



Factors Affecting Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in North-East India with Special Reference to Assam - An Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

Education is a necessary condition for a country's social and economic progress. It offers the foundational knowledge, proficiency, and experience needed to create a development structure. According to NEP-2020, India's educational system is organized into pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher education based on the students' age groups. The percentage of students in the 18–23 age range who are enrolled in higher education is determined statistically by the gross enrolment ratio. It can be computed by dividing the total population of 18–23-year-olds by the number people enrolled into higher education. It is common knowledge that in recent years, India's higher education sector has experienced exponential development and rapid change. Undoubtedly, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has been increasing in India. The GER of higher education stands at 27.1 in 2020-21 with a total enrolment 40.15 million. While it has been increased by 28.4 in 2021-22. Unfortunately, the Gross Enrolment Ratio of Assam is far below to the national level which is about 17 % to 18%. National Education Policy (NEP) – 2020 has targeted to increase 50% GER by 2035 suggesting two ways – To increase the number of higher education institutions in underserved areas and secondly consolidation and expansion of existing educational institutions. The present paper is an explanatory in nature. The aim of the paper is to study the GER of different states of India along with the factor causing the low growth of GER. Apart from this the author tries to suggest certain policy measures to further improvement of GER in higher education in Assam. The study's foundation is secondary data gathered from Wikipedia, journals, and Gmail, among other sources.

Keywords: *Higher Education, GER, NEP-2020, Economic Development, Secondary Data, Exponential Growth.*

INTRODUCTION:

The most crucial element in attaining quick development and technical advancement is education. In terms of the number of institutions & student enrollment, India's higher education system has become the largest in the world, second only to China. Since higher education equips people with skills, knowledge, and awareness, it is essential to a country's economic and social progress. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) is used to gauge access to higher education. The ratio of individuals during higher education institutions with the overall population in the 18–23 age range is known as GER.

In the Indian higher education system, GER has significantly improved. Over time, access to higher education has expanded. GER was detected at 10% in 2000, however it is increased to 24.3 % in 2015-16, followed by 25.2 % in 2016-17 (MHRD, 18) in 2017-18, it was recorded 26.3 % In 2020-21 it was 27.3 % and in 2021-22 it was increased by 28.2 %. Thus, there is a rapid increase in the GER in Indian higher education. This is due to the fact that the number of institutions have been increased and introduction of government measures like, free admissions, scholarships, etc. According to the report of AISHE 2020-21, There are 43796 colleges, 11296 independent schools, and 1113 universities. In India, there had been only 795 universities & 38498 colleges in 2015–16; by 2016–17, there were 860 universities and 40026 colleges.

STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE NORTH-EAST INDIA:

The seven siter states of India—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura—as well as Sikkim make up the country's northeastern area. Sikkim constitutes the smallest of these states, while the state of Arunachal Pradesh & Assam are the largest in the area. The cultural diversity and distinctive topography of North-East India, which includes hilly and isolated regions, are its defining characteristics. It has historically had access and infrastructure limitations, which have made it difficult for the northeast's higher education system to establish and expand. Only 16 colleges existed in the northeastern region before to India's independence; the bulk were in the Assam region. The founding of Guwahati University at 1946 significantly accelerated the growth in higher education from pre-university to postgraduate levels in Guwahati as well as at the PhD level throughout North-East India. Nonetheless, post-independence higher education in northeastern India grew rapidly, and throughout the past 20 years, the region's higher education has significantly expanded.

TABLE NO. 01**Number of Universities & Colleges during last Five Years (2017-18 to 2021-22):**

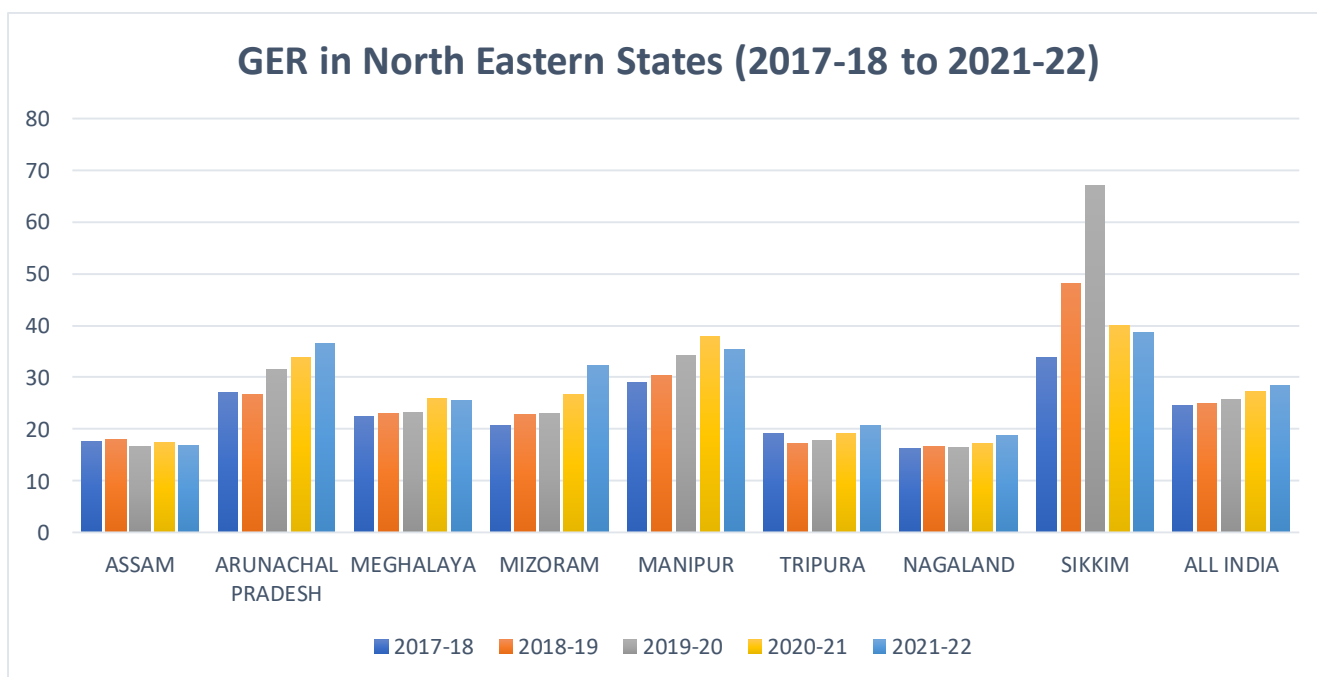
Sl. No.	Name of State	2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22	
		University	College	University	College	University	College	University	College	University	College
1	ASSAM	21	512	22	544	26	558	28	595	30	607
2	MIZORAM	3	30	3	32	3	35	3	39	3	40
3	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	9	30	10	37	10	39	10	42	10	44
4	MANIPUR	5	87	6	92	8	102	9	105	10	108
5	TRIPURA	4	52	4	52	4	53	5	54	5	54
6	MEGHALAYA	8	60	10	63	10	67	11	75	11	77
7	NAGALAND	5	66	5	67	5	67	5	68	6	69
8	SIKKIM	7	17	7	19	8	22	8	23	9	24
9	ALL INDIA	903	39050	993	39931	1043	42343	1113	43796	1168	45473

Source: Report of MHRD (AISHE 2021-22)

The above table clearly shows the growth of the higher education institutions in the North-Eastern areas in particular and India in general. All the years nos. of Universities and Colleges of North-Eastern states have been increased. During the year 2017-18 the colleges and universities were 512 and 12 respectively while this tally has been increased by 607 nos. of colleges and 30 nos. of universities in the year 2021-22 i.e. number of colleges have been increased by 18.53 % and that of universities have been increased by 42.85 %.

GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO IN NORTH EASTERN STATES:**TABLE NO. 02****GER in North Eastern States (2017-18 to 2021-22):**

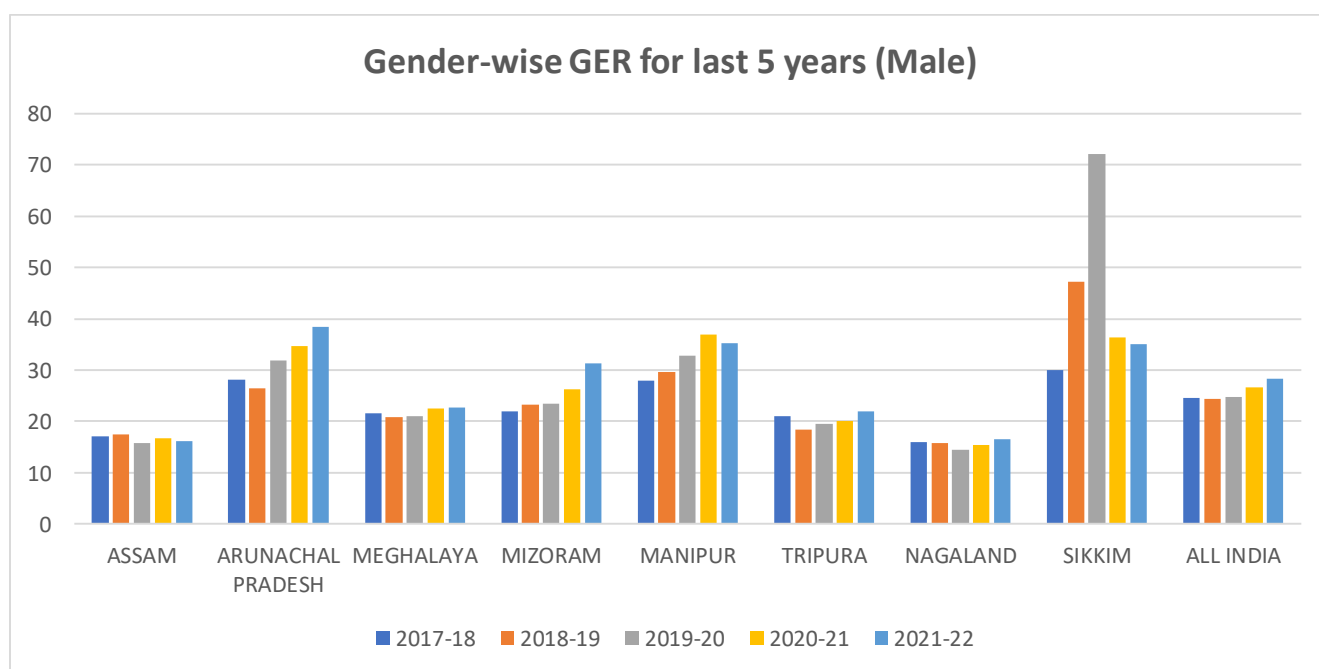
Sl. No.	Name of State	Year				
		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
1	ASSAM	17.6	18.0	16.5	17.5	16.9
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	27.1	26.8	31.6	33.7	36.5
3	MEGHALAYA	22.4	23.1	23.2	25.8	25.4
4	MIZORAM	20.7	22.9	23.1	26.8	32.3
5	MANIPUR	28.9	30.3	34.1	37.8	35.4
6	TRIPURA	19.2	17.3	17.9	19.2	20.7
7	NAGALAND	16.2	16.8	16.4	17.3	18.8
8	SIKKIM	33.7	48.1	66.9	39.9	38.6
9	ALL INDIA	24.6	24.9	25.6	27.3	28.4

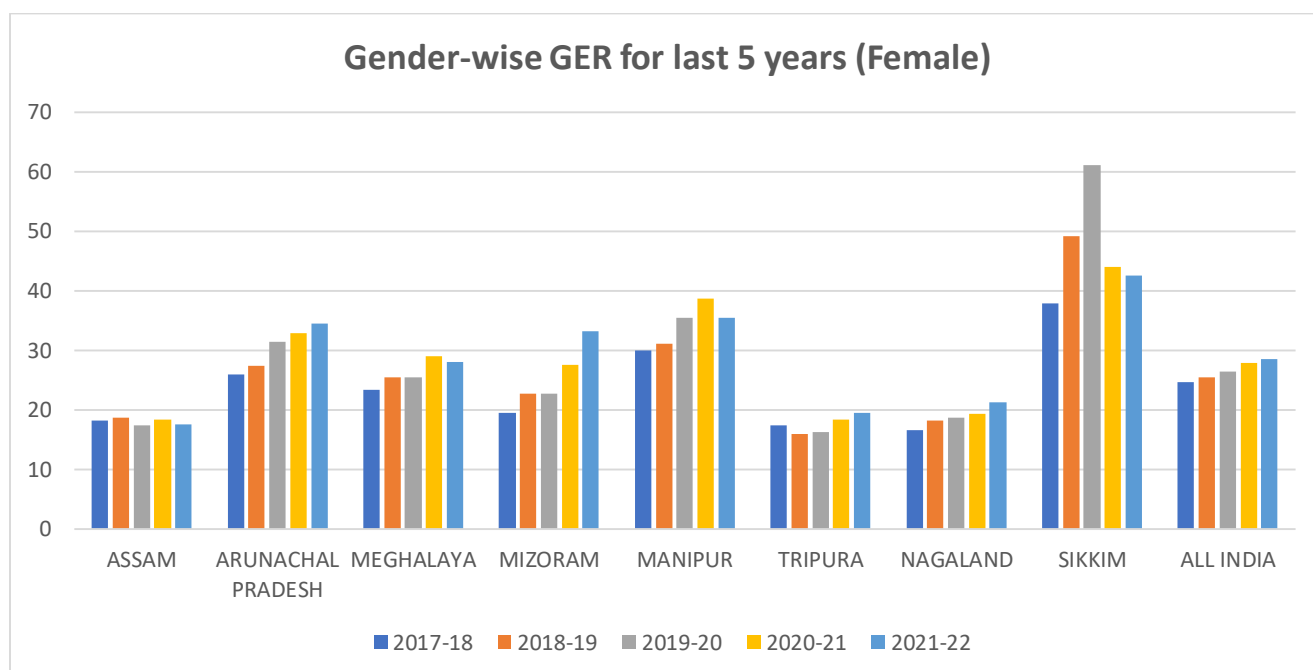
Source: Report of MHRD (AISHE 2021-22)

The Table – 2, shows us the GER in the North-Eastern states of India. It is seen from the table that the GER of Assam in higher education was 17.6 in 2017-18, in 2018-19 it has been increased by 18.0. But in 2021-22 GER has been declined by 16.9. The given schedule also reveals Sikkim has the highest GER in North-Eastern states, followed by Manipur. Further, the table interpreted that the GER of Assam in higher education is less than the National Average of 24.6 in 2017-18 and 28.4 in 2021-22.

TABLE NO. 03**Gender-wise GER for last 5 years (2017-18 to 2021-22):**

Sl. No.	Name of State	2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	ASSAM	17.1	18.2	17.4	18.6	15.7	17.4	16.8	18.4	16.2	17.6
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	28.2	26.0	26.4	27.3	31.9	31.4	34.7	32.8	38.4	34.5
3	MEGHALAYA	21.5	23.3	20.9	25.4	21.0	25.4	22.6	29.0	22.7	28.1
4	MIZORAM	22.0	19.4	23.2	22.7	23.5	22.7	26.2	27.5	31.4	33.2
5	MANIPUR	27.9	29.9	29.6	31.1	32.8	35.4	36.9	38.6	35.3	35.5
6	TRIPURA	21.0	17.4	18.5	16.0	19.5	16.3	20.0	18.4	21.9	19.5
7	NAGALAND	15.9	16.6	15.7	18.1	14.4	18.7	15.4	19.3	16.5	21.2
8	SIKKIM	30.0	37.9	47.2	49.2	72.1	61.1	36.3	44.0	35.1	42.5
9	ALL INDIA	24.5	24.6	24.4	25.5	24.8	26.4	26.7	27.9	28.3	28.5

Source: Report of MHRD (AISHE 2021-22)



The above Table shows gender-wise GER in higher education during the period 2017-18 to 2021-22 in the north-eastern states of India. In the year 2017-18 male GER in Assam was 17.1 which has decreased to 16.2 in the year 2021-22. Similarly in the year 2017-18 female GER was 18.2 which has decreased to 17.6 in the year 2021-22. All India male/female GER has increased from 24.5/24.6 in the year 2017-18 to 28.3/28.5 in the year 2021-22. Female GER increased by 3.9 during last five years i.e. from 2017-18 to 2021-22, whereas male GER has increased by 3.8. It is seen that Sikkim has the highest female GER in north-eastern region followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. If we go through the data in the year 2021-22 it is seen that Assam has the lowest female GER followed by Tripura. While Sikkim has the highest female GER followed by Manipur which is more than that of All India female GER.

Additionally, the schedule shows that the gender disparity has been closing over time. Previously, there were poor literacy rates and a high number of school dropouts among girls in socially deprived areas. Girls' education has been prioritized and supported by the nation's consecutive governments as well as the Assamese state governments through the development of numerous social programs and schemes, including:

Central Government undertaken prominent programmes and schemes:

1. Kalpana Chawala Memorial Award
2. Kiran Girls' Scholarship Award
3. Swami Vivekananda Single Girl Child Scholarship Scheme
4. Fair and Lovely Foundation for Higher Education for Women Scholarship
5. Prabha Dutta Fellowship
6. Free Admission for BPL Category of Students.

Assam Government undertaken welfare programmes and schemes:

1. Anandaran Boroah Award Scheme
2. Fee Waiver Scheme
3. Pragyan Bharat Scooty Scheme
4. Nijut Moina Scheme (for Class 11 to Post Graduate Girls Students)

The gender gap into GER has been closing as a result of all these programs, which have increased the participation of women from underrepresented groups in higher education.

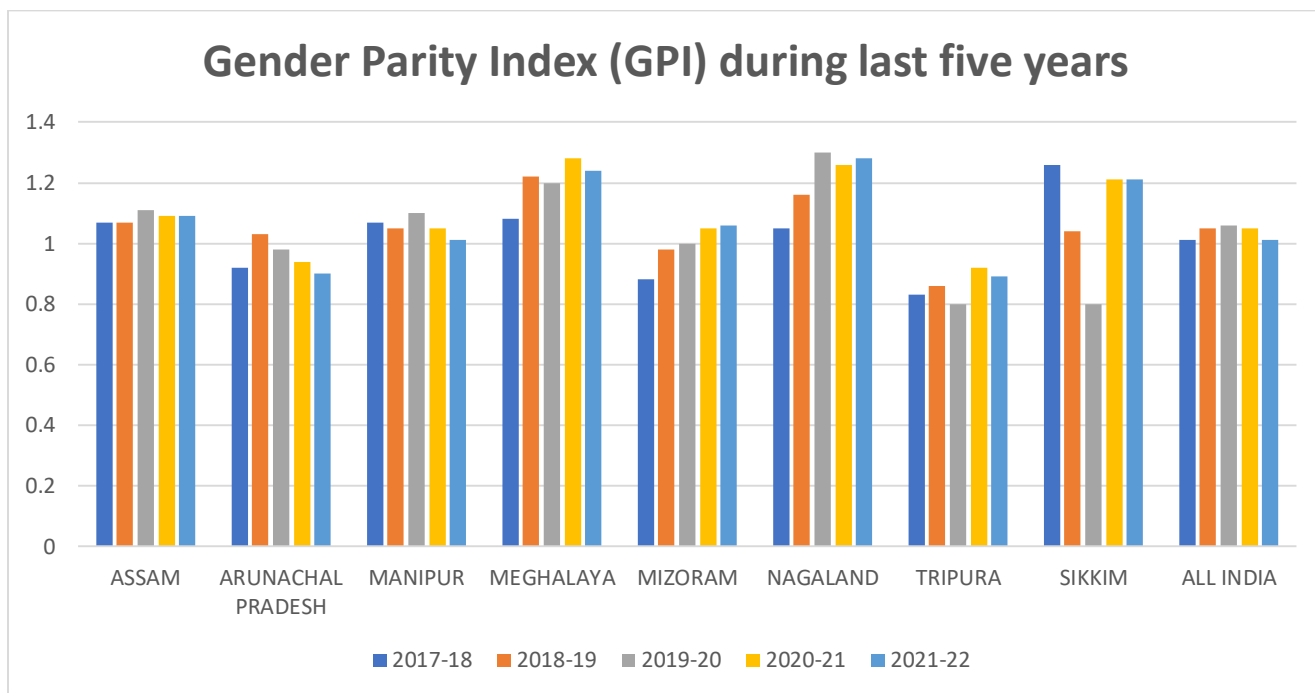
GENDER PARITY INDEX:

TABLE NO. 04

Gender Parity Index (GPI) during last five years

SL. NO.	NAME OF STATES	GPI				
		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
1	ASSAM	1.07	1.07	1.11	1.09	1.09
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	0.92	1.03	0.98	0.94	0.90
3	MANIPUR	1.07	1.05	1.1	1.05	1.01
4	MEGHALAYA	1.08	1.22	1.2	1.28	1.24
5	MIZORAM	0.88	0.98	1.0	1.05	1.06
6	NAGALAND	1.05	1.16	1.3	1.26	1.28
7	TRIPURA	0.83	0.86	0.8	0.92	0.89
8	SIKKIM	1.26	1.04	0.8	1.21	1.21
9	ALL INDIA	1.01	1.05	1.06	1.05	1.01

Source: Report of MHRD (AISHE 2021-22)



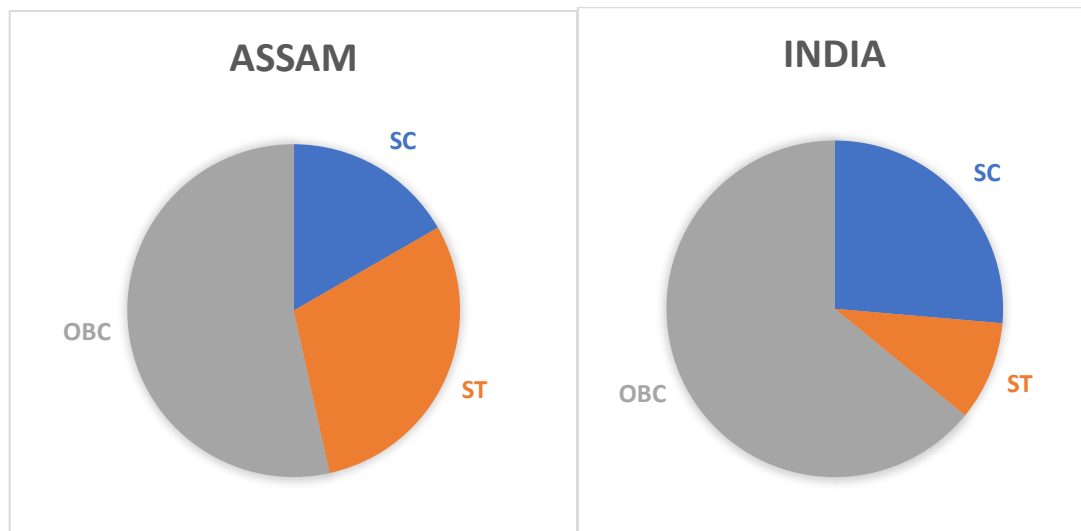
Gender Parity Index based GER rate is the ratio of Gross Enrolment Rate of Female enrolled in tertiary levels of education to the corresponding ratio of male students at that level which shows a picture of gender equality in education. A higher GPI means higher gender equality in an education system. India has a GPI of 1.05 according to AISHE report 2021-22. Among the north-east states, Tripura has the lowest GPI (0.92), followed by Arunachal Pradesh (0.94) on the other hand Meghalaya has the highest GPI (1.28) followed by Nagaland (1.26) and Assam stood in third position in GPI. We are fortunate that the GPI percentage of Assam (1.09) is more than that of National level (1.05).

SOCIAL GROUP-WISE ENROLMENT IN ASSAM DURING LAST 5 YEARS (2017-18 TO 2021-22):

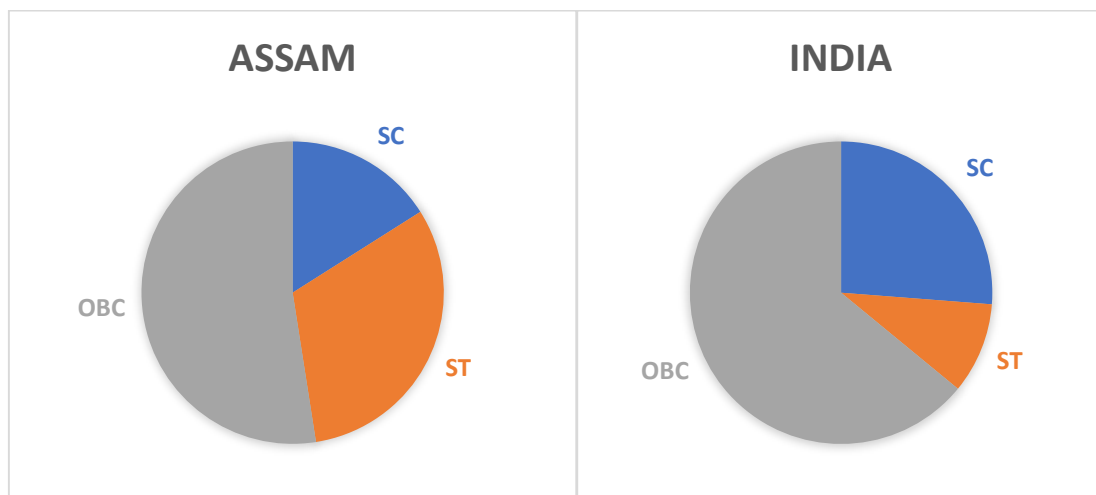
TABLE NO. 05

Name of State	2017-18			2018-19			2019-20			2020-21			2021-22		
	SC	ST	OBC	SC	ST	OBC	SC	ST	OBC	SC	ST	OBC	SC	ST	OBC
ASSAM	8.04	14.38	25.75	8.30	16.32	27.18	8.32	16.19	27.20	7.73	17.64	25.19	8.44	19.20	26.17
INDIA	14.41	5.22	35.02	14.88	5.52	36.34	14.68	5.59	36.97	14.24	5.82	35.81	15.30	6.26	37.75

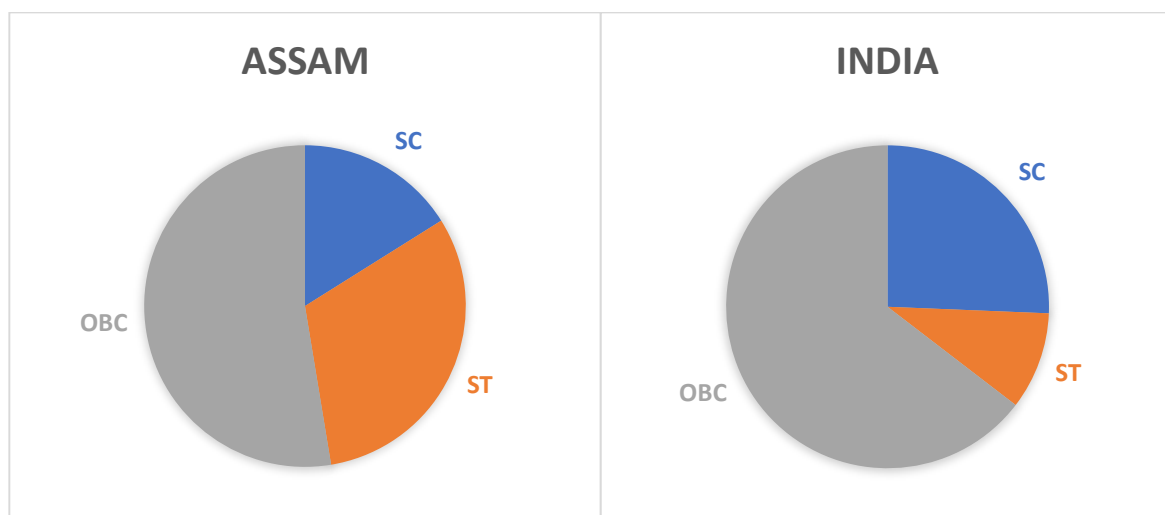
2017-18



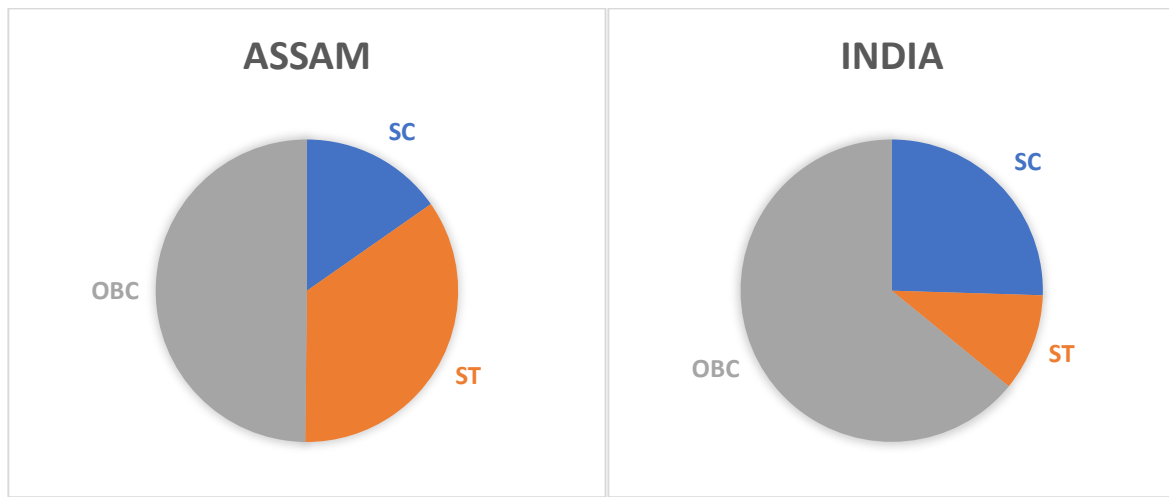
2018-19



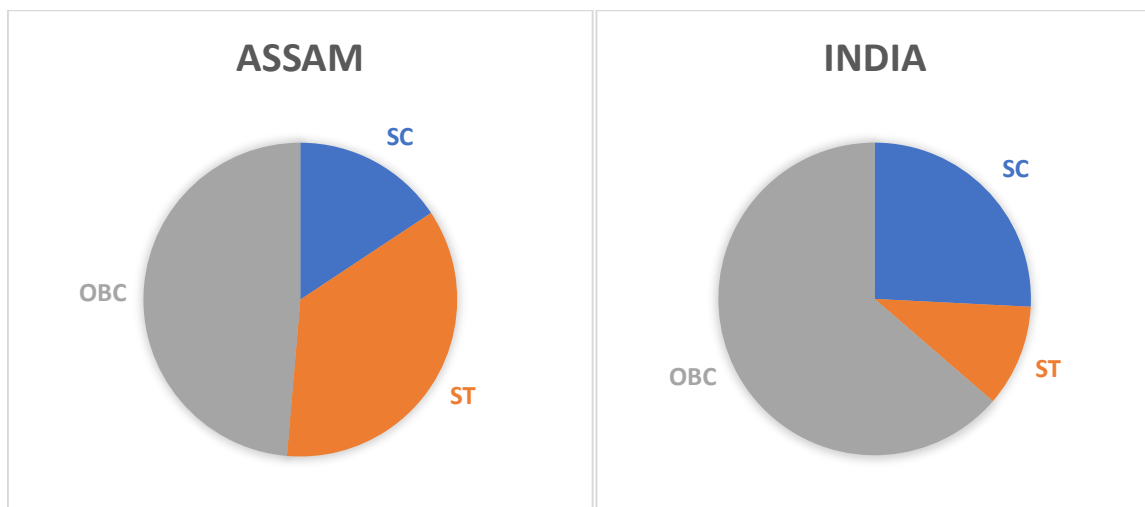
2019-20



2020-21



2021-22



The GER in higher education in Assam varies across social groups. The National GER is 28.4 % in 2021-22 out of which GER for female is 28.5 and that of male is 28.3. However, the GER in Assam is 16.9 in 2021-22 out of which GER for female is 17.6 while for male GER is 16.2. For SCs it is 15.30 %, for STs it is 6.26 % and for OBCs it is 37.75 % in National level. But in case of Assam for SCs, it is 8.44 %, for STs it is 19.20 % and for OBCs it is 26.17 %. Thus, it implies that the marginalized sections of the society do not have equal accessibility to the higher education in the Country.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

2024, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated, “Gross Enrolment in the state is stuck between the 17 and 18 percent range despite massive investments in the higher education system the past decade or so”. In order for the state to achieve a more desired Gross Enrollment Ratio in the future, he emphasized the necessity of a comprehensive strategy. It is the responsibility of all parties involved to ensure that all qualified individuals, regardless of socioeconomic background, have easier access to and affordability of higher education. He also stated, “Higher Education Institutions campuses should become an epicentre of students’ welfare and institutions may look into the possibility of creating a post of “Director of Students’ Welfare” for that purpose. Students resorting to agitation for matters ranging from educational and course-related issues to political subjects, among others, is a reflection of an educational institution’s failure”. He also alluded to

looking into the potential of implementing a new scholarship program for qualified kids around the state to pursue courses in higher education. Additionally, he urged the presidents of higher education institutions and the relevant government representatives to strive toward a unified academic calendar across all campuses. In addition, he requested that the leaders of higher education create plans for institutional development that take into account the needs and demands of the nation's modern educational environment. Additionally, he urged higher education institutions to make the most use of the resources at their disposal. "The state's current administration has always prioritized the advancement of female education, and many significant initiatives in this area are anticipated in the days to come."

The Honourable Education Minister of Assam, Dr. Ranoj Pegu, stated that the state's low gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education was caused by a number of government and private universities not being registered with the All India Survey in Higher Education. "To be in the top five developed countries, a country's all-India GRE should be at least 50%, which is currently at about 28%. In Assam, it dropped to 16 percent in 2021–2022 from 17 percent in 2020–21. Due to the emergence of numerous new universities, we hoped that the proportion would increase in 2021–2022. However, the decline sparked a lot of debate over the issue.

Pegu claimed that because so many institutions did not take part in the survey, the state government decided to hold workshops for those universities in order to guarantee that institutions would actively participate in the All-India survey on higher education. Pegu expressed hope that when the 2022–2023 reports are published the following year, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) will have improved as a result of these advancements.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

1. To research North East India's higher education gross enrolment ratio trends.
2. To examine the expansion of universities in the Northeastern Region.
3. To study the challenges of G.E.R. in Assam, etc.

METHODOLOGY:

The current paper's analysis is entirely dependent on secondary data. Unpublished as well as published sources were used to get the secondary data. The primary published sources include the yearly reports of the UGC, the All India Survey in Higher Education (AISHE) publications, several journal articles, etc.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

1. The present research is limited to only North Eastern region of India.
2. Only five years of Gross Enrolment Ration (GER) has been analysed.

3. The study has taken into consideration only about GER and left other parameters such as drop out ratio and passing percentages during that period of study.

CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASSAM:

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Assamese higher education is low because the state's higher education system is at a critical turning point and is beset by a number of obstacles that limit its effectiveness. Among the significant obstacles are:

Lack of access to higher education: In Assam, possibilities for higher education is another crucial challenge in Assam, particularly for marginalised communities and economically disadvantaged students. Many individuals from rural and poor backgrounds face significant barriers to pursuing higher education for example, financial constraints, lack of awareness about available opportunities, etc.

Financial issues: The state government has not been able to set up enough money for college. Many institutions are underfunded and lack the resources to improve technology and research.

Teacher shortage: There is a shortage of qualified teachers in higher education institutions.

Lack of infrastructure: One of the main issues Assamese higher education is dealing with is the inadequacy of infrastructure. Many colleges and Universities struggle with insufficient facilities, outdated technology, and a lack of essential resources. This deficiency is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where institutions often lack basic the overall learning experience.

Non-relevant curriculum: The curriculum offered in Assam's higher education institutions often lacks relevance and alignment with the needs of the job market. Many academic programs are outdated, failing to give pupils the abilities and information needed to thrive in a market that is changing quickly. There is a dearth of institutions offering professional or vocational courses.

Language Barriers: Language barriers also present a significant challenge in Assam's higher education landscape. The state is home to a diverse population with multiple languages and dialects. While Assamese is the official language, many students may be more proficient in their native languages. This linguistic diversity can lead to difficulties in comprehension and participation in classroom discussions, ultimately affecting academic performance.

Socio-Political Factors: The impact of socio-political factors in higher education can not be overlooked. Assam has a history of socio-political unraised and ethnic tensions which can disrupt the educational process.

Lack of research and innovation: One of the major issues facing Assam's higher education institutions is this. Research plays a crucial role in advancing knowledge and addressing social issues but in many colleges and universities in Assam are lacking the necessary resources and support to promote research activities like, limited funding, inadequate research facilities, etc.

Lack of modern technology: The use of modern technology can enhance educational delivery and accessibility. But in many institutions in Assam internet connectivity is inadequate, especially in rural areas which is hindering students' ability to participate in online classes and access digital resources.

Non-registration of universities: Some universities were not included in the All India Survey on Higher Education, either public or private.

Other factors that affect higher education in Assam include:

- Geographical isolation
- Lack of prominence given to the educational sector by both the federal and state governments
- Low adult literacy rate
- A large proportion of people that are below the poverty level

SUGGESTIONS & POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS:

1. This improvement can be achieved by offering competitive salaries, facilitating access to ongoing professional development programs, and creating a supportive academic environment that encourages faculty to engage in research and innovation.
2. To address this issue, the government and educational institutions must implement targeted initiatives that provide financial support to disadvantaged students. Scholarships, grants, and subsidized loan programs can help ease the financial burden and promote.
3. Educational Institutions must adopt a more inclusive approach by offering courses in multiple languages and providing language support programs for students who may struggle with the medium of instruction.
4. The government, educational institutions and community leaders should work together to create a peaceful environment that supports the pursuit of education. Dialogue, Conflict resolution and engagement with various stake holders can help to create a more conducive atmosphere for learning.
5. Encouraging institutions to prioritise research by providing funding, fostering collaborations with research organisations, and supporting faculty and student research initiatives can stimulate innovation and contribute to the overall advancement of knowledge in the region.
6. To ensure equitable access to technology, the government must invest in improving digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas. Initiatives that provide students with devices and internet access can empower them to engage fully in their education, regardless of their geographical location.
7. The rate of adult literacy should be raised with the right focus.
8. Increased funding for the education sector is necessary, and it must be spent wisely and effectively monitored.
9. Poverty eradication program must be strengthened.

10. Recommendation of Kothari Commission (1964-66) that 6 % of GDP should be spent on education is to be implemented.

CONCLUSION:

We can say at the end that, the challenges facing higher education in Assam are multifaceted and require a comprehensive approach to address effectively. From inadequate infrastructure and facility shortages of curriculum relevance and socio-economic barriers, these issues necessitate targeted interventions and collaboration among various stakeholders. By investing in infrastructure improvements, enhancing faculty quality, reforming curricula, promoting inclusive and fostering research and innovation, Assam can create a more equitable and moreover, addressing the socio-political factors and ensuring access to technology will be crucial in shaping a brighter future for higher education in the state. Ultimately, a concerted effort from the government, educational institutions, and communities is essential to overcome these challenges and empower the youth of Assam to achieve their full potential through education.

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