

The status of Literacy rate in India and Assam-A Comparative analysis.

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ABSTRACT:

The literacy rate and level of educational attainment of people are two indicators of country's economic development. Literacy and level of education greatly influence a person's daily life and help him/her to perform a range of activities which is not possible without an individual's ability to read, write and communicate in the social sphere. The present paper tries to highlight the impact of literacy on economic development. The paper also examines the status of literacy rate in Assam and India and makes a comparative analysis on the basis of the following criteria viz, Distribution of population by levels of education in percentage, Occupational engagement by level of education in percentage, Age specific enrollment rates, Distribution patterns of out of school children 6-16 years in percentage, School building by type, rural and urban in percentage etc and for analysing the status the paper takes the help of various secondary sources like census, Economic surveys, journals, websites etc. The paper also presents certain findings of the study and also suggest various recommendations for raising the literacy rate and level of educational attainment in the country as well as in the state.

KEYWORDS: LITERACY RATE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, OUT OF SCHOOL, GENDER DISPARITY, OCCUPATIONAL ENGAGEMENT, AGE SPECIFIC ENROLLMENT RATE.

INTRODUCTION:

Literacy rate also called the "effective literacy," can be defined as the total percentage of the population of an area at a particular time aged seven years or above who can read and write with proper understanding. The literacy rate and level of educational attainment of people are two important indicators of a country's development. Since economic development is economic growth plus structural changes in the economy, an increase in literacy rate improves the quality of life of the individuals, generates employment opportunities, raises their standard of living thereby enhancing the level of welfare, leading to economic development. Education is the mirror which reflects the economic and social status of the state. Education helps in the overall development of the individuals. Education is considered as a fundamental requirement for human resource development not only for the individuals in particular but for the nation as a whole. Education and literacy helps in boosting the moral values of individuals by enhancing their skills, productivity, efficiency and improving their quality of life. Literacy also enables the individuals to be better informed, to be more responsible, have better quality to exercise wide choices in activities of day to day lives, thereby contributing towards country's economic development

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A number of research work has been done from time to time on the literacy rate in India. Education Commission (1966) recommended for effective programme on adult education in India which should provide for the rapid elimination of illiteracy by means of mass education and attention towards women, industrial workers, and other special groups, programs of correspondence studies. J. Bhullar (1976) made a study of the university student towards physical activity in relation to academic

performance, intelligence, socio-economic status and personality characteristics. In his study he found that subjects with higher intelligence tends to have more favourable attitude towards physical activity in its relation to its place in the University program for health and fitness. E.V. Rathnaiah (1977) had emphasised on formal education, extent of its spread among the Tribal communities and the nature of structural constraints in a part of Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh. In his study he presents the living condition of various tribes and the low literacy rate prevailing among them and he also examined the various constraints responsible for low literacy rate namely exposure to modernity and socio-economic status of the family, type of occupation, low level of income etc. P. Michael Penn (1997) explained the inter-relation between education and development of the society. He also discussed the role of World Bank in developing countries such as assist to school, equity of schooling, quality of schools and delays in educational policy not only that it also recognised the variety of policies and practices for effective and efficient school to meet the challenges of education. UNESCO (1995) had stated that in the poorest regions of the world, women and girls are locked into vicious circles. Illiterate mothers produces illiterate daughters who are married off too early and thus enters into another vicious circle of poverty, illiteracy rate, high fertility rate and early mortality rate etc.

OBJECTIVES:

- To know the status of literacy rate in India and Assam.
- To know the impact of literacy rate in economic development.
- To suggest policy prescriptions, if any.

METHODOLOGY:

The present study is entirely based on secondary data collected from various sources like census Economic survey, books, journals and NSSO websites. The study uses tables and bar graphs to make a comparative analysis on the status of literacy between India and Assam.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Table 1: Literacy rate Assam and India: 2001 and 2011

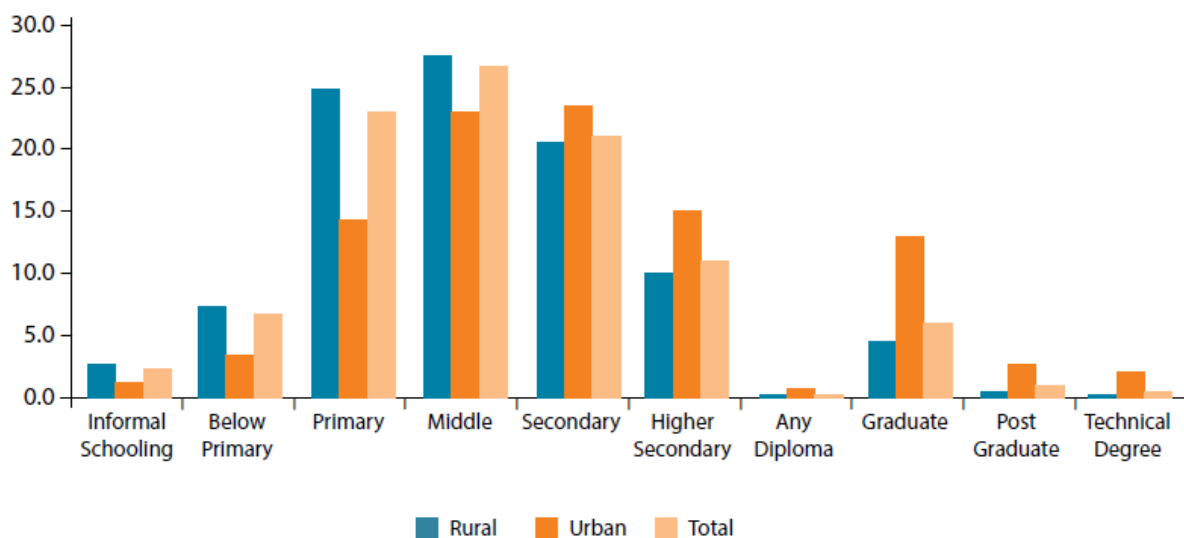
	India 2011			India 2001		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Male	80.9	77.2	88.8	75.3	70.7	86.3
Female	53.7	46.1	72.9	71.3	68.2	89.7
Total	73.1	67.8	84.1	64.8	58.7	79.9
	Assam 2011			Assam 2001		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Male	78.8	76.5	91.8	53.7	46.1	72.9
Female	54.6	50.7	80.2	54.6	50.7	80.2
Total	73.2	70.4	88.9	63.3	59.7	85.3

Source: Census 2011, 2001.

The above table shows the literacy rate of Assam and India in 2001 and 2011. The table shows that the percentage of total male literates in India in 2001 and 2011 was 75.3% and 80.9% respectively. However

the percentage of total female literates in India in 2001 and 2011 was 71.3% and 53.7% respectively. Thus, in 2011 in India the percentage of total male literates has increased as compared to 2001 implying a sign of development in the country in terms of literacy. However in 2011 the percentage of total female literates in India has decreased as compared to 2001, it is so because still in some parts of the country there exists gender discrimination where only the male members of the family are sent to school and female members have to sit at home doing the household works and taking care of their siblings especially in the rural areas. Again in Assam in 2001 the percentage of total male literates was 53.7% and in 2011 was 78.8% and the percentage of female literates in 2001 was 54.6% and in 2011 it was also 54.6%. In Assam in 2011 the percentage of male literates showed an increasing trend as compared to 2001. However the percentage of female literates remains the same in 2011 as compared to 2001. If we make a comparative analysis of the state literacy rate as compared to the national literacy level, it is revealed that in 2001, the state level of literacy was far below the national level of literacy both in the dimensions of male literates as well as female literates. However in 2011 there was not vast difference between the national level of literacy and the state level of literacy which reveals that Assam has shown improvement in terms of total male and female literates.

Table 2: Distribution of population by levels of education (in %)



The above table reveals the distribution of population by different levels of education in percentage in the rural as well as urban areas of Assam. The percentage of rural people in informal schooling, below primary, primary and middle schools is more as compared to the urban people, it is so because poverty never permits rural people to attend education in formal schools, as it involves lots of processes such as taking admission, paying monthly fees, buying text books and people lack funds to access them and no such processes are involved in informal schooling. The percentage of rural people having access to education at the secondary level, higher secondary level, any diploma, graduate, post graduate and technical degree is more in the urban areas and is very less in the rural areas because money always acts as a constraint in the rural areas, even the student may be very meritorious they cannot continue their education because of their financial problem, but in the urban areas parents try their best to educate their child upto a very high level by investing in education and money never acts as a barrier for most of the urban people. However very less people in the rural areas have got a graduate or post graduate degree because of certain provisions taken by the government to help the meritorious students in this regard.

Table 3:Occupational engagement by level of education(in %)

Levels of education	Agriculture & Livestock	Casual Work	Permanent Salaried Work	Self Employed in non farm	Total
Not Literate	28.35	57.65	4.00	10.00	100.00
Up to Middle	30.77	44.93	5.82	18.48	100.00
Up to Higher Secondary	26.04	24.85	22.73	26.38	100.00
Diploma/ Degree	8.99	12.39	55.40	23.22	100.00
Above Graduation	4.65	11.05	62.40	21.90	100.00
Total	27.38	39.90	13.60	19.12	100.00

Source: HDR Survey, Assam (2013).

The above table reveals the occupational engagement by levels of education in the state of Assam in percentage. It is evident from the table a very high percentage of illiterate people and people receiving education upto middle schools have engaged themselves in casual work followed by agriculture and livestock, followed by engaging themselves in non farm being self employed, and a very small percentage as permanent salaried employees as without education it was not possible to secure a permanent job. However a very large percentage of people having a Diploma/Degree and above graduation were permanent salaried workers as they possessed the educational criteria for getting a permanent job

Table 4:Age specific enrollment rates(in %)

	Male	Female	GPI	Rural	Urban	Total
6 to 14 years	93.59	94.13	0.95	93.56	96.28	93.85
15 to 16 years	71.17	78.49	0.87	73.17	84.62	74.57
17 to 18 years	53.24	52.07	0.82	50.16	69.62	52.71
19 to 24 years	20.33	15.19	0.79	15.47	30.32	17.70
6 to 24 years	54.84	53.28	0.92	65.33	69.22	54.07

%) Source: HDR Survey, Assam (2013).

The above table reveals the age specific enrollment rates in percentage in the state of Assam in the rural as well as urban areas. It is evident from the table that in various age groups the percentage of students enrolled in urban areas is more as compared to the rural areas, however in rural areas the percentage of people enrolled in various age groups is also increasing. The percentage of males enrolled in various age groups is also more as compared to female except for the year, 6-14 years and 15-16 years, still the percentage of females in terms of enrollment has been increasing.

Table 5: Distribution pattern of out of school children of age 6-16(in %)

Out of school children*	Rural	Urban	Male	Female	Total
Never enrolled	28.97	16.02	24.98	32.35	28.14
Left after enrolment	66.18	81.22	70.02	63.30	67.14
Enrolled but does not go to school	4.63	2.21	4.81	4.02	4.47
Goes to informal school	0.23	0.55	0.19	0.33	0.25
Total percent	100	100	100	100	100

Source: HDR Survey, Assam (2013).

*Total out of school children of 6-16 years: 2,839; total children of 6-16 years: 44,023.

The above table reveals the distribution pattern of out of school children of age 6-16 years in percentage in the state of Assam. It is seen that the percentage of people in the rural areas who have never enrolled them in schools is more as compared to the urban areas as people in the rural areas are poor and they don't have money to provide education to their children. The percentage of females never enrolled in schools is more as compared to the males because of gender disparity prevailing, it is believed that females will get married and go to their husband's house so it is not at all useful investing in the name of education for females. The percentage of male students leaving schools after enrollment is more as compared to the females due to certain responsibilities which may crop up where he has to leave schools though enrolled and engage himself in work to look after his family.

Table 6: Distance of primary and upper primary school from habitation, Assam

	Primary School			Upper Primary School		
	Within habitation	Within 1 km but not within habitation	Beyond 1 km	Within habitation	Within 3 km but not within habitation	Beyond 3 km
Assam	48.36	38.15	13.49	19.50	57.45	23.05
India	58.35	31.67	9.98	28.69	56.73	14.58

Source: 8th All India School Education Survey, 2009.

The above table reveals the distance of primary schools in Assam and India within habitation, within 1 km but not within habitation, beyond 1 km and upper primary schools within habitation, within 3 km but not within habitation and beyond 3 km in Assam and India respectively. The schools should not be located too far away from their habitation so that it becomes convenient for everyone to receive education which will raise the literacy rate of the country signifying economic development.

Table 7: Household by distance from secondary school (in %)

State/Country	Location	Distance from Schools with Classes IX-X		
		< 2km	2-5 km	>5 km
Assam	Rural	49.9	38	11.9
	Urban	82.8	13.9	3.3
India	Rural	47.3	35.5	17.1
	Urban	90.7	8.1	1

Source: Education in India: Participation and Expenditure, NSS 64th Round, 2007-08.

The above table reveals the households by distance from secondary schools in percentage in Assam and India in rural and urban areas. The distance of the households from secondary schools in percentage in the rural areas in Assam located at a distance of less than 2 km is 49.9%, between 2-5 km is 38% and greater than 5 km is 11.9% and in India is 47.3%, 35.5% and 17.1% respectively and in urban areas in Assam is 82.8%, 13.9% and 3.3% respectively and in India is 90.7%, 8.1% and 1% respectively. The secondary schools should not be located too far from the houses as there can be transportation problems due to which people may not have proper access to education.

Table 8: School building by type, rural and urban (in %)

Levels of school	Type of building*					
	Rural			Urban		
	Pucca	Partly Pucca	Kuchcha	Pucca	Partly Pucca	Kuchcha
Primary	69.84	23.96	5.74	77.61	20.97	1.35
	(88.20)	(7.88)	(2.14)	(89.06)	(8.51)	(1.17)
Upper Primary	46.62	35.12	17.96	67.22	29.26	3.52
	(89.39)	(8.70)	(1.38)	(91.51)	(7.39)	(0.79)
Secondary	37.92	49.37	12.63	64.64	29.78	5.58
	(84.45)	(12.24)	(2.53)	(92.66)	6.14)	(0.86)
Higher Secondary	57.70	38.52	3.77	75.42	24.17	0.42
	(90.49)	(8.31)	(0.89)	(94.93)	(4.60)	(0.26)

Note: Figures in parenthesis () indicate all India figures,
 * Schools in tents and open spaces are not included.
 Source: 8th All India School Education Survey, 2009.

The above table reveals the type of school building in rural and urban areas in the state of Assam in percentage. The percentage of primary schools, upper primary schools, secondary schools and higher secondary schools of pucca type in both rural areas as well as urban areas in Assam was lower than the national level. The percentage of primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools of partly pucca type and kuchcha type in both rural areas and urban areas in Assam was more as compared to the national level, implying that Assam has not been so successful in improving school infrastructural facilities.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Major findings of the study are:

1. The percentage of female literates in India and Assam as per the latest census in both the rural and urban areas is less as compared to the male literates and the reason for this is the gender disparity prevailing in the country.
2. The percentage of female literates in the rural areas as well as urban areas is better in Assam as compared to the national average.
3. A very high percentage of population have attended informal schools, below primary level, primary level and middle school because of lack of money those groups cannot continue further education implying a very meagre percentage of population having a graduate, post graduate and a technical degree in the rural areas.
4. Illiterate people, students receiving education upto middle schools, higher secondary schools are engaged in agriculture and livestock, casual work and those having a degree/diploma and above graduation are able to secured a permanent job as they possess the required educational qualifications.
5. The ratio of the number of female students enrolled to the number of male students i.e Gender Parity Index(GPI) has been successively declining in all age groups
6. A large percentage of both males as well as females have to leave schools after enrollment due to many social factors.
7. The percentage of primary and upper primary schools located within habitation in Assam is less as compared to the national level.
8. The state is lagging behind the country in terms of quality of schools due to wide rural urban disparity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Various steps must be taken by the government to reduce the gender disparity as gender disparity always obstructs the process of economic development.
2. Provisions must be made by the government to raise the number of schools in the rural areas to reduce the rural urban disparity.
3. In order to secure the objective of universalisation of education, free and compulsory education must be provided to the students.
4. Steps must be taken to raise the Gender Parity Index (GPI) so that literacy rate increases thereby contributing to economic development.

- 5.The percentage of out of schools has been increasing so adequate measures must be taken to reduce it.
- 6.Provisions must be made to provide scholarships to the meritorius students belonging to the poorer sections of the society so that they can continue their further education with utmost help from the government thereby contributing to the process of economic development.
- 7.It is suggested as per the National Council of Educational Research and Training documents on educational surveys reveals that the primary,upper primary,secondary and higher secondary stage schooling facilities in India should be made available within a distance of 1,3,5 and 8 km respectively.
- 8.It is suggested that government has to increase expenditure in improving the school infrastructure so that every students can have proper access to education.

CONCLUSIONS:

From the above study it is revealed that in terms of literacy taking into considerations the various criterion viz, Distribution of population by levels of education in percentage,Occupational engagement by level of education in percentage,Age specific enrollment rates,Distribution patterns of out of school children 6-16 years in percentage,School building by type,rural and urban in percentage Assam is lagging behind the national average due to gender disparity,rural-urban disparity and many other factors.Although government has taken various steps in raising the literacy rate in the state,the steps has not been so satisfactory.Thus more initiatives must be taken by the government from time to time to raise the literacy rate as increase in literacy rate directly contributes to economic development by raising the level of welfare of the population.

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