

PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN ASSAM: AN ANALYTICAL DISTRICT WISE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The indigenous system of primary education in medieval period in the state of Assam is changing after Indian Government along with Assam Government has taken various educational schemes for development of primary education in Assam time to time. Primary education or basic education is a fundamental right for every child in the development of country along with states. For the democratic country, India aims to provide equal educational opportunities to all children at least primary school education should be within the reach of every school going child. Primary education is free and compulsory to all children in the age group 6 to 14 in our country. In spite of making different efforts, the demand of universalization of primary education is not fulfilled in Assam. The study is conducted on the basis of various secondary data. The secondary data were collected from both government and non-government sources. The present paper is an attempt to study primary education as district wise in Assam.

KEY-WORDS: Primary Education, Compulsory Education, Right to Education Act, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Infrastructural Facility.

Introduction

Primary education or basic education is a fundamental right for each child which can play a significant role for the overall development of the country. Primary education is a basic requirement for economic development, modernization of the social system and the smooth functioning of modern democratic institution. The quality of life of a person depends on the primary education and one gets from the state. Primary education is free where children in the age group 6 – 14 are taught in India. Primary education is used the term as lower primary stage

where includes classes I to V and upper primary stage where includes classes VI to VIII. Primary school has been established for fulfilling the obligation to provide for free and compulsory education to all children as stipulated under Article 45 of the Constitution of India. Before the British rule, there was a purely indigenous system of education in Assam. David Scott, the first agent of the East India Company, tried to improve and develop the indigenous system of education soon after his arrival in 1826 in Assam. After the recommendations of the Wood's Dispatch of 1854, indigenous primary schools received grants-in-aid. Side by side, with these activities of the East India Company, the Christian Missionaries also started primary schools in their religious interests. The numbers of primary schools rose from 204 in 1871-72 to 1351 with an enrolment of 38182 in 1882-83 in Assam. The government of Assam passed the Primary Education Act in 1926. The government has taken various steps for the expansion of primary education after 1947 in Assam. After independence of the country, to make primary education compulsory an act was passed in 1947 in Assam. In 1947-48, there were 7374 primary schools with 3932478 pupils in Assam. The Assam Basic Education Act, 1954 was introduced according to recommendation of the Zakir Hussain Committee Report. This act was proposed to have free universal primary education in the state of Assam. Assam Elementary Education Act, 1962 was passed in the state. This act made the Gaon Panchayat responsible for the management and control of primary education in Assam. The Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution was passed forming a District Council for each autonomous district in the tribal areas in the state after in 1947. It is to be noted that for implementation of the National Policy on Education, 1986 for expansion and improvement of primary education was made under the Operation Black Board scheme. The centrally sponsored scheme Operation Black Board was primarily an effort to standardize minimum acceptable level of infrastructure. This scheme also contributed for the development of primary education in Assam. The DPEP (District Primary Education Program) guidelines were formulated in April, 1993 and since then there have been major developments in the evolution of DPEP. The scheme of SSA (Sarba Siksha Abhiyan) was evolved from the recommendations of the state Education ministers' conference held in October, 1998 to pursue UEE as a mission. The main target of SSA was to bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007. The Right to Education Act, 2009 is considered as one of the major landmark to provide free and compulsory education for all children in our country. The Act of parliament received the assent of the President on the 26th August, 2009. Finally this Act has come into force from April, 2010. Assam was the 19th state in India to have implemented the RTE Act since it was passed in 2009. After almost two hours of discussion, the RTE Act was approved during the State Cabinet meeting which would helped to every child between the ages of 6 to 14 years the right to free and compulsory education in the state. There were 35,000 lower primary schools in the time of state cabinet approve of the RTE Act in

Assam. The government of Assam has decided to introduce Teacher Eligibility Test to bring in eligible and competent teachers for quality education in the elementary level in the state in 2011. The Directorate of Elementary Education (DEE), Assam is functioning under the RTE Act to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years in the state. The government of Assam has made some new arrangement as per the mandate of the RTE Act, 2009, which provided for the inclusion of the classes between I and VIII in the elementary stage of education. The Assam State Government has already decided to have one primary school in a radius of one kilometer and an upper primary school in a radius of three kilometers in Assam. The Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam is mainly responsible for administration control, expansion, inspection, supervisions, monitoring and evaluation of elementary education in the state.

Objective of the Study

The objective of paper is to find out district wise enrolment and teachers along with infrastructural facilities in primary education of Assam.

Methods

The present study is basically based on analytical in nature. The research paper is based on secondary data. The secondary data were collected from both government and non-government sources. In addition to secondary data, a large number of discussions were held with knowledgeable persons regarding the primary education in Assam.

Discussions And Findings

An analytical discussions and findings regarding primary education in Assam are as below.

Enrolment and Teacher in Primary Education School

The important indicator for development of primary education is known from the Sixth All India School Education Survey that the total enrolments in primary schools are 2557239 and in upper primary schools are 943248 in the state of Assam. It is also observed that out of total enrolment 1319189 are boys and 1238050 are girls in primary schools in Assam. The total enrolments of children in primary schools were 3286215 in 2009-10 in Assam. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) in primary level schools in Assam is 98.8 and 92.2 respectively. The data regarding GNR and NER in the state are presented in Table- 1.

Table-1: District wise GER and NER at Primary Schools in Assam, 2013-14.

Sl. No	District	GER	NER
01	Kokrajha	98.4	90.6
02	Dhubri	98.6	91.7
03	Goalpara	99.0	92.9
04	Barpeta	99.3	93.9
05	Morigaon	99.4	97.9
06	Nagaon	98.8	94.3
07	Sonitpur	99.1	91.9
08	Lakhimpur	99.1	94.9
09	Dhemaji	99.3	92.0
10	Tinsukia	98.4	88.3
11	Dibrugarah	98.7	92.7
12	Sibsagar	98.3	96.0
13	Jorhat	98.9	94.1
14	Goalpara	99.5	95.4
15	Karbi angling	96.5	94.8
16	Dima Hasao	99.0	79.5
17	Cachar	98.8	91.9
18	Karimganj	98.5	89.5
19	Hailakandi	99.4	90.0
20	Bongaigaon	99.3	89.3
21	Chirang	98.6	89.1

22	Kamrup	99.1	89.3
23	Kamrup Metro	96.7	88.8
24	Nalbari	99.5	95.2
25	Baksa	98.9	96.6
26	Darrang	98.2	94.6
27	Udalguri	98.5	95.2
Total	Assam	98.8	92.2

Source: Statistical Hand Book Assam, 2014: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati, P: 279.

The trend of rising teacher will have far reaching consequences which may lead to development of Assam. There has been rapid growth of expenditure including enrolment and teacher in every district in primary level education in Assam. It is also observed that there is some noticeable disparity in development of primary level education among the districts in Assam. As we know that the literacy rate is the highest in Kamrup Metro (88.71%) and lowest in Dhubri (58.34%) in 2011 census. The District Information System for Education (DISE) report 2013-14 indicates that the average annual dropout rate at primary level in Assam was 6.24 which were higher as compared to 4.67 in India during 2012-13. The average annual dropout in primary level for girls and boys are 4.66 and 4.68 respectively 2012-13. It is to be noted that the main challenge lies in bringing the never enrolled and drop out children into the primary level education system in Assam District wise Enrolment and Teacher in primary schools are presented in Table-2.

Table-2: District wise Teachers and Enrolments at Primary Schools in Assam, as on 2013-14.

Sl. No	District	Teacher	Enrolment	Dropout %
01	Kokrajhar	4015	113046	06.3
02	Dhubri	5627	285346	12.8
03	Goalpara	4263	133446	10.7
04	Barpeta	5834	196428	02.8

05	Morigaon	3913	118058	05.8
06	Nagaon	10102	326765	07.8
07	Sonitpur	6350	187849	09.0
08	Lakhimpur	5455	123227	04.1
09	Demaji	3151	73164	04.9
10	Tinsukia	3190	117363	05.4
11	Dibrugarah	3672	112026	04.9
12	Sivasagar	9176	96570	05.6
13	Jorhat	3980	81411	01.8
14	Golaghat	3383	92027	06.8
15	Karbi anglong	3782	106250	09.7
16	Dima Hasao	2631	22627	07.8
17	Cachar	4567	186114	09.3
18	Karimganj	4035	158272	06.5
19	Hailakandi	3175	84811	05.5
20	Bongaigaon	2517	85403	05.2
21	Chirang	2406	57305	07.6
22	Kamrup	4888	133888	04.3
23	Kamrup Metro	2043	57630	00.8
24	Nalbari	3087	65400	10.3
25	Baksa	3346	92229	07.6
26	Darrang	3613	116294	12.3
27	Udalguri	3017	78893	08.3

Total	Assam	115218	3301842	06.3
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Source: Statistical Hand Book Assam, 2014: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati, P: 273.

In the period of Vedic, single-teacher schools have existed. The old tradition of single teacher schools have been changed in times. It is observed that most of the primary schools are found more than one teacher in Assam. The SAISES reveals that total full time teachers are 83848 in primary schools in Assam. Out of total teachers, 55468 are male and 28380 are female. Total number of part time teachers are 718 in the primary schools. On the other hand it is observed that the total number of full time teachers in upper primary schools were 57486 in the state of Assam. It is also observed that the majority of teachers are male in compared to female in Assam. In pupil - teacher ratio front, the state position was 25 which is lower in compared to 33 of the national average in 2009 – 2010. The total number of primary school in the state is increasing after the independence of the country. As per the information made by DISE developed by the National University for Education Planning and Administration, there were 53338 primary schools in the 23 district of Assam in 2009 – 2010. Out of total 53383 primary schools, 44,518 (83%) schools were government school. The state has got 13 primary schools per 1000 child in 2009 – 2010. In 2009 – 2010, the ratio of primary school to upper primary schools in Assam recorded at 2.85:1 which was higher in compared to 2.23:1 of national average.

Infrastructural Facilities in Primary Education School in Assam: The government emphasized to provide proper infrastructural facilities for primary education development. The National Policy on Education 1986, had laid down that investment on education be gradually increased to reach a level of expenditure of six percent of national income as early as possible. It is to be noted that after 1987 – 1988 the central government realized the significance of primary education and its contribution rose to about 19 percent to further rise to about 21 percent in 1993 – 1994. Also, over the period, the state government have been meeting a little less than half the expenditure on primary education in India. Education as a form of investment has to be emphasized, needs to be expanded in the changing times. The central government has granted large amount of money for infrastructure development of primary level schools in Assam. The status of infrastructure at primary level education is not satisfactory in Assam as compared to the other states of the country. It is observed that except teacher-pupil ratio, in all other parameters the achievement of the state is lower than other states of the country. It is observed that every state today finds it very difficult to cope up with the construction of program for the school building. The

primary school building is a very serious problem and unless it is taken upon top priority, it would adversely affect not only enrolment in the backward areas, but also the initiative improvement of the schools in a state of Assam. The SAISES recorded that out of total 30045 primary schools, total 11154 school structure are *pucca*, 4838 primary schools structure are *kuchcha* in Assam. In respect of upper primary school it is observed that out of total 7704 upper primary schools, total 2101 school structure are *pucca* and 1716 are *kuchcha*. The average student classroom ratio in Assam and national average was 28 and 32 in 2009 – 2010. The data regarding educational infrastructure in Assam are presented in Table-3.

Table-3: District wise Infrastructural Facilities of Primary Schools in Assam, 2013-14

Sl. No	District	No. of Primary Schools	Average No. of Classroom	Drinking Water	Boys Toilet	Girls Toilet
01	Kokrajhar	1762	4.7	1318	912	1330
02	Dhubri	2176	5.0	1705	1059	1627
03	Goalpara	1501	3.9	1390	1488	1462
04	Barpeta	1953	4.5	1871	1318	1617
05	Morigaon	1244	5.1	1192	1032	1140
06	Nagaon	2654	4.7	2551	1568	2308
07	Sonitpur	1937	5.7	1732	1631	1601
08	Lakhimpur	1826	3.7	1642	755	1485
09	Dhemaji	1305	4.7	1207	780	1132
10	Tinsukia	1133	6.5	1102	967	1024
11	Dibrugarah	1484	4.6	1438	1084	1326
12	Sivasagar	1925	4.2	1867	1464	1885
13	Jorhat	1753	4.3	1699	1338	1683

14	Golaghat	1333	4.4	1291	985	1084
15	Karbi-anglong	1783	4.2	1030	1338	1775
16	Dima-Hasao	751	3.4	276	265	748
17	Cachar	2068	4.5	1443	1178	1764
18	Kaimganj	1634	4.3	1032	1127	1378
19	Hailakandi	1236	3.2	532	494	965
20	Bongaigaon	844	4.4	725	447	529
21	Chirang	837	5.0	760	419	723
22	Kamrup	1941	4.7	1756	1499	1812
23	Kamrup-Merto	534	4.4	469	387	502
24	Nalbari	996	4.6	970	646	872
25	Baksa	1482	4.4	1307	1018	1231
26	Darrang	1097	5.1	1023	713	8908
27	Udalguri	1166	5.1	1021	1156	1166
Total	Assam	40355	4.5	34349	27128	35067

Source: Statistical Hand Book Assam (2014): Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati, P: 279

Infrastructures like economic, social and financial are major elements over all development of education in the state. It is observed that educational infrastructure in Assam is worse as compared to the national average. P.P. Buragohain and A.J. Mahanta mentioned as the poor status of educational infrastructure might be a factor causing poor performance of education at primary level in Assam. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Global Monitoring Report, 2010 compared the Education for All Development Index in the international level for different nations where India figures at 105th position among 127 nations. There have been different efforts in this line to construct Education Development

Indices within India and Ministry of Human Resource Development supported in this regard. The NUEPA and the MHRD have computed the Education Development Index for primary and upper primary and composite index for the entire elementary education which has been based on DISE in India. Regarding the EDI in Assam, the DISE -2013-14, Flash Statistics indicated that "the state is ranked 32 at primary level, 32 at upper primary level and 30 at composite level with EDI 0.490, 0.557 and 0.524 respectively. The all India ranking of the State as per EDI 2013-14 for access to primary schools is 7, for infrastructure is 32, for teacher is 34 and is placed at the top for outcome. The EDI rank of the State in respect of access, infrastructure, teacher and outcome at upper primary level is 33, 34, 29 and 5 respectively" (Economic Survey, Assam, 2014 - 2015). In spite of sizeable increase in educational expenditure, about 34,653 teachers post was laying vacant in the year 2015-16 in primary level education in Assam.

Conclusion

After independence, there is a great progress in the field of primary education in Assam. It is also equally true that in spite of the different measures undertaken by both the central and state government, the demand for UPE is not fulfilled even after seventy three of independence in the state of Assam. In spite of making positive efforts, a large number of girls and boys in the rural areas and in the urban slums drop out of primary education before completing even primary level education. Therefore, there is a great need to increase meaningful and interesting programs for the development of primary education in Assam. It is only primary education, which can lead an individual for the achievement of a better and higher quality of life. Therefore, primary education structure must be remodeled to extend its reach widely to all those who have right to education in the state of Assam.

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