

Higher Education Scenario In Udalguri District Of Assam

Alif Agaaddin

Assistant Professor

Department of Physics

Tangla College, Tangla

Abstract

The change in Higher Education in India is remarkable during the last 25 years. This change is observed mainly in the external factors, such as

- Increase in the number of Universities,
- Increase in the number of Degree colleges including Technical and Medical Colleges,
- Increase in the number of teachers
- Increase in the number of students.

All these changes occur inevitably in case of all the rural and semi urban areas of Assam. The expected change in quality is a matter of concern in certain cases.

The paper simply discusses various drawbacks of the Provincialised Degree Colleges of rural Udalguri District of Assam and put forward some measures to improve their quality in the field of HE.

Keywords:

Higher Education Institutions, Rural Area, Communications.

Introduction:

Education plays a very important role in the life of an individual. The behavior and quality of the individual greatly depend upon the education imparted to him/her at different levels. Knowledge and wisdom have always been considered as the highest virtues of an individual's life. According to John Henry Newman (1801-1890) "Liberal education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman; it is well to have a cultivated intellect, dispassionate mind, a noble

and courteous bearing in the conduct of life.” Newman’s ideal of liberal, secular education greatly influenced the HE in England and therefore in India also.

The word ‘Education’ has several meanings depending upon its context. Thus ‘Education’ can be defined from different aspects in different ways. Some of such definitions are :

Education is a quest for vision.

Education broadens our outlook.

Education sharpens our mental faculties.

Education teaches tolerance.

Education is the basis of a dignified existence.

Education is a crucial factor for survival.

Education is fundamental to all round development.

Education is a unique investment.

Education is a guarantee for national self reliance.

Education is a tool for self empowerment.

No single definition of the above can be considered to be perfect. Each of them has a particular approach.

Higher education in India has reached the present shape through many hurdles. During its growth from the very initial stage, it borrows necessary ideas from other countries at different times. From the history of HE in India, it is seen that, there is always a craving for quality education. In support of this, one can go through the famous letter written by the great Indian social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy to Lord Amherst, the then Governor General (1823-1828) of India in which he wrote that, the British should provide the Indians “the key to all knowledge-all the really useful knowledge which the world contains” by appointing “European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world.”

Modern HE in India can be considered to be started from 1835 with the Macaulay’s minute. He wrote –

“I feel that, it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the

millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.”

The medium of instruction was selected to be English leaving (Sanskrit and Arabic) Indian vernacular languages or mother tongues as these languages were demonstrably inadequate to the task of providing modern HE.

HEI s in Udalguri District :

In the district of Udalguri, BTR, Assam, there are five number of provincialised colleges, out of which the three colleges situated at Khoirabari, Majbat and Orang. The Udalguri College at Udalguri town has the Arts and Science Streams and Tangla College at Tangla town has Arts, Commerce and Science Streams. A few data of number of students and teachers of these colleges are collected and are tabulated below.

TABLE 1 : Present enrolment (2022) of students with teacher strength of the colleges of Udalguri District, BTR, Assam

Sl. No.	Name of College	Stream	Number of Students			Number of Teachers
			1 st Year Sem I/II	2 nd Year Sem III/IV	3 rd Year Sem V/VI	
1.	Tangla College, Tangla	Arts	980	640	540	40
		Com.	126	87	82	09
		Sc.	170	145	95	18
2.	Udalguri College, Udalguri	Arts	840	635	520	41
		Sc.	85	55	45	15
3.	KGBR College, Orang	Arts	680	540	475	24
4.	Khoirabari College, Khoirabari	Arts	650	520	470	30
5.	Majbat College, Majbat	Arts	420	330	282	20

The data of Table – I are collected from reliable persons related to the respective colleges in the month of September 2022

From the above data (Table – I) it is seen that, enrolment in Arts streams of all the five colleges are very high except a few deviations. Generally the number of teachers in any subject at best is five. Therefore, student-teacher ratio in the subjects like English, Political Science, Education is very high (In specific cases it is more than 100:1). As a result, students practically don't get any individual attention from teachers in the class room and they become disinterested to the class. Some of these students remain absent in the class frequently.

Secondly, majority of students get admitted in these colleges are belonging to schedule tribe and scheduled caste. Some of these students are interested only in the scholarships, they get from the government, neglecting their study.

Thirdly, a good number of students of these colleges are belonging to families of economically backward conditions. Most of such guardians are cultivators or daily wage earners. Therefore, the students of such families don't get adequate facilities from their guardians to continue study. Sometimes some of such students are compelled to leave college as they are unable to bear the expenditure of study.

Due to these adverse situations, the students of these colleges are exposed little to the national standards of HE.

The students belonging to the well-to-do families of the district don't want to take admission at these colleges as the area is affected by flood frequently, inadequacy of communication between the College and the interior villages of the district. As the guardians of this class of students are conscious about the career of their wards, therefore they want to admit their children at city colleges.

Some disadvantages of these institutions :

- Lack of exposure of students to the National standard through various competitive examinations, workshops, conferences, educational excursions etc.
- Scarcity of part-time teachers on certain subjects.
- Tendency of students to leave college before attending fully the daily classes due to scarcity of public transport to the remote villages
- A large number of students hails from vernacular schools most of whom are lack of competence in spoken English.
- Some of these colleges are also running the Higher Secondary courses, which in one hand increases the teaching load of the teachers and on the other hand, the HS examinations held in the colleges lead to suspension of all the U.G. classes.

- Black board-Chalk culture is still going on.

Keeping in mind the above disadvantages, these colleges can take some measures for development and quality assurance. Some of such measures are –

- The Colleges may introduce vocational courses on Agriculture, Horticulture, Pisciculture, Mushroom Cultivation, Floriculture etc.
- The colleges may grow plant gardens of medicinal value, as most of the colleges have sizable land property. Workshops or any such programmes on herbal medicine would help a lot on this aspect.
- The colleges may introduce certificate courses on paper technology and sericulture as the raw materials for such industries are available in this rural area.
- For attaining fluency in Spoken English, some enrichment courses can be introduced which would be useful for the students coming from vernacular schools.
- The colleges may introduce job oriented computer courses which would attract the students.
- The colleges may introduce courses in Physiotherapy, Maternity etc. The students of these courses would be very useful to the inhabitants of remote villages.
- The colleges may start Yoga and Meditation Centre for the students as well as for the locality.
- The colleges may introduce awards for talented students which would motivate the students for excellence.
- The colleges may arrange short term courses for various competitive examinations.

Finally Principal of a college should be just like the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a company. He/She should be a real leader with a vision and mission. He/ She should be able to bring about the changes in attitude in himself/herself. Then he/she will be able to motivate and inspire his team.

Conclusion :

For the better existence of the HEI s of Udalguri district, at this era of tough competition, everyone related to it should work hard. Students should be regular, sincere and studious. Teachers should be ready to give more time for extension work and aware of the changes /new developments in the field of HE. The Principal should be an unbiased, good administrator, who can make a place on the hearts of everyone of the college fraternity.

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