



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Educated Unemployment in Assam (India)

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Abstract: *The economy of Assam is suffering from the perennial problem of unemployment from several years which acts as one of the major hurdle in the socio-economic development of the state. Unemployment rates among educated youths are even more severe in Assam than other states of India. Moreover, the acute problem of high unemployment among educated females is a matter of serious concern for the state of Assam. This paper makes an attempt to present the educated unemployment scenario of Assam with the help of secondary data.*

Keywords: Educated Unemployment, Assam, Economy, Job seekers

1.Introduction:

Unemployment is one of the serious problem worldwide. The swelling problem of unemployment is paralysing the entire world economy. Unemployment can be defined as a situation when a person of working age group is actively seeking for work but unable to find any work. Unemployment is considered as one of the biggest curse for present day society. It has many adverse effects on our society like wastage of human resources, slow economic growth, poverty, social unrest etc.

The capacity of education in the upliftment of social status and its linkage with employment has attracted the attention of researchers from very early times. In developing economies like India, education is a kind of investment. People expects that education help individuals in acquisition of new skills and knowledge that increases their productivity in labour market. Parents spend their hard-earned income on their kid's education with the expectation to earn secure future income when their grown up kids enter the job market.

In the rush to educate the rapidly growing Indian population, the current education system of India prefers quantity over quality education. It results in the mismatch between education obtained by the individuals and skills preferred by employers in job market. The education system is creating educated but skill-less youths which further adds fuel to the problem of unemployment. According to Gunnar Myrdal (1975) "India's educational policy does not aim at development of human resources. It merely produces clerks and low cadre executives for the government and private concerns. With the expansion in number of institutions which impart this kind of education, an increase in unemployment is inevitable. It is so because education in arts, commerce and science will not ensure employment to all those who have received it on account of its limited utility for productive purposes". Myrdal considers those who receive merely this kind of education not only as inadequately educated but also wrongly educated. Gunnar Myrdal's criticism of India's educational system is valid till today since no large significant effort has been made in order to bring change in the traditional education system .To solve the problem of unemployment in India ,radical changes has to be made in current education system.

According to official data, almost 2 million graduate and half million post graduate are unemployed in India. And a major percentage of graduates in India are not competent in performing any kind of

significant role in industries. As a result, Indian job market is facing a puzzling situation, on one side the educated youths are desperately looking for jobs and on the other side the employers are suffering from the non availability of skilled workers.

2. Objective of the study:

The main objective of the paper is to discuss the problem of educated unemployment in Assam and also suggest some remedial measures to solve unemployment problem.

3. Methodology:

The study is based on secondary data. Datas are collected from Periodic Labour Force Survey reports, Economic Survey, NSSO reports etc .Moreover research article, journals, newspapers etc are also studied for the paper.

4. Review of Literature:

Martin Carnoy (1987) examined the detail problem of graduate unemployment in India in his work "Higher Education and graduate employment in India: A summary of three case studies." According to him the problem of India's graduate unemployment is a complex issue. The problem is deeply rooted in the economy and employment opportunities are growing at a very slow rate than the expansion of higher education. Higher education continues to expand not only because of high unemployment at lower level of schooling but higher education is a necessary prerequisite for most white collar jobs in India.

In "Unemployment in North-East India: Some Issues" Srivastav and Dubey (2010) investigated the incidence of unemployment among northeastern states of India by using NSSO data for the year 1993-94. According to their study, unemployment is rising at a alarming rate for high education category in north eastern states which suggests job opportunities in urban formal sector are almost approaching the saturation level. Without large investment in manufacturing sector of north east region, employment situation is unlikely to improve in coming years.

Majumder and Mukherjee (2013) highlighted the issues of education, skill formation and unemployment among youth of India in their research paper "Unemployment among educated youth: Implication for India's demographic dividend." According to their study, unemployment among educated youth is highest among all groups. Skilled and trained youths also face a bleak unemployment scenario and even technical graduates have higher than average unemployment rates. Unless this mismatch is corrected India shall end up with a vast mass of unemployed and unemployable youth which will ultimately lead to demographic disaster rather than demographic dividend.

Khadim and Choudhury (2018) attempted to identify the motivating factors of entrepreneurs in micro and small business activities in Cachar district of Assam in their work "Motivational Factors of Entrepreneurship in Micro and Small Enterprises: An Empirical Study in Cachar District of Assam." In their study they find that the rate of industrialization is negligible in Cachar district of Assam because people getting engaged in this sector is low. The mentality of young generation is that everyone wants to do government job, no one want to engage themselves in business activity. As a consequence of it, the problem of unemployment is rising day by day.

K. Devi (2020) attempted to study rural employment and unemployment in relation to the education in Assam in her research paper "Education and Employability With Special Reference To Rural Assam." According to her, education and employability are two opposite poles in India as well as Assam because of the large gap between academics and expectation of industry and society. Due to lack of adequate quality education, vocational and professional education, skill development training facilities a large

number of youth population in India is suffering from lack of skill and efficiency which further leads to the problem of unemployment.

4. Unemployment in Assam:

Assam is the gateway to the North East of India. The state is known for its natural beauty and astonishing diversity. Despite being rich in natural resources, Assam is still considered as one of the economically backward state of India. The agro based economy of Assam has been suffering from the problem of unemployment from several decades. Lack of rapid industrialization is one of the major hurdle in the process of employment generation in Assam. The widespread problem of unemployment is one of the major root cause of youth unrest and ongoing insurgency problems in the state.

Assam is one among the literate states of India. As per census data, the literacy rate of Assam has increased from 63.25% in 2001 to 73.19% in 2011. But the employment scenario of Assam is not as bright as the literacy rates. The rapid expansion of higher education in the last few years has contributed to the problem of educated unemployment in the state. As compared to the rapidly rising population of educated youths, the potential of the agro based Assam's economy to provide employment is not sufficient.

The underdevelopment of the state, slow economic growth, infrastructural bottlenecks, problem of illegal migrants from Bangladesh, insurgency problem etc have aggravated the problem of unemployment in Assam. The problem of unemployment among female population is even much more severe than male population both in urban and rural area of the state.

The estimation of employment and unemployment data is not an easy task for a heavily populated country like India. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) was conducting the employment and unemployment survey as a part of its National Sample Survey. The first nationwide survey on employment and unemployment was conducted in 9th round (May-November 1955) of NSSO. These surveys were quinquennial (once in every five year) and one of the prime source for employment and unemployment data in India.

But from 2017, NSSO adopted a new employment and unemployment survey known as Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). The first PLFS report was published in June 2019 for the period July 2017 to June 2018. PLFS aims to provide more reliable employment and unemployment data for more frequent intervals (annual and quarterly) and it has now become one of the major source of employment and unemployment data in India.

Table 1

Unemployment Rate (in percent) according to Usual Status(Principal Status+ Subsidiary Status) for Assam and all India in the age group 15 -29 years for the period July 2017 to June 2018				
	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Assam	25.7	38.5	18.6	30.2
All India	17.4	13.6	18.7	27.2

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Report (July 2017 to June 2018)

In India, the youth population covers the age group of 15-29 years (NSSO, 1997). The table 1 makes a comparison of the unemployment rate according to usual status (principal status+ subsidiary status) among youth population of Assam with all India youth unemployment rates for the period July 2017 to June 2018. The unemployment rates of male (rural) and female (rural) in Assam are 25.7% and 38.5% respectively. These rates are much higher than the national average unemployment rates. The all India unemployment rates for male and female in rural areas are 17.4% and 13.6%. The unemployment rates for male (urban) and female (urban) in Assam are 18.6 % and 30.2% respectively. The all India unemployment rates for male and female in urban areas are 18.7% and 27.2% respectively for the above mentioned period. The unemployment scenario of the females both in rural and urban area of Assam is much more worse than male unemployment.

Unemployment among persons who have attained an educational level of secondary or above and attained an age of 15 years or above is termed as educated youth unemployment (PLFS).The increase in population of educated youths with limited job opportunities that matches their educational qualification leads to the problem of educated unemployment in the state. The organized formal sector is not growing enough to absorb the job seekers. Although the unorganized private sector is rising slowly, but still the educated job seekers of Assam preferred the formal sector due to numerous reasons like job security, decent salary, pensions, paid leave and many more.

Table-2

Unemployment Rate (UR) (in percent) according to usual status(principal status+ subsidiary status) for persons of 15 years and above of different general education level for Assam during PLFS(2017-18) and PLFS(2018-19)				
General Education Level	2017-18		2018-19	
	Rural+Urban (Male)	Rural+ Urban (Female)	Rural+Urban (Male)	Rural+ Urban (Female)
Secondary & above	11.6	24.1	10.8	20.6
Graduate	11.3	21.6	13.7	27.6
Post Graduate & above	9.7	34.9	5.7	16.9

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Report of (2017-18) and (2018-19)

The table- 2 depicts the unemployment rate (in percent) according to usual status (principal status+ subsidiary status) for persons of 15 years and above of different general education level in Assam during PLFS (2017-18) and PLFS (2018-19).

Among the educated youths, the unemployment rate for graduates is much higher for both males and females. The unemployment rate for graduates for males (rural + urban) increases from 11.3% in 2017-18 to 13.7% in 2018-19 . Again the unemployment rates for female graduates (rural + urban) increases from 21.6% in 2017-18 to 27.6% in 2018-19.

The unemployment rate among educated females is much more worse than males. The unemployment rate for females(rural+urban) who have attained the qualification of post graduation & above was 34.9% in 2017-18 and it was much higher as compared to males (rural+ urban) unemployment rate which is 9.7%.In 2018-19, the unemployment rate for females(rural+urban) who have attained the qualification of secondary and above was 20.6% and for graduates and post graduate & above qualified females(rural+ urban) was 27.6%.and 16.9% respectively.

5. Employment Exchanges and Registered Job Seekers in Assam:

An Employment Exchange is a government programme established in order to offer assistance to job seekers. The job seekers can register their names in the exchanges for different job vacancies occurring in the different sector of the state.

The Employment Exchange in Assam operates under the Labour and Employment Department. Till 2018, Assam has 52 employment exchanges which include 47 General, 2 Special and 3 Employment Information & Guidance Bureau (EI & GB). Moreover there are 29 Employment Information & Assistance Bureau (EI &AB). In Assam, there are two districts Baksa and Chirang which have no employment exchange.

Table-3

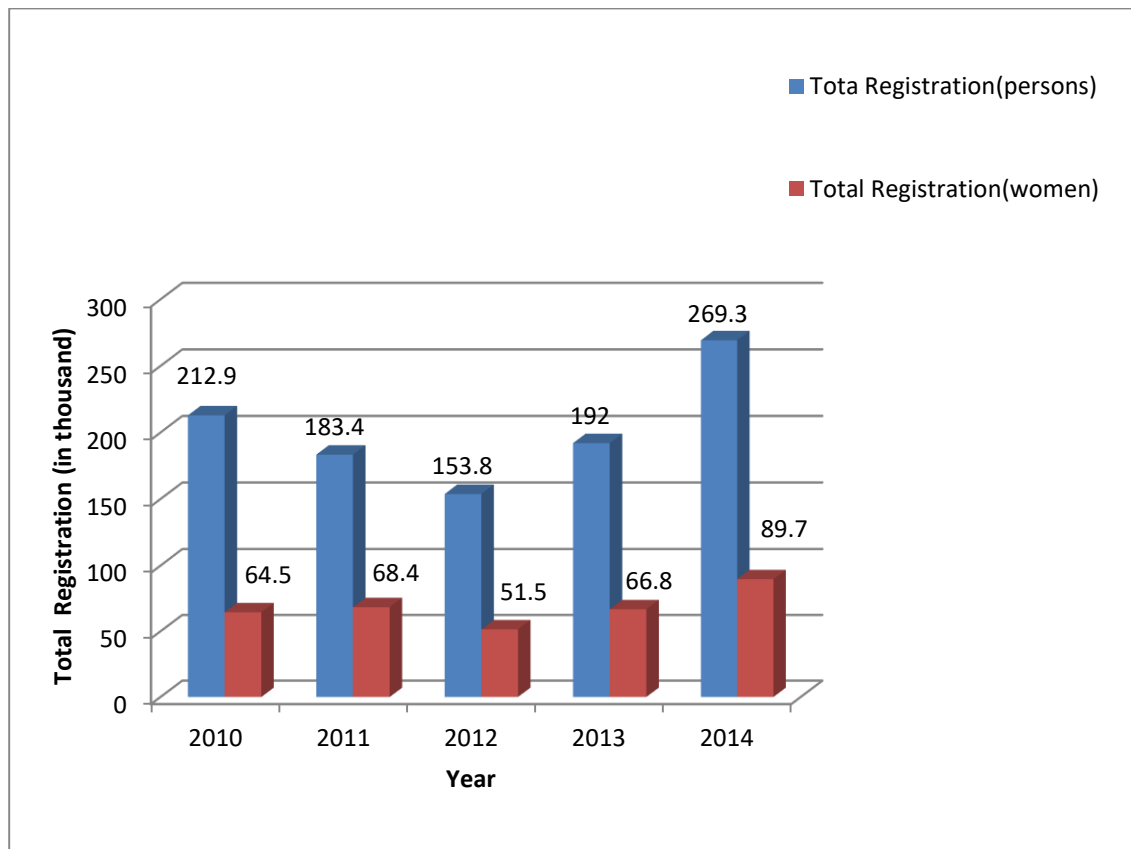
Comparison between total registration (persons) made and total registration made (for women) in Employment Exchanges of Assam during 2010-2014 (in thousand)		
Year	Total Registration(persons)	Total Registration (women)
2010	212.9	64.5
2011	183.4	68.4
2012	153.8	51.5
2013	192.0	66.8
2014	269.3	89.7

Source: Handbook of Employment Exchange Statistics(1947-2014), Ministry of Labour and Employment, Directorate General of Employment and Training, Government of India.

The table-3 shows a comparison between total registration (person) and total registration (women) in Assam from 2010 to 2014. The share of women's registration in total registration is comparatively very small. In 2010, the share of women's registration was 64,500 whereas the total registration (persons) was 2,12,900. It shows that only 30.29% of total registration were made by women in 2010. In 2011, the share of women's registration in total registration was 37.29%. Similarly, it was 33.48% in 2012, 34.79% in 2013 and 33.31% in 2014.

Figure-1

Total Registered (Person) Job seekers and total registered(Women) Job seekers in Assam for the years 2010,2011,2012,2013 and 2014



Source: Table 3

The figure-1 depicts the share of women's registration as compared to total registration (persons) in the employment exchange of Assam from the year 2010 to 2014. The total registration (persons) in 2010 was 212.9 thousand and the share of total women registration was only 64.5 thousand. In 2014, the share of total registration (person) in employment exchange of Assam increases to 269.3 thousand but the share of total women's registration in Assam is still very low which was around 89.7 thousand.

The number of educated youths looking for secure job is increasing at a volatile rate, which is a prominent issue for the economy of Assam. The current education system has not been successful in establishing a link between the educational curriculum and demands of the job market. The students are not rightly guide to meet the emerging needs of the job market. The prime focus of the current education system is rote learning and secure good marks in exam. But memorizing for mere marks can't be considered as learning unless it is applied practically. There is no scope for creativity in current education system.

Table-4

Distribution of Educated Job Seekers in the Employment Exchanges of Assam for the year 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018				
Level of Education	Registration			
	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Engineering Graduate	681	1081	1589	1638
Medical Graduate	30	62	91	94
Agriculture Graduate	10	19	28	29
Veterinary Graduate	14	28	41	42
Passed out Trainees (ITI)	10921	11190	16450	16962
Post Graduate	1878	1948	2864	2953
Graduate	19249	21212	31183	32153
H.S.S.L.C	51684	53105	78068	80496
H.S.L.C	36585	39121	57511	59300
Diploma Holder (Eng)	812	2885	4241	4373
Others	1455	3870	5690	5867
Total	123319	134521	197756	203907

Source: Directorate of Employment & Craftsmen Training, Assam

The table 4 shows the registered job seekers according to the level of education in employment exchanges of Assam for the year 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. The total number of registered educated job seekers for the year 2015 was 123319. It increased to 134531 in 2016 and thereafter it increased drastically to 197756 in 2017. In 2018, the total number of educated job seekers increased to 203907.

Among the educated job seekers, the total number of H.S.S.L.C qualified job seekers was highest in those years. It was 51684 in 2015 and further it increased to 80496 in 2018. The number of graduate job seekers increased from 19249 in 2015 to 32153 in 2018. Again the job seekers with post graduate degree showed an increase of 57.24% from 2015 to 2018.

Again the total number of registered job seekers with graduate degree increased from 681 in 2015 to 1638 in 2018. The total number of job seekers with medical degree was 94 in 2018. The total number of job seekers with agriculture degree was 29 and veterinary degree was 42 in 2018.

The situation of technical degree holder is not very good in Assam. The number of passed out trainees (I.T.I) who were seeking job in 2015 was 10921 which increased to 16962 in 2018. Again for diploma holder(eng) the number increased from 812 in 2015 to 4373 in 2018.

6. Reasons behind Educated Unemployment in Assam:

Assam is facing the problem of educated unemployment which has some serious impact on the state's economy. The main reasons behind this problem of educated unemployment in Assam are discussed below-

(i) Defective education system: The present education system of Assam has not been able to meet the needs of the economy. Assam's outdated education system is producing lakhs of skill-less degree holder. The system has also not been able to develop entrepreneurial skills among youths which acts as a hindrance in employment generation in the state.

(ii) Lack of large scale industries: Infrastructural barriers, insurgency problems and ignorance from the central government are one of the main reasons which contributed to the problem of rapid industrialization in the state. The traditional agriculture sector cannot absorb the entire unemployed youth alone. Moreover, the educated youths do not prefer to work in the agriculture sector as they consider it backward.

(iii) Lack of proper career guidance: Due to lack of the facility of career counseling, students of Assam are not conscious about the new career options available in the modern world. As a result of it, after finishing their formal education they could not decide their way and remain unemployed.

(iv) Presence of corruption in public sector jobs recruitment process: Bribing the high officials in order to get a government job has become a serious problem in Assam. Leakage of question papers in various government job recruitment exams demoralize the youths of Assam which can further lead to the problems of depression and suicides among youths.

Apart from these problems, there are several other reasons for the problem of educated unemployment in the state which includes lack of proper vocational courses, excessive dependence on agriculture sector, pressure from the parents and society etc.

7. Suggestions:

The problem of educated unemployment is prevalent both in rural and urban areas of Assam because it demands job creation in non-agricultural formal sector of the economy which has not been possible due to several bottlenecks. Unemployment is a very intricate issue and cannot be solved in a day. A long term planning is needed to solve the problem of educated unemployment in the state of Assam. Government has taken various initiatives to solve this issue but still these are not enough for solving the problem of unemployment. There are some suggestive measures described below which can be used to solve the problem of educated unemployment in Assam as well as India-

(i) The quality of whole education system should be improved in order to cater the needs of modern world. The curriculum should not be only theoretical in nature but it should also include practical things through which skills can be developed. Vocational courses should be included in school curriculum. Moreover the curriculum should also focus in developing entrepreneurial skills among the youths to reduce pressure on formal job sector of the economy.

(ii) Government should focus on developing internship programme for college and university students. It will help the students to gain experiences in practical world. This will ultimately help them to compete in modern competitive job market in future.

(iii) There should be more emphasis on developing MSMEs to engage the unemployed youths in productive activities. Moreover, Assam is a naturally endowed state so government should primarily focus

on environment friendly small scale units like floriculture, horticulture, handloom etc and meet the domestic as well as foreign demand of these commodities.

(iv) Government should primarily focus on those sectors which create jobs like IT sector which can employ a large section of young educated youths of Assam. Moreover government should take initiatives to develop the tourism sector of Assam. It is one of the potential economic sector in Assam which has the capability to engage large number of unemployed youths.

(v) The Central Government of India should help in improving the infrastructural facilities of north-east India including Assam. It will help the state of Assam to establish trade link with other regions of India as well as other neighbouring countries like Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal etc. This can ultimately help in creating employment opportunities in the long run.

8. Conclusion:

Unemployment is a serious burning issue which acts as a major hindrance in the socio-economic development of a state. The issue of unemployment among the educated youths is even more dangerous as it leads to the wastage of human resource which ultimately reduces the value of education in the society. Government should take proper initiatives to overcome the problem of educated unemployment so that the educated youths can live a dignified life and contribute in the development of the state.

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