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Development of Higher Education in Barak Valley of Assam since Independence

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Abstract

Introduction: Education is the key to unlock the main gate of civilisation and modernisation. It is the most important input for the development of an individual, society and nation. It determines the level of economic prosperity, welfare and security of the people. It plays an important role for the development of a particular area. The more an area is educationally developed, the more economic stability and quality of life that area enjoys. Education should therefore stress in such a way that it will lead to the development of an individual and society which will ultimately develop the economy of that region and enhance the quality of life.

Higher education is the stage after secondary education which is said to be a crucial factor for survival. National policy on education 1986 (revised in 1992) states that “higher

education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialised knowledge and skills.” The development of higher education depends largely on the policy of the government from time to time. For the development of higher education, the Government of India set up various commissions and committees such as University Education Commission (1948), University Grants Commission (1952-53), Kothari Commission (1964-66), National Policy of Education 1968 and 1986 and modified in 1992 envisages improvement and expansion of education in all sectors including higher education. However regional imbalances and many other similar factors raised a serious problem to amalgamate the development of educational scenario in India as a whole. Though the facilities of higher education have expanded all over the country, however the pattern of growth is not same everywhere. It is different from one state to another. There is an unequal rate of development of higher education among the districts of Assam also. Some districts are very well developed whereas some are less developed.

So far as development of higher education in Barak valley is concerned, the beginning of higher education in Barak valley can be traced with the establishment of Murari Chand College at Sylhet in 1892 (It is to be mentioned here that till 1947, Sylhet was a part of State of Assam). This college catered to the need of higher education of the people of the whole Assam till the establishment of the Cotton College in 1901 at Guwahati. However, the higher education in present Barak valley started with the establishment of Guru Charan College at Silchar in 1935. The college initially started with only Arts faculty with the intermediate level. This institution of higher learning began its journey on 15th July 1935 with 51 students and 6 teachers on honorary basis. Another important event in the development of higher education in Barak valley was the establishment of Karimganj College in 1946 with 81 students. At that time Karimganj was a part of Sylhet district which later on became a subdivision of Cachar district of Assam. At the time of independence, there was no Medical, Technical and Teacher’s Training Institution in Barak valley. Thus, the two colleges i.e. Guru Charan College and Karimganj College played the most important role in catering to the need of higher education of the people of Barak valley for many years till independence.

Development of higher education in Barak valley of Assam since independence: The gradual development of higher education in Barak valley started after independence with the establishment of S.S. College, Hailakandi in 1950. The period from 1951 to 1960 did not witness the establishment of any college in Barak Valley. But the three colleges established till then (G.C.College, Karimganj College and S.S. College) failed to meet the demand of higher education of the over increasing population of the valley. Hence, there was a demand for establishing more institutions of higher education in the valley. The period from 1960 to 1963 witnessed the remarkable development of higher education in the valley. During this period, 6 new colleges came up including Teachers Training College, Law College, Polytechnic and three other Degree colleges. Teachers’ Training institute was

started in Barak valley with the establishment of Teachers Training College at Silchar in 1960. In the same year, A.K. Chanda Law College was established at Silchar which paved the way for law education in the valley. Technical education started in the valley with the establishment of Silchar Polytechnic in 1960. To meet the demand of higher education of the valley, Cachar College came into existence in Silchar in 1960. For catering to the needs of female education, two colleges, namely, Rabindra Sadan Girls College, Karimganj (1962) and Women's College, Silchar (1963) were established which were successful in its immediate objective.

Thus, it is observed that all the colleges that came into existence till 1963 were located mainly in the urban areas of the valley. It is also seen that after 1963, there was a rapid and steady growth of higher education in rural areas of Barak valley. In 1964-1965, 4 colleges sprang up in the rural areas of Barak valley, namely R.K. Nagar College, Ramkrishna Nagar (1964), Janata College, Kabuganj (1964), Lala Rural College, Lala (1964) and Nehru College, Pailapool (1965). Thus, till 1965, 13 colleges were established in Barak valley out of which 9 were in the urban area and 4 in the rural backdrop.

The period between 1966-1972 ushered in a new era in the development of higher education in Barak valley. This period witnessed the establishment of 5 more colleges, including Engineering College and Medical College. The Regional Engineering College, Silchar was established in 1967 which further accelerated the development of technical education in the valley. Regional Engineering College, Silchar was upgraded to National Institute of Technology, Silchar with the status of Deemed University on 28th June 2002. At present, National Institute of Technology, Silchar possesses biggest Digital Library in Asia. The year 1968, was remarkable for the history of higher education in the valley because in that year, Silchar Medical College & Hospital was established. With the establishment of Silchar Medical College & Hospital, medical education started in the valley. The general higher education was further accelerated during that period with the establishment of Nabin Chandra College, Badarpur (1969), Rabhamadhab College, Silchar (1971) and M.C.D. College, Sonai in 1972. Thus, till 1972, 18 colleges were established in Barak valley which served the purpose of higher education in the valley. But the period between 1973-1983 did not witness the establishment of any educational institution of higher education.

Between 1984 and 1993, 8 more colleges came into existence. They were Karimganj Law College (1984), West Silchar College, Borjatrapur (1985), Swamy Vivekananda College, Chandkira (1987), Patherkandi College (1990), A.L. Choudhury College, Algapur (1991), S.R. College, Kalain (1992), S.C. Dey College (1992) and Hailakandi Women's College (1993). Upto 1993, there were 26 colleges which served the needs of higher education in Barak valley.

It should be mentioned here that after the establishment of Assam University, Silchar (1994) there has been tremendous development of higher education in the valley. With the establishment of Assam University, Silchar, the number of colleges increased in a rapid rate. 21 new colleges sprang up even in the remotest corner of the valley which served to

the needs of the people for higher education. Out of these 21 colleges, 14 colleges were for general education and the rest 7 colleges catered to the need of teacher education. The majority of these colleges are located in rural areas. These colleges are, Nilambazar College, Nilambazar (1994), S.K. Roy College, Katlicherra (1994), Silchar College, Singari (1994), M.K. Dey College, Amraghat (1994), Silchar College of Education, Nagatilla (1994), Vivekananda College of Education, Karimganj (1995), Patherkandi College of Education, Patherkandi (1995), S.M. Dev College, Lakhipur (1995), S.B. Institute of Education, Hailakandi (1996), Lalit Jain Commerce College, Silchar (1996), Moinul Hoque Choudhury Memorial Science College, Algapur (1997), Jagannath Singh College, Udharbond (1998), Katigorah Anchalik Degree College, Katigorah (2000), Shyama Prasad Mukherjee College of Education, Silcoorie (2004), Borkhola College, Borkhola (2009), N.C. Paul Memorial College, Chencoorie (2010), S.K. Roy Memorial Institute of Education, Katlicherra (2010), F.A. Ahmed Degree College, Banskandi (2012), Kairun Nessa Begom Women's College, Badarpur (2015), G.C. Paul Memorial Institute of Education, Ramkrishna Nagar (2015), Baswati Dev Memorial Institute of Higher Education, Silchar (2016). Thus, till 2016, there are 47 colleges in Barak valley which are fulfilling the demand of higher education in the valley.

The establishment of Assam University, Silchar in 1994 ushered a new era in the development of higher education of the over increasing population of not only the three districts of Barak valley but also two other neighbouring districts, namely, Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong. As a result of the establishment of the Assam University, Silchar, post-graduate education got momentum. The development of higher education can be visualised with the establishment of new Departments and Schools in the University. At the time of establishment of Assam University, Silchar, there were 6 Departments and 3 Schools which rose to 38 and 16 Departments and Schools respectively in 2015-16. With the establishment of Assam University, Silchar, different research work has been carried out in various Departments of the University. As a result the numbers of M.Phil and Ph.D. holders have also increased tremendously. It can be said that with the establishment of Assam University, Silchar, not only the number of colleges, enrolment of students and number of teachers increased in the graduate level but also the number of Departments and Schools, enrolment of students and number of teachers have also increased in the post-graduate level. So, it can be said that higher education got momentum with the establishment of Assam University, Silchar.

Though, there is significant development of higher education in the valley since independence, even then the institutions of higher education specially general and professional colleges have been facing many problems. The infrastructural facilities are not up to the mark in most of the colleges. Certain colleges lack proper building, classroom, conference hall, hostel facility etc. Most of the colleges do not have sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staff. As majority of the colleges are either non-provincialised or private in nature, so they are not receiving financial assistance from UGC and state government. Moreover, most of the colleges are facing various problems in respect of

proper implementation of curriculum, method of teaching, library facility, learning materials, laboratory facility, evaluation procedure etc. However, the condition is better in case of provincialised colleges as they are receiving financial grants from UGC, state government as well as from other government agencies.

Post independent Barak Valley has witnessed tremendous development in the sector of higher education, but much has to be done for the overall development of higher education in the valley. With the revolution in information technology and globalisation, many changes have occurred in the field of education. The higher educational institutions have increasingly felt the impact of all these changes. These institutions of Barak Valley are to realise the impact of these changes and should apply them to reform and revitalise the objectives of higher education to make it compatible to the need of the hour. Though the higher educational institutions of Barak Valley have been facing many problems, inspite of that it has now become imperative on the part of the institutions to strive to meet the requirements of changes through the adoption of strategic and planned utilisation of resources that would make them fit to meet the present day challenges. To achieve the desired objectives, the higher educational institutions of Barak Valley should undertake periodical self-assessment, identifying their strength and weaknesses to analyse them for undertaking practical means that would enable to achieve standard of quality in the domain of higher education.

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