Chapter V

Changes in Secondary Education in Assam (1964-74) and Their Influence on Higher Education in the State.

I. The Growth of Higher Education in Assam (1964-74)

The explosion of educational aspiration is one of the striking features of the social scene in a developing country like India and indeed all over the world, demanding for its fulfilment, almost unchecked expansion of educational facilities. It has been found that enrolment at the secondary level in Assam has enormously increased in the period 1964-1974. By introducing several reforms in the educational system, attempts have been made to make education suitable to the needs and capacities of the adolescents. Secondary education has been re-organised in such a way as to make it terminal for those who do not or cannot pursue higher education, and preparatory for the deserving ones who will pursue higher education after the completion of school education. However, it has been noticed that secondary education in the State has not fully catered to the needs and capacities of the students, nor has it wholly provided education of a terminal nature. Thus it continues to give instruction mainly of a general nature. As a result, it has been found that there is mounting pressure for enrolment on higher educational institutions of a general nature.
in arts, science and commerce. A large number of colleges of general education have sprung up in many nooks and corners of the state. There were 19 colleges and one university (Gauhati University) in 1948, and in 1974 the figure rose to 115 colleges and 2 universities, the Dibrugarh University and the Gauhati University, (the Agricultural University and the professional and technical colleges being excluded). The following table (Table I) shows the number of colleges of general studies (arts, science, and commerce) and their enrolments during the period 1964-74.
Table 7

The following table consists of the number of college and graduate students who took the SAT from 1964 to 1974.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1364-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1364-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1364-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1364-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1364-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1364-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1364-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1364-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1364-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1364-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The total number of students is calculated as follows:*

- For 1964-65: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-66: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-67: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-68: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-69: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-70: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-71: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-72: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-73: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}
- For 1964-74: $60 + 70 + 10 = 140^{*}

*Total number of students = 1400

*Note: The asterisk (*) indicates that the numbers provided are for illustrative purposes only.*

*Illustrative calculation:

- Total for 1964-65 = 140
- Total for 1964-66 = 140
- Total for 1964-67 = 140
- Total for 1964-68 = 140
- Total for 1964-69 = 140
- Total for 1964-70 = 140
- Total for 1964-71 = 140
- Total for 1964-72 = 140
- Total for 1964-73 = 140
- Total for 1964-74 = 140

*Total number of students = 1400*
In Assam, institutes of technical or professional courses of any standard, school or collegiate or still higher, are limited in number although the state abounds in many natural and industrial resources including oil, coal, tea, timber, and jute. There is enough scope for the development of various industries, both in the private and the public sector so that these natural resources could be fully utilised for the economic development of the country as a whole and of the state of Assam in particular. It is found that in the bygone decades the people of Assam were not inclined or equipped generally for vocational or other technical education or they were not being sufficiently provided with opportunities to pursue technical or vocational courses. This can be seen from the following table (Table II) showing the number of different vocational and technical institutions and their enrolment during the period 1964– to 1974.
Table showing the number of technical/professional colleges/institutes in Assam (1964-74) and their enrolment at the degree/diploma level (Agriculture, Commerce, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Ayurvedic Studies, Veterinary studies, B.T., Textile)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total number of college/institute</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source : Directorate of Public Instruction, Assam]
II. Wastage in Higher Education

The reforms at the secondary level were introduced during the period 1964 to 1974 with the hope that education would be provided to the students according to their needs and capacities, and that it would minimize the wastage at the secondary level and prepare more mature and knowledgable students for the next higher levels so that at the higher levels there would be no wastage. However, as the present study shows, the wastage in the form of a large number of failures at the higher level of education has remained unchecked. The results of different examinations at the pre-university and degree level prove the point. The post-graduate level of higher education is, however, not being included in this study in view of the specialised nature of its courses.

The accompanying table (Table III) showing the examination results for the period 1964 to 1974 in the entire state of Assam proves that wastage in the form of failure at the pre-university and degree levels continues to be depressingly high. The average pass percentage of the period in P.U. Arts is 40.84, in P.U. Science 44.35, and in P.U. Commerce is 39.37. At the degree level, for the same period, the average pass percentage in arts is 46.61, in science 57.97, and in commerce 57.24. The high rate of failure thus makes it obvious that a large part of the money spent on higher education of a general nature has been wasted. This point is further proved when we examine Table IV which shows the income and expenditure of the colleges of a general nature — arts, science, and commerce — under Gauhati University
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Pass Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pass Rate is calculated as the number of passes divided by the total number of attempts.*
The following graphs show the percentage of pass in degree exams of the state from 1964 to 1974.
alone. The results of different university examinations including the Pre-University and the Degree for the period 1964 to 1974 show (Table V) that the average pass percentage for the period in P.U. Arts is 40.82, in P.U. Science 44.07, and in P.U. Commerce 39.35. At the degree level, the average pass percentage in Arts is 46.37, in Science 57.30, and in Commerce 56.11. Thus it is seen that an amount of about 4.48 crores of rupees was spent by the colleges, but only about a half of the total candidates passed.

Table IV
Affiliated colleges (G.U.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>Rs.2,40,88,610.00</td>
<td>Rs.2,58,58,977.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>2,53,63,851.00</td>
<td>2,53,51,322.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>2,20,94,160.00</td>
<td>2,22,05,242.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>2,54,25,640.00</td>
<td>2,36,25,398.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>3,00,67,060.00</td>
<td>3,07,02,684.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>3,45,93,089.00</td>
<td>3,62,67,157.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>3,96,70,901.00</td>
<td>3,89,10,612.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>4,59,56,910.00</td>
<td>4,51,84,660.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>4,74,73,704.00</td>
<td>4,76,61,909.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>4,97,14,707.00</td>
<td>4,84,90,897.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures include all the recurring and non-recurring grants by different bodies including the Central Government, State Government, and U.G.C.

[Source: Statistical Records Unit, Gauhati University]
III. The Quality of Higher Education

The enormous expansion of school enrolments made it necessary to change the nature and purpose of secondary education. Economic and social changes call for new adjustments to be made in the educational system which includes redefining of goals and functions in the light of these new needs as well as their psychological impact, particularly on the younger generation. Thus, great pressures for change in the field of education were building up. Many changes were introduced at the level of secondary education. These changes, however, could not be viewed piecemeal or in isolation; they are interlinked and their effect is also cumulative. It was expected that as a result of reforms at the secondary level, the quality of higher education would improve, but it has been observed that contrary to expectation, in the state of Assam the quality of education is deteriorating at that level as well as at the higher ones.

The quality of education, however, is not a fixed concept. It covers a multiplicity of processes, relationships, and outcomes which interact and intermingle. For example, it is seen that there is a relationship between the education system and the society it serves, and that it is assessed in terms of the system's capacity to meet the needs of that society. Within an education system, the standards of quality have been seen in terms of the capacity of the students to acquire forms of knowledge, attitude, skills, and to have work-habits developed. There can be no absolute standard of education fixed for all times. Standards vary from
time to time. The Kothari Commission suggested a three-fold criterion for judging the standards of education: adequacy, dynamism, and international compatibility. It says:

"Judged on the basis of these criteria, the existing situation appears to be far from satisfactory. Our universities do a good deal of work which really belongs to the secondary school and the latter in turn does a good deal of work of the primary school. The weakness of these degrees was pointed out by the Calcutta University Commission more than forty years ago. Meanwhile, advanced countries have made phenomenal progress in education. The gap between their standard and ours has further widened."\(^1\)

The Commission suggested this corrective approach:

"Principal efforts in all the states and union territories should be directed towards the qualitative improvement of this (Secondary) stage through re-organisation of structure, increase of duration, intensive utilization and improvement of quality and extent of inputs other than time to raise standards continually at all stages of education so that its wastage which reaches appalling dimension at present is reduced to the minimum. With the substantial reduction in wastage and with better inputs in terms of teachers, curricula, methods of teaching, and evaluation and facilities, the Commission believes that it would be possible to raise the standard of school education."\(^5\)

The Commission recommended that the different stages of education should work in a group rather than in isolation and suggested that each stage of education should take the responsibility
The many-fold changes during the period 1964-74 at the secondary level could not reduce the wastage at the secondary level and also failed to improve the quality of education at that stage which influenced the higher levels in an adverse way. It was found that the knowledge, skill, work habit, and attitude of the majority of the secondary school graduates were not properly developed, and therefore, they were not properly equipped to pursue higher education. As a result, the wide expansion of higher education of a general nature in the states gradually led to a decline in standard.

The late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru remarked that while he was pleased to see the number of universities and other institutions of higher learning multiplying fast, he was at times worried if the same should dilute the quality of higher education. He feared that if it was allowed to happen, the very foundation of our society would be weakened.  

The complaint of a falling standard is heard from many who are vitally concerned with education — parents, teachers, administrators, employers and examiners. In 1963 Mr. M.C. Chagla, the then Minister for Education, Government of India, told the Lok Sabha that he was "painfully conscious" that standards of higher education in the universities were not high. He averred that the standard of university education was deteriorating and attributed the deterioration to the quality of education at the secondary schools.
In the state of Assam, it has been seen from the present study that the quality of secondary education is deteriorating. In a study made by the Education Officer for Physics and Mathematics, S.E.B.A. on certain aspects of the Mathematics paper of H.S.L.C. examination, 1966, it was found that about 70 to 80 per cent questions in the Final Examination were from courses done unto Class VIII and yet the students showed poor performance with an average percentage of pass of 15 to 20. This shows the extent to which the standard has sunk. The fall in standards is noticed at all stages of education. It is noticed at the primary as well as at the secondary stage, and even higher, Since the effect of changes at any stage of education is linked with changes at all the other stages, it is now seen that the changes and their effects at the level of secondary education exert influences both on primary stage of education as well as higher education. It is so because after passing the secondary stage many take to teaching at the primary stage, while many others pursue higher education.

It is seen from the accompanying table (Table V) that only a few students could get first and second divisions in the Pre-University examinations under Gauhati University during the period 1964-74 while a majority of the students passed in the third division. The situation is still deplorable when we find that the number of students getting honours and distinction constitutes only a very small portion of the total number of graduates.

In the year 1964 the number of those placed in the First Division in the Pre-University examination in arts was only 1.55%,
Percentage of students securing Honours and Distinction for the period 1964-1974

BA

BCom

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
64 & 65 & 66 & 67 & 68 & 69 & 70 & 71 & 72 & 73 & 74 \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
64 & 65 & 66 & 67 & 68 & 69 & 70 & 71 & 72 & 73 & 74 \\
8.47 & 4.10 & 7.83 & 7.01 & 6.93 & 5.81 & 8.1 & 11.1 & 11.5 & 12.8 & 13.1 \\
\end{array}
\]
Percentage of students securing Honours and Distinction for the period (1964-1974)
in science 7.29\% and in commerce 4.5\% of the total number of candidates who passed. For those not in the Second Division, the percentage was respectively 7.87\%, 17.44\%, and 15.14\% respectively. Of those who were placed in the Third Division, the respective numbers were 90.57\%, 75.25\%, and 80.33\%. Similarly, at the degree level, in arts only 8.80\% secured Honours and Distinction, in science this figure was 27.22\%, and in commerce it was 8.67\%, while for those declared merely to have passed, the corresponding figures in arts, science, and commerce were 91.19\%, 72.27\%, and 69.13\% respectively. (These figures relate to Gauhati University alone.)

The condition did not improve even after about a decade when we find that in 1974 the number of those placed in the First Division in P.U. Arts, Science, and Commerce were, respectively, 11.17\%, 1.52\%, and 6.43\%. Of those placed in the Second Division, the corresponding number was 42.14\%, 23.2\%, and 30.22\%, and of those placed in the Third Division, these figures were 46.67\%, 75.26\%, and 63.34\% respectively. At the degree level for the same year i.e. 1974, the percentage of those who secured Honours and Distinction was 14.25 in arts, 34.07 in science and 7.7 in commerce. The percentage of those declared simple pass in arts, science and commerce was, respectively, 46.57, 75.26, and 63.34. Thus it is evident that while the number of graduates increased, the quality did not rise, as only simple pass graduates constituted the overwhelming majority of the successful candidates.

For the purpose of determining the influence of changes in Secondary Education in Assam (1964-74) upon higher education of
a general nature (that being the subject of the present study) the investigator prepared an interview schedule and arranged interviews with 100 persons comprising 20 school teachers, 40 college teachers, 10 college Principals, 10 educational administrators, 5 educationists and 15 guardians from different parts of urban and rural Assam. The questionnaire (Appendix III B) was prepared covering the following areas for eliciting their opinion.

1. Quality of students at different educational levels.
2. Quality of education provided at different levels.
3. Defects in the educational structure.
4. Quality of the educational institutions.
5. Performance of teachers.
6. Enrolment in higher educational institutions.
7. Defects in the system of examination.
8. Quality of text books.
9. Attitude of parents.
10. Family situation.

Regarding the quality of students at higher educational institutions of a general nature, out of a total of 50 persons who were directly connected with higher education, 40 remarked that generally mediocre students and sometimes even less than mediocre ones were being admitted to their colleges. The reasons they gave were as follows:

(a) That the colleges of professional and technical education in Assam, viz. the three medical colleges — the Assam Medical
College, Dibrugarh, the Silchar Medical College, Silchar, and the Gauhati Medical College, Gauhati, and the three Engineering Colleges at Jorhat, Gauhati, and Silchar, and the Agricultural College at Jorhat and the Veterinary College at Gauhati attract the major section of students securing 1st division and higher 2nd division in the H.S.S.L.C. examination and P.U. examination.

(b) An insignificantly small number of bright students seek admission to the higher institutions of a general nature (arts, science and commerce) while the majority of students at the higher educational level are those who do not qualify for admission into the professional courses or cannot pursue higher professional or technical courses for economic reasons.

(c) The polytechnic schools at Jorhat, Gauhati, Dibrugarh, Nowgong, and many other places also attract another big section of bright students because there is a better job prospect after the completion of courses in them.

Thus, in most of the colleges of a general education, a large number of students of average or less than average merit get themselves admitted. No excellence of standard can be expected of them.

10 respondents remarked that they were getting students of good quality, because

(a) Admission to their colleges was given only on the basis of merit,

(b) The number of seats for different groups of studies was limited,
(c) The students usually come from enlightened families which could provide proper environment for studies.

It may be noted here that the most reputed colleges are situated in urban areas.

While enquiring about the quality of education imparted at higher educational institutions, the following picture came out from 50 respondents:

40 teachers remarked that a proper standard of education could not be maintained in most of the colleges. The reasons given by them were:

(a) Owing to a large enrolment in a class due attention could not be given to the students,

(b) Necessary educational facilities like sufficient accommodation, library, equipments etc. for learning are generally not provided to the students,

(c) Due to heavy rush for admission, and on public pressure, specially in aided colleges, the authorities usually add sections to different classes for which they cannot provide regular teachers as that involves a huge amount of money, and so run the classes with part-time teachers and that means indifferent teaching.

(d) In most of the colleges, the authorities fail to provide the minimum number of regular full-time teachers on the proper time-scale and instead appoint teachers on a consolidated pay of very meagre amount. The low-paid teachers naturally cannot be expected to teach sincerely,
(e) Because of overcrowding in a classroom, even the best teacher finds it difficult to discipline the class. Hence teaching proves ineffective.

(f) Lack of educational environment owing to a large enrolment makes it difficult to maintain proper discipline in the higher educational institutions.

10 teachers, however, maintained that good quality of education was provided in their institutions because

(a) Necessary educational facilities like spacious class rooms, laboratory equipments, etc. were provided,

(b) The minimum number of properly qualified regular teachers were available,

(c) A disciplined educational atmosphere prevailed.

A well-equipped library is very essential for any institution of higher education. But in Assam, even today, the library service is very poor. In response to the query on library facilities, 30 respondents stated that they had only skeleton libraries with only a few books. 20 respondents said that they had good college libraries, but the students did not care to profit by them by borrowing reference books or periodicals to supplement their textbook knowledge. Only 5 respondents said that they had reasonably well-stocked libraries and that the students also made proper use of them.

As regards the related question of educational facilities like proper accommodation and laboratory equipments etc, 40
respondents said that such facilities were not properly provided. They complained that they had no classroom large enough to accommodate all the students and as a result many students had to keep standing. Laboratory facilities also were very inadequate, they said.

10 respondents said that proper classroom facilities and laboratory facilities were provided to all the students.

As regards the syllabus prescribed for the one year P.U. Course, 50 respondents who taught at different colleges remarked that that was rather heavy, considering the short duration of the session, and the limited number of actual working days. They also remarked that the text books were not of proper standard. But the syllabus and the quality of the text books for different subjects as prescribed for the 3-year degree course were considered by them to be well-planned and of proper standard.

While expressing their opinion on the structure of education 10 + 1 + 3 and 11 + 3, the entire group of persons interviewed presented the following picture: The two types of secondary schools prepared two sets of secondary school students. Therefore, it is natural that their quality would differ. The better equipped 11-year Higher Secondary Schools could produce students of superior ability, for they were trained for a longer period in an advanced curriculum, than the High Schools could. The students from the 10-year High Schools had to undergo one-year Pre-University course in a very short time and thus were not adequately taught. Similarly, at the degree level, students of unequal
abilities were found and that caused difficulties in maintaining a proper academic standard at the college.

The one-year Pre-University course was not considered to be much of a success. According to them,

(a) the shortness of duration of the Pre-University course could not provide proper education. Because, practically, the working days for the one-year Pre-University course were less than 100 and hardly sufficient to cover the entire Pre-University course. The students were admitted to this course in the month of August and by the end of December they had to sit for the test examination. In between, there were frequent interruptions of the academic schedule for socio-political reasons, for which the colleges always found it difficult to complete the Pre-University course.

(b) the students found it difficult to grasp the contents of the syllabus for they had to learn the Pre-University course in English within a very short period of time. (Till 1973 the medium of instruction at colleges was English. It was switched over to the regional language, Assamese, in 1974 keeping English as an alternative medium.)

Expressing their opinion on the quality of education at a higher level, a total of 70 respondents out of 100 pointed out that the quality of education at the higher levels is the cumulative effect of education at the lower levels viz. the primary and the secondary. However, they maintained that the importance of secondary education was significant. They reiterated
that as the foundation of higher education was built upon those stages of education, it should be firmly built up at those stages. Those who are properly educated at the secondary stage are likely to profit by higher education. But those who are not getting proper education at the secondary stage, are not in a position to gain much. When such ill-equipped students constitute the majority of the college students, the result is the deterioration of quality in general.

A total of 60 out of 100 respondents, remarked that the majority of the students did not profit by education at the earlier stages. As such higher education also was not of much help to them. According to them,

(a) Many students did not even know how to read and write correctly. They hardly knew how to express their thoughts even in simple language.

(b) Most of the students had no knowledge of even the preliminaries of a subject. As a result, they were unable to acquire further knowledge of it.

(c) A large section of students did not have the capacity to learn and were unable to analyse and synthesize their thought. The habit of reading and learning by themselves was beyond them.

They opined that the reason for such a poor performance may be attributed to the following:

(a) Absence of a disciplined atmosphere for learning in the schools,
(b) The poor quality of education provided at the school level, 
(c) Lack of proper attention from parents or guardians owing to ignorance, negligence or indifference, 
(d) Poor socio-economic conditions, 
(e) Inherent incapacity for learning.

It would not be inappropriate at this stage to state that most of the pupils of our schools in the post-independence era are first-generation literates.

40 respondents out of 100, however, observed that a limited number of students could show very good results by securing high marks in different examinations at the higher levels, and they considered it to be the result of the high quality of education that they had received at the lower levels.

According to the opinion of 40 respondents, the well-equipped 11-year Higher Secondary Schools could provide the students a wide scope for pursuing courses according to their interests and capacities. They also remarked that the four-year integrated Higher Secondary and Multipurpose School course provided a sound base for knowledge of different subjects and thereby it could prepare more mature and knowledgeable students for higher education.

In reply to the question regarding the quality of teaching, it was stated by 60 respondents, out of 100, that the devotion of teachers left much to be desired. They observed that many teachers were busy coaching students privately, and therefore they were neither sincere nor regular in their class-room teaching.
The deteriorating quality of the average student is one of the reasons for the decline of higher education generally. The deterioration of the educational life of the student was found to be another main cause for the deterioration of the quality of higher education. 80 respondents out of 100 remarked that there was an increasing tendency of decline in the educational life of the students at all levels and therefore a kind of chain reaction could be traced from the primary to the secondary and on to the higher stages in the matter of declining standard. According to them, the primary stage of education is the stage for acquiring elementary knowledge of different subjects. When the pupils were not properly trained at this stage, they naturally remained ill-equipped for the next stage. Again, the secondary stage is the preparatory ground for the elementary school teachers. If the students are not properly educated at the secondary stage, they will not be properly equipped to teach at the elementary level. As such, the educational standard falls. Similarly, those who remain half-baked at the secondary stage cannot be expected to gain from higher education. So, unless the quality of education is emphasised strictly at all levels, a general improvement of standard cannot be expected.

The increasing tendency to adopt unfair means by examinees is a symptom, among others, of the decline of educational life with the ultimate result of impairment of the quality of higher education.

80 respondents out of 100 would account for this malpractice thus:
(a) Increasing slackness in teaching, and indiscriminate promotion of students to the next higher class on extra-academic considerations or any consideration other than academic help unworthy students to thrive,
(b) Inability of most students to read for themselves,
(c) A large section of the students are unworthy of the course to which they are admitted,
(d) Unwillingness on the part of a large number of students to work hard and read the prescribed text,
(e) The craze for a certificate at any cost which is a kind of a passport in the job market,
(f) Decline of all moral values,
(g) Unrealistic social significance attached to a degree,
(h) Lack of proper vigilance on the part of the authorities to uphold honesty and integrity,
(i) Easy availability of question-answer 'key's in various subjects and the introduction of 'objective type' questions.

The present system of examination is found to be a major cause in the decline of educational life of the students which encourage copying and other malpractices and discourage hard work, and systematic analysis of thought. Hence the students do not develop the right attitude for acquiring and applying knowledge. Moreover, no external examination by itself can be called a reliable means of evaluation without an adequate internal assessment to supplement it. Internal assessment is necessary to assess whether a student has adequately learnt most of the syllabus without being selective in reading.
The practice of awarding grace marks in different examinations for raising the pass percentage was another factor responsible for the fall of standard in higher education. It has been found that the Board of Secondary Education, Assam, has the practice of giving grace marks upto 20 to raise the pass percentage at the H.S.L.C. examination. It has also been found that the practice of awarding grace marks is there at the University also, both at the Pre-university and degree final examinations. Thus, without acquiring even the minimum knowledge of a subject, a student can manage to 'pass' the examination and get a degree.

Indiscriminate expansion of institutions of higher education, both in rural and urban areas, has also contributed to the decline in standard. The affiliating authorities are found to be slack in enforcing the conditions for the purpose. As a result, many colleges, both in rural and urban areas, have sprung up which do not have the minimum physical facilities. Some of them do not have even a building of their own. Nor do they have the requisite number of qualified teachers. Students who somehow manage to pass the school leaving examination, join these colleges. Many of these so-called colleges work in shifts in rented houses. A library is a rarity in such institutions. Also, for political reasons, such colleges come into existence. But the ultimate result proves disastrous: they only swell the total college enrolment of the state, and prove an ineradicable drag on academic excellence.

The increasing number of unemployed graduates is a reflection on the quality of higher education in the state. Since the
British rule in our country, higher education has been a gateway for the white colour jobs. Only recently some opinion has been expressed for discontinuing the practice. Different employment bodies now select their personnel on the basis of certain selection tests. Hence only the competent persons are likely to be selected. A large number of educated unemployed implies that something is wrong somewhere in the education system. But it also indicates that those unemployed youth may not be always employable either.

The number of persons securing employment through Employment Exchanges in the years 1964-1976 is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registration</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Number in the registration on 31 December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>6535</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>51,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>7355</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>58,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>6130</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>55,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>5920</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>57,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>6416</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>63,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>5785</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>66,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>85,808</td>
<td>7032</td>
<td>780,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>90,357</td>
<td>6015</td>
<td>93,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>83,322</td>
<td>5299</td>
<td>98,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>105,174</td>
<td>7154</td>
<td>121,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>92,490</td>
<td>6571</td>
<td>139,180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The figures indicate that the placement of registered youth is only minimum while a large number in the live register poses a serious problem.
But the situation is not entirely gloomy. Facilities for further employment should be explored. That means proper planning and utilisation of the natural and industrial resources of the state to absorb all types of students of different levels of intelligence, interest and capacities. The education system of the state should be geared to utilise the natural and industrial resources of the state to provide employment.

One thing, however, deserves attention. As against a huge number of poor quality graduates, there have been some very promising students who have shown brilliant results in different examinations at the national and sometimes at the international levels and have secured top positions in national level tests like the I.A.S., I.F.S., and other services of trade and commerce and proved their capacities in different jobs. Therefore, it cannot be said that the quality of higher education has irrecoverably fallen when we find that higher education is sufficiently helping them to show their capacity to the highest level.

Thus, there is no universal criterion to prove that the quality of higher education has fallen merely because of the changes in the secondary educational level.

In response to the related question in our questionnaire, a total of 40 respondents out of 100 replied that the quality of higher education was not going down. They even claimed that the standard was rather improving. They pointed that:

(a) With the help of N.C.E.R.T. and many other organisations in the field of education the students were now better guided and
trained in their specific fields and as a result they would show much better results than the students of the earlier years.

(b) The quality of the text-books and the standard of the syllabus and other reading materials are much better than before. Their standard also is much higher.

Though the fall in quality was noticeable in some educational institutions which did not have the requisite facilities, well-equipped institutions can always be expected to maintain a high level of standard. Therefore it cannot be said categorically that the standard of higher education has fallen everywhere.

Mr. P.K. Bhuyan, Secretary, Assam Public Service Commission, while giving his personal opinion on the question of the falling standard, remarked that he did not perceive any decline in the quality of higher education; on the contrary, he maintained that there was evident improvement in the teaching of subjects like Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Botany, History, Geography and Economics.

It has been observed by the entire group (100) that because of the social prestige and economic benefit attached to it for better living, the desire for higher education has become almost universal even among those who had no tradition of learning at all in their family. Hence the standard of book learning is naturally falling in schools and colleges, generally. But standards in practical spheres of education like scientific and technological research and application, and engineering, have risen significantly. Therefore changes in secondary education cannot be said to have had any adverse effect upon the standard of higher education as such.