CHAPTER - III

ADMINISTRATION AND PROGRESS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN ASSAM

- HISTORICAL BACKGROUND -

3.1 Education in Assam in Ancient and Pre-British period:

'Education', - One of the most distinguished Indologists, "is no exotic in India. There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercised so lasting and powerful an influence".  
Countries like China, Egypt and Babylonia rank with India as being cradles of ancient civilization, but no other country has left behind such an enduring ranks of heritage as India. Her art and literature, which survive to the present day, bear eloquent testimony to her cultural institutions of ancient days. These institutions with the hall mark of the hoary past have lived through the ages on account of their system of education, which is acknowledged to be extraordinarily sound.  

It is clear that education in the sense of book learning was not so widely diffused as it is to-day in the early period of Assam.

1. Thomas, F.W., - History and prospects of British Education In India : George Bell and Sons, 1891, P.1.
The learned class of the day was of course, the Brahmans, but the common people were also not illiterate.

Education was centred round the Gurugriha, schools maintained by private individuals, or at village schools provided by the Brahmans of an Agrahara village. The Brahman villages were responsible for treaty of Sanskrit, Vedas, the system of philosophy and various branches of learning in the schools. The great vaisnavite apostle Sankar Deva received his education at "Tola" maintained by Brahman Guru Mahendra Kandali.3

The village school some times used to be held in the porch of a temple. But, whether used as a school or not, the village Shrine was a centre of popular education through constant recitation and exposition of Ramayana and Mahabharata and Purreas. The temples were also the scene of festive gatherings and communal rejoicings. Thus the temples played a remarkable part in the cultural life of the people.4

It is obvious that the kings were keenly interested in the spread of learning and education, and made large grants for that purpose. The Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsang remarks that king Bhasharavarman of Kamarupa, was fond of learning and "Men of high talents" visited his kingdom from different parts of the world.

Learning flourished in Assam and made it attractive to scholars of other countries, Huien Tsang remarked that "men of abilities came from far to study here". This is evident from the visits of such scholars as Sankarcharya (788 - 820 A.D.), Nanaka (1649 - 1538 A.D.)

3. Barua, Birinchi Kumar, - A cultural history of Assam, Early period: Lawyer's Book Stall, Guwahati, PP. 149,150.
4. ibid - P. 150.
and Guru Teg Bahadur in 17th Century. Elsewhere, in Assam also both
Brahman and non-Brahman scholars and teachers wander holding debates
and disputation with teachers of rival sect. The defeated teacher
would usually give up his own doctrines and embrace those of the winner.
As for instance Madhavadeva happened to be defeated with vaishnavite
Guru Sankardeva over the issue of the respective merits of Saktta and
Vaishnava faith and accepted Sankardeva as spiritual Guru. In the court
of Koch King Nararayana, Sankardeva defeated many Brahman scholars
brought from Banaras and other religious centres of Northern India,
for which Sankardeva was given a high place in the court of Koch
kingdom.

Besides, the king in their court used to maintain eminent
scholars and poets, who were encouraged to compose and compile treaties
on various subjects. The two great epics, for instance, were translated
into Assamese at the court of Kachari King Mahamanikya in the thirteenth
century and the Koch King Nararayana in the sixteenth century. King
Nararayana, further entrusted some eminent scholars including Sankar-
deva, with the task of translation and compilation of books of Bhagabat
Purana, Sanskrit grammar, Astronomy and Mathematics. There is every
instances of the preservation of Royal manuscripts, records during
Ahom kings also.

Whatever it might be, Assam in the name of Kamarupa was
a highest centre of learning in the 7th century A.D. as reported by

Thus Assamese in general who adopted Hindu culture, even though regular education, have been accustomed to a type of education which was far from satisfaction. However, the non Aryan tribal elements did not enter the picture at all, and therefore there was a gap between the learned few and the ignorant masses.

Curriculum in ancient Assam

The curriculum includes the four Vedas, the four Upavedas, such as Ayurveda, Gondherbavidya and the Tantras, the six Vedangas, Itihasa, Puranas, Saritias, Arthasastra, Kamastra, Silpestra, Alankara Kavya etc. Besides Jyotisavidya, the science which measured time by studying the movements of the planets and stars, was extensively studied.

Literature

Assamese language is not entirely based on the Sanskrit, and its evolution an independent lines began very early. Macdonell points out, the Assamese, "possesses an important literature - its literary style does not suffer like Bengal from the excessive use of Sanskritisations. The literature goes back to an early date, is varied in character and specially abounds in historical works. The origin of Assamese literature, therefore goes back to antiquity, act it is as rich as other provincial languages in India. It is as old, if not

8. ibid - P. 413.
older than Bengal. Assamese literature is essentially a national product, it always has been national act it is so still.

material used for writing

The existing manuscripts of our period may give us some idea of the writing materials used. These consisted of inner bark of the Bhurjapatra, aloe wood and sampipat (aquilaria agallocha) tulapat (leaves made of cotton cloth) wood board, plan leaves, animal substances.

The use of ink was common. Ink was usually prepared from Silikha (Terminalia Cibizina) and bull's urine. The use of sap of earth worms for invisible writing is also found.

Pen and pencil were made of Bamboo, wood, reed, animal horn, metal chalk etc. and were known commonly as Lakhani or varnaka. At present they are known as "Kalama".

Aims of Education

Individual attainments, state and social service, and the realisation of higher ends in life were the main aims of education in ancient time. Moral and spiritual aspects of life greatly shaped in type of education. It was perhaps culture and not literacy was the highest aim of India and Assam. The common objective of education was cultural rather than utilitarian.

12. ibid - P. 401.
13. ibid - P. 402.
14. ibid - P. 402.
15. ibid - P. 402.
Ahoms who invaded Assam and ruled for about 600 years since 1228 A.D. were patriotic and enthusiastic for promotion of learning and culture.

Under the benign influence of vaisnav education of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century, the great religious leaders Sankardeva and Madhavdeva restored their rightful place in the main body of Hindu culture in Assam. It was through their catholicity in outlook and universalism in the spread of vaisnav literature and education, destroyed the artificial barrier of peoples, races and classes and gave Assam a common cultural meeting ground.\textsuperscript{16}

The satras established by Sankara and Madhava became in main centres of education. In these satras, education was imparted through Vaisnava dharma, literature, dance, music, dramatic performances, paintings etc. besides the study of Sanskrit. Dr. S. N. Sarma remarks "The cultural history of Assam in respect of fine arts, crafts, educational learning since the beginning of the Sixteenth century till the advent of the British largely developed centering round the Vaisnava movement which in turn found expression through the satra institution."\textsuperscript{17}

The establishment of Nanghars (prayer Hall) by Sankardeva in the later period of Fifteenth century also played an important role in spreading education among Hindus in Assam. These Nanghars were the common platforms to hold discussions and disputations of any kind besides prayer, which still has its impact on the life of every


Assamese Hindu people. Side by side the Masjids of Muslims also played an important role in spreading education among the Muslim people. Besides these, various social taboos, customs, fairs and festivals, Ekulas have contributed in spreading informal but useful education among the people of Assam in general in the pre-British days.

Be that as it may be, mass education in its proper sense was made widespread throughout Assam by the profile writers of the pre-Vaisnava and Vaisnava period.

Analysis

Thus it may be observed that although Assam had a very rich system of education, which was far from satisfaction, but because of proper administration and organisation of schools, a large section of the population remained illiterate and uneducated. The system of education was conducted under the patronage of royal families, Brahmans, scholars, religious saints and by some enlightened individuals at their own initiatives. As there was no state system of education, the administrative set up of the schools, established by different sections were different. Generally the Pandits (teachers) who were engaged in the task of teaching were held in the key position of educational administration. There were no superior forces except the teachers who could be solely responsible for organisation, control and management. That is both instruction and administration of education was conducted by the teachers. But at present, instruction and administration have been

In the elementary level a teacher is nothing to do except imparting of lessons to the pupils. Further, there was no system of financial assistance to the schools as it is to-day. But the royal families gave assistance to the teachers for the education of their children. In other cases, the teachers concerned had to manage the schools out of their own capacity, either by collecting gifts from the scholars or by whatever means possible.
3.3 Administration of educational activities of the Missionaries.

Like other presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal, the Missionaries very lately came to Assam under the East India Company's rule in 1826, according to the Treaty of Yandabo, and deserved credit for promoting the cause of educational progress and progress in Assam. Among the unofficial enterprises, the contribution made by the Christian Missionaries to the vernacular schools in Assam, the tribal areas in particular, though inspired by the zeal of spreading Gospel, was indeed unparalleled¹.

They learnt the languages of the people and acquainted themselves with the traditions of local cultures and habits of doing things. The style of work of the Missionaries earned for them the confidence of the people and their self sacrificing spirit led them to travel long distances even to normally inaccessible places for purpose of establishing mission societies².

On the representation of David Scott, a branch of Serampore Missionary was set up at Guwahati in 1829, under James Rae, a native of Dumfries. The American Baptist Mission Foreign Society sent a mission under Reverends, Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter to Assam and reached Sadiya on 23rd March, 1836³.

After three months of their stay at Sadiya, they started their work of establishing schools. But the drowning of Rev. Thomas in 1837 while travelling by boat on route to Sadiya⁴, and the sufferings

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of other Missionaries due to the unhealthy climate and natural discomfort, they came back to Sibsagar from Sadiya, and by 1844 they set up as many as 14 schools in Sibsagar District.

Twelve schools were established by Walsh Mission during 1853-63 in Khasi-Jaintia, Garo and Naga Hills, also in Howong and in Kachiramahal of Darrang District. In 1840, Browason taught the Nagas and Hamsangs, the Bibles as well as improved methods of manufacturing tea and salt. By 1845, the Baptist Missionaries at Nowgong founded an orphanage, started schools and hospitals. They openly taught the Bible in their school, but espoused the cause of the vernacular of the people and made invaluable contributions to the Assamese language as literature.

With the exception of the Missionary institutions and the few indigenous schools sponsored by the public where teachers were mostly Assamese, both Hindus and Muslims, instructions was imparted in all Government village schools in Bengali on elementary reading, writing and arithmetic, where as it was the Assamese language or the mother tongue of the pupils in the Missionary schools. It is interesting to note that Bengali was used as the medium of instruction in all primary schools started by East India Company since 1836 with the powerful influence of Bengali intelligentsia those who came with the East India Company. But with the pioneering effort of Missionaries, both Assamese and non-Assamese social reformers from April 19th, 1873

that on all primary schools of Assam, Assamese language was used as the medium of instruction and also used as the language of the court at the lower level\textsuperscript{11}.

It was an arduous task for the Missionaries to impart instructions to the pupils due to the dearth of available text books. Furthermore, it was a time when both pupils and parents were indifferent to education, the Missionaries being the pioneers in the field of modern education in Assam wrote books on diverse subjects.

The Saranpore Trio, Curry, Marshman and Ward in collaboration with an Assamese scholar Atmaram Sarma translated the whole bible into Assamese and published in 1813\textsuperscript{12}. Bronson Brown and Widki Levi Parwell, the Trio, laid the foundation of the christian Assamese literature\textsuperscript{13}.

Bronson's monumental work Anglo-Assamese dictionary with 1400 words was published from Baptist Mission Press, Sibsagar in 1867 the earliest of its kind till 1900. Brown translated the new testament into Assamese and published his grammatical notes on the Assamese language (1849) and collected a good number of Assamese manuscripts. He also wrote many books on History, Arithmetic and Geography. Widki Levi is credited with a historical work, a number of story books. Prior to that, in 1846, the branch of Sibsagar Missionary published the 1st Assamese News-paper "The Arunode" which became the powerful vehicle of Assamese language\textsuperscript{14}. In 1839, William Robinson another Missionary wrote the first Assamese grammar\textsuperscript{15}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Saikia, S., - \textit{Op. cit.}, P. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Das, L., - \textit{Education in Assam : First edition, 1978, Guwahati}, P. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Neog, Mahaswar, - \textit{Assamiya Sahitya Rakshaka}, PP. 284–291.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Baryunari, H.K., - \textit{Op. cit.}, P. 303.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Neog, D., - \textit{Assamiya Sahitya Duranj : Sanai Prakash}, Jorhat, 1957, P. 568.
\end{itemize}
Thus the Missionaries developed the Modern Assamese prose literature. Disseminating Western thought and learning the Árumdoi inspired the younger generation and paved the way for an intellectual awakening.16

Thus one can easily conclude that the Christian Missionaries did excellent work in Assam in the field of elementary education, and covered the hill areas with a net work of elementary schools. The schools were better staffed as better equipped than many of our existing schools.

Dr. L. Das has nicely summarised the salient features of the Missionary educational activities in the following ways.17

1. Establishment of charity schools.
2. Establishment of printing press.
3. Opening of training institutions for teachers.
5. Sharing of responsibility for construction of school.
6. Collecting of money with the help of Lottery.
7. Opening of orphanages.
8. Emphasis on mother tongue.
10. Admitting students from all religious groups.

The contributions of the Missionaries and a few others both Assamese and non Assamese, backed by the untiring efforts of the benevolent Commissioner Major Gankins prepared the ground and sowed the seeds in the field of education, which germinated and bore fruit early in the next century in Assam.  

3.3 Administration of Elementary Education in Assam under East India Company, since 1826 - 1858.

Although for long Assam had her indigenous system of imparting elementary education through formal institutions like Toko Madrasas and Pathshalas, before the advent of East India Company and Christian Missionaries, because of the curtain of ignorance and superstitious beliefs which had pervaded almost all classes. The progress of education was too distressingly slow, in fact no serious attempts was made at any level to introduce a liberal system of education. The indigenous system of education, however, continued to exist even after the period of Burmese invasions, the courses of study in those institutions were of stereotyped nature - calculated to impart lessons for leading a pious and religious life and not so much for any useful purpose of widening the mental horizon¹.

Assam came under East India Company's rule after the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826. David Scott, an agent to the Governor General for the whole eastern frontier, flavoured the encouragement of oriental learning by improving the indigenous system of education in Assam. For the promotion of indigenous education David Scott in 1826, procured the sanction of the Government of Bengal to establish a number of schools in upper and lower Assam.

This proposal was accepted by the Government of India in October, 1926 and eleven schools were established mostly in lower Assam².

These were at Guwahati, Nilschal, Fatee Darrang, Hajo, Bejali, Seela, Biswanath, Nowgong and Desh Darrang (Mangaldai) teaching 'Sastras' through the medium of Sanskrit. Some schools have broader curriculums consisted of the study of Arithmetic, Medicine and Astronomy. Each teacher was to impart instruction to 30 pupils, for which he was to receive 30 puras of rent free land\(^3\). Adam White, Collector of Guwahati, provided opportunities for employment of several products of such schools in Government service\(^4\).

As per demand of the villages of Kamrup District, in August, 1838, on the representation of some village headmen, James Matthie, the Collector of Guwahati prepared a village scheme of education to the Government\(^5\) viz:

(i) The establishment of an Anglo vernacular school at a central site where a perfect knowledge of the vernacular would be imparted besides elements of English with a view to admitting pupils at a particular stage of the Guwahati schools for completion of higher education.

(ii) To impart elementary education in reading, writing and arithmetic, started by David Scott were to be remodelled and their number to be raised from eleven to twenty two. Instructors are to be recruited by a Board of well informed individuals at the Sadar

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4. -do- - - A Short History of Higher Education in Assam: Golden Jubilee Volume, Cotton College, 1952, P. 4
5. ibid - Assam in the days of Company: P. 311.
schools and management was to be entrusted to a local Committee consisting of Choudhury and two other respectable persons of the pargana concerned.

The General Committee of public instruction did not accept the whole scheme. At the strong recommendation of Mr. Ross, the President of the Council, the supreme Government accorded the 2nd part of the scheme as an 'experimental measure' rejecting the first part of it (Anglo vernacular school). At the success of the scheme, similar schools were set up in other Districts. In 1857-58, the number of village schools stood at seventy eight with a total enrolment of about one thousand. In the interior places not only did the villagers erect the school buildings and maintain by regular repairs, but they cooperated with the local authorities in the management of these institutions.

Thus it was seen for the first time in 1838, under East India Company's rule they introduced a system of management of schools in sadars to be entrusted to a local Committee consisting of Choudhury and two other respectable persons. Prior to that there was no system of organised administrative machineries in the field of education.

In April, 1844, with a view to effecting a vigilant control, and introducing 'a uniform system of instruction' William Robinson the Headmaster of school was made the Inspector of Schools under the.

14 August, No. 65.

Commissioner of Assam. To assist him in duties, in 1855, five Sub-Inspectors of Schools were placed in different Zones viz: Lakhimpur and Sibpur, one in Darrang and Nowgong, and one each in Lemurup and Goalpara. But in the meantime, the jurisdiction of the Inspectors had to be extended over few Districts of North East Bengal, and the management and control of schools fall on principal assistants who were also required to conduct annual examinations. In absence of effective supervision, the schools were conducted according to no system or each had a system of its own. In most mofussil schools, masters keep no register of daily attendance nor even had they any list of pupils, neither there was a fixed curriculum nor any list of text books, in fact, dearth of text books compelled the teachers to devote much of their times to the teaching of writing letters, petitions, keeping accounts or of enjoying them in religious studies.\(^8\)

But the most formidable obstacle which the pupils were faced with was the foreign medium, namely Bengali, which was not the mother tongue of the people. Inspite of it, the attitude of the Government of Bengal to the glaring defects was one of total indifference while the amount of money they provide for education to the province of Assam was too meagre.\(^9\)

Administration and organisation of elementary schools can be better known from the report on the province of Assam by A. J. Moffat Mills in 1853, under East India Company's rule. Mills writes that,

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9. ibid
when British Government look possession, there were schools of great benefit to the people which had in a most deplorable state, because of indifference of the higher classes to instruction, inefficient school masters, class books and supervision. Captain Butler of Howgong states that in 1838 it was difficult to find thirty educated individuals who could read and write. Therefore, a number of Bengalee people had to be employed in offices of the different Districts. In the meantime the American Mission Societies have established some elementary schools numbering seventy, many of which were located in a thinly populated area having poor attendance in 1835\(^\text{10}\).

The Government suggested to establish only in populous villages reducing the number of elementary schools to twenty eight. There should be zadar school at each station and second class schools in the Mofussil. It was further suggested that the head teacher should get fifteen rupees per Menses, while the assistant master and the Mofussil master should get ten rupees each. Government recommended to establish one Anglo vernacular school at Sibsagar which was the ancient seat of Loyalty\(^\text{11}\).

Colonel Jenkins entrusted the supervision of schools to the Collectors. He supported the indigenous schools and suggested the book fund to be raised. Further he suggested the examination of schools to be last to the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Collectors\(^\text{12}\).


11. ibid - P. 28.

12. ibid - P. 29.
Kamrup: To take the statistics from 1840 to 1853, a period of decade, E. R. Rowlatt, Collector of the then Kamrup zila in a letter dated 29th April, 1853 states that, there were twenty six schools in the District, one in the sadar station and twenty five in the Mofussil areas, where from sixty people could get employments in different offices after getting certificates.  

Darrang: As per report of G. F. F. Vincent, Collector of Darrang that there were none vernacular schools, the statistics which were given in the following Table, No.- I.  

TABLE No. I

The Table shows the salaries of teachers, enrolment of students of primary schools in 1863.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the school</th>
<th>Name of teachers, Pandits</th>
<th>Amount of salary</th>
<th>Number of boys in the Roll in the batch of May, 1853</th>
<th>Number of boys present on 1st June, 1853</th>
<th>Number of boys appointed to public service since the school was opened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tespore</td>
<td>Doorgaperaaud</td>
<td>Rs. 20/-</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poarnoodab</td>
<td>Rs. 6/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Monitor</td>
<td>Rs. 3/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishnath</td>
<td>Peddessur</td>
<td>Rs. 6/-</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahdub</td>
<td>Bermanud</td>
<td>Rs. 5/-</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modopee</td>
<td>Horodev</td>
<td>Rs. 6/-</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munguldeya</td>
<td>Debjeet</td>
<td>Rs. 8/-</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Monitor</td>
<td>Rs. 2/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maheeree Para</td>
<td>Jossodhur</td>
<td>Rs. 7/-</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lokria</td>
<td>Sohodev</td>
<td>Rs. 6/-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheespazar</td>
<td>Bhobanund</td>
<td>Rs. 7/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setmader</td>
<td>Kistodev</td>
<td>Rs. 7/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 83/-</strong></td>
<td><strong>275</strong></td>
<td><strong>255</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mowgong:—As stated by A. J. Moffat Mills Offg. Judge, Sudder Court, dated 1st July, 1853, Mowgong District, the American Baptist Missionary Society have established two schools, one for Boy's and one for Girl's, at the station. The former number fifty and the latter eighteen pupils, they also opened three village schools, of which the average attendance was about one hundred.¹⁵

Seebagar:—So far Seebagar District is concerned, it is found in the Mills Report that there were nine elementary schools. In the station schools, English was taught. The attendance of village schools were stated to be irregular, and the pundits to be mostly ignorant men. Five schools at station are viz. Seebagar, Nazeera, Jorhat, Golaghat and Bentbarree, were somewhat in a good condition, while other four village schools at Suhing, Gorah Losh, Salzara and at Dewargong with a poor condition. The Collector suggested to stop the village schools and keep up four schools at Principal stations at Seebagar, Golaghat, Jorhat and Nazeera giving an allowance of twenty rupees to the Pundits of the former two and while the latter Pundits an allowance of rupees sixteen per mensem.¹⁶

¹⁶. ibid - PP. 514-515.
Luckimpoor :- In the Lakhimpur District, according to the report of E. T. Dalton, Collector of the District, dated 31st May, 1853, there were five schools in the elementary stage where Bengalee was taught, which are given in the following Table.\(^{17}\)

**TABLE No. – 2**

Table shows the Number of Pundits, pupils, average attendance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Schools</th>
<th>Number of Pundits</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
<th>Average attendance</th>
<th>Number of Lads appointed under Govt. establishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debroogur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luckimpoor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Well attended</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhokova Khanah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordoloy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saikhoah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denjoy and Tengakhata</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source :-** Appendix-D, PP. 683–684.

Thus the East India Company took keen interest for the development and administration of school systems in India and Assam by several measures. They made recurring and non-recurring grants for the maintenance of schools, buildings and site etc. borne expenditures of repairs, renovation and extension of school buildings; directed its officers to help in raising the funds and collecting subscriptions from rich citizens for the cause of education among the masses.18.

There is the reference that, at the public interest Jenkins, the Commissioner collected a subscription for Guwahati schools from the inhabitants of Guwahati town. He collected Rs. 1000/- each from Raja of Koch Behar, Daya Ram Barua, the Chowdhury of Dharmapar, Jogendra Phukan, the Sadar Amin of Guwahati; and Rs. 500/- from Dihingia Goenka of Kurua, a village on the north bank of Brahmaputra19.

3.4 Educational Policy of British India

Administration and progress of Elementary Education in Assam

Introduction

Prior to the educational policy of the despatch of 1854, the administration and organisation of primary education could not be counted in the real sense of the term. However, Assam had a sound system of primary (elementary) education, suited to local needs of the people. Needless to say that as Assam was very thinly populated, had surplus natural food having no social complexity, could never think of a system of education different from that of the traditional one in the by-gone days. It was Wood's Despatch of 1854, that shaped and reconstituted the structure of modern education.

Wood Despatch

The educational policy is based on the Despatch of the court of Directors of the East India Company sent out to the Governor General in Council in the year 1854. In the seventh Quinquennial review, Mr. Sharp Says : 'The Directors' Despatch of 1854 first recognised and indicated the duties of Government and their limits and laid the foundations on which Indian education has since been built.¹

to University state. It suggested valuable suggestions which were not even imagined by any Indian natives for which some people remarks it as a 'Magnacarta' of Indian Education.

The Despatch of Wood gave elementary education a special status in the history of elementary education. He criticises the Downward Filtration Theory and advised the Government to base on the indigenous schools for the spread of elementary education.

Further, a grant in-aid system for indigenous schools was introduced under certain restricted principles: imparting a good secular education, enforcing good local management, acceptance of the obligations of inspection by Government officers together with the conditions prescribed, and levying a fee, however small, on the pupils. The Despatch initiated the scheme of training of teachers for better educational out-put and state that, "Our wish is that the profession of school master may for the future, afford inducements to the native of India such as we held out in other branches of the public service".

Wood's Despatch said any general system of education entirely provided by Government may be discontinued, with the gradual advance of the system of grand in-aid, when many of the existing Government institutions, especially those of the higher order, may be safely closed, or transferred to the management of local bodies under the control of, and aided by, the state. Any way the Despatch of 1854 laid down the principles of partnership between the state and the local initiative in the matter of educational expansion.

It was a matter of great regret that the later provincial Departments of Education did not work as Mr. Wood gave emphasis in the matter of primary education. The Education Department directly shifted their attention in opening of Secondary Schools than to the primary schools. The people could not be benefitted by necessary and practical education, and the position of indigenous schools remained stagnant. As a result of this, primary education had to face many problems and since 1854–58 there were no noticeable growth of primary education.

Before the introduction of the Despatch, 1854, the position of primary education in Assam was 47 numbers in 1843-44, and 63 in 1853-54. The Despatch of 1854, recommended the payment of grant in-aid to private schools. A grant of Rs. 1.00 was paid to every ten boys attending a school. This system greatly helped the development of primary education in Assam. In 1857-58, the number of pupils receiving instruction in such schools was 750 in Sibsagar and 600 in Kamrup Districts. In other Districts the number of pupils stood as follows: Lakhimpur 125, Newgong 125, Darrang 86 and in Goalpara it was 165.

According to the Indian Administration Act of 1858, the Governor General of India was given the title of 'Viceroy'. Accordingly, instead of the President of Board of Control and Court of Directors, Secretary for the State of India and Indian Council was constituted. Lord Stanley was appointed as the first Secretary for the State of India.

After a thorough study of the educational policy of India, issued a Despatch in 1954. Mr. Stanley accepted the policy of 1854, with difference in the matter of primary education that, instead of giving the responsibility of primary education to the local authorities, Government should bring it directly under their control for the spread of mass education. The Despatch also directed that a local cess should be levied for educational purposes.

As an effect of Stanley's Despatch, a noticeable progress was seen in the field of primary education. But in regard to the administration of primary education, it was not finally decided, whether state or local authorities will take the responsibility of primary education, the provincial Governments followed either of the principles according to their own conveniences as for example, the provincial Government of Bombay withdrew from the responsibility of indigenous elementary education leaving it to the local authorities.  

After the separation of Assam from Bengal as a separate province in 1874, a separate Department of education was created. This led to a closer contact between the authorities and the school and it facilitated the growth of primary schools from 513 in 1873-74 to 1,760 in 1881-82. Out of the schools, 7 were Government schools with 187 pupils, 1,256 aided schools with 35,643 pupils and 497 indigenous schools with 9,733 pupils. In the same year Bombay had 73 aided indigenous and 3954 Government conducted schools, while Bengal had 28 Government and 47,374 indigenous elementary schools. Again Assam had 7 Government 1,256 aided and 497 unaided schools.  

So from the above discussion, it can easily be remarked that the tremendous growth of primary schools from 1872 to 1882 was the immediate effect of the creation of a separate Department of education in 1874, and perhaps due to the introduction of a new scheme sanctioning Rs. 4,000.00 at the instance of Sir George Campbell in 1872, for the spread of mass education through indigenous schools in Bengal. The new scheme also proposed that after Departmental inspection, teachers should be given stipends between Rs. 2/- to Rs. 5/- per mensa. This grant in-aid was extended to Assam which was a part of Bengal, and naturally led to the increased growth of primary schools in Assam. 9

So far administration and control of education was concerned there sanctioned one Inspector of public instruction, one Deputy Inspector and 12 Sub-Inspectors. 10

After the Despatches of 1834 and 1839 there was a long gap in the history of Indian education in regard to the adoption of new policies. However, the political administration followed the principles of General Committee of public instruction.

In the matter of educational finance, in most of the provinces local taxes were levied. In some of the provinces one third of the local tax was spent for the purpose of elementary education. A local case was introduced in Assam in 1879, but in Bengal, no case on land revenue was imposed even upto 1882 11

The percentage of school going children during 1881 to 1882 could easily be understood from the following extract from the report of the Indian Education Commission 1882\(^\text{12}\).

Table shows the percentage of school going children during 1881 to 1882

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provinces</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>17.78</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>21.40</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>20.82</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Province and Aoudh</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>12.11</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.P. (Central Province)</td>
<td>10.49</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>14.61</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coorg</td>
<td>22.44</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad assigned (District)</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average :-</td>
<td>16.28</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above Table, it is observed that the average percentage of boys attending schools was 16.28 against the 0.84 percent of girls attending school in India. In Assam the percentage was 14.61 and 0.46 for both boys and girls respectively. Quite surprisingly, the percentage of boys attending school was higher than the girls during 1881-1882 in Assam also.

\(\text{12. Table-3, (Source Nurullah & Naik, - P. 192).}\)
Hunter Commission

The next authoritative statement regarding the educational policy of the state appeared thirty years latter. An Education Commission was appointed under the orders of the Governor General Council in 1882 as W. W. Hunter being the Chairman. The Commission by examining witnesses in different parts of the country in to the working of every branch of educational work submitted a report covering resolutions of the entire field of education. The Commission was approved in 1884. The findings of this Commission as accepted by the Government, became an authoritative document guiding the Government of India in all its educational efforts.

Recommendations on Primary Education

For the spread of elementary education among the masses the recommendations can be divided under the following heads :-

Policy :-

(a) Primary education be regarded as the instruction of masses through the medium of vernacular dialects.

(b) Every branch of education should get sufficient attention and specially elementary education should get special priority in matters of extension and improvement.

(c) The primary education be extended in backward Districts, especially inhabited by aboriginal races, by the instrumentality of the Department pending the creation of school Boards, or by liberal grant in-aid to those who are willing to set up and maintain schools.
Legislation and Administration :

The Commission recommended that the control of primary education should be made over to Districts and Municipal Boards with the powers to levy taxes, to provide schools, and to compel attendance of children of a given age.

Encouragement of Indigenous schools :

In regards to indigenous elementary schools it recommends that as much elasticity is possible be permitted both as regards the hours of the day and the seasons of the year during which the attendance of scholars is required, especially in agricultural villages and in backward Districts. The indigenous schools should deserved encouragement and incorporation in the official systems of education. Further it recommended the adoption of payment by result system as the best method of assisting indigenous schools. The Commission was of the opinion that the system of examination, buildings, and material conditions of teaching should be very simple in primary education.

School administration :

In matters of administration, the Commission said that the provincial Government should take the responsibility of teachers training and inspection, while the municipalities and Local Boards will take the responsibility of control and management of the schools. The managers should be free to choose the text books for their schools.

Fund :-

The Commission speaks of a separate fund for primary education. Both the Municipal and Local Boards should keep a separate school fund to be utilised exclusively for the expansion and improvement of primary school. Beside these, some more valuable suggestions were given in the field of primary education.

As an effect of the recommendations of Indian Education Commission, 1882, and side by side following the introduction of the policy of local self Government in India by Lord Ripon, Local Boards or Councils and Municipal Boards or Committees or Councils were established in all the provinces of India. Lord Ripon observed that Local self Government was to be looked upon, not "as a means of devalution of authority in administration and decentralisation of financial resources but as a means of popular education, primary education was declared to be an obligatory duty of these local bodies."

In 1882, a resolution of the Government of Assam was passed whereby the administrative area of a Local Board came to be known as sub-divisions. But after 1854, a School Board in each sub-division was formed and the power to control and management was handed over to the local bodies.

Coming to the recommendations of the Commission regarding indigenous schools, we find that their acceptance was not universal except for the adoption of the system of payment by result system. It

would appear from a comparative statistics of primary schools and pupils for 1881-82 and 1901-02 that Assam had abandoned its old policy and gone in a direction contrary to that recommended by the Commission. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the problem of the indigenous schools ceased to exist on the other hand, they died of sheer neglect by the Department of Education.\(^{16}\)

Turning to the recommendations regarding primary education and its finance we find that they were not carried out by the provincial Governments. Due to the rapid growth of secondary and collegiate education after 1882, large share was spent in favour of the said and primary education had to suffer. The expenditure on primary education in India as a whole from Government fund was Rs. 16.77 lakhs in 1881-82, and it rose to only Rs. 16.92 lakhs in 1901-02. But the local bodies did a magnificent service to the cause of mass education, as their contribution to the primary education fund in 1881-82 was Rs. 24.9 lakhs while it was Rs. 46.1 lakhs in 1901-02 in India.\(^{17}\)

From the above statistics it can easily be said that the expenditure on primary education from Government fund did not increase in the next twenty years from 1882-1902 on the other hand local bodies spent almost doubled in the next subsequent years. Due to the absence of substantial contribution from Government, no rapid growth of primary education could be seen and as a result different types of educational systems continued to exist in India.


\(^{17}\) ibid - P. 199.
In Assam, primary schools maintained by different agencies were, Departmental primary schools, aided schools, unaided schools and indigenous schools under two grades, upper primary and lower primary stage. During 1889-90 there were 1925 elementary schools with 56,224 pupils in Assam, out of which 24 Government schools with 333 pupils, 1243 local Board schools with 36,261 pupils, 516 aided schools with 15,403 pupils and 142 unaided schools with 4,227 pupils. The local bodies formed after 1884 were not financially strong to establish and maintain primary schools. At the beginning the local bodies were giving aids instead of taking the responsibility of primary education. But gradually they started taking the responsibility of it. By 1937, the bulk of entire primary schools in Assam came to be maintained by local Boards.

The progress of primary education in India after 1882 to 1902 can be gathered from the following figures.

Figure shows the number of primary schools and number of primary attending schools in 1881-1902.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Primary schools</th>
<th>No. of Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>92,916</td>
<td>2,061,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-92</td>
<td>97,107</td>
<td>2,837,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>98,538</td>
<td>3,268,726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. ibid - P. 72.
Although reliable data could not be collected for the province of Assam separately, from the above Indian figures one can easily comment about the probable progress of primary education in Assam.

It is easily understood from the above figure that after twenty years of the Hunter Commission, though there was the increase of nearly 16 thousand primary schools; it was too negligible in comparison to the increasing population, than in India.

Inspite of all the recommendations so long made by the Government policies of 1854, 1859 and 1882, the progress of primary education continued to be slow in India, because of

(a) failure to introduce compulsory education,
(b) transfer of primary education to the control of local bodies, and
(c) neglect of the indigenous schools.

However, the qualitative achievements of Hunter Commission were the following.

(1) Construction of school buildings.
(2) Improvement in the training and qualifications of teachers.
(3) Admission of girls and pupils of low-castes.
(4) Use of printed books.
(5) Adoption of new methods of teaching, and
(6) Changes of curriculum.

Broadly speaking, primary curriculum of 1902 was far richer than that of the indigenous schools of a century earlier.

22. ibid pp. 204-206.
Lord Carson's Educational Policy

The unsatisfactory position of primary education has led to a resolution issued by the Governor General of Council on March 11, 1904 entitled "Indian Educational Policy" forming the third authoritative statement regarding that policy. In the sphere of primary education, it said, 'has hitherto receive insufficient attention and an inadequate share of the public funds. The Government consider that it should be made a leading charge upon provincial revenues, and that in those provinces where it is in a backward condition its encouragement should be the primary obligation and that should be recognised by District or Municipal Boards.23

The resolution of 1904 emphasised quality against quantity and expansion side by side with improvement. He therefore sanctioned large recurring and non-recurring grants to primary education which enabled the provincial Governments to raise the rate of grant in-aid to local Boards and Municipalities from one third in 1882 to one half of total expenditure and to pay better grants to private schools.24

Curzon emphasised the necessity of providing a large number of training institutions for primary teachers, along with the revision of primary school curriculum. In accordance with the policy of Lord Curzon the system of payment by results was universally abandoned and replaced by more scientific and advanced method of grant in-aid.

As a measure, central Government took steps to release a greater amount of funds for education. In 1902, Curzon released

Rs. 40.00 lakhs for general education whereas in 1904-05, Rs. 35.00 lakhs was allotted exclusively for primary education. These grants were given to the provinces and a major part of the funds was made over to the local bodies for the expansion and improvement of primary education. Between 1902-1918-19, the grants amounted to about Rs. 300.00 lakhs recurring grant, which was unknown in the history of Indian education either before or since.

Out of the sum of Rs. 35.00 lakhs released by the central Government for primary education, Assam received Rs. 1.00 lakhs in 1904. In 1903, the Chief Commissioner of Assam promulgated a scheme for the improvement of primary education and increased the provincial grants by Rs. 50,000/- and an additional grant of Rs. 24,000/- to the local bodies to supplement private efforts in securing better building for village schools.

In the meantime, Assam was amalgated with Eastern Bengal in 1905, and it gave a death-blow to the growth of primary schools in Assam. As the Department of Education was situated in Bacca, Assam secured less attention than Eastern Bengal in all directions. Moreover, the different educational set up of Assam and East Bengal were different and led to some extent caotic conditions specially in the matter of giving grants, it showed a step mother attitude. As for instance allotments from provincial and imperial grants to local bodies was Rs.218,784 in Eastern Bengal, while figure for Assam was Rs. 116,610. The amount

spent for East Bental was more than double the amount spent in Assam. Thus the administrative changes hampered the growth of primary education in Assam upto 191527.

The rapid expansion which originated under the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon, was due to several causes. The most important of those were :-

(a) The great social and political awakening of the struggle for freedom.
(b) and the large financial resources available for education.

The progress of primary education in India was thus 97,854 schools with 1,55,017 pupils in 1901-02, and in 1921-22, it was 32.04,336 with 61,09,752 pupils28.

From the above figure, it can be easily concluded that after 20 years of 1901 there was a militant growth of primary education than ever before. Further, due to the strict principles of educational administration, qualitative improvement laid the foundation in the entire structure of education in India.

Educational Policy of 1913

The fourth authoritative pronouncement on the subject of educational policy in India is the resolution of the Government of India is the resolution of the Government of India published on February 21, 1913. In the shape of primary education the resolution said that there must be a great expansion of primary and this expansion should be secured by means of Board schools, except this is financially impossible, when aided schools under the recognised management should

be encouraged. It laid stress on the establishment of a large number of lower primary and upper primary schools.\(^{29}\)

The resolution of 1913 introduced a comprehensive system of education. While grants were given on a liberal scale, the local authorities were allowed to levy a case, private bodies were allowed to raise a fund by fees, donation, subscription and endowments. Missionary schools were given a lump-sum grants from provincial funds for their remarkable works specially in the hill areas of Assam.\(^{30}\)

Assam takes its identity as a separate province in 1914 from Eastern Bental felt the need of defining the duties of the local Boards in respect of education once more. The Assam local self Government Act of 1915 gave wide powers to local bodies in the sphere of management and control of all the primary and middle vernacular schools under public management within a sub-division.\(^{31}\)

The local bodies were to appoint teachers, beside the cost of constructions and to give grants to primary schools. The Act of 1915 did not cover the Municipalities. Therefore, another Act was passed in 1923 and made the Municipalities of Assam responsible for establishment, maintenance and management of all primary and middle vernacular schools under their areas.

The two Acts made the local bodies directly responsible for the spread of primary education in Assam almost up to the time of independence. Development of primary education was greatly helped by the resolution of 1913, still it could not make any effort for universal, free and compulsory education in India.

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31. ibid - P. 46.
3.5 Compulsory primary education: Administration and progress of elementary education in Assam

Introduction

The earliest suggestion for introducing compulsory primary education in India was made by William Adam in 1838, according to whom that a law should be enacted compelling every village to maintain a school. In 1862, Captain Wintage, a Revenue Survey Commissioner in Bombay province also suggested to levy a cess of five percent on land revenue to utilise a part of it for compulsory primary education for the sons of the agriculturists. Shortly after two decades in 1884, Sri Shastri the Deputy Educational Inspector of Broach, suggested the introduction of compulsory primary education in his Annual Administrative Report.

Due to the awakening consciousness of nationalism, and with the enforcement of compulsory primary education in England in 1870, strong resentment grew up to consider compulsory primary education as a national need by the Indian intellectuals as well as by the political leaders.

Since 1880, a number of Indian leaders began screaming the need of education for all and the National Congress in 1885 strengthened the movement further more. But it was His Highness the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikward of Baroda, who introduced free compulsory education as an experimental measure in Amreli taluka of his state in 1893, and then extended it to the entire state in 1906. This scheme of the Prince did not last long due to the paucity of fund.

4. ibid - P. 38.
In 1910 and 1911, the first definite and strong demand by two separate bills, for introduction of compulsory primary education was made by Gopal Krishna Gokhle, who was a member of the Imperial Legislative Council of Bombay. In the meantime, World War broke out and the issue was suppressed for the time being.\(^5\)

According to the Indian Administration Act of 1919, along with the administrative changes, the responsibility of educational administration fell on the Indian Ministers. Since then most of the provincial Governments passed Compulsory Primary Education Acts between 1919-1930, in the line of Gokhle's bill. Assam had the opportunity of passing such a Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1926.

Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1926

The first and famous Compulsory Primary Education Act was passed in 1926\(^6\), with some important provisions, making the local authority and Education Committee responsible for the enforcement of the provisions of the Act.

The Act of 1926, empowered the local bodies at least to convince the guardians to send their children to schools. No tuition fees was to be charged from pupil of any schools. Poor pupils were to be given books and writing materials free of cost by the local authority. The local authority should provide all facilities of accommodation, equipment for the children between 6-12 years of age as might be considered by the Director of Public Instruction.\(^7\)

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7. Assam Primary Education Act : ibid.
The conscious parents and local authorities accepted the introduction of compulsory primary education as a matter of sentiment, but did not come forward with necessary zeal. Moreover, due to the apathetic attitude of the local bodies, the Act could not be implemented.

The Government entrusted the Inspector of Schools of Assam valley with special responsibility to scrutinise the schemes submitted by the local bodies. As an immediate effect, Golaghat Local Board submitted a scheme for introduction of compulsory primary education and received the sanction of the Government in 1930-31. But the members of the Members of Board were afraid of introducing it for the fear of imposing a local tax from their benefitted voters in the next election. However, local bodies of Sibsagar, Tempur and North Sylhet also submitted their schemes for the same purpose. The schemes were returned to the local bodies for certain modification. But the local bodies failed to submit modified schemes and thus the compulsory Primary Education Act of 1926 could not be implemented in any area of the province.

Any way there was a marked growth of primary schools with enrolments in the subsequent years following the Act of 1926, which could be known from the following figure.

8. Devi, R., - Progress of Education in Assam:
9. ibid - P. 79.
### Type of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1889-90</th>
<th></th>
<th>1936-37</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Pupils</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>10,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Board</td>
<td>1243</td>
<td>36,261</td>
<td>4,909</td>
<td>250,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>15,403</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>20,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaided</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>4,227</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>31,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>56,224</td>
<td>6,795</td>
<td>313,347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above figure shows that although compulsory primary education of 1926 was failed it made the public and local bodies more conscious of their responsibilities in the matter of expanding primary education. Further, gradual abolition of some barriers due to the interaction with the western culture and tradition, and improved means of communications facilitated the free movement of pupils from village to town and town to village helps the growth of primary schools.

It was seen that, Government schools increased by 13th times in 1937 that it was in 1889. Again Local Board schools increased by 4th times and enrolment by 7th times than it was in 1889, of course, the growth of aided and unaided schools could not be counted in the growth list. The main cause was that Government and Local Board schools had sufficient funds at their disposal. Due to the paucity of fund available the aided and unaided schools could not be counted.

**Compulsory Primary Education Act, 1947**

In 1947, another Primary Education Act was passed in Assam to introduce free, compulsory primary education between the children
of 6 to 11 years of age in gradual stages. According to this Act, compulsory primary education is to be introduced in certain selected areas first and then to be extended to the whole of Assam. This Act gave the responsibility of making compulsory primary education to the newly created 'State Board of Elementary Education', instead of local authorities. Due to the anomalies of administration as a whole in India for Swaraj Movement, neither the Government nor the local bodies could draw their attention to implement it. Hence, like the Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1926, the Act of 1947 was also not enforced in Assam.

So far as the progress of elementary education was concerned, there was 742 M. E. and M. V. schools with 4,65,113 pupils and 7,547 primary schools with 4,46,972 pupils for general education. While the number of primary schools in 1946-47 was 1,72,663, in India.

Assam Basic Education Act, 1954

After independence movement for basic education sponsored and initiated by Mahatma Gandhi and given formal organisational shape by Zakir Hussain Committee in 1937, which provides for integrated education through self activity of some productive and purposeful craft work, started in many provinces of India. The father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, gave basic education to India as the last and most precious life. The wave of basic education has swept the frontier most province of Assam also. The Government of Assam accepted basic education

as the future pattern of elementary education, like other provinces of India. Subsequently in 1954 Basic Education Act was passed with some important provinces to make education compulsory, universal and free for the children between 6-14 years of age. The distinctive elements of basic education is to learn purposeful and productive activity by learning by doing method through the medium of Mother tongue of the pupils.

The outstanding feature of the Basic Education Act of 1954, is the creation of two separate Boards with their distinctive funds and sanctions for smooth administration.

They are 14 - (a) State Advisory Board of Basic Education and (b) District or Regional Board for Basic Education.

A State Board of Basic Education should be constituted to advise the Government making the Minister of Education as President and Director of Public Instruction as the Vice President. The Board shall advise the Government in the matter of giving grants to schools, control and management, recruitment and service conditions of teachers, selection of text books, and training of teachers. The Board will maintain a fund under the charge of Director of Public Instruction.

In each District, under the administrative area of Deputy Inspector, a Regional Board of Basic Education will be constituted where the Deputy Inspector will be the Secretary of the Board. He will maintain and administer a fund for the same.

All Government middle vernacular schools, all middle vernacular schools managed by private authorities, all primary and basic schools, and all private elementary schools were included under Basic Education Act of 1954.

The Board will be formed from the representatives of local Board, Municipality, Panchayat and teachers of schools. The Board will have to perform the following functions:

(a) Creation of new schools.
(b) Recognition, control, redistribution, expansion, amalgamation of basic schools.
(c) Preservation of old schools.
(d) To provide material conditions of teaching.
(e) To provide teachers.
(f) Inspection of health of the pupils.
(g) Arrangement for selling the school products.

As an effect of this Act of 1954, steps were taken by the Government of Assam to convert all the L. P. and M. V. schools into Junior Basic and Senior Basic schools respectively by a gradual process. The Primary Teachers' Training Centres had also been converted into Junior Basic Training Centres. Arrangements were also made for the training of Senior Basic school teachers.

According to this Act, all lower primary schools were named as Junior Basic and the upper primary schools as Senior Basic schools. But before converting all schools into basic schools, the people of

India have lost the faith in it. People have developed an idea, that basic education is meant only for the weaker section of the community, although it was a wrong conception. So, not to speak of making basic education compulsory, but it becomes difficult even to preserve the identity of it.

In 1944, the total number of basic schools in India was only 261. After five years in 1951, at the commencement of first five year plan, the number of Junior and Senior Basic schools in the country was 33,379 and 388 respectively and it rose to 1,53,000 and 16,700 in 1965-66\textsuperscript{17}.

In 1947-48, the total number of primary schools (including basic schools) in Assam was 7,574 with an enrolment and teachers of 456,972 and 10,015 respectively. But since 1950-1969, the nature of the growth of primary education is known from the following figures:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Primary &amp; Basic School</th>
<th>No. of Pupils</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>1172</td>
<td>6,80,732</td>
<td>16,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>12610</td>
<td>8,15,367</td>
<td>20,252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>15979</td>
<td>11,25,584</td>
<td>26,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>18928</td>
<td>14,42,771</td>
<td>32,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-69</td>
<td>19611</td>
<td>15,20,947</td>
<td>34,983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure shows the number of schools, pupils and teachers from 1951 to 1969 in Assam.

\textsuperscript{17} Kohli, K.K., - Op. cit., P. 58.
Expenditure up to the end of March, 1954, incurred in the field of basic education was 7.06 lakhs. The number of persons employed at the end of March, 1954 was 714. The Government of Assam in her first five year plan made room to incur expenditure up to the end of March, 1954 for the construction of basic training schools was 3.06 lakhs while training of teachers for basic schools was 1.62 lakhs.\(^{18}\)

However, the Joint D.P.I. of Assam gave a death knell to basic education in 1963. As per notification of a Government letter B/E Eng.70/63/3509-13 dated 19-3-63, all the Junior and Senior basic schools attached with the then Basic Training Centres handed over the charges of maintenance to the Deputy Inspectors of each sub-divisions\(^{19}\). Thus Basic Education Act of 1954 failed to achieve the desired result. Therefore, like the other provinces of India due to the neglected attitude of people, and the powerful influence of western education among the educated classes, Basic Education Act could not survive although it was a must for a country like India. Consequently in 1962, Assam Elementary Education Act was passed in the Legislative Assembly of Assam.

**Assam Elementary Education Act, 1962**

The main objective of passing "The Assam Elementary Education Act of 1962" and control of elementary education and to provide for free and compulsory education between the children of 6-14 years of age in gradual stages. This Act was to be effective all over Assam,

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18. Department of Planning and Development (Govt. of Assam) 
   Five Year Plan Assam : 1951-54, PP. 1-10.

except the autonomous Districts. Of course, the Governor with due consent of the District Council, could extend it to the autonomous Districts also. According to this Act, primary education will cover the period from Class-I to VIII standard. The term of local authority would mean, the Municipal Board, Town Committees and the villages constituted under the Panchayati Act of 1959 of Assam.²⁰

Under this Act, all Government H. V. schools all senior Government basic education schools, Middle Madrasa, all primary schools and senior basic schools maintained or aided by the Government shall be recognised as elementary schools.²¹

According to this Act, to advise the Government in all matters of elementary education, at the key position there should be "State Elementary Board of Education" with the Education Minister as President, Deputy Education Minister as Vice President and the D.P.I. as the Secretary along with some other representatives from different agencies. The main functions of the Board will be²² -

1. To make rules for giving grants to local authorities.
2. To make rules for appointing teachers and conditions of their services.
3. Amalgamation, expansion and recognition.
4. To make rules for newly established schools.
   And other allied duties connected with elementary education.

The provisions of this Act were almost similar to the other Acts of 1926, 1947 and 1954 with a due difference that, soon after the

implementation of the Act, the local authorities shall have to take the responsibility of administration of primary education in their own areas. The Block Development Officers with the help of the officers of Education Department will make relation between Gaon Panchayat and State Board of elementary education, in those areas, where the Panchayati Raj Act of 1959 have been implemented. The main functions of the local authorities will be as follows:

(a) Construction of school buildings, preservation and expansion.
(b) Disbursement of pay to the teachers and other workers.
(c) Giving scholarship and other such financial help to the students.
(d) To make provisions for play ground, material conditions of teaching, mid-day meal and welfare schemes for the workers.

Comments

Like Basic Education Act of 1954, the Elementary Education Act of 1962, wanted to make a strong foundation of elementary education by covering I to VIII the classes under elementary education. The Government did not sit idle by giving some powers to the local authorities (Panchayats, Mahkuma Parished). In this regard it is very difficult to comment that now for it was judicious to hand over the responsibilities of primary education to the local authorities. Even the responsibility of making compulsory and free elementary education was also given to

the local authorities. At that time the local authorities were not so efficient because of the illiterate members. Specially in rural areas village Panchayats could not work properly.

It is interesting to note that at one time thinking it not justifiable, the responsibility of management and control was withdrawn from the local authorities and local Boards, and was handed over to the State Board of Education. After the implementation of 1959 Panchayati Raj Act, instead of local Boards the Panchayats became the local authority. Again the Elementary Education Act of 1962 had empowered the responsibility of management and control to the local authorities, was nothing but to pour old wine in the new bottle.

It is seen that both state and central Government is giving importance in the field of elementary education in the five year plan schemes.

But until and unless primary education will be made universal compulsory and free, many of the problems of elementary education would remain unsolved. Inspite of having many defects of the 'Elementary Education Act of 1962', there was a noticeable progress of elementary education in the subsequent years.

Following the different reports, recommendations and five year plans, the central Government took many novel schemes in the field of primary education, which were also extended to the provinces and union territories. As an effect of this, there was a marked development in the field of primary education in India.
In Assam, for the further advancing step, the latest primary Education Act was passed in 1974. Within the period of the Fifth five year plan (1974 - 1979) it was expected that all children of the age group of 6 - 12 years will receive free and compulsory primary education. Plan to establish one primary school in every 1.5 kilometer was also taken by the Government. The following figures shows the primary education in Assam between 1972 - 1975:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>Basic - 2407</td>
<td>2,62,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary - 16086</td>
<td>12,09,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>Basic - 2407</td>
<td>2,61,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary - 17188</td>
<td>12,26,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>Combined - 19745</td>
<td>15,00,794</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remarkable developments in the field of primary education and middle school education in the post independent period as summarised by Nurrulah and Naik are; better provisions, school community relations, decentralisation of administration, better remuneration and training of elementary teachers, text books and improvement curriculam, legislation for compulsory primary education and education of girls.

Following the five year plans and desired targets, educational facilities for 110 percent of the children in the age group 6-11, 57 percent of the children in the age group 11-14 and 90 percent in the age group 6-14 by 1982-83 was expected.

In the year 1977, the Janata Government declared its new policy with regard to primary education. The centre had also asked the States to prepare plans for the universalisation of elementary education. The Government of Assam declared its decision to start 350 schools during 1977-78 and make special provision for the enforcement of compulsory primary education. In the same year the State Government also decided to provincialise the lower primary schools of Assam in a phased manner with immediate effect. Prior to that all middle vernacular schools (M.V.) were provincialised by the Government with effect from 5-9-75.

In order to run administration of elementary education smoothly a separate Directorate of Elementary Education was constituted in 1977 in Assam. Besides, a 20 member State level Advisory Board on Education which will review the progress in the field of education and suggest general policy and guide lines for rapid development was constituted by the State Government. Along with elementary education, the Board was required to suggest measures for the development of non-formal education also.

Inspite of a specific provision in the constitution to endeavour to provide free and compulsory education upto the age of 14 by 1960, and several explicit commitments with regard to the achievement of universal elementary education, progress in this sector is far short of the target. About eleven Crore children constituting 76 percent of the population of the relevant age group are in elementary state in India. The country has reached a gross enrolment level of 93.4 percent at the primary level. These national aggregate figures are impressive but these also hide tremendous disparities between states sections and sexes. Moreover, these gross enrolment rations for over and under age children show performance of a much lower level. The enrolment is as low as 62.9 percent in Assam. There are Districts where enrolment of girls is as low as 17 percent (Jalore in Rajasthan) while the enrolment of girls on all India basis is 755 percent. The enrolment rations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are 93.4 percent and 81.9 percent respectively. The enrolment of girls in particularly unsatisfactory in rural areas among scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The over all enrolment position, therefore, cannot be said to be satisfactory despite the apparent achievement in terms of gross enrolment ratio. 

Education pattern in India has undergone changes from time to time. But it has not been sufficiently realistic and related to the life needs of the people. Change has been sporadic, not well planned and not properly implemented. It has been recognised that education is the most important national activity and is the back-bone of any programme that the country would undertake. It has to adjust with time, with development and with new discoveries in technology. National policy on education, 1986, has been designed keeping in mind the achievements and failures of education till 19861.

The salient features of the National policy on education are2 to provide national perspective and national direction to education, social involvement of educational institutions, national curricula for school education, education for equality, education for women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and for the handicapped, vocationalization of education, work experience, providing sports and physical education and examination reform.

As in other States, Assam has also adopted its own policies and strategies for educational advancement of the State in pursuance of the National policy on Education in 1986. Since the adoption of the National policy on Education, a series of National conferences of Education Ministers of the States and meetings of the Central Advisory Board of Education were held in New Delhi with a view to developing strategies for effective implementation of the directions of the policy. The Educa-

2. ibid — P. 2.
The Minister of Assam has attended all such significant national meets and has expressed Assam's viewpoint on National policy on education and its implementation in the State in regard to the primary (elementary) education in Assam.


Assam is one among, the nine educationally backward States of India. Inhabited by 3.43 percent of our country's total population, Assam has a literacy percentage of 28.1, the national average being 36.23. In 1951 the national average was 16.67. As such we are far behind our goal. The goal is of fulfilling the constitutional commitment of free and compulsory education to all children between the age group 6 to 14. Therefore, let the base of our new educational policy be fulfilled of Article 45 of our constitution. As a step towards this, primary education should receive top priority.

An integrated approach

The state of primary schools reflects the State of the country and is well known. School less village, single teacher schools, school buildings without roofs and walls, poor physical amenities, lack of teaching aids and multiple other factors are there. Out of about 26,000 primary schools in Assam, only 21.5% have blackboards.

1. Education in Assam : Views of Education Minister, Assam, Published by Director of State Council of Educational Research and Training, Assam, Guwahati -7 March, 1988. PP. 3 to 4.
Reorganisation of education, therefore, must start from the primary level. For this, special emphasis must be given on two aspects: (1) Expansion of facilities and (2) Retention. Our expansion programme should aim at "one school at every village" 71% of the total drop-out at the primary stage is due to poverty and backwardness. The goal of universal education will not be achieved until we can attract our children to love the school and the schooling. The village school must be made the most attractive campus in the area. There must have a building and a playground and also a tube well for drinking water. Inside the building there must be a table and a chair for each teacher and adequate number of desks for students. On the whole the school must be provided with all material conditions of teachings.

Again, each primary school has four classes (I, II, III, IV). There must be a minimum one teacher for each class. In case of schools with low enrolment the number of teachers may be reduced. An integrated approach should be adopted to build up the primary school as the most attractive place of activity in the whole area. The Education Department should build up the house, appoint the teachers, prepare the curriculum and provide the teaching aids. The Public Health Department should provide a tube well, which will be utilised by the villagers also. Social forestry should plant fruit bearing trees around the campus and Sports Council should provide the sports materials. Such an integrated approach would definitely succeed in creating the proper environment in the primary schools. Involvement of the community would then automatically follow. These administrative efforts should be supplemented by free supply of text books and mid-day meal in the areas of extreme backwardness.
Creation of proper environment would reduce drop-out. Also re-scheduling of school hours and academic session slightly would enable rural children to help their agricultural parents. The result would be increased in enrolment.

Views of Education Minister in the meeting of Central Advisory Board of Education, April 27 & 28, 1986

100% enrolment of children of 6–11 years by 1990 and 6–14 years by 1995 is proposed, may be achieved only through full financial assistance from Central Government and involvement of other voluntary organisations besides Government agencies.

Minimum facilities should include at least –

- One school in each village.
- One room for each class.
- One teacher for each class.

The village school should also be the community education centre that includes the centre for adult education, Centre for continuous education, the village library and community information centre of development agencies. There should be an integrated approach to develop the school campus and make it more attractive for all villagers. Vacations should be adjusted to suit the agricultural seasons. Working days should be raised to 222–240.

Views of Education Minister, in the conference of Central Advisory Board of Education, August 1–2, 1986 in regard to primary (Elementary) education as a mark of implementation of National policy of education in Assam.

Primary Education

(a) School building: It is proposed to convert the Kacha and thatched school buildings into pucca buildings by utilising the fund received from the Central Government and other sources of the State.

(b) Teaching aids: It has been proposed to supply the necessary teaching aids such as blackboards, maps, globes etc. to all lower and upper primary schools to meet the minimum needs. As regards science kits for teaching of science at lower primary stage about 7000 schools have been provided with science kits developed by N.C.E.R.T. for its prototype. The State Government is thinking developing and supplying of science kits to all the schools of elementary stage for effective teaching of the subject.

(c) Expansion and Development programme: There are 2771 school-less habitations in the State. These school-less habitations will be covered with primary schools in a phased manner.

(d) Conversion of single teacher schools to two teacher schools: At present the number of single teacher primary schools 3894 in the State and measures are being taken to convert these single teacher primary schools to two teacher schools in a phased manner.

(e) Non-formal Education: Effective functioning of the non-formal education will be looked into and number of centres will be increased particularly in the interior, tribal and tea garden areas. Efforts
must be made to increase the enrolment of drop-outs and non-starters to attain the goal of universalisation of primary education.

(f) **Inspection and Supervision** :— In consideration of the number of schools in the State including non-formal educational centres the inspecting and supervisory staff is not at all sufficient. The supervisory staff is to be increased. Government has engaged honorary Inspector of schools from amongst reputed retired teachers at each Gaon Panchayat level as an immediate measure for improvement of teachers in the schools even in the interior areas.

Views of Education Minister of Assam, in the Conference of Education Ministers, February 14, 1987, regarding the programme of action (POA) against National Policy of Education (NPE)

In pursuance of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's letter dated 30th July, 1986, the Government of Assam have already formed a Cabinet Sub-Committee, with the Chief Secretary as its convenor. The State level Central Advisory Committee to the Education Minister, is already engaged in translating the programme of action into practice.

The Government has also formed Advisory Boards for Elementary Education at the Sub-Divisional level. Subsequent upon the adoption of the (NPE) National Policy on Education, a series of discussions and seminars with the participation of academicians and intellectuals as well as the teachers organisations of different levels were held with a view to keeping a breast of the new thrust in the NPE.

* POA : Programme of Action.
* NPE : National Policy on Education.
Assam, as are among the nine educationally backward States of India, wishes to record its determination to fulfill the constitutional obligation of universal elementary education.

The directive principle of over constitution provides free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years. The Government has made determined efforts to achieve this goal since independence. However, goal still remains to be fulfilled. The (POA) programme of action now proposes to achieve this goal of enrolling all children up to the age of 11 by 1990.

Operation Blackboard (OB)

The POA* has proposed the Operation Blackboard programmes. Its purpose is to ensure provision of minimum essential facilities in primary schools. The use of the word 'Operation' implies that there is an urgency in the programme, that the goals are well-defined and the Government and the people are determined to achieve these goals within a time frame. The Operation Blackboard envisaged the following minimum material facilities and learning equipments will be provided to each school:

- two reasonably large rooms suitable for all weather,
- blackboard,
- maps,
- charts,
- necessary toys and games materials,
- other learning materials.


* POA : Programme of Action.
It is also proposed that at least two teachers will be provided in each rural primary school. One of them would be a lady as far as possible.

One black board to each of the 25,970 lowar primary schools and three black boards to each of the 5000 middle schools have been provided during the current year at a cost of Rs. 32.00 lakhs from the State's resources. Supply of other teaching aids like globes, maps, charts etc. has not been possible due to heavy slash down.

**Elementary Education**

**Operation Blackboard in Assam**

When Assam Ganaparishad Government took charge on December 24, 1985, only 21 percent of the total of more than 25 thousand primary schools had black boards. During 1986–87, provision was made at least one black board for every primary school. Black boards are reaching every primary school, and middle schools. An amount of Rs. 321.00 lakhs were made available from the State fund during 1986-87 as furniture grants to the schools at the rate of rupees five thousand per school. Free supply of text books, in various media, to more than 40 lakhs of students of elementary schools would continue. It started from the academic year of 1986. During 1986–87, the Education Department took up construction of 3302 existing primary schools with fund provided under eighth Finance Commission award and State fund.

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Out of 3898 single teacher schools in Assam, 1395 are located in TSP* areas. Already steps are taken to convert 700 of these into two teacher schools. 200 of them are located in TSP areas.

The Government target was to enrol and retain 100% children in primary school by the end of the 7th plan with special emphasis on the education of the SC, ST and other Tribal brethren including tea garden labours.

The mother tongue of the children vary from tribes to tribes in Assam. The Government has already introduced Bodo, Karbi and Garo; and in 1987, Missing has been introduced in 100 schools in Missing majority areas. This year in 1989, the Government has proclaimed to introduce Bishnupriya Manipuri in the schools of Manipuri majority areas of Cachar District. The peculiar situation in Assam deserves special attention in terms of planning as well as fund allocation. As envisaged in the NPE, adequate measures have been taking to uplift the conditions of the SC, ST communities Rs. 6,00,000 was awarded to 10,000 such primary students and Rs. 3,00,000 to 5,000 post primary students as scholarships. In addition to these, special scholarship awards to girls students at the rate of Rs. 20 per month in TSP areas. L.P. level scholarship meant for all categories of students has been raised from Rs. 5 to Rs. 15 per month.

To make elementary education compulsory and free, the Government has decided to provide free text books at elementary level. Under the scheme, free text books to 38 lakhs students belonging to general as well as TSP areas are provided. The total number of books distributed amounted to Rs. 2.02 Crore.

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*TSP : Tribal Sub Plan.
Assam has given great emphasis on the improvement of the physical conditions of the elementary schools as envisaged in the NPE. At present, out of 25,970 L.P. and 5,181 middle schools, only 1,257 have permanent building worth the name. The Government have undertaken massive programme of construction of school buildings.

A massive teacher orientation programme was successfully completed when 16,000 teachers from both elementary and secondary level were given orientation in 1986. During the summer vacation of 1987, another 16,200 teachers were oriented. About 300 L.P. and M.E. teachers were trained in education for environment during the National Environment month. There are at present 22 numbers of Training Institutes for primary teachers. Recruitment of teachers from SC/ST candidates have been done strictly in accordance with the National Policy of Education upto secondary level. At present the State Government propose to establish six District Centres to train teachers of elementary level.

Views of Education Minister, in the Meeting of Central Advisory Board of Education, June 25 & 26, 1987

SC/ST Component and others -

The hill areas of Assam have been identified as a separate geographical entity keeping the basic needs of the hill people in mind. During 1980-85 in the field of Elementary Education, 430 new posts of lower primary school teachers were sanctioned and 173 new schools in school-less villages are set up. 121 NPE centres were opened and under the incentive programme, free text books and uniforms were supplied to 2.30 lakhs students and 1.29 lakhs students respectively.

During 1986-87, 200 additional posts of lower primary school teachers have been sanctioned and another 200 posts will be created during the current year for opening lower primary schools in school-less villages and for single teacher L.P. schools.

The flow of funds in the TSP areas from the general fund has been increased to 15.67 % in 1987-88 from 14.69 % in the previous year. Further, both in TSP and SCP areas free uniforms are also supplied to cover a substantial portion of students.

There are 793 tea gardens in Assam. The State Government have provincialised 500 primary schools in the tea garden areas. To cover the entire area another 400 schools are yet to be provincialised.

Views of Education Minister of Assam in the Conference of Central Advisory Body of Education, March 11-12, 1988
Delhi, on Elementary Education

(1) D.I.E.T. (District Institute of Education and Training) :-

As a mark of implementation of NPE in our State, the Education Minister of Assam State in the conference that, Government have selected 6 (six) existing teacher training institutes for up-gradation as D.I.E.T. The project reports were placed in the State Level Education Committee meeting held on 24th and 25th February, 1988 where in the Secretary of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development was also present.

The education policy of 1986 envisages some measures for the professional growth of teachers at all levels of school education. It is mentioned in the programme of action that a District level institution called District Institute of Education and Training be established in each District to facilitate extension of the latest advances in educational curricula, methodology and technology to the grass-root level workers of formal, non-formal and adult education. The Government of India, therefore, have proposed to complete the programme of establishment of D.I.E.T. within the plan period with adequate financial support. Accordingly, Government of Assam accepted the plan and prepared projects for six D.I.E.T.s as the first phase during 1987-88, through a Task Force constituted for this purpose. In subsequent two phases during 1988-89 and 1989-90, twelve more D.I.E.T.s will be established in the remaining Districts of the State with central assistance. The D.I.E.T. will conduct pre-service and inservice courses for elementary teachers and also for the personal working in the field of non-formal and adult education.

(2) Operation Black-Board :-

In regard to the implementation of Operation Black-Board the Education Minister of Assam states that, the project reports of 33 Blocks out of 135 Blocks and 72 towns in the State have been finalised and placed before the state level Education Committee meeting held on 24th and 25th February, 1988, and cleared the proposal for releasing an amount of Rs. 738.79 lakhs during the year 1987-88. The State Government have already taken some advance steps on the following :-

(a) Construction of 2 all weather usable rooms: The State Government has taken a decision to complete construction of at least 2 rooms in 3527 schools on or before December, 1988 with the resource available under the award of Eighth Finance Commission, NREP/RLEGP and State Plan. Besides, N.E.C. have been requested to provide necessary fund at least for construction of 25% of the aforesaid school buildings.

(b) Contingency money: The Government has decided to provide contingency fund of Rs. 500.00 per school per annum as envisaged in the scheme of Operation Black-Board.

(c) Purchase of articles: In consultation with the State Level Education Committee, Government has decided to purchase only the quality articles.

(d) New Curriculum: New curriculum as per guideline of N.C.E.R.T. are being developed with necessary text books.

(3) Non-formal education:

The existing scheme of non-formal education has been revised as per guidelines given by the Government of India and required proposal has been submitted to the Ministry of H. R. D. Department for release of fund. However, the work is in progress.

Major performance of S.C.E.R.T. (State Council of Education and Research Training) in 1987 in elementary education— at a glance\(^{12}\).

A training course on mathematics was organised at Nowgong for middle level teachers in January. S.C.E.R.T. academicians developed curriculum for primary stage subjects in the light of national curriculum frame work after a month long exercise in February, 1987. Text books for Class-I and III based on new curriculum were prepared in collaboration with Text Book Corporation, Assam during the month, March-April. S.C.E.R.T. conducted massive teacher orientation programme 1987 for 16,200 teachers of both elementary and secondary level during the summer holidays with active support from entire State machinery of education.

Problems of Elementary Education in Assam

Education is one of the major processes that operate in the society. But what do we find in the society? There is chaos and confusion. After 42 years of our independence, we have not yet been able to attain the constitutional directions of elementary education. If we make an investigation that why universal compulsory elementary education has not yet been successful, the following reasons stand as problems of elementary education in Assam.

Like other States of India, Assam have numerous problems concerning elementary education.

1. Wastage and stagnation: Wastage was defined by Hartog Committee as the premature withdrawal of children for school at any stage before the completion of the primary course. So, if the children

leave the school before the completion of the minimum schooling, it is wastage. It is wastage of money, energy and time of both teacher, taught and the parents. In the field of elementary education, wastage is very high in Assam because of several factors. As for example, if sixty students are admitted in a school in Class-I, after the end of the course i.e. in Class-IV only 20 students remain in the school. In case of 40 students, there is the wastage of money, energy and time.

Stagnation was defined by Hartog as the retention in the lower classes of a child for a period of more than one year only 20 percent of the pupils are promoted to the next class. These is the largest stagnation in Class-I. Particularly Class-I is a stagnant pool. Stagnation is an evil which leaves a great demoralising effect on the children as well as the parents. It results in wastage of time, energy and money. Many parents withdraw their children from school after repeated retention. So these factors of wastage and stagnation should be removed from the field of elementary education in Assam.

2. **Lack of qualified teachers** :- Due to the dearth of properly trained teachers in the elementary stage, they cannot draw any attention in the method of teaching.

3. **Unattractive School Building** :- The unattractive school building cannot provide any incentive to the pupils. In rural areas children feel no attraction for these old, illfated, ill-ventilated and ill-lighted schools.

4. **Illiteracy of parents** :- Most of the people living in villages are illiterate. Hence, they take an indifferent attitude to send their children to schools.

5. **Poverty** :- Poverty stands at the progress of literacy in Assam. Due to this economic backwardness parents feel no incentive to educate their children.

6. **Unattractive curriculum** :- The curriculum of elementary education does not cater the various needs of the child for whom it is framed. Moreover, there are no influences of co-curricular activities. Hence, they cannot take the school as a place of incentive.

7. **Single teacher school** :- Many of the primary schools in rural areas of Assam are conducted by single teacher. He is to face very many problems like instruction, and discipline resulting a deplorable standard.

8. **Lack of school in backward areas** :- In the backward places of Assam, schools are not distributed properly. Still there are many school-less villages. So, dearth of school has become a problem in the progress of elementary education.

9. **Lack of finance** :- Lack of financial assistance is another important problem of elementary education. The limited financial assistance of the State have created many problems, specially in management and control.
10. **Superstitious and backwardness** :- The conservative attitudes of the people living in villages is responsible for the slow growth of primary education in Assam. Even now a section of the population is against women's education, does not like to send their daughters to school. Moreover, illiteracy and economic stagnation has made them weak in their moral and intellectual development.

11. **Lack of inspection** :- It is observed that, due to the lack of inspection of the schools in the elementary state, the standards have come to be degenerated. Moreover, in comparison to the increasing number of schools, there are no provisions of inspection has caused slackness in the administration of schools.

12. **Lack of equipment** :- The present education is a child centric education. To make a success of it, in advance countries many new material conditions of teaching have been supplemented in elementary schools. Unfortunately in Assam due to the dearth of proper equipment in schools, elementary education has not yet been able to develop the children in the proper sense of the term.

13. **Flexible policy and indifference of Government** :- Along with the change of political Government, there has been the changes of educational policies also, since independence. Lack of a suitable policy has created difficulties in the development of elementary education. Moreover, indifference of Government administrative machineries is also one of the important problem of primary education.
14. **Lack of communication and natural calamities** :- Lack of proper communication and natural calamities in rural areas prevent regular attendance of schools which again gave rise to other problems.

15. **Failure to introduce compulsion** :- The last but not least cause is failure to introduce compulsory Primary Education Acts passed so far in Assam, because of administrative difficulties, indifference of local authorities and common masses.