	.99
5	Tripura	.74
6	Mizoram	.91
7	Meghalaya	1.04
All India		.92

Source: Educational statistics at a glance, 2018

Table 2 states that GPI of higher education India was .92 in 2015-16. Among the North Eastern- States Tripura had the lowest (.74) GPI, which was followed by Assam (.90).

4.1.3 People Teacher Ratio (PTR):

The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is the average number of students enrolled per teacher at a specific education level. It is obtained by dividing total enrollment by the number of teachers. It measures teacher workload, resource availability, and potential individualized attention, with lower ratios generally indicating better educational quality. A standard PTR is very important for quality teaching and learning in all stages of education. A low rate of PTR is good for an education system. Higher education is a stage of education where special care is needed for the students so that they can get the chance to shape their thinking in a positive way, which leads to development of the nation. Table 3 shows the PTR of North- Eastern States. In 2015-16, the PTR of India was 21, while that of Assam was 22, higher than the national one.

Table 3: Pupil Teacher Ratio of North- Eastern States

Serial No.	State	Pupil Teacher Ratio
1	Assam	22
2	Nagaland	15
3	Manipur	19
4	Arunachal Pradesh	33
5	Tripura	26
6	Mizoram	15
7	Meghalaya	22
All India		21

Source: Educational statistics at a glance, 2018

4.1.4 Total Number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

In 2024- 25, Assam has 20 Universities (including private and deemed universities), 2 Central Universities. The details of Higher Education institutions in Assam are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Number of Higher Educational Institutions in Assam

Institutions	Numbers in 2023-24	Numbers in 2024-25
Universities (Including Private and Deemed Universities)	20	20
Central University	2	2
Government Colleges	5	4
Government Model Colleges	11	18
Provincialized Colleges	321	321
Private/Non-Government Colleges	92	92
Literary & Voluntary Organization	25	25
Government Law College	1	1
Non-Government Law College	26	26

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2023-24, 2024-25

Table 4 reflects that the number of Government Model colleges has increased in 2024-25.

4.1.5 Quality of Higher Education:

Quality of higher education is the greatest concern of every nation; University Grants Commission (UGC) established the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in the year 1994 as an autonomous institution to look at the quality aspect of higher education of India. Any institution of higher education of the country, recognised by the UGC, is eligible to avail the services of the NAAC for getting assessment regarding the quality of education it offers and obtaining Accreditation. As in the other parts of the country, the healthy practice of getting assessed by the NAAC has also grown in Assam. The result of assessment is communicated in the form of grades as A++, A+, A, B++, B+, B and C and D(not accredited). The quality of an educational institution is mainly dependent on the curriculum framework, teaching-learning process, culture of research and innovation, academic resources, examination and evaluation system, imaginative approach, available infrastructure and management skill. Financial resources also influence the quality. The latest grades obtained by the older universities of Assam are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Recent Grades obtained by the universities of Assam

Sl. No,	Universities	Grade by NAAC
1	Assam University	B (Graded in 2021)
2	Gauhati University	A+ (Graded in 2024)
3	Dibrugarh University	B++ (Graded in 2023)
4	Tezpur University	A+ (Graded in 2017)

Source: <http://naac.gov.in>

4.2 Recent initiatives undertaken by the Government of Assam for the development of higher education of the state:

The government has launched new schemes under Higher Education for the interest and benefit of the students in the state.

1) Fee Waiver Scheme:

The Assam government introduced the Fee Waiver Scheme in 2016-17 to help students pursue their higher education. Under the scheme, the students taking admission to the specified institutions do not have to pay the tuition fees. The students can get free admission to the applicable degree and post-graduate courses in the specified institutions in Assam. The Government has introduced the Fee Waiver Scheme to reimburse the admission/tuition fees for poor and BPL students admitted to colleges and universities whose parental income is Rs. 2.00 lakh or below it. The released funds and the number of beneficiaries is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Released funds and the number of beneficiaries against Fee Waiver Scheme

Year	Amount released (Rs in lakh)	No. of beneficiaries
2018-19	9173.30	278729
2019-20	7723.13	189434
2020-21	16192.61	407581
2021-22	8979.39	357903
2022-23	18387.32	329612
2023-24	10309.72	294633

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

Table 6 makes it clear that the highest amount of funds was released in 2022-23 among the studied years, and in 2020-21, the highest number of beneficiaries benefited from the scheme.

2) Distribution of scooters to Girl students:

The Government has introduced Dr. Banikanta Kakati Merit Award Scheme for providing scooters to girl students securing 60% or more marks and boys students who secured 75% and above marks in Higher Secondary examinations conducted by Assam Higher Education Council under Pragyan Bharat Scheme.

Table7: Distribution of Scooters to Girl Students

Year	Amount released (Rs. In lakh)	No. of students benefitted
2018-19 & 2019-20 (Being provided in 2021)	9020.96	15160 (girls students benefitted)
2021-22	0	0
2022-23	25741.98	35800 (Girls with 1 st Division and boys securing 75% and above it)
2023-24	25641.07	35770 (Girls with 1 st division and boys securing 75% and above it)

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

Table 7 shows that the highest (Rs 25741.98 lakh) amount of fund was released in 2022-23, and 35800 beneficiaries benefitted from the scheme.

3) Mobility Grant:

The Assam government provides mobility grants to support the education and transportation of female students, which are now largely merged under the Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina (MMNM) scheme. This initiative offers monthly financial aid to girl students in Higher Secondary (₹1000/month), Graduation (₹1250/month), and post-graduation (₹2500/month) for 10 months to facilitate their travel to institutions. In 2022-23, the State Government has introduced the scheme for providing mobility grants to girl students studying in State Universities, Autonomous Colleges and State Colleges. For this, Rs 772.30 lakh was released to 7723 beneficiaries. In 2023-24, Rs 720.00 lakh was allotted for the implementation of the scheme.

4) Mess Dues Waiver:

It is a scheme of government of Assam, part of Gyan Deepika Yojana, providing Rs 1000 per month for 10 months for students in government/provincialized college hostels. During 2022-23, the Government has released Rs.1199.89 lakh for 16763 students, and in 2023-24, Rs. 1079.90 lakh is released to 12525 beneficiaries.

5) Book grant to students:

The Government of the State has provided book grant to UG level students. In 2021, book grants were given to Rs.1000 each. During the year 2020-21, the grants were enhanced to Rs.1500/- each. During the year 2021-22, the grant was Rs 1000/ to each. The number of students benefitted is shown in Table 8.

Table 8: No. of students receiving book grants

Year	Amount released (Rs. In lakh)	No. of students benefitted
2019-20	675.31	67531
2020-21	4433.63	295575
2021-22	3543.41	354341
2022-23	4954.11	341663

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

Introduction to the additional stream:

The state Government has introduced additional stream in the existing colleges for the benefit of the student communities. Table 5 states that in 2020-21, 16 streams of Science was started and in 2022-23, 2 commerce stream was opened.

Table 9: No. of additional streams introduced

Year	Science	Commerce
2020-21	16	-
2021-22	1	-
2022-23	8	2
2023-24	0	0

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

6) Bhasa Gaurav Achoni:

The Government has introduced Bhasa Gaurav Achoni to preserve and promote vernacular languages and cultural traditions of the State for making corpus fund and financial assistance to Indigenous Sahitya Sabha of the State. Table 10 presents funds released and the number of beneficiaries under Bhasa Gaurav Achoni.

Table 10: Number of beneficiaries under Bhasa Gaurav Achoni

Year	Amount released (Rs. In lakh)	No. of beneficiaries
2020-21	4320	21Numbers Sahitya Sabhas
2021-22	Nil	Nil
2022-23	2736	21Numbers Sahitya Sabhas
2023-24	129.60	21Numbers Sahitya Sabhas

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

Table 10 shows that the highest (Rs 4320 lakh) amount of money was released under Bhasa Gaurav Achoni in 2020-21.

7) Scholarship:

Combined Merit Scholarship:

Combined Merit Scholarship is provided by the Directorate of Higher Education to the students of Assam studying in the 1st Semester Degree course and Master Degree course in any recognized Colleges/Universities in the State and other States of the country who have uniformly good Academic records and obtained at least 60% marks in the last qualifying examinations. The amount sanctioned for the Combined Merit Scholarship is shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Combined Merit Scholarship Statements

Year	Name of the course	No. of students benefitted	Rate per student	Amount Sanctioned (In Rs.)
2020-21	Degree	505	Rs. 300 per month	1818000
	Master Degree	30	Rs. 500 per month	180000
2021-22	Degree	350	Rs. 450 per month	1890000
	Master Degree	175	Rs. 500 per month	1050000
2022-23	Degree	231	Rs. 450 per month	1247400
	Master Degree	274	Rs. 500 per month	1644000
2023-24	Degree	400	Rs. 5400 per month	2160000
	Master Degree	152	Rs. 6000 per month	912000

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

Table 11 states the amount sanctioned as combined merit scholarship from 2020-21 to 2023-24. The table states that in 2023-24, Rs. 2160000 was sanctioned to 400 numbers of degree students and Rs 912000 to 152 master degree students.

P.G. Research Scholarship:

This scholarship is provided by this Directorate to the students of Assam pursuing M.Phil, PhD and LLM degree courses in any recognized Colleges/Universities in the state and other states of the country who have good academic records and obtained 55% marks in the last qualifying examinations. The amount sanctioned for 2021-22 to 2023-24 is shown in Table 12.

Table 12: P.G. Research Scholarship Statements

Year	Name of the course	No. of students benefitted	Rate per student	Amount Sanctioned (In Rs.)
2021-22	Ph.D.	40	Rs. 1000 per month	480000
	M.Phil.	21	Rs. 750 per month	189000
	LLM	4	Rs. 500 per month	24000
2022-23	Ph.D. (Renew)	3	Rs. 1000 per month	36000
	Ph.D.	43	Rs. 1000 per month	516000
	Ph.D. (Renew)	7	Rs. 1000 per month	72000
2023-24	LLM	1	Rs. 6000 per month	6000
	Ph.D. (Renew)	8	Rs. 9000 per month	72000

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

Scholarship Belonging to Minority Community:

This scholarship is provided to the Girls' students of Assam belonging to the minority community studying in the 1st Semester Degree course and Master Degree course in any recognized Colleges/Universities in the State and other States of the country, who have good academic records and obtained at least 50% marks in the last qualifying examinations. The amount sanctioned from 2020-21 to 2023-24 is shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Statements of Scholarship Belonging to the Minority Community

Year	Name of the course	No. of students benefitted	Rate per student	Amount Sanctioned (In Rs.)
2020-21	Degree	235	Rs. 6000 per month	186000
	Master Degree	13	Rs. 10000 per month	10000
2021-22	Degree	103	Rs. 6000 per month	1410000
	Master Degree	11	Rs. 10000 per month	130000
2022-23	Degree	400	Rs.6000 per month	618000
	Master Degree	152	Rs. 10000 per month	110000
2023-24	Degree	198	Rs. 6000 per month	1188000
	Master Degree	40	Rs. 10000 per month	400000

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

8) Literary Pension:

Literary Pension are given to reputed Writers/ Authors of the state who have outstanding contribution in the literary field of Assam at a rate of Rs. 8000/- per month. The year wise number of pensioners is given in Table 14.

Table 14: Year wise number of pensioners

Year	No. of Pensioner
2020-21	43
2021-22	22
2022-23	23
2023-24	3

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

9) Appointment of Teaching & Non-Teaching Employees:

During the year 2023-24, number of posts created are 126 in 5 numbers of Govt. Model Colleges and 2 nos. of Model Women Colleges of Assam. Table 15 shows number of appointment of Teaching & Non-Teaching Employees in colleges of Assam.

Table 15: Number of appointments of Teaching & Non-Teaching Employees

Year	Category of post	No. of incumbents
2020-21	Teaching& non-teaching	1626 numbers in 33 provincialised new Colleges and addl. Posts of 134 in provincialised Colleges, 36 numbers in Govt. Model College, Kaziranga.
2021-22	Teaching& non-teaching	934
2022-23	Teaching& non-teaching	1093
2023-24	Teaching& non-teaching	586

Source: Economic Survey, Assam, 2024-25

Table 15 shows that in 2020-21, appointment was given to 1796 incumbents and in 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, appointment was given to 934, 1093 and 586 teaching and non-teaching staff.

5. Conclusion:

The Higher Education Department of the government of Assam has been playing an important role in the expansion and quality development of the Higher Education sector through the universities and colleges. The state Government has provided adequate funds for infrastructure development of these educational institutions as well as establishing new universities and colleges and introducing additional streams to existing colleges to enhance access to Higher Education. A well-designed policy of higher education, combined with adequate government funding and proper monitoring and control over standard of higher education is urgently required in higher education in Assam to meet the global competition.

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