

Educational System and Economic Development of North-East India

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Abstract: North-East India, in spite of being one of the lesser developed part of India, scores at par with the national standard of literacy rate. However, the scenario differs drastically in case of higher education. Lack of economic development and lack of qualified human resource is resulting in vicious circle. Lack of economic development is triggering unemployment and that in turns compelling youth of North East India to move out of region for higher studies or to drop their higher education. Again this lack of professionally qualified human resource is creating hurdle for fostering economic growth. This article attempts to portray the actual scenario of prevailing educational system and suggests few way outs which will ensure economic development of this region and minimize disparity of North East states compared to the rest of India.

Keywords - education of north-east India, higher education and unemployment, socio-economic development of north-east India

I. INTRODUCTION

North-East India is the eastern-most region of India. It comprises the contiguous Seven Sister States (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura), plus the Himalayan state of Sikkim. North-East India is generally considered one of the most challenging regions of the country to govern. It has been the site of separatist movements among the tribal peoples, who speak languages related to Tibeto-Burman. North-East India constitutes about 8% of India's size. Its population is approximately 40 million (2011 census), 3.1% of the total Indian population. The Siliguri Corridor in West Bengal, with a width of 21 to 40 kilometres connects the North Eastern region with the main part of India. The region shares more than 4,500 kilometres of international border (about 90 per cent of its entire border area) with China (southern Tibet) in the north, Myanmar in the east, Bangladesh in the southwest, and Bhutan to the northwest. The states are officially recognised under the North Eastern Council (NEC), constituted in 1971 as the acting agency for the development of the eight states. The North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFi) was incorporated on 9 August 1995 and the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) was set up in September 2001.

From times immemorial, India's North-East has been the meeting point of many communities, faiths and cultures. A place renowned for its magical beauty and bewildering diversity, North-East India is the home for more than 166 separate tribes speaking a wide range of languages. Some groups have migrated over the centuries from places as far as South-East Asia; they retain their cultural traditions and values but are beginning to adapt to contemporary lifestyles. Its jungles are dense, its rivers powerful and rain, and thunderstorms sweep across the hills, valleys and plains during the annual monsoons. The lushness of its landscape, the range of communities and geographical and ecological diversity makes the North-East quite different from other parts of the subcontinent.

II. EDUCATION IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

The formal or institutional education has a colonial origin in most parts of North East India, in the sense that the educational institutions started in this region during the British colonial rule. A very few fragment of population in Assam, Tripura and Manipur were educated through traditional Indian education systems like 'Tols', 'Pathshala', 'Moktab' etc. True advent of modern education system was implemented during British period. Education provided by British was only sufficient to cater their need for running their administrative mechanism. In that sense the actual credit goes to western missionaries. Though they were also having their objective of spreading Christianity, still they made the most significant contribution by converting the tribal dialects into written languages which prepared the base for the future school-college based education system. According to census 2011, except Assam (73.18%) and Arunachal Pradesh (66.95%), all other North-East (NE) states are having literacy rate which is more than the national standard of 74.04%. Mizoram with its impressive literacy rate of 91.58% has secured the third rank in the country including State and Union Territory both and second among all Indian states.

III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

Economic development is the process by which a region improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. Economic development is influenced by Human Resources, Natural Resources, Capital Formation, Technological Development and Social and Political Factors. In today's era, all these factors together develop the platform for industry of different scale, be it small or medium or large. Industrially, the NER continues to be the most backward region in the country, and the states in the region hardly have any industrial base, except perhaps Assam, because of its traditional tea, oil and wood based industries. To some extent Meghalaya has made some headway in setting up of small and medium industries. There are a number of factors contributing to the lack of industrial growth in the region, like:

- Poor infrastructure
- Inadequate electricity supply
- Violence and extortion.
- Shyness of capital due to high cost of production
- Vulnerability of the region
- Lack of entrepreneurial motivation on the part of the local people
- Low level of public sector investment, etc.

In recent years the “Look East Policy” of Government of India has made North East more important and strategic. The region has to gear up to take up more challenges and capitalize on the opportunities thrown open by the huge market in the South East Asian Countries.

The industries of this region can be broadly classified as under:

- Agro-based industries: It includes tea industry, sugar industry, grain mill products industry (rice, oil and flour mills), food processing industry and the textile industry.
- Mineral-based industries: Mineral-based industries of the north-eastern region include railway workshops, engineering industry, and re-Rolling Mills, steelworks, motor-vehicle workshops, galvanised wire units, cycle factories, aluminium utensils industry, cycle spare parts, steel wire net, barbed wire, cement industry etc. Moreover, the non-metal based industries include petroleum oil industry and natural gas-based industry.
- Forest-based industries: It includes plywood industry, saw-mill industry, paper and paper pulp industry, match industry, letter industry, hard board industry etc.
- Other industries: It includes power generation industry, fertiliser industry, printing press, brick and tiles industry, Ice industry, chemical industry etc.

Economic Development in North-East India

Education and economic development is related deeply as because education ensures long term economic development of the region. It provides basic prerequisite of economic activity like industrialization. It enhances employability of the citizen which in turn ensure increase in purchase power. In one way it promotes awareness regarding environmental, social and economic issues and on the other hand with improved financial status citizen improve their life style.

Mere literacy rate cannot ensure economic growth. Economic growth demands professionally trained skilled manpower and entrepreneurial activity. NER, due to its complex geographical and political structure lacks in drawing investment. And lack of outside investment is one of the prime factors which pull back entrepreneurial activity.

Table1: State-wise Industrial Entrepreneurs Memorandum (IEMs) Implemented by Industrial Undertakings during 2012 to February 2014

Name of the State/UTs	Numbers Filed - 2012	Investment Rs.Cr - 2012	Numbers Filed - 2013	Investment Rs.Cr - 2013	Numbers Filed - 2014(Jan-Feb)
Andhra Pradesh	87	8411	76	8386	10
Arunachal Pradesh	1	33	0	0	0
Assam	14	290	16	1012	1
Bihar	9	471	7	869	0
Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0
Chhattisgarh	0	0	1	31	0
Delhi	0	0	0	0	0
Goa	5	228	2	37	1
Gujarat	153	49616	83	15478	27
Haryana	18	1289	15	889	2
Himachal Pradesh	7	609	3	27	1
Jammu & Kashmir	0	0	0	0	0
Jharkhand	3	406	0	0	3
Karnataka	26	1672	24	4912	7
Kerala	0	0	0	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	14	2157	7	1519	3
Maharashtra	87	7509	96	30266	10
Manipur	0	0	0	0	0
Meghalaya	3	401	7	1100	1
Mizoram	1	28	0	0	0
Nagaland	0	0	0	0	0

Orissa	2	105	4	652	0
Puducherry	0	0	0	0	0
Punjab	6	1042	1	38	0
Rajasthan	18	2017	30	3173	1
Sikkim	6	142	5	370	6
Tamil Nadu	10	524	12	2292	3
Tripura	0	0	1	0	0
Uttar Pradesh	23	1450	22	4111	1
Uttarakhand	52	2752	22	781	2
West Bengal	25	962	44	2482	9

Source: <https://data.gov.in/catalog/state-wise-iems-filed-industrial-undertakings>
<http://dget.nic.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/publication/Main.pdf>

Five states out of eight NER states are performing poor consistently in case of industrial entrepreneurship. There are several factors which act as barrier for industrial development. The Northeast region can be categorised into the Eastern Himalayas, Northeast Hills (Patkai-Naga Hills and Lushai Hills) and the Brahmaputra and the Barak Valley Plains. Northeast India (at the confluence of Indo-Malayan, Indo-Chinese, and Indian biogeographical realms) has a predominantly humid sub-tropical climate with hot, humid summers, severe monsoons, and mild winters. The region is covered by the mighty Brahmaputra-Barak river systems and their tributaries. Geographically, apart from the Brahmaputra, Barak and Imphal valleys and some flat lands in between the hills of Meghalaya and Tripura, the remaining two-thirds of the area is hilly terrain interspersed with valleys and plains; the altitude varies from almost sea-level to over 7,000 metres (23,000 feet) above mean sea level. The region's high rainfall, averaging around 10,000 millimetres and above, creates problems of ecosystem, high seismic activity, and floods. The states of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim have a montane climate with cold, snowy winters and mild summers.

Due to its geographic condition it hardly supports heavy industry except oil and natural gas based industries. Tea industry, Dairy farming, Food processing, Floriculture are few to name which have good prospect in this region. Apart from that service based industries may also flourish. This entire region has its own identity in the field of handicrafts which may be exported to other parts of India as well as foreign countries.

Table 2: State-wise expertise in different Crafts of NER states

Sl. No.	States	Type of Handicrafts
1	Arunachal Pradesh	carpet making, masks, painted wood vessels, bamboo and cane crafts, weaving, woodcarvings, jewellery and other miscellaneous crafts like hand made pottery, brass cutting, silver works, numerous articles with goat hair, ivory, boar's tusks, beads of agate, and other stones as well as of brass and glass
2	Assam	handloom weaving(culture of endi, muga and mulberry silk), cane and bamboo works, sitalpith, brass and bell metal works, ivory, wood-work, sholapith, pottery and fiber craft
3	Manipur	gold and gold plated jewellery, textiles, strong bell metal bowls, cane and bamboo and mats made of spongy reeds
4	Meghalaya	pineapple fiber articles, artistic textile weaving and woodcarving, Carpet weaving, ornaments, musical instruments, cane and bamboo works
5	Mizoram	weaving, bamboo and cane craft, pipes, jewellery and musical instruments
6	Nagaland	weaving, basketry, woodwork and jewellery making, preparation of different products using shell and beads, birds' wings and flowers, pot making without the use of wheel
7	Sikkim	carpet weaving, wood carving, thangka paintings, choktse tables
8	Tripura	distinct handloom products with vertical and horizontal stripes with scattered embroidery in different colours, cane and bamboo craft

Source: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (<http://ignca.nic.in/craft004.htm>)

IV. EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SCARCITY OF EFFECTIVE HUMAN RESOURCE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Now, the question is, does the prevailing education system of NER cultivate human resource in accordance to its reality? Does it provide environment which ensure entrepreneurship on the basis of the region's competitive advantage? Otherwise there will be a huge gap between the skill acquired by its human resource and its competitive advantage. Which will in turn trigger unemployment. And unemployment means barrier for economic growth.

Literacy rate is good in North-East Region. However, when it comes to higher education the scenario is exactly opposite. It has been found that people are literate but not enough higher educated or properly educated to enhance employability or to add value to the pool of human resource or to carry on entrepreneurial activities.

Table 3: Number of Higher Educational Institutions and Enrolment of Students in NER (2005-2006)

Sl. No.	States	No. of Institution in Higher Education	Enrolment
1	Arunachal Pradesh	37	35803
2	Assam	560	524607
3	Manipur	91	96164
4	Meghalaya	73	63550
5	Mizoram	32	26919
6	Nagaland	69	34315
7	Sikkim	23	19606
8	Tripura	54	64312
	TOTAL	939	865276

Note: Enrolment Figures Include Ph.D., M.Phil., PG, UG, PG Diploma and Diploma

Source: MHRD, All India Survey on Higher Education (2015-2016)

According to census 2011, at that time total population of NER was 4,56,38,130. The state wise distribution is as follows.

Table 4: Population Distribution among NER States

Sl. No.	State	Population
1	Arunachal Pradesh	1383727
2	Assam	31205576
3	Manipur	2721756
4	Meghalaya	2966889
5	Mizoram	1097206
6	Nagaland	1978502
7	Sikkim	610557
8	Tripura	3673917
	TOTAL	45638130

Source: Census 2011

So, it shows that, participation in higher education was only 2% of the whole population. Whereas, literacy rate was 75%. The below table will clarify the scenario clearly.

Table 5: Total Number of Literate Person in NER

Sl. No.	State	Literacy Rate (in %)	Total Population	Total No. of Literate Person
1	Arunachal Pradesh	65.38	1383727	904681
2	Assam	72.19	31205576	22527305
3	Manipur	79.21	2721756	2155903
4	Meghalaya	74.43	2966889	2208255
5	Mizoram	91.33	1097206	1002078
6	Nagaland	79.55	1978502	1573898
7	Sikkim	81.42	610557	497116
8	Tripura	87.22	3673917	3204390
	TOTAL			34073627

Source: Census 2011

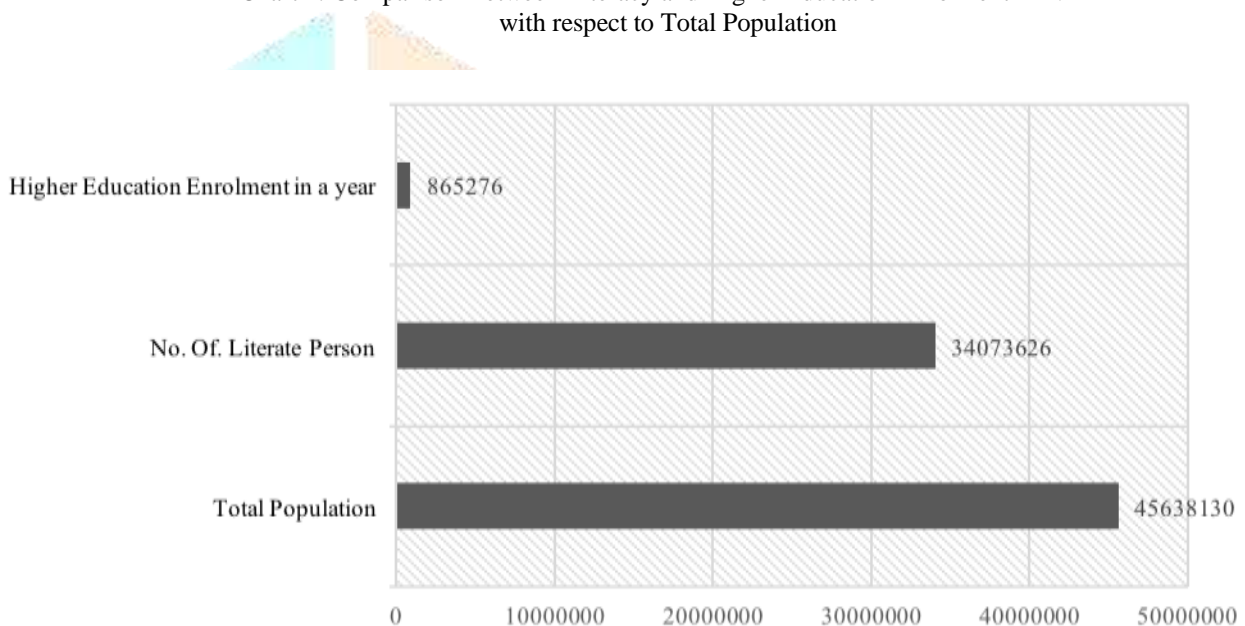
Table 6: Gap Between Literate and Higher Educated Person in NER
with respect to Total Population

Sl. No.	State	Population	Higher Edu. Enrolment	Total No. of Literate Person
1	Arunachal Pradesh	1383727	35803	904681
2	Assam	31205576	524607	22527305
3	Manipur	2721756	96164	2155903
4	Meghalaya	2966889	63550	2208255
5	Mizoram	1097206	26919	1002078
6	Nagaland	1978502	34315	1573898
7	Sikkim	610557	19606	497116
8	Tripura	3673917	64312	3204390
	TOTAL	45638130	865276	34073627

Source: Census 2011

If we plot a graph to show the gap between literacy rate and higher education enrolment then it will be like the following one.

Chart 1: Comparison Between Literacy and Higher Education Enrolment in NER
with respect to Total Population



Though higher education enrolment of a particular year has been considered, still it clearly showcases that very good literacy rate is not assuring very good number of enrolments in higher education. It also denotes probability of moving out of students towards other states of country or foreign countries after getting basic education at NER. This has a direct relation with employment scenario. Higher education has several roles like imparting knowledge, constant research for better future, cultivation of talent, driving economic activities through skilled manpower and trained entrepreneurs.

Table 7: Unemployment in Rates 2015-2016 (per 1000)

State	Total	Urban	Rural
Tripura	197	172	203
Sikkim	181	168	184
Arunachal Pradesh	89	52	93
Nagaland	85	141	69
Assam	61	101	55
Manipur	57	70	49
India	50	49	51
Meghalaya	48	134	28
Mizoram	30	49	15

Source: Fifth Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey (2015-16) from Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.

The above data shows that, six out of eight states of NER is having unemployment rate of higher than that of national average.

If we rank different zones of India in ascending order of GDP, the last position is held by NER.

Table 8: Estimated GDP of Different Zones of India

Zonal councils	Nominal GDP (INR,₹)
Southern	₹55.0 lakh crores
Western	₹43.7 lakh crores
Northern	₹31.2 lakh crores
Central	₹25.9 lakh crores
Eastern	₹22.6 lakh crores
North-Eastern	₹4.8 lakh crores

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indian_states_and_union_territories_by_GDP

So, it is being evident that improper higher education system and economic and social development is deeply related. However, one may point out that, because of slow economic development, higher education scenario is not improving. Lack of economic development and lack of qualified human resource is resulting in vicious circle actually.

So we need to understand the pattern of higher education of NER closely. Here we will not talk about the gap between literacy rate and higher educational enrolment rather we will focus on the higher educational system which already prevails.

Table 9: Universities in NER

State	Central U	Institute of National Importance	Others	State Public U	State Open U	State Private U	Deemed U	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	1	1				6	1	9
Assam	2	2	1	11	1	4		21
Manipur	2	1	1					4
Meghalaya	1	1				8		10
Mizoram	1	1				1		3
Nagaland	1	1				2		4
Sikkim	1	1				5		7
Tripura	1	1				1		3

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education(2015-2016)

Table 10: Colleges in NER

Sl. No.	States	No. of Colleges
1	Arunachal Pradesh	28
2	Assam	539
3	Manipur	87
4	Meghalaya	63
5	Mizoram	29
6	Nagaland	65
7	Sikkim	16
8	Tripura	51

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education(2015-2016)

Table 11: Vocational Colleges in NER

Sl. No.	State	Medical Colleges	Veterinary Science Colleges	Teachers Training Colleges	Engineering Colleges	Other Colleges
1	Arunachal Pradesh	1	-	-	-	-
2	Assam	7	2	41	2	3
3	Manipur	1	-	5	3	2
4	Meghalaya	1	-	4	2	-
5	Mizoram	1	-	1	-	-
6	Nagaland	1	-	4	-	-
7	Sikkim	2	-	1	1	-
8	Tripura	1	-	1	2	3

Source: (i) National Sample Survey Organisation (ii) Office of the Registrar General of India (Education data – 04 - 05)

Comparing Table 10 and Table 11, it can be easily understood that, within the given infrastructure, there is lack of vocational and professional education providing institution. A huge amount of students are actually enrolling in arts based courses and there is a crunch in science, technology, engineering and management graduates. In today's world, these are the area where job prospect is better but due to lack of industry the scenario is not so impressive in case of NER. So, students are not being motivated. In this context, how economic development can be ensured?

Knowledge transforms our lives through two ways. Study in humanities when applied in society or policy making it becomes subject to societal and political activities. Study in science leads to transform in technology. Technology is the practical implementation of theoretical knowledge. It modernizes farming and industry and thus it is a subject to economic activities. So, education must fulfil the need of society and the system has to be designed in that way to ensure sustainable economic development.

V. SUGGESTIVE MEASURES

Only through Governmental initiative the North-East region will not achieve economic development. It requires efforts from the region's citizen. Firstly, Government has to provide proper infrastructure like road, water, health, electricity, telephonic connectivity etc. It is not possible by individuals or private organizations to provide this structure as a whole in this vast and diversified geographical region. Secondly, it is up to both Government and Private Organizations to introduce more and more vocational courses along with a direct integration to market demand so that, after completing those courses people starts earning a decent amount. People tends to study humanities more because of unavailability of other types of courses. Professional courses and vocational courses related to agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry, piggery, forestry, tussar and silk plantation, food processing, dairy firming, floriculture, bee keeping, mushroom cultivation, water management, water harvesting, weaving, handicrafts, servicing motor vehicles-computer software-hardware-mobile phones etc. has to be introduced in proper scale. Thirdly, to stop brain drain to other states of the country, NER requires more emphasize on medical, engineering, mining, management courses. This will also attract industrialists to invest in the region if they found professionally qualified human resource is readily available. Fourthly, Central and State Government, Private Venture Capitalist Firms, Universities, CII, FICCI, Nationalised and Private Banks all have to work together to nurture the environment of entrepreneurship. Until NER is getting local entrepreneurs it will not be able to achieve rapid growth and sustainable economic development. Here school education has to play a crucial role. The silver line is the impressive literacy rate of this region. From elementary education, the culture of entrepreneurship has to be induced in young minds. Vocational training will add water to it. Professional courses like engineering-management will act as fertilizer. And proper infrastructure like road, transportation, connectivity, health, water etc. will prepare the ground where that tree of sustainable economic development will flourish.

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