

Educational Inequalities and Challenges in Rural Assam : An Analysis of Rajapool Gohain Gaon

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ABSTRACT

Education plays a pivotal role in laying a proper foundation for the overall socioeconomic development of any region. It serves as the gateway to the wider world. Even after years of independence, some states of India are still struggling to achieve quality education. Despite efforts towards universal education, disparities in educational opportunities continue to persist, particularly in rural areas. This research paper aims to make an educational analysis of Rajapool Gohain Gaon (village) of Sivasagar district, Assam, and shed light on the inequalities and challenges in education faced by the people due to socioeconomic divide and related challenges. Since there is only one primary government school in the area, this study solely looked at the primary level of schooling. It also aims at enhancing the quality of education in the rural education system. Given that there is a wide gap to be bridged in terms of achievements in education compared to several other states or all India average and given the financial resource constraint Assam indeed faces a major challenge in fostering the human capital accumulation of the poor. It has focused on examining the inequalities in receiving proper educational facilities in the selected study area.

Keywords: rural education, socioeconomic challenges, inequalities, Rajapool Gohain Village, quality of education.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as the most effective tool for social change and social reforms. It has always been considered to be a very important dimension of any agenda for development programme in a society. Education starts when the human child is born and continues upto the last moment of death. Education help individuals develop physically, intellectually, morally and socially. The backbone for the socio-economic development, our education system is lagging behind respect to the present competitive world. Today, the developed countries have about 100 percent literacy rate which leads them to occupy in a better position in developmental indices. But, India has still only 74.04% (census 2011) which is a matter of concern for the economy. The present education system in Assam as well as in the entire country is not satisfactory with respect to modern competitive world. A section of people in our society is on the way to post-modern society whereas some other people are still illiterate and are lagging behind. The people who are provided with quality education get opportunities in a better position and on the other hand, a large number of deprived people are fighting with poverty and unemployment. Education and economic growth are interrelated. Impact of education can also break down the narrow roots of superstitions, backwardness, social evils, underdevelopment, etc. It's a fundamental element of social progress and social development.

Providing basic education has been one of the common public policies in most countries since World War II, for illiteracy and ignorance not only prevent an individual's growth but also that of society. Economists and policymakers across the world emphasized the need to universalize basic education a long time back. However, many countries, particularly countries with low income have fared poorly in ensuring basic education for all. Various studies on the progress of school education in India have highlighted the positive development of the programme, like near universal enrolment, yet there are many areas in which the programme did not achieve success. One of the important drawbacks has been the exclusion of socially and economically backward communities like the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) from educational attainments.

According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate of Assam is 72.19% but the literacy rate for the State has improved substantially. According to a recent report on education compiled by the National Statistical Office (NSO) Assam ranked fifth in the entire nation with a literacy rate of 85.9%. Although there has been remarkable progress in school education in Assam during the last few years and the government of Assam has initiated a number of steps to raise the quality, expansion, and relevance of education but desired results are yet to be achieved. The conditions of government-run schools (except Kendriya Vidyalaya, Navodaya Vidyalaya and a few) are not satisfactory with respect to a number of teacher and educational infrastructural facilities. Children

from rural areas are mostly prone to suffer. Single-teacher school, especially at the primary level is one of the important problems of state government-run schools. Presently, in the era of globalization and the knowledge economy, education is the key to the overall progress of an area.

Indian Education Commission 1964-66, popularly known as Kothari Commission attach much importance on development of physical and human resources. According to this commission some important aspects for achieving the goal of national development are self-sufficiency in food, economic growth and full employment, social and national integration, and political development. All these can be achieved by means of education. Kothari Commission in its report attributes education as the main instrument of change .(NCERT, 1970).

India, the second most populous country has been successful in the recent past in reducing poverty levels and investing more in public services like education and health. At the same time India is also home to more than 300 million people living below poverty line. India's record in providing basic education to all has also been subject to many drawbacks, although it made a constitutional commitment to provide free education to all long back in 1950. Realising the urgent need to ensure school education to all India launched a special programme in 2001 called Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) to universalize basic education which was different from previous other programmes on many fronts. Both the Central and state governments pledged to support SSA financially through a partnership. The programme targeted to pay special attention to take the programme to the socially marginalized communities and to remote areas, and aimed at ensuring universal enrolment by 2007 and universal retention by 2010.

Rural areas very often lack educational institutions. Schools are not easily accessible when children have to cover a long distance to reach school. In such cases the child has to go walking, or families have to invest in transportation or make any other alternatives like arranging housing facilities with relatives. The location of a school in a distant place is particularly discouraging for female children as they are expected to assist in household activities, such as cooking and cleaning. Furthermore, families may consider the safety and chastity questions, if the school is far away, particularly for female children before sending them to school. Although there has been remarkable progress of school education in Assam during the last few years and the government of Assam has initiated a number of steps to raise the quality, expansion and relevance of education, but desired result yet to be achieved. Assam is still considered an educationally backward state in the national context.

1.1 Policy Initiatives

The Constitution of India is in fact, unequivocally committed to the idea of social justice and equality, especially equality of opportunity and status, for all citizens as well as to the responsibility of the State to preserve, protect and assure the rights of marginalized groups and the minorities. Equality of opportunity, while open to discussion, has been widely interpreted to include equality in the provision of education seen as a crucial factor in securing equality of status. The Constitutional underpinnings in the development of education policy thus have implications for the manner in which its delivery is conceptualized. While the idea of basic education as a public good is universally accepted due to the positive externalities its provision entails and due to the fact that the marginal costs of provision are low (non-rival property), the role of the State is particularly strong incases where poverty and social exclusion make it difficult for sections of the population to access private provision.

The Indian Constitution through its article 45 of the Directive Principle has directed to provide free and compulsory primary education for all children until they complete 14 years of age within 10 years from the date on which the constitution comes into force. But the dream is yet to be realized. The 86th amendment of the constitution that made education as a fundamental right was passed in the year 2002. The new article 21 A says "the State shall provide free and compulsory education through a law that it may determine." But the State has failed miserably in fulfilling this obligation imposed upon them by the Constitution. One of the most defining moments in the journey of universal education is this constitutional amendment, making education a Fundamental Right and adopting the corresponding Right to Education Act by the Indian Parliament in 2009. The Right To Education is now being implemented all over India with effect from April 1, 2010 including Assam. The country has already launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) to make quality primary education for all. The country has also embarked on the ambitious path of making secondary education universal and ensuring equitable access to all. For this purpose Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan has been already launched all over the country. These achievements and policy measures have raised new expectations for the future.

Etymologically, policy is a course of action or principle of action adopted by an organization or individual and governance is the process of decision-making and implementation of the decision taken. The Government, in a country like ours, launches a number of plans and programmes for welfare of its subjects in conformity with the development policy. Rajapool Gohain Gaon, a traditional village in Sivasagar district of Assam is also no exception to the process.

1.2 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Scheme

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and Compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right. Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GoI) anchors the SSA Programme. The SSA has been operational since 2000-2001. With passage of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 changes are incorporated into SSA approach, strategy and also norms.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in Assam in February, 2002. Although this was implemented in Assam, still there arise a number of issues regarding its growth, quality and success which demands a comprehensive research. Despite tremendous efforts being made on infrastructure development some of the significant shortages in the provisions of infrastructure facilities are yet to be achieved. To universalize primary education, it is necessary to provide schools everywhere and also provide all necessary facilities to all the schools. This is because schools without proper infrastructure and facilities, termed as ill-equipped schools, may not be in a position to impart education properly and the quality of education in such schools will be poor.

1.3 Mid Day Meal Scheme

The Mid-day Meal programmes started by certain States provided some motivation for children, especially those from poorer background to attend school. The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education was launched in 1995 in order to consolidate earlier efforts to provide the Mid-day Meal in primary schools to supplement nutrition for children in the age group 5-9 years. By doing so it was hoped school enrolment would increase and drop out rate would decline.

A nation-wide Mid-day Meal programme was launched from August 15, 1995 to give a boost to universalization of elementary education by improving enrolment, retention and attendance in primary schools and also to improve the nutritional status of children. Central Government supplies free of cost the full requirement of food grains for the programme. As an incentive to facilitate the movement of food grains to villages, the Central government has even decided to reimburse the actual transportation charges for moving food grains from Food Corporation of India godowns to schools/villages under the Scheme. The success of this programme however is limited.

1.4 Right of the Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009)

The Right of the Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act was passed by the Indian parliament on 4th August 2009 to execute the article 21(A) which was inserted after 86th amendment of the constitution. RTE can be achieved by free and compulsory education for which India had been striving even before country attains independence. During the period from 2002 to 2010, the process of drafting of bill, passing in both the house of parliament, notification as law has been completed and finally the law came into effect from 1st April 2010. Now according to section 3(1) Chapter 2, RTE Act 2009, "Every child of the age of 6 to 14 years shall have a right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education." This act is passed as a consequence of the 86th amendment of the constitution where three important provisions are made. There are (i) Article 21(A) in Part III (Fundamental right) (ii) modified the article 45 (in directive principle) and added a new clause (K) under article 51 (A) (fundamental duties) making the parent or guardian responsible for providing opportunities for education to their children between six to fourteen Years.

1.5 Exclusion in Education

With research and the efforts of activists shedding light on specific issues affecting exclusion in education, the policy regime acknowledged the need for special efforts to reach the 'unreached'. However, these efforts took the form either of scattering incentives to motivate parents to send children to school or parceling out the responsibility for each group to different arms of the government machinery, such as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs or the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Besides fostering separatism in provision the low priority these Ministries and departments enjoyed in the allocation of resources meant that very limited resources were available for the efforts leading to poor quality of services. The incentives on the other hand limited and poorly administered as they were – could not compensate for the very poor quality of education provided in public schools. Thus as we will see further on, while they increased physical access to schooling for many, they did not improve the outcomes for children from excluded communities. Besides, the incentive schemes were targeted at only a limited section of the marginalized. Street and homeless children, children from migrant families, children of nomadic tribes, even children from minority communities were not extended incentives, as were SC and ST children. In fact the focus of inclusion was skewed towards SC/ ST children and the girl child.

The development of hierarchies within the public school system with more resources being made available to "model" schools, such as the Kendriya Vidyalayas, relative to regular government schools coupled with the push towards privatization have added to more and different forms of exclusion and the perpetuation of

a variety of inequalities in education. Its most ambitious education programme meant to achieve universalization of basic education -Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan [SSA]- has also been fraught with design flaws and implementation loopholes, leading to a less than desired impact. Since this programme affects the education of the marginalized the most the poor quality education it delivers adds to their burden of inequality.

1.6 Statement of the problem

In the backdrop of above discussion a study is undertaken which is stated as follows:

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1.7 Objectives of the study

- To examine the inequalities in receiving proper educational facilities in the selected study area.
- To enquire the socio-economic position of the rural households in the selected study area.
- To study awareness of the people living in the study area towards the educational issues.
- To sort out the way to chalk out the challenges and perspectives of education in the study area.
- To explore the problems of education with respect to students, teachers and educational infrastructural facilities.

1.8 Research Questions

- What are the inequalities in receiving proper educational facilities in the selected study area?
- What is the Socio-economic position of the rural households in the selected study area?
- Are the people in the selected study area aware about the educational issues they are facing?
- What is the way to chalk out the challenges and perspectives of education in the study area?
- What are the problems of education with respect to students, teachers and educational infrastructural facilities?

1.9 Description of the study area

This research study is carried out in Rajapool Gohain Gaon of Nazira sub-division in Sivasagar district, Assam. The gram panchayat that comes under this village is Borboruah gram panchayat. The eastern boundary of the village is surrounded by Bheborsuk Gaon, the western side is surrounded by Ligoripukhuri Civil Hospital, the northern side by Nazira SDO office, and the southern side by Gar Ali Gaon. Most of the people of the village belong to the Ahom community. The village is mostly occupied by poor families. The main occupation of most of the villagers is cultivation and farming. While some rich villages were small tea growers, some others were laborers. There is a historical tank named ‘Rajmow’, situated in the village which was constructed during the rule of Swargadeo Gaurinath Singha (Ahom king). It is covered with a land area of 8 bighas. Another historical pool is located in the village that was originally constructed by Bhumura Borphukan. Other important historic elements of the village include some earthen pyramids. The nearest town Nazira is around 5 km from the village.

1.10 Description of the school in the study area

In the village, there is one Lower Primary school i.e. 124 No. Fulonibari L.P. School was established in the year 1898. It has classes from I to V (under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme). The school is housed in an Assam-type building. There is only a single hall for all the five classes. As such it has been observed that the students of different classes sit in the same room. The classes were divided with temporary partitions. The free uniform was provided to students from 2012. Except for blackboard and some charts of Assamese alphabet and numbers, other teaching learning materials like globes, and maps could not be seen.

1.11 Limitation of the study

The present study area has only one lower primary school in the selected village and thus the scope of this study is limited to stand alone on the lower primary school as a part of rural education, as it does not cover other schools that have lower primary section or any other middle or secondary or higher secondary schools. The study also cannot claim to be applicable to the whole of Sivasagar district or the state of Assam and its findings may not necessarily be applicable to the other districts of the state.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Bajpai and Goyal (2004) analysed quality and coverage issues in primary education. They noted that despite constitutional provisions, the quality of education provided by the public sector was low and varied substantially from state to state. Furthermore, they highlighted both the lack of schools and the quality of teaching. Their research revealed weak links between the school and the community and the teachers with little incentive to teach despite good salaries. Schools had poor-quality classrooms and teaching materials and lacked basic infrastructure, such as water and toilets. These become disincentives for girls in particular. Apart from teacher

training and qualifications, outcomes also depend on how many hours of teaching actually occur. In rural districts, teachers are reluctant to take an appointment in a remote school and often apply for transfers, further exacerbating teacher availability problems and pupil-teacher ratios (Bajpai and Goyal, 2004). In addition, multi-grade classrooms and single-teacher schools impact what can be taught as curriculums become hard to follow. Other factors impacting quality are caste and social systems which can serve as a disincentive for students of a lower class in a school with an upper-class teacher. Systemic corruption is not uncommon with misuse of school funds and nepotism in recruitment. Governance is poor and low accountability also cause disruptions in the learning environment (Bajpai & Goyal, 2004).

Studies discussing the problems and gaps in the public funded education programme in India. ASER-Pratham (various years), Kingdon (2007), Banerji and Mukherjee (2008) point out the positive and negative developments in the school education programme of India. Kingdon (2007) points out that reasonable progress was made in making primary education accessible by all. The study points out several positive developments under the programme like near universal enrolment and increase in literacy rate which are encouraging. However some neglected areas are also highlighted. The attendance rate is low particularly in northern states, further there are inter-state differences in school enrolment rate, there is gender inequality in accessing education, participation in secondary school education is unequally distributed, and thirdly, quality of education needs to be increased since learning achievements are very low in primary and secondary level, fourthly the facilities in school are very poor and teacher absenteeism is very high. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), published by Pratham, a leading non-government organization, pointed out that the quality of education in most government schools is poor (ASER, 2012).

Rabha A.K. (2017) conducted "A study on the problems of primary education among the children of the Rabha community of Assam with special reference to the district of Goalpara". The objective of the study was to investigate the problem of primary education among the children of Rabha community of Assam with special reference to the district Goalpara. The researcher used descriptive method in the study. For data collection researcher used questionnaire and interview scheduled. Researcher used both primary and secondary source for data collection. The population of the study was all the primary school students belonging to the age group 6 to 14 years of age in Goalpara district. The study revealed that parents' illiteracy is a major hindrance in the success of primary education and also parent's occupation influence influenced for the success in primary education.

Kowar P. (2018) carried out a study on "Status of Primary Education among the Kaibartas of Assam A Case Study in Sivasagar District of Assam". The major objective of the study was to find out the status of enrolment, attendance and dropout in the Primary Schools of the Kaibarta villages in Sivasagar district of Assam. The nature of the study was analytical in nature. This study revealed that the enrolments of the sample schools have been reduced during the period of 2011 to 2015. The total number of enrolment was 2107 of the 28 sample schools in 2011 which has been declined to 1764 in 2015. The primary education had been accepted as the starting point for promoting gender equality and empowering women in a society. It is a basic requirement for economic development, modernization of the social system and the smooth functioning of modern democratic institution. Economic development demands a constant supply of skilled manpower, for which the first step is primary education. The quality of a person's life depends on the primary education. All developed nations provide public primary education for the young children in the world. There is a global goal (MDG) to provide primary education for all. There is no definite definition of primary education.

Aruna Roy (1980) in her study 'Schools and Communities : An Experience of Rural India' presents that in Rajasthan in spite of opening a number of schools to improve access to primary education, the schools were plagued by problems of low enrolment and attendance as the schools drew only 40 percent children of age group 6-11. Some problems that have been highlighted in the study as factors affecting enrolment at primary level were; (i) children were busy during the day as they had to work and family could not afford to get a substitute to them, (ii) the teacher usually did not view the village as a desirable place to stay and had to commute long distances to work making him/her dependent on the local transport facilities that were often unreliable and this also alienated teacher from the village, and (iii) the curriculum did not take the environment into consideration. To improve the situation it was necessary to make the schools more relevant to the village life, to involve parents in planning, to run it at times when children could be spared from domestic or farm work, to select the teachers from the village and to adopt the curricula and teaching methods to the local environment. Based on the above recommendations an appropriate programme was introduced in three villages of Rajasthan. The author describes that the implementation of a locally relevant education programme proved to be successful in reaching out to more number of students and the programme was extended to ten more villages with a total attendance at the schools of more than five hundred children.

Brahma K. (2012) conducted "a study of primary education of the bodos in Kokrajhar district". The main objective of the study was to study the present status of primary education of the bodos in Kokrajhar district. The population of the study was all the provincialized lower primary schools class 1-4 of Kokrajhar district. The sample of the study was 108 schools and 5 educational blocks and used stratified random sampling technique. For

the collection of data the researcher used questionnaire and checklist. This study has revealed that during the year 1771-1780 only one primary school under Gossaigaon educational block in Kokrajhar district also researcher observed that in the year of 2005-2010 the total numbers of primary education institution in Kokrajhar district were increased.

Most unfortunate part of this survey of related studies is that in all these studies there are suggestions and remedial measures related to the problems that the investigators took up for studies but very little actions were seen to be taken by the concerned authorities.

Theoretical Framework

The need to know and learn sustains the efforts at becoming educated. In this paper, education is conceptualized as a need that influences the needs for “esteem” and “self-actualization”. Education has been viewed as an “Enabling” factor (Dreze & Sen, 2002) in development literature and influences the “capabilities” of taking decisions and influencing our freedoms. The Capability approach placed forward by Prof. Amartya Sen views poverty not only in terms of economic backwardness but also as “Capability Deprivation” (Sen, 1993). Capability Approach understands poverty beyond income. It refers to poverty beyond a range of means available to achieve human capabilities like Literacy, longevity, and access to income.

Differences in educational aspirations have also been observed between income and ethnic groups and appear to have a role in mediating decisions to pursue educational qualifications (Butler and Hamnett, 2011).

The theoretical framework of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs can be used as a part for understanding the poor socio-economic status and their social aspirations of the people of the study area. Maslow used the terms ‘physiological’, ‘safety’, ‘belongingness’ and ‘love’, ‘esteem’, ‘self-actualization’, and ‘self transcendence’ to describe the pattern that human motivations generally move through. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is often portrayed in the shape of a pyramid with the largest, most fundamental levels of needs at the bottom and the need for self-actualization at the top. Maslow’s theory suggests that the most basic level of needs must be met before the individual will strongly desire or focus motivation upon the secondary or higher level needs. In this paper, education is conceptualised as a need that influences the needs for esteem and self-actualization . Though not specifically mentioned in Maslow’s need hierarchy, the characteristics of education as an enabler or a catalyst for human development, persuade one to view it as a need that comes into play at a subsequent level once food and clothing are ensured.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Method

The study is analytical and descriptive and completely qualitative in nature. Fieldwork is conducted to collect primary data from Rajapool Gohain Gaon (village) of Nazira sub-division in Sivasagar district, Assam. In this study, descriptive survey method is applied and the purposive sampling technique is used while selecting sample for collecting data. The researcher also adopted the observation method of study by cooperating with people in the study area. Qualitative analysis technique is used in this present study. The responses given by the parents, teachers, and the students were carefully collected, recorded and interpreted.

3.2 Population of the study and sample size

The population for this study comprised of the headmistress of the primary government school, the teachers and other staff members of the school and some villagers of the study area. The total sample of the present study comprised of 34 samples with one headmistress, 8 (teaching+ non teaching staff), other 25 members of the village itself.

3.3 Tools used for data collection

Following tools are prepared by the investigator to collect data for the present study

- Interview schedule for the Headmistress of the primary School inside the village. Here items included to know the present status of the school, available study equipments , operation of SSA scheme, operation of MDM scheme etc.
- Interview schedule for the teachers of the primary school , non teaching staff and some villagers. Here items included to know the present status of the school, household condition of the students, socio-economic problems and it’s impact on the students, operation of SSA scheme, operation of MDM Scheme etc.
- Field notes: Observation by the investigator recorded as field notes which are qualitative in nature are used as a tool for the study. Because these notes depicts the actual school and village environment while visiting the field.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

- Provision of elementary education to all children is the first component of universalisation of elementary education and this can be said to be achieved in the study area.
- As per RTE act there should be at least one classroom for every class (batch). This objective was not found to be achieved because all the classes 1-5 were held in the same hall with temporary partitions.
- The condition of toilets have improved to a large extent after implementation of SSA because permanent toilet was found in the study area school but separate toilets for boys and girls were still not available.
- The problem of drinking water was solved entirely after the introduction of Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan.
- In the school it was found that there was no facility for separate common room for teachers and only a part of the headmistress' office was used as a teacher's common room and also for other official purposes.
- There were no separate room for library. It was found that the books were kept in the wardrobe of the headmistress which was also used as library.
- It's true that mid day meal attracts students to come to school but at the same time after having food, they used to have the tendency to leave the school before specific time. Some villagers said that though the fund for mid day meal is quite regular but sacks of rice were wasted every year for improper utilisation. The teachers complained that sometimes the headmistress and the co- teachers are compelled to leave their classes and work in halfway to go to the market for purchasing vegetables, pulses, spices, firewood, etc.
- As there was no separate dining room or space available where students can eat at peace, the school verandah or passage was used as their dining space.
- Most of the households suffered from economic instability and deteriorating condition of their families and they expressed their concern on the lack of income generation facilities for which they find it hard to run their lives.
- There is no other higher educational institution in the village. For further studies, the students of the village had to move out of the village.
- As expressed by a few parents, it is not much convenient for the adolescent girls to walk in the roads for attending school far from their houses (4-5 kms) but they still support higher education for everyone irrespective of any gender.
- Most of the villagers gave less importance to educate the differently abled children. They are unaware about the initiatives that the government provided for differently abled children.
- Lack of computer knowledge is seen in the area so students are also not able to follow the e-learning facilities.
- Some respondents expressed that though the internet is accessible in the study area but due to the lack of digital devices, the students could neither attend classes during pandemic nor any initiative was taken from the school authority.
- The researcher found that there was no cooperation between the parents and the teachers. Parents generally cannot manage time to come to school and also they were not much interested in coming. And the teachers also do not think it necessary to visit the homes of the children.
- As most of the village population are not much financially sound, therefore some of them desire to involve their kids after a level of study into their agricultural activities due to non availability of fund to enroll their children to higher education.
- Socio-economic problems of the state in particular to create the unhealthy forces like "bandh" culture, extremism, politicization etc. and these forces are making huge loss towards our education system. The over all environmental conditions have got damaged due to such type of problems.

Operation of MDM scheme

MDM programme is an important inclusion in the school education programme of the country. It's aim is to attract children into the educational mainstream. It also helps in providing the nutritional support to otherwise malnourished children. With the help of this scheme it is expected to reduce dropout, increase enrollment ratio and attendance. As observed in the sampled school, it is serving its purposes specifically. The headmistress and teachers of the school under sample opined that MDM scheme is helping in increasing enrollment ratio and attendance. However not all expressed that dropout is reducing due to MDM. It helps in maintaining the nutritional health of the village children. According to a teacher, for a number of children it is the only meal of the day. It is also encouraging to note that the selected school has a separate room as kitchen where MDM is cooked and food is usually stored. This is a positive impact of SSA interventions. However the operation of the scheme is not free from defects. Though a separate cook is employed for cooking MDM, a good amount of the teaching time is wasted in managing the programme. The fund provided for the meals is not adequate enough to include nutritious foods (like milk, fruits etc.) in the meal. Food items are only Khichri prepared from Dal and Rice. In the name of

vegetables potato is mainly provided. Right to nutrition is one of the basic right of the child. Implementation of MDM scheme in rural schools contributing to some extent to provide this Right to children.

The researcher reviewed the work done by G. Revathy (2008) on “organizational culture of schools.” In his study, it is suggested that infrastructural facilities and resources need to be improved, including furniture, bore well, grant for maintenance, whitewash and repair, water facilities. After all, SSA has brought about a new light in the field of elementary schools of Assam.

Lack of trained teachers

As we know that the needs and demands of the students are changing with the advancement of time. In this regards teachers should be train to deal with the new pedagogical methods, teaching aids to create an effective classroom. Teacher training programmers should be conducted for the teachers to introduce new teaching methods, about the using of teaching aids in the classroom. But in primary level teacher training programmes conducted very less and in primary level school numbers of teachers are very less according to the students

In the analysis, the researcher observed that though a considerable progress has been made in recruiting teachers, making classroom, teaching aids, and toilets and drinking water facilities available, however, the distribution of such facilities across states is not uniform; furthermore, an important element of schooling, that is, teachers are not regular in teaching and a large number of untrained teachers have been employed. Such a situation not only hinders the availability of quality education but represents a complete lack of commitment to fight the problems of poverty and mass ignorance.

Lack of parents' interest

The villagers were not much concerned about the significance of education. Most of the parents lack interest in sending their children to schools. To a limited stage they send their children to schools but when they grow up, the parents seem not to be interested in sending them to schools and prefer to involve them in earning money. Such situation prevails due to lack of parents' education. Parents' education is most important to boost a child's career prospect. Parents do not give much importance towards girl's education. After getting a minimum education qualification, the girls are prepared for marriage rather than providing them with quality higher education.

Method of teaching

Success of education mostly relies on the method applied in teaching the students. The sample school used lecture method as the main method of teaching. Though play way method is most suitable for primary education but most of the teachers use play for passing their times. Of course, SSA is providing training courses for every teacher but it is not properly followed in the government schools of rural areas. Maximum number of teachers of rural areas do not apply discussion and activity method in teaching. Teaching aids are not used to learn any difficult concept.

Uncertainty of parents' income

The parents of the children attending the School are in the lowest socio-economic and class structure in the village with several living below the poverty line. Their day-to-day life is consumed by daily work in the nearby tea gardens and other works in the nearest town, managing around the social fabric of the society they live in. Male members go away to daily work. The women are at home managing the housework, cooking, and animal husbandry to the extent that they have no time or ability to supervise children. Almost nothing is consistent, and a high degree of uncertainty is associated with daily activities relating to income, health and survival. Sickness of self, family or animals, too much rain or too little rain; the list of variables, or reasons, is long and constantly changing, all impacting families' decision making. The factors of decision making in the moment, characteristic of the rural families, is driven by these variables which are themselves uncertain.

Problem of illiterate parents

With regard to the level of education of the people, it seems the location of the village plays an important role. All other factors like poor economic conditions, lack of motivation and ambition among the students, poor guidance, agricultural work, etc., being more or less equally responsible. The village being located relatively away from the nearest town, the people generally have lesser accessibility to educational institutions. In some backward places, most of the parents are not aware of the significance of primary education. They prefer to send their child engage some factory or any other workplace. Most of the parents want to educate their male child rather than a female child. Concerning girl child's, they engage in household activities. On the other hand, most of the parents give less importance to education with regard to differently able children. They are unaware of the initiatives that the Government provides for differently able children.

Low learning achievement

The primary focus of any educational process is learning. Parents send their kids to school because they want them to learn how to read, write, and learn new things. It is challenging to condone schools' poor performance on this count. Low levels of learning act significantly against the marginalized group.

Economic factors and emigration

Economic condition is another major factor creating hindrances in education. The primary occupation of most of the villagers is agriculture. Due to various situations, to manage their livelihood some school-going students are engaged in various earning sources. They help their parents in short-term occupations like fishing, small tea growers, small businesses, etc. Due to a lack of money for higher education, many students left their education life and engaged in small jobs to fulfill their needs. Many boys of the village left their village in search of jobs and most of them are in other states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra, doing small jobs. Such conditions are creating emigration in large quantities every year.

Absence of Adult Education

Adult education is a powerful auxiliary and an essential incentive to the education system. No programme of compulsory education of children can succeed without the active support and cooperation of adults. But the absence of adult education among the village inhabitants and other rural areas has some impact on the slow progress of education among the children of these areas. Parents should be given adult education to reduce illiteracy. The establishment of the adequate number of Adult Education Centres in these areas is suggested. Existing literature on children's schooling has also upheld the role of the mother in the educational attainment of her children. Such education is an important factor in attaining children's education level. Hence, steps should be taken to raise the level of mother's education in rural areas. Awareness campaigns should be organized to aware evil effects of large families.

V. SUGGESTIONS

- The focus must now be on ensuring uniform standards of education across the state, as access to school is no more an issue. At the same time, attention must be given to making post-primary schools available adequately particularly in the village areas so that students can continue their education in the village itself, as we have seen that the selected study area had only a single lower primary school.
- One of the important areas of SSA that has not been adequately addressed is the high rate of absence. Monitoring of teachers needs to be strengthened. Teachers remaining absent must be penalized. Further research must be carried out to know what can be done to reduce teachers' absence from schools. Additionally, all untrained teachers must be provided with in-service training.
- The lower level of school completion rate among the socially disadvantaged groups calls for special attention. However, possibilities of offering rewards on school completion to students from socially disadvantaged communities need to be explored to discourage dropouts. School curriculums must include the achievements of these communities. Additionally, teachers' training should also focus on the need to be sensitive to the various issues of the students.
- Community participation is a must not only in school management but also in regular monitoring of the schools in the locality.
- Proper supervision should be needed for the improvement of the existing status of primary education as well as to maintain a standard for both teachers and students.
- Comprehensive, periodical and systematic orientation is mandatory to sensitize all stakeholders including the policymakers, implementers, teachers, center level officials and community people to make them understand this scheme well. This would help them to become more efficient and be active partners in the programme which will certainly enhance its performance.
- The achievements of the students are not up to the mark. Their performance in the last annual exam depicts that grade promotion is done without achieving the minimum competencies. Special focus should be given to the evaluation process. The process of continuous and comprehensive evaluation should be followed.
- Some special sessions or classes can be conducted for the parents to make them realize the significance of education for their children.
- To appreciate the efforts of students, some type of scholarship either in the form of gifts or books can be given to those who perform well in the class.
- There should be facilities to visit schools by educational functionaries for academic support.
- Participation of teachers in Teacher Training Programmes.
- Transportation of food grains allocated under Mid-day Meal Schemes should be provided.
- Introduction of Adult Education Scheme for the parents so that they may motivate their children for higher education.

- Infrastructure facilities play vital role in the teaching learning process. It can be considered as the major part of any educational institution. So in primary level proper infrastructure facilities should be provided for fulfilling the needs of the all the students including differently able children.

VI. CONCLUSION

From this research, it is found that there are differences in the socioeconomic structure of the education system in the selected study area. This may be due to improper management and unequal monitoring processes. However, more such studies will be a useful base for the effective implementation of plans and programmes and knowing the existing scenario in the current village education and also for visualizing the future strategies for further development of primary education in Assam. It is envisaged that such study will generate information like efficient resource management at all possible levels. The authority should ensure that their efficiency and performance are also improved if continuing with rural government schools are essential for universalizing access to primary education as a result of implementing the Right to Education Act.

There has been considerable achievement in primary education in Assam since the launching of SSA in 2002-03. Consequently, access to primary education has been increased. Although there has been remarkable progress in school education in Assam during the last few years the government of Assam has initiated several steps to raise the quality, expansion, and relevance of education, but the desired result is yet to be achieved. It is proved from the discussion that the number of schools across the state has grown, enrolment rates have also raised significantly over the years, and dropout rates have also reduced considerably, but still, we are far from the goal of universal elementary education in a real sense. So it is the responsibility of the teachers, parents, and society to fulfill the basic needs and requirements of the children at the elementary level. At the age 6 to 14 years the growth and development of students concerning physical, mental, social, spiritual emotional, etc. A teacher can lead the students to become responsible citizens with an understanding of the developmental characteristics at this stage and help to provide an opportunity to build a well-adjusted personality throughout life.

The residents of Rajapool Gohain Gaon struggle with many challenges, from infrastructure development to law and order. It faces widespread poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and a lack of proper health and education infrastructure. In the Indian or more specifically, the north east Indian case, belongingness may not come after the physiological need. The belongingness, it is seen in the larger Indian culture, is higher amongst people who are the poorest and thus least able to fulfil their basic physiological needs. Poverty brings them together and affluence makes them drift apart. However, in the case of the need and aspiration for education, the reverse seems to be true. Education can be seen in terms of a higher order need parallel to the need for security and self-esteem since it would be a significant contributor to both. The desire to get educated and to educate would probably arise only when one understands that education can help in the betterment of the life situation. An individual who is trapped in the struggle for basic life needs like food, shelter and clothing, would not be motivated to think of the higher order needs like self-esteem or security which relate to education.

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