

Problems and Future Prospects of Higher Education in North East India

Pallab Jyoti Boruah

Institution: Sibsagar college of Teachers Education, Jaysagar, Dist- Sibsagar, Assam, India, PIN 785665
Bahgorah village, P.O- Mezenga, Via- Nazira, Dist- Sibsagar, PIN- 785685, Assam, India Designation: Student
Corresponding Author: Pallab Jyoti Boruah

ABSTRACT: Higher Education today is one of the pillars of success for any Nation. In India, higher education is of vital importance to build knowledge based society of the 21st century. It produces a variety of manpower needed in administration, industry, agriculture and other services. In India especially in north east region higher educational institutions has faced many problems. Moreover, every year hundreds and thousands of students from the North East India come to the universities and colleges of Delhi, Calcutta, and Bangalore etc. for education in various fields. The intent of the present paper is to identify the various problems of higher education in north east India as well as to study the future prospects of higher education in this region. This paper also gives some sorts of suggestions to enhance the quality of higher education in north east India.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Society, Prospects, India, North East.

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I. Introduction:

Higher Education covers all studies and training activities at the tertiary level or higher level. Any higher education institutions, there are three main functions or objectives. These are- Imparting dissemination of knowledge, engaging in Research work investigation and conducting different extension work. India has a large Higher Education sector, the third largest in the world in student numbers after China and United states. Every year a large number of Indian students go overseas for their higher education. In the same way every year hundreds and thousands of students of North East region have to go out their homes to other states in the country to be able to achieve standard higher education. If students are going to overseas for higher education, it's because North Eastern states has a problem of both capacity and quality. At present, the world-class institutions in India especially in north east region are limited. In this region most of the colleges and universities lack in high end technical and research facilities. The present system of higher education does not serve the purpose for which it has been started. In general education itself has become so profitable a business that quality is lost in the increase of quality of professional institutions with quota system.

II. Significance Of Higher Education In North East India:

In a country with enormous diversity, the North Eastern region comprising eight states viz. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim, is an important geographical entity. This regions development is impeded by certain inherent difficulties such as inadequate infrastructure, adverse climate conditions and mountainous landscape. The regions peace and social life is often disturbed by border clashes and ethnic tensions. However, the region is endowed with rich bio-diversity and natural resources. The literacy rate in many of these states is above the rest of the country. Skilled human resources to exploit the local resources, if developed, such as tea, timber, tourism, oil, coal and bio-resources, offer immense potential for the economic progress of the region. It is needless to mention that quality higher education is pre- requisite for creation and development of skilled human resources. Quality higher education, thus especially in north eastern region will help to circumvent the natural resource constraints and creation of knowledge infrastructure towards self-empowerment of the people.

III. Objectives:

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the current status of higher education in North East India.
2. To identify the problems of higher education in North East India.
3. To study the future prospects of higher education in North East India.
4. To give some suggestions to improve the quality of higher education in North East India

IV. Methodology:

This study is qualitative in nature. Here, the investigator collected the data from different research journals, books, websites etc

V. Findings And Discussions:

O1: To study the cu status of Higher Education in North East India

Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace. According to UGC Higher Education, as of 6th September 2017, India has 803 universities with a break up of 47 central universities, 370 state universities and 123 deemed universities, 282 private universities, 3 institutions established and functioning under the state Act, and 74 Institutes of National Importance which include AIIMS, IIT's and NIT's among others. And 42338 Degree colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC as on 31st March 2017.

Before independence of India, there were only 16 colleges in the north eastern region, majority were located in the Assam area. The establishment of the first University at Guwahati in 1948 gave a real boost to the expansion of higher education from the pre-university up to the postgraduate and doctoral level in the whole of North East India. In spite of the late start, higher education in North East India had a very rapid growth in post independence era.

According to UGC Higher Education as on 31st March 2017, there are 10 Central university, 13 State university, 31 Private university, 1 Deemed university and 924 Colleges in North East region.

Table 1: State wise number of Universities and Colleges in North East India

State	Number of Universities				Colleges
	Central University	State University	Deemed University	Private University	
Assam	2	12	-	5	556
Arunachal Pradesh	1	-	1	7	31
Meghalaya	1	-	-	8	69
Mizoram	1	-	-	1	30
Manipur	2	-	-	1	90
Nagaland	1	-	-	3	30
Tripura	1	1	-	1	57
Sikkim	1	-	-	5	25

Source: UGC Annual Report 2016-2017

O2: To identify the problems of Higher Education in North East India

In North East India, higher education suffers from manifold problems. The chief problems of higher education in North East India are:

- **Inadequate physical infrastructure:** Quality education is possible when facilities, resources and technologies are upgraded with adequate funds. Most of the colleges are not accredited by NAAC. Those colleges which are accredited by NAAC get woefully lower grade due to such issues as low quality input, inadequate teacher-student ratio, poor communication etc. as a result, prospective grants are also curtailed.
- **Negative feelings towards full dedication of teachers towards their service:** In north east India, most of the colleges and universities various professional courses have been introduced in addition to the general academic courses. It is positive symptom for the higher educational institutes of this region, but the problem is most of the teachers are on contractual basis with lump sum pay which sometimes creates negative feelings towards full dedication of the teachers towards their service.
- **Less focus on the establishment of excellent institutions like IITs and IIMs:** Due to few numbers of excellent institutions like IITs and IIMs in North East India, the students are bound to move to other parts of the nation and even aboard for higher education.
- **Outflow of the local students to other parts of the country:** In north eastern region, the parents usually have the tendency to send their children to metropolitan cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, and Delhi etc. or even to other parts of the country for higher education. As a result, sooner or later the North East India may start to lose the local meritorious students.
- **Insufficient number of Institutions:** To cater to the requirement on higher education in the North Eastern part of India, there are enough institutions to meet the demand, resulting in mass exodus of students to places outside the region in their pursuit of the same.

- **Theoretical Based Syllabus:** The main loophole of Indian higher education system is that most of our education is theoretical based rather than practical. Curriculum of higher education is not up-to-date. The same problem is prevalent in the higher education system in North East India.
- **Problem of Language:** The North Eastern part of India has a preponderance of language, some of which are very well developed while others are not. Some states have over 300 dialects. State languages vary from one state to the other. There is paucity, if not absence, of books in local language for pursuing higher education.
- **Lack in Industrial Collaboration:** In higher education system of north eastern region, there is lack of academic-industry cohesion and this leads the industry in the dark of depression. The oldest universities in India especially north east region are still averse to the collaboration of academic world and industrial world.
- **Aimlessness:** Today, by a large number of students in higher educational institutions suffer from the problems of aimlessness. They are not clear about the aims of education in life. Aimless education gives birth to frustration and disillusionment. Most of the students suffer from this disease. They manage to pass various examinations without any clear-cut goal in view. This is leading to great harm.
- **Problems of finance:** In the development of higher education, problem of inadequate finances is a big one. Proper maintenance of libraries, laboratories, hostels and playground etc, involve huge costs. Quality and standards demand more facilities. Education had been a state subject and state government always showed their inability to manage the affairs properly. Moreover, misuse of finance or corruption is one of the most important problems of higher education in north east India.
- **Inappropriate for Research work:** In Indian higher education system especially in north eastern states, the Infrastructural and other facilities are not beneficial to carry on research work at international level. With a very low level of PhD enrolment, this region does not have enough high quality researchers; there are few opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary working, lack of early stage research experience; a weak ecosystem for innovation, and low levels of industry engagement.
- **Problem of wastage and stagnation:** Like primary education, higher education also suffers from the problem of wastage and stagnation. The difference is only that of degree. Defective system of examination, lack of teacher-taught relationship, inadequate hostel facilities and maladministration etc. are responsible for it. In North East India, higher education is very costly due to the private universities or institutions.
- **Commercialization of higher education:** In North East India, education becomes a business for some class of people. In other words, higher education system is profit earning source in some class of people. So, it is another main problem of higher education in North East India.

O3: To study the future prospects of Higher Education in North East India:

Modern times are known as the most turbulent times. Social, economic, political and technological conditions are fast changing and these changing will have far reaching impact on future. Some future prospects of higher education in north east India are as follows:

- Diversification is taking place to meet the new needs. Numbers of specialised institutions have come up to meet the specialised needs of specific population. This is because of expansion of student population. At the same time, academic system has become more stratified. Therefore, diversification will also be an important challenge in the coming decades.
- Moreover, Research and publication of journals and books is an important issue now. Issues of access, communication, control and technology are intertwined which would gain lot of importance in the years to come.
- In the present situation in North East India, more emphasise is given on girls education. So, we are expecting more women colleges and university increase in future in North East India.
- Higher educational institutions will sign MOU and different foreign universities. As a result, universities of north eastern states have campus and study centres of those foreign institutions. Students will also benefit from these by getting scholarship and opportunities to learn in foreign universities

VI. Suggestions:

Following are some suggestions to improve the quality of higher education in North East India:

1. **Job oriented courses:** Universities and colleges should focus on extending job oriented programmes. Combination of arts subjects and computer science and science and humanities or literature should be introduced so that such courses should be useful for the students to do jobs after requirement in some companies which would reduce unnecessary rush to higher education.
2. **High tech libraries:** In north east India, university libraries have a good collection of books, but they are all in mess. A library must be online and conducive for serious study. Indian universities should concentrate more on providing quality education which is comparable to that of international standards.

3. **More support and funds:** In order to improve the higher education system in north east India, Public Private Partnership needs to be encouraged. Government should even think of PPP to bring about qualitative development in those govt colleges with sub-standard quality out-put.

4. **The system of examination:** Professionalism and computerization for timely declaration of results are very much required in higher education. Utmost care, seriousness and accountability in the scrutiny of answer scripts is also the need of the hour.

5. **Research and Technological Development:** Research and technological developments are inseparable components of any colleges and university. A team consisting of experts from industries, universities, research institutes and legal fields may be constituted to formulate policies on consultancy, patent and technological developments on the basis of local needs and available resources.

VII. Conclusion:

From the above study it is inferred that North Eastern states has faced lots of problems in higher education and also the region has a lots of opportunities in relation to higher education. Paucity of financial allocation and poor administration in higher educational institutes in North East region drives the colleges and universities into disappointing condition. A report of Indian Chamber of Commerce (2010) analyzed that majority of the students migrate to the other states such as Delhi and Bangalore not only to pursue higher education like research but also a basic level of higher education like graduation because it lacks quality education. Secondly, technical and professional education centres within the region provide outdated and irrelevant curriculum which also push the students to another area. Therefore, some efforts need to be made by the government to minimize the weakness of higher education in north east region. In this direction Twelfth five year plan of the planning commissions has also laid emphasis on quality of education in this region. Still the North East region of India has scope for improvement in bestowing quality education.

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