CHAPTER-4
EDUCATION IN ASSAM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Education in ancient Assam has not been widely studied by the scholars mainly because of the lack of available source materials. However, an idea of the educational system and the extent of learning can be had from the inscriptions and literary or religious works of those days. The Pan-Indian system of education in ancient India was mainly Indo-Aryan and Sanskrit Oriented. Most probably the formal system of education in Assam was first introduced by the Aryans who migrated to Pragjyotisha or Kamrupa about the beginning of the Christian era. It is narrated in the Kalika-Puranam, that king Narakasura, who occupied Pragjyotishpur by defeating the Danava ruler Ghatakasur, made provision for the settlement of the twice born classes by driving indigenous Kiratas to the Eastern region of Dikkaravasini and the Eastern Sea shore. He also made provision for the study of the Vedas. The earliest reference to the migration of the Aryans to the adjoining region of Kamarupa is found in the Satapata Brahmana wherein mention is made of the episode of Videgha-Madhavya crossing the river Sadanira (Karatoa) with the Vedic sacrificial fire. That the Indo-Aryans penetrated into the North-Eastern India prior to the fifth century A.D. is borne out by the Umachal Rock Inscription of Surendrarvarman or Mahendravarman. And these Aryans brought with them the system of education prevalent amongst them. Diffusion of learning is inextricably linked up with the use of the script. When the Aryans migrated to Pragjyotisha or Kamrup they were already equipped with the knowledge of the scripts. It can be easily surmised that the Indo-Aryan learning or more precisely the Vedic learning must have been cultivated by a section of Aryanised people of this country even before the fifth century A.D. However, the formal learning system of any sort did not touch this region before the advent of the Aryans. (Barpujari, p 285)

Social life in ancient India was moulded on the basis of Varnasrama or caste and stages of life. In such a compartmentalized system, the portals of education could not be expected to be open to all. The study of the different branches of the Vedas and the Vedangas was confined to the twice born classes only. The higher type of learning like Sruti, Smriti and philosophy was naturally limited to those who occupied exalted position in the hierarchical society. The Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas, including princes
and higher officers of the state, also received instructions befitting their social and official status.

Early rulers of Kamarupa - the Dynasties of Pushyvarman, Salastambha, and Brahmapala - were not Indo-Aryan by racial or ethnic stock. Probably they were taken in to the Aryan fold by granting them the status of the Kshatriyas. With the zeal of a neophyte, these Aryanised kings actively contributed to the spread of Aryan culture and civilization. The very fact that the kings of Kamrupa claimed themselves in epigraphs as upholders of Varnasrama, clearly indicates the observance of the duties allotted to the four castes and asramas was under the control of the State. Although there is no reference as to the existence of the State Department of education, it may be reasonably presumed that the State exercised some control and supervision lest there be transgression of Varnasrama-dharma and injunctions of dharma-sutras. Early rulers of Karmarupa patronized the learned Brahmanas well versed in Vedic lore and sacrifices with land grants in their efforts to propagate the Aryan language and culture. No wonder, therefore, ancient Assam, ultimately turned in to an Indo-Aryan language speaking zone, and the Aryan culture, which later assumed the form of Hindu culture, gained a strong footing. The ancient Indian education thus got accessible to the higher stratum of the society represented by the twice born classes, princes and nobles. (Gait, 1994)

From the epigraphic and literary sources it can safely be presumed that the ancient Indian system of education and curriculum as prescribed by the Dharma-sutras were also followed in Kamarupa. Instructions were imparted, generally, through a two-fold process. Under the Gurukula system from the Upanayana or initiation till the ceremony of Samavartana the pupils studied at the house of their teacher and carried on their academic life according to the code of conduct prescribed by the Dharma-sutras. Balavarman’s Nowgong plate speaks of a Brahman named Srutidhara who having performed the samavartana ceremony at the preceptors’ house returned to lead the life of a house holder and acquired the title Kathanistha for his proficiency in reciting ancient lore. Ratnapala’s Bargaon grant and Dharmapala’s Subhankar Pataka grant have respectively mentioned Gangadatta and Bharata who were constantly engaged in discharging the six fold duties of a Brahman one of which was teaching (adhyapana). Vedacarya, a smriti writer of the thirteenth century, categorically states in the colophon appended to the 15th chapter of his work Smriti-ratnakara that he
compiled the digest for the benefit of his pupils. These references clearly prove the existence of educational institutions maintained by learned scholars where students were taught different branches of learning according to the proficiency of the preceptors. The other agency of transmitting education was the hereditary system wherein some used to receive education from their fathers. Inscriptions of Vanamala, Ratnapala, and Dharmapala have recorded the names of learned donors whose fathers and grandfathers were equally learned and well-versed in different branches of studies.

It can be safely presumed that in many cases students of learned families received instructions from their fathers or near relatives at home. There was another agency of a secondary nature which was in existence from the remote past. Scholarly discussions were occasionally held in congregations of the learned in which teachers of repute and their pupils actively participated. The assembly of the learned which has been called Parishad in Dharmasastra continued in western Assam, particularly in the district of Kamarupa, till the early decades of the twentieth century. References have been made to such learned discussions in biographies of several medieval Vaisnavite preachers. Though no specific references to Parishad of the learned is to be found in the inscriptions or early works, its existence cannot be denied in view of the wide prevalence of the ancient educational system of the Hindus in Kamrupa.

4.1: DURATION OF STUDENTSHIP:

For the study of the Vedic learning, a long period was prescribed by the Dharma-Sutras. According to Gautama, a student should devote twelve years to study one Veda. It was hardly possible for most of the students to spend thirty six years in mastering the three Vedas. Vishnu Sarma of the Panchatantra fame told king Amrasakti that grammar alone takes twelve years for its complete mastery. It was, therefore, not possible for a general students to spend twelve years on each subject. Some short cut in the courses and length of study was naturally made for the general students by reducing the number of years. The duration appears to have been limited to twelve years but in actual practice it depended on the nature of the subject of study and willingness of the students. The ambitious students usually spent more years in their studies. Since the Brahminical system of education was followed in Assam, it can be presumed that the duration of study was similar to that prevalent in other parts
of the country. Though there is no reference in ancient records of Assam, biographies of medieval saints and preachers throw some light on this subject. Sankar Deva, the greatest saint of Assam, is said to have spent twelve years in the Patshala of his teacher Mohendra Kandoli.

During the sessions of study numerous holidays were allowed, viz. on the days of the new moon and the full moon. In addition, the ancient authorities maintained a long list of inauspicious days during which neither teaching nor study was permissible. These prohibitions have continued till the present day in the traditional institution of Sanskrit learning, viz. tols and catuspathi. In the Vedic tradition the whole life of an individual is divided into four Ashramas viz. Brahmacharya (the student life), Garhastha (family life), Banaprastha (Forest life), and Sannyas (detached from the worldly life). The first part of life was the period of acquisition of knowledge, precisely the religious knowledge. One had to prepare himself for other parts of life which indicate the practice of life centered education in those days. (Barpujari, pp288-89)

4.2: CURRICULUM:

The curriculum for all the castes was not identical, although a modicum of certain fundamental branches of studies was imparted to all. In the case of Brahmmin pupils emphasis was laid on the knowledge of the Vedic studies. With the passage of time the Vedic study came to be regarded as of secondary importance for the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas. In the Arthasastra of Kautilya, it is held that the education of the Kshatriyas, especially of the royal princes, should include the study of the triple Vedas, anviksiki (nyaya, sankhya, yoga), dandaniti and varta (knowledge of trade and profession). Similarly the education prescribed for the Vaisyas was vocation-oriented besides a superficial knowledge of the Vedas and the Vedangas. So far as the study of the Vedas and ancillary branches including different systems of philosophy are concerned, the burden of imparting instruction was shouldered by the Brahmmins. But the occasional and the technical education befitting the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas was probably left to professionally skilled persons who either acquired proficiency through the hereditary process or imbibed through professional guilds.

With the development of different systems of philosophy and other branches of learning including practical sciences, the curriculum underwent massive changes.
From the records in inscriptions as well as Puranas and Smritinibandhas, it can be inferred with some amount of certainty that besides the study of the Vedas and its ancillary branches (vedangas) provisions for the study of the Dharma-sutras, dharma-sastras, puranas and itihasas, different systems of philosophy, dhanurveda, ayurveda, arthasastra, including dandaniti and tantras were in existence. There are reasons to believe that training in Devajana Vidya (fine arts) and architecture, as evidenced from the sculptures and architectural ruins of the Pre-Ahom period, was imparted assiduously either on hereditary lines or through professional guilds.

So far as the Vedic study is concerned enough evidence of its cultivation is furnished by the inscriptions and religious works written in ancient Assam. The Tezpur grant of Vanamala Varman speaks of one Bhitajita as versed in the Vedas, more specially in the Yajurveda with its ancillary branches. His son Indoka was equally proficient in the Vedas. Balavarman’s Nagaon inscription mentions one Malsdhara Bhatta, his son Devadhara and the grand son Srutidhara as having proficiency in the Vedic learning. Ratnapala’s Bargaon plate speaks of Brahmanana Devadatta who was the foremost among the Vedic scholars and was well versed in the three Vedas. Balavarman’s second plate praises one Garga and his son Gabisthi affiliated to the Kanva-sakha of Yajurveda for their knowledge of Vedic sacrifices which has also been testified by several epigraphic records. The religious works, notably puranas and dharma-sastras, reveal familiarity of the authors with Vedic literature.

The early records, both epigraphic and literary, furnish evidence of the prevalence of the different system of philosophy forming a part of the educational curricula. The Vedanta system, especially the Advaita School, received attention of the scholars. The Nidhanpur grant describes Mahendra-varman, one of the forefathers of Bhaskarvarman, as atmatattavajna and his Doobi grant speaks of Sushhitavarman as an extraordinary king who crossed the vast ocean of knowledge having mastered in Vyakarana, Samkhya, Nyaya, Mimamsa and Vedanta. The Doobi grant describes Vajradatta, son of Naraka, not only as a scholar in the Vedas and the Angas, but equally proficient in grammar, logic and political ethics. He also knew the science of training of elephants and the horses including their pedigree. The verse of Rampala’s Bargaon grant salutes the Natarja Siva who is described as both the perceiver (drasta) and the perceived (drisya). Here through the identity of drasta and drisya the monistic doctrine is neatly expressed. The Kalika-Purana, a work composed not later than the
eleventh century A.D. contains several verses wherein the monistic doctrine is suggested. The *Svalpmatsya Purana*, presumably a work of the Kamarupa school of *Dharmasastras* written towards the beginning of the second millennium A.D. in its benedictory stanza describes the unity of the Godhead by drawing the analogy of the rope whereon the idea of the snake is superimposed through ignorance. *Nilambaracarya*, the well-known digest-writer on *smritis*, who flourished towards the middle of the thirteen century A.D., is credited with a brief commentary on the Vishnu-Purana known as *Amsaprakasika*. Here the writer has interpreted the Purana from the monistic point of view. It may be incidentally mentioned that the commentator clearly states that he wrote the commentary on the basis of the interpretation of his father *Sankarshanacarya*. Instances given above are sufficient to show that the Vedanta system, especially its monistic school, was widely read and studied in ancient Kamrupa. In those days *Dharmasastras* and *Dharmasutras* dealing with religious and social duties, conduct and observances were also practiced. The teaching of *Tantras*, for which Kamrup is recognized as one of the important centers in Eastern India, centering round the temple of Kamakhya was also practiced.

Literature was also one of the popular subjects of study comprising the works of the classical poets and dramatists like *Kalidas, Magha, Bharavi* etc. Some secular branches of knowledge especially for the royal princes include learning the use of arms and military skills. The knowledge of science of polity (*Rajadharma*), the lessons from *Arthasastra*, Jurisprudence, Astronomy, Astrology (*Jyotisha*), and Ayurveda enriched the curriculum.

Education in Assam as in the rest of India in ancient times was too much restricted to the priestly classes and upper castes. Epigraphic and Literary evidences clearly prove the existence of *Gurugrihas* and Sanskrit *Tols* patronized by the rulers for the promotion of learning in this region of India. In these centers, instructions in various branches of studies, including the religious lore, was imparted by competent teachers who were very keen in discharging their duties. Learning was confined to the higher classes, especially among the Brahmans and the Priestly classes. The so called higher classes of the society were unwilling to impart instructions to the lower classes to which education was prohibited by the traditional caste system. Ordinarily the pupils having thirst for knowledge flocked to them, and occasionally teachers also invited pupils from different parts of the country, and accordingly the Brahmin teachers
(Gurus) in homely atmosphere of Tols and Priestly classes in the serene atmosphere of temples imparted instructions to their pupils. Actually education was limited to perusal of the translation of the Bhagavat Gita, Ramayana and the commentaries. The range of education consisted in nothing more than a mere smattering of Sanskrit sufficient to enable them to read their religious scriptures and to officiate at the religious ceremonies. As to curriculum and method of teaching—‘there were no fixed hours for reading and attending the Tols, and each student read a different subject and pages, the whole course of study being restricted to learning the rules of the Sanskrit grammar and strings of Sanskrit text. Common subjects such as Arithmetic and Geography were entirely ignored. Under such a state of things and system, the students grew up inordinately conceited and vain of their own learning.’ (Barpujari, pp288-294)

Another type of quasi religious schools where non-Brahmins were also admitted existed in important villages and it trained up the youth in the knowledge of Sanskrit literature and Science. Following the Neo-Vaisnavite movement in Assam under Sri Sankar Deva, the great Vaisnavite reformer of the Sixteenth century, there developed a new system of educational institution namely the Satras. Like a Christian Church or Buddhist Monastery, Satra was a religious center with a school and a library where the teaching of Sri Sankardeva and his principles governing life were imparted to the pupils along with other branches of knowledge. The Namghar actually evolved as an offshoot, an extended wing or a miniature replica of the Satra institution. To create an atmosphere where single-minded devotion to God based on a fellowship of devotees or Bhaktas under the guidance of a Guru or teacher could be achieved, the Satra institution was brought into existence and it became a well organized and a popular institution within a century of its inception. The Satra, literally meaning “holy areas” each headed by a Guru (teacher) designated as the Satradhikar. In its Kirtanghar (prayer hall), the saint was surrounded by the devotees within the compound and on the four sides of the Kirtanghar. The Kirtanghar was the nerve centre of the entire place. It was a long and open hall, where the devotees sat together to sing the glory of God. There was no idol in the altar, but only a book, generally the Bhagavata, symbolising God. In addition to prayers and cultural functions, religious discourses were also held in the Kirtanghar. One of the functions of these satras was to initiate aspirants to Neo Vaishnavism. This activity of initiation by the Satras prepared the
ground for cultural integration of different sections of the Assamese society with increasing numbers of both tribal and non-tribal sections of the Brahmaputra valley population accepting the new creed, which had a strong democratic content based on a common code of conduct. In the book, ‘Aspects of the Heritage of Assam’ Dr. S.N.Sarma (Sarma, 1999) has stated that the cultural history of Assam in respect of arts and crafts education and learning since the beginning of sixteenth century till the advent of the British largely developed centering round Vaishnavite movement which in turn found expression through the Satra institutions.

In addition to these religious and quasi-religious institutions, the respectable gentry employed private teachers to instruct their sons and daughters at home. The village kakatis and scribes were generally selected for this purpose, but a Brahmin was always preferred to instruct the children in a Brahmin family. Since instructor had to be remunerated, this system was confined to those parents who were comparatively in affluent circumstances.

4.3: MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION:

As in other parts of India, in Assam too, Vedic Sanskrit and Prakrit was the language of the masses during the ancient time. Instruction was imparted in these languages which were intensified as the course of study included the Vedic Literature, Ramayana Mahabharata, Purana, Tantra etc. written and instructed in Sanskrit. It was found out by the scholars like Dr. Banikanta Kakoti, the present Assamese language is greatly influenced by the language of the Kols, Mundas, Malayans of the Austic family of the Bodos of the Tibeto-Burman group. With the passage of time, the language got changed with the change in administration. In ancient time it was Sanskrit and then the gradual shifted to the local tribal languages like- the Khasi, Garo, Mizo, Naga, Bodo, Kachari, Kuki, etc. During the time of the Ahoms, there evolved a common language of Tibeto-Burman and Shan-Tai origin i.e. Assamese (Shastri, 1958, pp31-33). In the medieval period, though the Muslims did not capture Assam wholly, but in some parts of the State, the influence of Persian, Arabic and Urdu languages prevailed. The coming of the British echoed a marked awareness and fluctuation towards English as the medium of instruction.

With Sankardeva’s appearance in the field of education, the medium of education shifted from classical Sanskrit to the simpler and more popular language of the
common people of the region and referred to as Brajovali. Scriptures were translated in to this language to make them accessible to hither to excluded sections of the society.

However, the medium of instruction has been the most controversial issue in the history of education in Assam. Due to administrative needs Bengali was treated as the medium of instruction in Assam which developed serious discontentment among the Assamese, and the missionaries also raised the issue strongly to the administrative authority and pleaded for Assamese as the medium of instruction since the majority of people were comfortable with that language. But the British administration did not pay any attention to the fact as it was William Robinson, Inspector of Schools who did not find any difference between the Bengali and Assamese as language. After Robinson, came James Murray, who made some observations on the issue and suggested to the Lt. Governor of Bengal, George Campbell and finally in 1879, he acceded to Assamese as the languagein the courtand as medium of instruction in education in the Assam Valley (Assamese dominated) districts; but for Bengalee populated districts of Goalpara, Cachar and Sylhet Bengali continued as medium of education and administration.

4.4: THE MUSLIM SYSTEM OF EDUCATION:

The arrival of Muslims in Assam during the early medieval period opened up a new chapter in all aspects of life including education. The formal history of the Muslim Socio-Political life in Brahmaputra valley begins in 1206 A.D., when the Turkish military commandder Ikhtiyaruddin Mohammad Bakhtiyar Khalji (1201-06), the first Muslim ruler of Bengal entered Kamrup on his way to Tibet expedition. It was Hussain Shah who, during his Kamatapur campaign, encouraged many Muslim warriors to settle down at Hajo and he built, perhaps, the first masjid at Rangamati (Choudhuri: 1982). The Muslim population which settled in the Brahmaputra valley either by compulsion or by choice gradually mingled with the multi-ethnic social population of the then Assam. Muslim settlers were engaged by the Ahom kings as security guards, workers in kings’ fire arms manufacturing as well as minting workshops (Choudhuri: 1982). Muslims were good at making copper utensils and this industry was monopolized by them in medieval Assam. They were also employed to carry out finer artistic works in temples. Tailoring was another profession in which
Muslims were good at. Their Bengal connections helped them to carry out trade and commerce across Assam and Bengal. In fact prior to the arrival of Marwari traders, during the colonial period, Muslim traders played a significant role in this sector. Some of the early Muslim settlers also worked as musicians and singers, shoe makers and japi manufacturers (Barua: 1989).

Besides the Sultanate and Mughal invading forces, preachers of Islam in general and Sufi saints in particular also visited the Brahmaputra valley during the medieval period. The activities of different peers and fakirs like Jamaluddin Tabriji during the 13th century, Giasuddin Aulia during the 14th century and Azan Fakir during the 17th century had led to the internalization of Islam as one of the components of local medieval culture. It may not be out of place to mention here that Ahom king Surampha (1641-1644), also known as Bhaga Raja, had even conferred land grants to Azan Fakir. Although the Ahom kings vigorously fought against the Muslim invasion all through their reign till the end of 17th century, there is no single instance of their war against Islam. In fact, Sufism and Sankardev’s neo-Vaishnavite movement progressed hand in hand in medieval Assam. Many Muslims became the disciple of Sankardev and some of them like Chand Khan, Joyhari, Haridas and Dheli Darji are well known for their contribution to the growth of neo-Vaishnavite movement in pre-colonial Assam (Barua:1989). Even Sankardev himself referred to the existence of the “Turuk” (meaning the Muslims) population in Assam during his time (Neog: 1985).

When the Muhammadan chronicler Shihabuddin visited Assam with the Mughal invading army led by Mir Jumla during 1662-63, he noted that the Muslims settled here had assimilated themselves to such an extent that except the name nothing of Islam was left with them. (Gait: 1981; Neog: 1985).

In medieval period with the arrival of the Muslims, a new system of education opened up which was so organized, planned and aimed to prepare a man fit to live in this world and the world hereafter. It was very much liberal and open to all. Religious instruction comprised the most significant aspects of this education like the Hindu system and was imparted in Maktabs generally attached to the mosque and Madrasas—the institutions meant for primary and secondary education respectively. Quran and Hadith were the main sources of Islamic education. In Madrasas, with the religious instructions some practical subjects were also taught.
Among the traditional institutions, Maktabs had substantial presence among the Muslims. The country was dotted with Maktabs wherever the Muslim population was capable of sustaining a Maktab. Islamic education, in general, refers to the teaching and learning of Quoran, Hadith and Muslim jurisprudence.

It is said that in Islam, the educational system started from "Suffa Nabvi" - a platform of the Prophet. The Masjid-e-Nabvi i.e. the Mosque of Prophet thus, became the first seat of Muslim education in Medina. Following this trend, formal Islamic education started from the Masjid and religious circles (Khan, 1997). These madrassas are known as Qaumi madrassas and are found in almost all Muslim habitation even in remote areas where government educational set up was almost nonexistent. These madrassas were of three types-Alimiya and Fazilat Madrassas, exclusive Hafizia Madrassa and mohalla-centric Maktabs.

In the Madrassas, they taught a series of Islamic subjects such as Tafsir (Quranic Commentary), Hadith (Prophets Sayings), Muftiana (Islamic Jurisprudence), Tarik (Islamic History), Fiqha (Islamic Law), Tasawwaf (Mysticism), Tajwid (Art of Quranic Pronunciation) along with Urdu and Arabic Languages. Some institutions of high repute have specialization in different branches viz. Mufti (specialist in Islamic Jurisprudence), Qari (specialist in Arabic Pronunciation), Mufassir (specialist in Quranic interpretation) Muhaddis (Specialist in Prophetic tradition), Alim, Fazil, Hafiz (recite Quran by heart) etc. The official mediums of teaching in these madrassas were Urdu with occasional use of vernacular. The Muslim educational institutions in Assam have been following these traditions from medieval times till today.

Maktab education provides the primary Islamic knowledge to Muslim children. It trained the young mind in the rudiments of Islam, to teach what is Faith, i.e. Kalma, the other obligatory (Farz) practices such as offering Salat (Namaj) five time in a day, fasting in the month of Ramzan, paying Zakat (Amount to be paid to the needy by the affluent), Haj (Visit to Macca), the kitab (book) on Tajwid, Deeniyat, Kaida, Siphara, etc. also include the practical practices on the performance of Namaz, moral code of conduct. These are usually attached with local masjids (mosques) but many of them function separately also. Children from 3/4 years to 11/12 years of age attend makatabas. The maktaba's are held generally in the morning, where there is no gender constraint. At the same time these students also can attend the formal educational
Institutions after Maktab hours. It is treated by the Muslims as a religious obligation to send their children to the Maktab for learning the basics of their religion.

In the Maktabs the teachers are generally termed as Maulavis or Maulana, one who is well versed in Quran, Hadis, and the Basics of Islam. In the Madrassa, the teachers are also titled as Maulana, Maulavi, and the specialists of different subjects are called by the name like- Qari Saheb, Fazil Sahaeb, Munsi Saheb (who knew Persian), Hafiz Saheb, and in the bigger Madrassas the teachers besides the above mentioned titles also known as Muhaddis Saheb, Mufti Saheb, Sheikh Saheb etc.

Generally, the maktabs were managed by the local people, say the village committee through the means of collection, donation, local endowment etc. The madrassas cover a bigger area and also run by the community through voluntary efforts under a Private Management. The remuneration of these teachers was very low, the people often donated to them. They had to collect donations during different harvest seasons and manage their life. They used to lead a very simple, honest and spiritual life, maintained disciplined, bore good moral character and had cordial relations with the students.

It has also been pointed out that while transacting the Islamic Curriculum, a graded approach is followed i.e. the subject is taught in an outline at the primary stage, in details at the secondary stage, and proficiency and mastery level at the higher level.

4.5: BEGINNING OF MODERN EDUCATION IN ASSAM:

Modern education in Assam is of comparatively recent origin. Towards the close of the 18th century, when the neighbouring state of Bengal had already been familiar with the system of Western education, Assam was still in the midst of political confusion created by civil wars, insurrections and repeated invasions by the Burmese. Its status as an appendage to the administration of Bengal delayed the advent of the modern system of education even further. However the traditional system of both Hindu and Muslim education continued, although that also got disrupted due to the said political confusion. Again, it must be noted that while Hindu education before Sankardeva was confined to Upper Caste Hindus while the Sudras had not access to it but Sankardeva made it accessible to all without any distinction of caste or class.
Similarly, Muslim education though essentially religious in nature was accessible to all Muslims without any distinctions of status.

The endeavor of modern education in Assam, at the initial stage started with some individual efforts made by some enlightened scholars. David Scott, the agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, encouraged the indigenous schools by land grant. The educational institutions which, survived the Burmese ravages, continued to be controlled by the priestly classes who had also exercised considerable influence over the masses. He realized that the introduction of any scheme for secular education affecting their monopoly would be productive of great dissatisfaction and resentment which might be prejudicial to the interests of the British Government. He, therefore, left the indigenous system of education undisturbed and continued to make grant of lands to these educational institutions. In early 1826, with the approval of the Government of Bengal, he made additional grants for the establishment of several indigenous schools in upper and lower Assam. Accordingly, in September-1826, eleven schools were established in lower and upper Assam. Of these, two were at Nineduars and one in each station of Gauhati, Nilachal, Darrang, Hajo, Bijali, Silcahr, Biswanath, Nowgong and Desh-Darang. Within a few months the number of schools rose to sixteen by the addition of schools at Gauhati, Behanjee, Dharmapore, Pattee Darang, and Boreegoge.

In 1831, Adam White, the collector of Gauhati rewarded several students of these institutions by placing them in Government service. In the same year, in collaboration with James Rae, a member of Serempur Missionery Society, white started an elementary school at Gauhati. However the gravity of the situation was realized by T.C. Robertson, who succeeded Scott as agent to the Governor General, in April 1832. He felt that the position of the government would be jeopardized unless immediate steps were taken to educate the native people with a view to absorbing them in Government services. However the scheme of imparting useful education to the natives of Assam received serious consideration in Francis Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam during 1834-61. Within a few months of his assumption of office, being alarmed at the sight of outsiders (Bengalis) in every field particularly in Government offices, he considered it essential to win over the heart of the native gentry and for whom the Government must provide education and employment. To that end, in his letter on 21st June, 1834, brought home to the Government of India—“These few
(Assamese) in their present uneducated state do not suffice to carry on duties of our courts, the offices which are mostly filled by natives of Sylhet and Rangpur. The old families of Assam are still in their own native provinces are being elbowed out from those situations which lead to power and decent maintenance. This state of things appears to me pregnant with evil and I know no other method by which it could be remedied than by the Government taking some active measure to provide instruction for the Assamese youth.” (Dutta, 2007)

He strongly appealed to the Government to impart English education under the supervision of local bodies at Sadar stations of Goalpara, Guwahati, Nagaon, Darang and Biswanath. For necessary training, a number of youths of rank should be sent to Calcutta and provisionally teachers capable of teaching English and Bengali would have to be procured from Bengal. Also it pointed to the Government of Bengal that in a backward state like Assam instruction should be the concern of the Government alone, because most of the people were not in a position to take the responsibility of education as they were universally poor and incapable of judging themselves.

Meanwhile, in India as a whole the hue and cry situation continued between the Anglicist and the Orientalist scholars regarding the medium of instruction in the educational institutions, and finally Lord William Bentink, the Governor General appointed Lord Maculay in 1833 to resolve the deadlock and it was Maculay who was a strong supporter of English education gave his verdict in favour of English Language as the medium of instruction. This decision brought a revolutionary change in the Indian system of education. This in turn also brought into focus the intention of the British in educating the natives. In this connection we may cite one quotation of Maculay which stated as "I feel... that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the whole body of people. We must, at present, do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us, and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indian in blood and color but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and intellect." (Maculay, 1935).

What the people demanded was not merely English education but instruction of higher order to make them eligible for responsible posts. “The boys now see”, wrote Robinson, “the minimum attainment will not suffice to secure the better class of appointment now being thrown open to them, and the results, I am happy to see is a
desire for a higher standard of education is almost certain, hope that the race is to be strong and that better the qualification, the better now the chance of employment.”

The Government of India referred the proposal for consideration by the General Committee of Public Instruction and it recommended the establishment of one school at Gauhati. The Gauhati English School was opened in June 1835 with M. A. Singer as Head Master on a salary of Rs-150 per month. In the beginning there were 58 students of whom 41 were regular in attendance, within three months 19 regular students left the school being obliged to work for their subsistence. Besides, the unintelligibility of the English language was the most important cause of deterring them from attending school. As a remedy, early in November 1835, three Departments viz. Bengali, Sanskrit and Persian were added to this school. The result was encouraging for in December 1835, scholars increased to 113 of whom 77 were Hindus, 33 were Mohammedans and 3 were Christians. In 1836, it rose to 197, of whom 88 attended the English, 104 Bengali and 5 the Sanskrit Department. In 1839-40, the school attained a permanent footing with the increase in enrollment to the tune of 366. In early 1838, William Robinson of the Serampur Mission was appointed the Head Master of Gauhati School in place of Mr. Singer on a salary of Rs-263 per month. Being satisfied with the progress of English education in Assam, the Commissioner felt that it would not only enable the Government to fill up the vacancies in the Government offices with the people of the soil, but also provide the means of spreading education amongst the masses.

In the mean time, lieutenant Bogle, the collector of Kamrup, emphasized the importance of Vernacular education in Assam. In 1837, he pointed out to the Government of Bengal that English Education would help only a few intelligent learners, where as to the great majority it would be a mere waste of time to acquire even the rudimentary knowledge of it. Therefore, he urged for the introduction of vernacular education by which all kinds of useful information would be easily acquired by the people at large. After the acquisition of vernacular education, he added, there would be also a desire for English education that would act as the proper channel of all higher branches of knowledge. Being influenced by this arguments and considering the future possibilities of material gain to be derived from having a class of persons qualified for the minor posts of the revenue officers, the Supreme
Government sanctioned in 1837, an amount of Rupees sixty four (Rs- 64) for the establishment of vernacular schools in Darang, Chatgaree and Tezpur.

But the credit for the spread of mass education in the rural areas goes to James Mathie, who succeeded Bogle as the collector of Kamrup. As a measure of revenue reform in 1832-33, pattas or title deeds were introduced for the first time in Kamrup, where the ignorant villagers were served frequently with the notices from the court. To understand these and to protect themselves from being deceived by the amlas (officials), the villagers felt the need of having rudimentary knowledge of the 3 R’s through vernacular schools. On the demand of the local people Mathie drew up a plan for mass education. His plan included the opening of branches of Anglo-Vernacular school at Dharampur and several other mofussil areas. He also proposed to establish twenty one mofussil (village) Vernacular schools for the instruction of masses through the medium of both Assamese and the Bengali in the principal parganas of Kamrupa at the cost of Rs-79 per month.

Mathie’s plan received cordial support of the educationists like – Thomas Munro, Mountstuart Elphinestone and William Adam. They thought that this would be a strong foundation upon which a huge fabric of Higher education might be erected. His plan received approval of the Government as an experimental measure on condition that its continuance in future would be determined on the results of the school examinations. When the portals of public services were thrown open to the English educated people, the demand for English education was also on the increase. Towards the close of 1839, two Bengali medium branch schools were set up, one at Nilachal another at Pandu near Gauhati, entirely with public cost with an enrolment of 125 scholars. Again in 1840 two branch schools were started in Beltala and Amingaon and another in North Gauhati in 1841. The total number of pupils of these five branch schools including Gauhati School rose to 523 in 1840-41. In 1841 another branch school was started at Sibsagar with D’Souza as Head Master. Influenced by the flourishing condition of the school Lieutenant Brodie, the Principal Assistant of Sibsagar, urged the Government for the sanction of eight village schools and two branch schools at Jorhat and Jaypur.

However, the outcome of these schools was far below the expectation. As Robinson reported, “Even the most advanced students were just able to read only a few of their
text books without any comprehension whatever to their mind and not un-often the
teacher himself….their hand writing illegible, their grapy much worse of arithmetic,
they literally knew nothing.”

This kind of education fails to fulfill the aspiration of the parents as this kind of
knowledge renders the student unfit for discharging any other duty than those of a
gaonkakoty. Thus, until the middle of the 19th century, Assam had a system of
education, elementary and higher, which was far from encouraging. The high hopes of
the early administrators remained a pious wish. Door to higher offices remained close
to the sons of the soil. The avenues thrown open to them were those of copyist, clerks,
accountants, for which even a knowledge acquired at village school or at best junior
standard of English school would provide the requisite qualification.

The Woods’ Dispatch of 1854, regarded as the Magna Carta of Indian education,
made the Government responsible for providing education to the natives. The
Dispatch laid down that higher education should grow under private enterprise and
that lower or primary education should be developed through the direct
instrumentality of the Government. It made provision for grant-in-aid to be given to
private or indigenous schools capable of imparting good and secular education. It also
recommended for the establishment of Zilla Schools in every district where
opportunities for higher education made the youth useful members of society.
Accordingly in 1856-57, existing Anglo-Vernacular schools at Guwahati and Sibsagar
were upgraded to Zilla schools both in English and Bengali Departments. This was
followed by the opening of similar schools at Dibrugarh (1864), Tezpur and
Nagaon(1865), Goalpara and Silchar(1868) instead of establishment of a network of
primary schools in different places of the state.

Consequently, the demand for quality English education was raised, for it was
obvious that with the knowledge of just the 3 R’s they could not aspire after any other
than minor jobs under the Government. This was confirmed by the Lieutenant
Governor of Bengal when in early 1862 he paid a visit to Dibrugarh. He wrote,
“There is a very strong desire on the part of all the better classes of the community to
give their children an English education, that wherever there was school for teaching
that language the attendance is good…. Saddar stations where there is no school of
the kind the people were clamoring for the establishment of one.”
In 1874, when Assam was separated from Bengal and formed an independent province, it had 513 Primary Schools, 71 Middle Vernacular Schools, 11 Middle English Schools and 8 Higher English Schools. Separation of Assam from Bengal was immediately followed by two important developments: the creation of a separate Directorate of Public Instruction and recognition of Assamese as the medium of instruction”. Till 1873, the medium of instruction at the Primary stage was Bengali. One effect of the decision to introduce Assamese in Brahmmmaputra Valley was a great increase in the enrolment in primary and secondary schools. The foreign missionaries took a lead in establishment of schools especially in hill areas of the state. By the end of the 19th century, a satisfactory spread of education in Assam was seen. The percentage of literate persons rose to 12.2% in 1901.

However, considering the fact that most of the masses went to indigenous vernacular medium schools where they got “poor quality” instruction, remained practically ignorant and incapable of employment in Government offices while the few belonging to the upper strata of the society who got “better quality” English education got employed in government offices and the ones who had a High School education were appointed to senior positions as well. Thus, began the great divide between the illiterate and poor and poorly educated masses on the side hand and the minority of the well to do English educated on the other which continues till date.

The Indian Education Commission of 1882 favored the transfer of control of the primary schools from Government to the Local bodies. It recommended that primary education be declared to be that part of the whole system of public instruction which possesses an almost exclusive claim on local funds set apart for education, and a large claim on provincial revenue. As a follow up, the Government of India passed a resolution in 1884, directing the Provincial Governments to implement them. In 1882, the Government of Assam passed a resolution whereby the administrative area of a local board came to be known as sub-division. After 1884, a school board in every sub-division was formed under the recommendations of the Indian Education Commission (1882) with a view to controlling primary schools, but separate primary school funds were not created in most of the local bodies. Consequently the local bodies spent very insufficient sum on education and the imperial grant was also not given by the Central Government to the Provincial Government till the end of the 19th Century. The newly established local bodies in Assam were not financially strong to
establish and maintain all the primary schools and hence they adopted the policy of aiding primary schools instead of accepting direct responsibility for them. Later on, the local bodies adopted the policy of converting aided schools increasingly into local body schools.

Besides the schools managed by the local bodies, there were other primary schools maintained by different agencies like-

1) Departmental Primary Schools: as per the recommendation of the commission, these schools were established and maintained by the state in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Mikir Hills and the backward places in the Darang District. Some pathshalsas attached to Normal schools were maintained in Kamrup, Sibsagar and Tezpur for practice teaching work.

2) Aided Schools: these were maintained by the missionaries who received lump sum grants from the Education Department. Other schools managed by private bodies received result-grants from local bodies. Up to 1917, these schools were known as combined schools as they were supported by a very small amount for fixed payment to teachers and certain specified rewards earned under the reward rules.

3) Un-aided Schools: these were schools started by individuals or private bodies without any aid from local bodies. Some of these schools followed the prescribed curriculum and courses of studies of the Department, and were upgraded to the aided list when they applied for grants.

4) Indigenous Schools: these were the schools conducted by the local people and they taught through ‘native methods’. Though the commissions strongly recommended the improvement of these types of schools by extending the payment-by-result system, but were neglected completely. Thus, began the downfall of the indigenous system of education and the values associated with it.

With the beginning of the 20th Century, following Curzon’s approach emphasis was given on the improvement and expansion of primary schools. In 1903, the Chief Commissioner of Assam promulgated a Scheme for the improvement of the Primary education. He increased the Provincial grants by Rs. 50,500 and an additional grant of Rs. 24,000 was given to the local bodies to supplement private efforts in securing better buildings for village schools. In 1904, the Central Government released Rs. 35 lakhs for primary education, out of which Assam received Rs. 1 lakh. With this
money 491 village schools and one model school for girls were established and thus began encouragement to girl’s education in Assam.

The amalgamation of Assam with the Eastern Bengal as a result of the Partition of Bengal 1905, literally gave a death blow to the entire endeavor in primary education. Besides the socio-cultural differences, there also prevailed differences in the matter of education in the two states. In Eastern Bengal, the majority of the lower primary schools were under private management, while in Assam majority was under the control of the local bodies. In Eastern Bengal, residual grants along with result grants were given annually while in Assam local bodies gave fixed grants and a capital allowance determined by the number of enrolment. Again in 1905-06, in East Bengal, a scheme was prepared for utilizing the imperial grants in education by establishing a number of well-equipped Model Board Schools for improving primary education, but no such plan was taken up in Assam. On the other hand, the allotments from the provincial imperial grants to the local bodies were fewer by far in Assam than in Eastern Bengal. The Table was Rs. 218,784 in Eastern Bengal while Table for Assam was Rs. 116,610.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the Local Boards and Municipalities came into being in Assam. The Local Board exercised a wide power over the educational matters of the Province. However, after the creation of Assam as a separate province in 1914, the government of Assam felt the need of defining the role of the local bodies in respect of education once again. An Act was passed in 1915, empowering the local boards to establish, maintain and manage all the primary and M.V schools; they were to appoint teachers, bear the cost of construction and repair of buildings and arrange for giving grants to primary schools. The main purpose of this act was to convert all aided primary schools into local board schools, because aided schools with meagre facilities failed to provide good primary education. But this act did not cover the Municipalities which incidentally spent little on education; another Act was passed in 1923, which made each municipality responsible for the establishment, maintenance and management of all primary and M.V schools under public management within its area.
4.6: EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE MISSIONARIES:

Unlike other presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal, the Missionaries came to Assam very late under the East India Company’s rule in 1826, following the Treaty of Yandaboo and deserve credit for promoting the cause of educational process and progress in Assam. Among the unofficial enterprises, the contribution of the Christian Missionaries to the Vernacular schools in Assam, in the tribal areas in particular, though inspired by the zeal of spreading Gospel of Christianity, was indeed unparalleled. 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 a long distance even to normally inaccessible areas for purpose of establishing Mission Societies.

On the representation of David Scott, a branch of Serempur Missionary was setup at Guwahati in 1829, under James Rae, a native of Dumfrice. The American Baptist Mission Society sent a mission under Rev. Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter to Assam which reached Sadiya on 23rd March 1836. After three month of their stay at Sadiya, they started their work of establishing schools. But the drowning of Reverend Thomas in 1837 while traveling by boat enroute to Sadiya, and the sufferings of other Missionaries due to the unhealthy climate and natural discomfort, they came back to Sibsagar from Sadiya and by 1844 they setup 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, as also in Nagaon and in Kacharimahal of Darrang District. In 1840, Brownson taught the Nagas and Namsangs the Bible as well as the improved method of manufacturing tea and salt. By 1845, the Baptist Mission 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 and 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, instruction was imparted in Government village schools in Bengali in elementary reading, writing and arithmetic. Whereas the Assamese or the mother
tongues of the pupils was the medium in the Missionary schools. It is interesting to note that Bengali was used as the medium of instruction in all primary schools by East India Company since 1836, with the powerful influence of Bengali intelligentsia who came with the East India Company.

But with the pioneering effort of the Missionaries, both Assamese and non-Assamese social reformers accepted on 19th April 1873, that in all primary schools of Assam, Assamese language should be used as a medium of instruction and also used as the language of the court at the lower level.

It was an arduous task for the Missionaries to impart instruction to the pupils due to the dearth of available text books. Furthermore, it was a time when 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 Serampur Trio- Curry, Marshman and Ward in collaboration with an Assamese scholar Atmaram Sarma translated the whole Bible into Assamese and published it in 1813. Brownson, Brown and Nidhi Levi Farewell, the trio laid the foundation of the Christian Assamese literature. Brownson’s monumental work of Anglo-Assamese dictionary with 1400 words was published from Baptist Mission Press, Sibsagar in 1867, and 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. Nedhi Levi is credited with a historical work, and a number of story books. Prior to that, in 1846, the branch of Sibsagar Missionary published the first Assamese newspaper, ‘The Arunudoi’ which became the powerful vehicle of Assamese language. In 1839, William Robbinson, another Missionary wrote the first Assamese grammar.

Thus, the Missionaries developed the modern Assamese prose literature. Disseminating western thought and learning, the Arunudoi inspired the young generation and paved the way for an intellectual awakening. Therefore, one can safely conclude that, the Christian Missionaries did excellent work in Assam in the field of elementary education and covered the hill areas with a network of elementary schools. The schools were better staffed and better equipped than many of our existing
Dr. L. Das has nicely summarized the salient features of Missionary educational activities in the following way:

1. The establishment of elementary schools,
2. The establishment of printing press,
3. The opening of training institute for teachers,
4. The granting of aids for necessary expenditure of schools,
5. Sharing of responsibilities for construction of schools,
6. Collecting money with the help of lottery,
7. Opening of orphanages,
8. Emphasis on mother tongue,
9. Employment of native people,
10. Admitting students from all religious groups,

The contribution of the Missionaries and a few others both Assamese and non-Assamese, backed by the untiring efforts of the benevolent commissioner Major Jenkins prepared the ground and sowed the seeds in the fields of education which germinated and began to give fruit early in the next century in Assam. However, despite the efforts of the missionaries to provide good quality education to the masses in vernacular, the minority of the English educated continued their dominance in public employment especially at the higher positions.
4.7: THE ASSAM COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION ACT -1926:

The earliest suggestion for introducing compulsory primary education in India was made by William Adam in 1838. Adam proposed that, a law should be enacted compelling every village to maintain a school. Captain Wingate, a Revenue Survey Commissioner in Bombay Province also suggested to levy a cess of five percent on land revenue to utilize a part of it for Compulsory Primary Education for the sons of the agriculturists. Shortly after this, Sri Shastri, the Deputy Educational Inspector of Broach, suggested the introduction of Compulsory Primary Education in his Annual Administrative Reports.

The first and famous Compulsory Primary Education Act in Assam was passed in 1926, with some provisions, making the local authority and Education Committee responsible for the enforcement of the provision of the act. This act empowered the local bodies at least to convince the guardians to send their children to school. No tuition fees were to be charged from any pupil of recognized primary schools maintained or aided by the local authority. Poor pupils were to be provided with books and writing materials free of cost by the Local Authority. The local authority and the education committee concerned were held responsible for the enforcement of the provisions of the Act. They were expected to provide for all such facilities of accommodation, equipment and staff, as might be considered necessary by the Director of Public Instruction. This was the first serious effort by the provincial authority to educate the population of the province.

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 properly and the spread of primary education got restricted.

The Government entrusted the Inspectors of schools of Assam Valley with special responsibility to scrutinize 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 Board were afraid of introducing it for the fear of imposing a local cess on their bonafied voters which might affect their prospects in
the next election. However, local bodies of Sibsagar, Tezpur 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 implemented in any area of the Province.

Anyway, there was a marked growth of Primary schools with increasing enrollment in subsequent years following the Act of 1926, which can be understood from Table 8 below:

Table 8

Increase in number of institutions and enrolment following the Act of 1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of schools</th>
<th>1889-90</th>
<th>1937-38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Board</td>
<td>1243</td>
<td>36,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>15,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-Aided</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>4,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>56,224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above Table shows that although Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1926 was not implemented, it made the local public 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 communication, facilitated the free movement of pupils from village to town and town to village which helped the growth of primary education.
It was seen that the number of Govt. schools increased 13 times in during 1889-1937. Again Local Board Schools increased 4 times and enrollment 7 times during the same period. Of course, the growth of aided and un-aided schools couldn’t be estimated in the growth list. The main cause was that Govt. and Local Board Schools had sufficient funds at their disposal. Due to the paucity of fund available the aided and un-aided schools couldn’t be counted.

This act was followed by another serious effort by passing another Education Act at the dawn of independence.

4.8. STATUS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN ASSAM AT THE DAWN OF INDEPENDENCE (1946 – 47):

Having examined the progress of education in Assam from ancient times through the medieval period and having detailed how the modern western type of education emerged, it is time to review the status of elementary education in the state at the dawn of independence because having got freedom from the colonial rule, the government of free India had to begin from there.

The status of elementary education in Assam at the time of independence is summarized in the tables 9 to 15 below.

Table 9 shows that in Assam, during 1946-47, there were a total of 10,748 elementary schools, which includes 8,420 Primary schools for Male and 1,464 primary schools for Female; 750 Middle schools for Male and 114 Middle schools for Female.

Altogether, there were 9,170 (85.31%) Elementary Schools for Male only and 1,578 (14.69%) Elementary schools for Female only.
### Table 9

**Statistics of Elementary Education in Assam, 1946-47**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of institutions</th>
<th>No. of institutions</th>
<th>No. of scholars</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>8420</td>
<td>1464</td>
<td>449058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(88.74)</td>
<td>(11.26)</td>
<td>(83.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>84499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(87.51)</td>
<td>(12.49)</td>
<td>(16.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9170</td>
<td>1578</td>
<td>533557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(88.54)</td>
<td>(11.46)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>10,748</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,02,613</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in the parentheses indicates %.

**Source:** Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47.

During the year 1946-47 there were a total of 6,02,163 pupils among whom 5,33,557 (88.54 %) were male and 69,056 (11.46 %) only were female. And out of 6,02,163 pupils, 5,06,056 (83.98 %) were at the Primary stage while 96,557 (16.02 %) were at the Middle stage. Among the 5,06,056 pupils at the Primary stage 4,49,058 (88.74 %) were male and 56,998 (11.26 %) were female while among 96,557 pupils at the Middle stage 84,499 (87.51 %) were male and 12,058 (12.49 %) were female. These Tables show that the relative proportion of boys declined from Primary to middle stage to a greater extent than that of girls or in other words a little larger proportion of girls continued at the Middle stage after Primary school than that of boys.
Table 10 gives the details of the types and management of elementary schools in Assam in 1946-47.

![Table 10]

**Table 10**

**Distribution of Elementary Schools by Their Types and Management in Assam, 1946-47**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognized institutions/types</th>
<th>For Males</th>
<th>For Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Publicly funded*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle English Schools</td>
<td>445 (100)</td>
<td>18 (4.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Vernacular Schools</td>
<td>305 (100)</td>
<td>259 (84.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>8420 (100)</td>
<td>6854 (81.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9170 (100)</td>
<td>7131 (77.76)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentage

* Funded fully by the government or the local bodies

**Source**: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47.

It shows that out a total number 9,170 of schools for male 445 (4.85%) were Middle English Schools, 305 (3.33%) were Middle Vernacular Schools, and 8,420 (91.82%) were Primary Schools.

The data in the table show that, out of the total 9,170 elementary schools 7,131 (77.76%) were publicly funded, 1,020 (11.12%) were Aided and 1,019 (11.11%) were Un-aided schools. Out of 445 Middle English Schools 18 (4.04%) were publicly
funded, 335 (75.28%) were Aided and 92 (20.67%) were Un-aided schools. Among the 305 Middle Vernacular schools 259 (84.91%) were publicly funded, 46 (13.08%) were Aided and there were no Unaided Middle Vernacular schools. Of the 8420 Primary schools 6854 (81.40%) were publicly funded, 639 (7.59%) were Aided and 929 (11%) were Un-aided schools.

The number of schools for female was 1,578 only, out of which 66 (4.18%) Middle English Schools, 48 (3.04%) Middle Vernacular School, 1,464 (92.78%) were Primary schools. Of the total of 1,578 schools 1129 (71.55%) were publicly funded, 194 (12.30%) were Aided and 255 (16.16%) were Un-aided schools for female. Among the 66 Middle English schools 6 (9.09%) were publicly funded, 50 (75.76%) were Aided and 10 (15.15%) were Un-aided. Out of 48 Middle Vernacular schools, 41 (85.42%) were publicly funded, 6 (12.5%) were Aided and 1 (2.08%) were Un-aided. Among the 1464 Primary schools, 1,082 (73.91%) were publicly funded, 138 (9.43%) were Aided and 244 (16.67%) were Un-aided schools.

This data shows that the number of elementary schools for girls were about 1/17 of the number for boys, implying thereby that the society and the state discriminated against the girls in access to elementary education. This data also shows that the state funding for Vernacular medium schools was much greater in extent than the English medium schools for both boys and girls. The voluntary effort in elementary education was very limited as shown by the proportion of aided and un-aided schools both for boys and girls. This implies that, although the state propagated vernacular education for the masses, the English medium education for the elite was supported mainly by the private effort.

Table 11 gives the distribution of boys in elementary schools by religion (race) and classes attended.
Table: 11

Distribution of Elementary School Scholars by Race and Class attended (MALE), 1946-47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types/classes</th>
<th>Anglo-Indians &amp; Europeans</th>
<th>Indian Christians</th>
<th>Hindus Brahmins</th>
<th>Non- Brahmins</th>
<th>Exterior Caste Hindus</th>
<th>Caste Hindus</th>
<th>Other Castes</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>No. of pupils from rural areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1772 (0.03)</td>
<td>19925 (0.37)</td>
<td>2260871 (42)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5382795 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Class I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9799</td>
<td>4234</td>
<td>57082</td>
<td>18422</td>
<td>79738</td>
<td>57533</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>24443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class II</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5680</td>
<td>3487</td>
<td>32807</td>
<td>8893</td>
<td>45187</td>
<td>25353</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>9666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class III</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4064</td>
<td>3377</td>
<td>28109</td>
<td>6397</td>
<td>37883</td>
<td>18473</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>7377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class IV</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3195</td>
<td>3205</td>
<td>21313</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>25651</td>
<td>12967</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class V</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2948</td>
<td>3935</td>
<td>22015</td>
<td>3390</td>
<td>29340</td>
<td>12528</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class VI</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1540</td>
<td>2427</td>
<td>11845</td>
<td>1429</td>
<td>15701</td>
<td>5935</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VII</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1218</td>
<td>2592</td>
<td>11631</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td>15508</td>
<td>4722</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VIII</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>2306</td>
<td>8959</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>12156</td>
<td>3617</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>29313</td>
<td>25563 (9.68)</td>
<td>193791(73.37)</td>
<td>44786 (16.96)</td>
<td>264140 (100)</td>
<td>141128</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>54079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(53.97)</td>
<td>(28.84)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(74.58)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in the parentheses indicates the percentage

Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47.
A perusal of this table shows that out of a total of 4,89,389 pupils 121 (0.02%) were Anglo-Indian and European, 29,313 (6%) were Indian Christian, 2,64,140 (53.97%) were Hindu, 1,41,128 (28.84%) were Muslim, 431 (0.09%) were Buddhist, 177 (0.04%) were Sikh, 54,079 (11%) belonged to Others which included tribal and other minor religions.

Comparing the proportions of boys from various religious communities with their respective proportions in the population it is noticed that Hindus who formed only 42% of the population significantly over represented as they occupied about 54% of the berths in the elementary schools, and again the Indian Christians who formed only 0.37% of the total population were also over represented as they formed 6% of the pupils in the elementary schools. While Buddhists’ and Sikhs’ proportions were the same as in the population, the Muslims were highly under represented forming only about 29% of the elementary school enrolment while they were about 34% in the total population of the province. Others which included tribals and minor religions, who formed about 24% of the population, were grossly underrepresented at the elementary stage as they formed only 11% of the enrolment.

Historically, among the Hindus, more than 60% population has been those of Lower Castes, but the data on elementary school enrolments showed that only about 17% of all Hindu boys were from the Lower Castes while 83% of the boys came from among the Brahmins and other Upper Caste Hindus.

Comparing the proportion (25.42%) of Urban pupils with (74.58%) of Rural pupils, it appears that in absolute terms a vast majority of the pupils at this stage came from rural areas, but considering the extent of Urbanisation at the time the Urban population would not have been more than 7-8%. Thus, rural population in real terms also was at a disadvantage.

Table 12 gives the distribution of female pupils in elementary schools by religion (race) and classes they attended in Assam in 1946-47. This table shows that out of the total of 1,59,723 pupils 107 (0.07%) were Anglo-Indian and European, 18,161 (11.37%) were Indian Christian, 92,754 (58.07%) were Hindu, 35,174 (22.02%) were Muslim, 263 (0.16%) were Buddhist, 3 (0.001%) were Sikh, 13,254 (8.30%) belonged to Others which included tribal and other minor religions.
Table: 12

Distribution of Scholars in Elementary Stage by Race and Class attended in Assam (FEMALE), 1946-47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types / classes</th>
<th>Anglo-Indians &amp; Europeans</th>
<th>Indian Christians</th>
<th>Hindus (0.45)</th>
<th>All Hindus (33.74)</th>
<th>Muslims (0.07)</th>
<th>Budhist</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total (100)</th>
<th>No. of pupils from rural areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>1288 (0.03)</td>
<td>17825 (0.37)</td>
<td>1952352</td>
<td>1626866</td>
<td>3594</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>1218792 (25.28)</td>
<td>4821938 (100)</td>
<td>128818</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Class I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7698</td>
<td>3763</td>
<td>26161</td>
<td>19229</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7547</td>
<td>72283</td>
<td>62323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class II</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3620</td>
<td>2430</td>
<td>12730</td>
<td>6199</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2301</td>
<td>29889</td>
<td>24504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class III</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2526</td>
<td>2095</td>
<td>9290</td>
<td>13219</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1535</td>
<td>21432</td>
<td>17307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class IV</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>1778</td>
<td>6488</td>
<td>2550</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>14391</td>
<td>10953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class V</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1201</td>
<td>1587</td>
<td>5486</td>
<td>2056</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>11657</td>
<td>8447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class VI</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2057</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>4182</td>
<td>2255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VII</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>3340</td>
<td>1689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VIII</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2549</td>
<td>1340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>18161</td>
<td>13276</td>
<td>65191</td>
<td>92754</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13254</td>
<td>159723</td>
<td>128818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(11.37)</td>
<td>(58.07)</td>
<td>(22.02)</td>
<td>(8.30)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(80.65)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in the parentheses indicates the percentage.

Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47.
Comparing the proportions of girls from various religious communities with their respective proportions in the population it is noticed that Hindus who formed only 40.45% of the population significantly over represented as they occupied about 58.07% of the berths in the elementary schools, and again the Indian Christians who formed only 0.37% of the total population were also over represented as they formed 11.37% of the pupils in the elementary schools. While Buddhists were slightly over represented with 0.16% enrolment, while they represent only 0.07% in the population, the proportion of Sikhs in this category was almost nil, but they formed 0.03% in population. The Muslims were highly under represented forming only about 22% of the elementary school enrolment while they were about 34% in total population of the province. Others which included tribals and minor religions who formed about 25% of the population were grossly underrepresented at the elementary stage as they formed only 8.30% of the female enrolment.

As has been said above that among the Hindus, more than 60% population has been those of Lower Castes, but the data on elementary school enrolments among the girls show that only about 15% of Hindu girls were from the Lower Castes while 85% of them came from among the Brahmins and other Upper Caste Hindus.

Comparing the proportions (19.35%) of Urban pupils with (80.65%) of Rural pupils, it appears that in absolute terms a vast majority of the girls at this stage came from rural areas, but considering the extent of Urbanisation at this time the Urban population would not have been more than 7-8%. Thus, among the females like their male counterparts rural population in real terms was at a disadvantage.

Comparing the data on boys’ enrolments by castes with those of the girls, it is seen that girls in general were at a disadvantage and those belonging to weaker sections of Lower Castes and Muslims were at a greater disadvantage than their male counterparts. It appears that rural girls were at a little lesser disadvantage than the rural boys.

Table 13 below gives the distribution of male teachers by their Academic qualifications and training. This table shows that the total number of male teachers at elementary stage was 14,588, out of which 11,204 (76.80%) were in Primary schools and 3,384 (23.20%) were in Middle schools.
Table 13:

Distribution of Elementary school teachers (Male) by their qualifications and training (1946-47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of institutions</th>
<th>Trained teachers with the following educational qualifications :</th>
<th>Untrained teachers</th>
<th>Total teacher</th>
<th>Total trained teachers</th>
<th>Total un-trained teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Degree</td>
<td>Passed Matric</td>
<td>Passed Middle</td>
<td>Passed Primary</td>
<td>Lower Qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY:publicly funded</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2197</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-aided</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2282</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE: publicly funded</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-aided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>3095</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in the parentheses indicates the percentage.

Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47.
Of the total 11,204 primary teachers 9,471 (84.53%) were in public schools with 2,275 (24.02%) trained and 7,196 (75.98%) were untrained. There were 767 (6.85%) teachers in Aided primary schools of them 62 (8.08%) were trained and 705 (91.92%) were untrained. 966 (8.62%) teachers were in unaided primary schools with 41 (4.24%) trained and 925 (95.81%) were untrained teachers.

At the Middle stage, the total number of male teachers were 3,384, out of them 1,407 (41.58%) were in public schools with 735 (52.24%) trained and 672 (47.76%) untrained teachers. In Aided Middle schools the number of teachers were 1,595 (47.13%), of which 204 (12.79%) were trained and 1,391 (87.21%) were untrained. In Un-aided Middle schools, there were 382 (11.29%) teachers of which 41 (11%) were trained and 340 (89%) were Untrained male teachers.

Again, the data reveal that out of 14,588 male teachers in elementary schools very few 3,451 were having formal educational degrees and the majorities 11,141 were having no formal educational degree. The data also show that the majority of the teachers were untrained and that proportion of untrained teachers was much larger at the primary stage than that at the middle stage. The proportion of untrained teachers was larger in the private and aided schools than that in the public schools.

Table 14 gives the distribution of elementary school teachers (Female) by their qualifications and training (1946-47). The table shows that there were total 2,015 female teachers, out of which 1,566 (77.71%) were in Primary schools and 449 (22.29%) were in Middle schools.

Of the total 1,566 primary teachers 1,086 (69.35%) were in public schools with 153 (14.09%) trained and 933 (85.91%) were untrained. There were 158 (10.09%) teachers in Aided primary schools of them 20 (12.66%) were trained and 138 (87.34%) were untrained, 322 (20.56%) teachers were in unaided primary schools with 6 (1.86%) trained and 316 (98.14%) were untrained teachers. At the Middle stage, the total number of female teachers was 449 out of whom 171 (38.08%) were in public schools with 61 (35.67%) trained and 110 (64.33%) untrained.
Table 14

Distribution of Elementary school teachers (Female) by their qualifications and training (1946-47)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of institutions</th>
<th>Trained teachers with the following educational qualifications :</th>
<th>Untrained teachers</th>
<th>Total teacher</th>
<th>Total trained teacher</th>
<th>Total untrained teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Degree Passed Matric or School Final Passed Middle School Passed Primary schools</td>
<td>Possessing a Degree</td>
<td>Possessing no Degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certificated Un-certificated Certificated Un-certificated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY: Publicly Funded</td>
<td>- 5 118 30 - - 14 919</td>
<td>1086 (69.35) 153 (14.09) 933 (85.91)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>- 1 19 - - - 1 137</td>
<td>158 (10.09) 20 (12.66) 138 (87.34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-aided</td>
<td>- - 6 - - - - 316</td>
<td>322 (20.56) 6 (1.86) 316 (98.14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Primary</td>
<td>- 6 143 30 - - 15 1341</td>
<td>1566 (100) 179 (11.43) 1387 (88.57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE: Publicly Funded</td>
<td>1 5 52 3 1 1 5 103</td>
<td>171 (38.08) 61 (35.67) 110 (64.33)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>4 9 40 6 - 5 5 131</td>
<td>200 (44.54) 59 (29.5) 141 (70.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-aided</td>
<td>1 2 7 - - 1 3 61</td>
<td>78 (17.37) 10 (12.82) 68 (8718)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Middle</td>
<td>6 16 99 9 2 9 13 295</td>
<td>449 (100) 130 (28.95) 319 (71.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6 22 242 39 2 9 28 1667</td>
<td>2015 (100) 309 (15.33) 1706 (84.77)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in the parentheses indicates the percentage.

Source: Educational Tables Related to Assam, 1946-47.
In Aided Middle schools the number of teachers was 200 (44.54%), of which 59 (29.5%) were trained and 141 (70.5%) were untrained. In Un-aided Middle schools, there were 78 (17.37%) teachers of which 10 (12.82%) were trained and 68 (87.18%) were Untrained female teachers. Also the data shows that out of 2,015 female teachers in elementary stage very few 348 had formal educational degrees only and the majority 1,667 had no formal educational degree. The percentage of trained Male teachers in both the Primary and Middle schools are more than the Female teachers.

Table 15 details the expenditure on elementary education in Assam during 1946-47. It shows that the total expenditure for elementary education in Assam was Rs. 8080932, out of which Rs. 27,73,799 (34.33%) was spent on administrative affairs, Rs. 46,43,304 (57.46%) was spent on Male elementary education and Rs. 6,63,829 (8.21%) was spent on female elementary education.

### Table 15

**Expenditure on Elementary Education in Assam, 1946-47**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of expenditure</th>
<th>Total exp.</th>
<th>1946-47</th>
<th>Govt. Funds</th>
<th>Local Funds</th>
<th>Fees</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directions &amp; inspections</td>
<td>Rs. 744330</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>2029469</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>15.69</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2773799</strong> (34.33)</td>
<td><strong>63.12</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.31</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.48</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.09</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MALE) Middle Schools</td>
<td>1350518</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>21.78</td>
<td>32.47</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>2894410</td>
<td>69.52</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Schools</td>
<td>398376</td>
<td>75.79</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>11.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4643304</strong> (57.46)</td>
<td><strong>59.55</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.45</strong></td>
<td><strong>13.18</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.83</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(FEMALE)Middle Schools</td>
<td>239518</td>
<td>37.80</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>13.79</td>
<td>26.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>384319</td>
<td>65.19</td>
<td>28.32</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special schools</td>
<td>29992</td>
<td>57.23</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>29.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>663829</strong> (8.21)</td>
<td><strong>53.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.68</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.36</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.31</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand totals</td>
<td>8080932</td>
<td>58.78</td>
<td>14.48</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>17.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Quinquennial Review of the progress of Education in Assam during 1942-47.
Out of the total of Rs. 80, 80,932 spent, 58.78% came from Government funds, 14.48% from Local funds, 10% from fees and 17.01% from other sources. The data shows that 69.43% of expenditure utilized for administrative affairs was spent from public funds and 11.48% from fees and 19.09% from other sources. 76% of the expenditure on males was met from public funds, 13.18% from fees and 10.83% from other sources and on the female elementary education, 74.33% was met from public funds, only 5.36% from fees and 20.31% from other sources.

The data also shows that while for boys’ schools 76% funding came from the government and local bodies, for girls schools only 74.33% came from these sources. In the girls education fees constituted only 5.36% of the total funding while in the case of boys it was 13.18%. Other sources contributed 20.31% of expenditure on girls’ education compared to only 10.83% on boys’ education. This shows that a large proportion of funding for girls education came from voluntary funding. This also shows that the society considered education of girls important and contributed voluntarily towards this cause.

4.9. PROGRESS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE:

Immediately after independence the government of free India began reviewing and reorganizing education as the leaders had realized that without expanding education at all stages, progress of the country, rather the survival itself would not possible. Similarly the states including Assam began the process of revamping their education system.

Assam Government, in its attempt to revamp the education system enacted the Assam Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1947. Through this Act, Assam introduced Free and Compulsory Primary Education for children between 6 and 11 years of age. According to this Act, Compulsory Primary Education was to be introduced in certain selected areas of non-sixth schedule districts (Non-Tribal districts) first and then extended to the whole of Assam. For the successful implementation of the scheme in the selected areas of the state certain coercive measures had to be taken against the defaulting parents or guardians. The coercive measures adopted were the issue of warning notices and even prosecution in some cases. During this period the scheme of Basic Education was prepared and mass literacy programme which had been
languishing for want of funds was placed on a stable footing. The scheme of Basic Education was put into operation in 1948 with the grants sanctioned by the Government of India. Unfortunately towards the end of 1949, the central grants were stopped, but the state government somehow continued to implement the scheme and the number of Basic Schools in 1951-52 was 147. In November 1953, the All India Basic Education conference was held at Titabor with great success. The said Act gave the responsibility of implementing Compulsory Primary Education to the newly created State Board of Elementary Education instead of local authorities. But, due to the uncertainty created in the administration as a whole in India by Swaraj Movement, neither the Government nor the Local Bodies could pay their attention to implement it and like the Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1926, the Act of 1947 also could not be enforced in Assam.

This Act was followed by another Act in 1954, viz. ‘The Assam Basic Education Act’. After independence, the movement for Basic Education sponsored and initiated by Mahatma Gandhi and given formal organizational shape by Dr. Zakir Hussain Committee in 1937, provided for integrated education through self-activity of some productive and purposeful craft work, started in many provinces of India. The wave of Basic Education swept the frontier province of Assam also. The Government of Assam accepted Basic Education as the future pattern of Elementary education like other provinces of India. Consequently, in 1954 the Basic Education Act was passed with some important provisions to make education compulsory, Universal and Free for all children between 6 and 14 years of age. The distinctive elements of Basic Education are to learn purposefully and productively through learning by doing method in the medium of mother tongue of the pupils.

The outstanding features of the Basic Education Act of 1954 were the creation of two separate Boards with their distinctive funds and sanctions for smooth administration. They are- i) State Advisory Board of Basic Education, and    ii) District or Regional Board of Basic Education. The Act provided for constitution of a State Board of Basic Education to advise the Government, making the Minister of Education as President and Director of Public Instruction as the Vice President. The Board was supposed to advise the Government in the matters of giving grants to schools, control and management, recruitment and service conditions of teachers, selection of Text Books and training of teachers. The Board would maintain a fund under the charge of the
Director of Public Instruction. In each District, Deputy Inspector of Schools of the area would be the Secretary of the Board. He would maintain and administer a fund for the same. The Board would have representatives from the local bodies, Municipalities, Panchayat and School teachers. The Board would perform the following functions: a) creation of new schools, b) Recognition, control, redistribution, expansion, amalgamation of Basic schools etc., c) Preservation of old schools, d) Provide material conditions of teaching, e) To provide teachers, f) Inspection of health of the pupils, and g) Arrangement for selling the school products.

To implement the provisions of this Act of 1954, steps were taken by the Government of Assam to convert all the Lower Primary (L.P) and Middle Vernacular (M.V) Schools into Junior Basic Schools (JBS) and Senior Basic Schools (SBS) respectively by a gradual process. The Primary Teachers’ Training centres were also converted into Junior Basic Training Centers (JBTC). Arrangements were also made for the Training of Senior Basic School Teachers. In 1947-48, the total number of Primary Schools (including basic schools) in Assam was 7,574 with an enrolment of 4,56,972 pupils and 10,015 teachers.

Table 16 below gives the details of growth of primary education from 1951-52 to 1968-69. This table shows that the number of schools, pupils and the teachers grew steadily through the implementation of the provisions of the Education Acts of 1947 and 1954.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Primary and Basic Schools</th>
<th>Number of Pupils in Primary and Basic Schools</th>
<th>Number of Teachers in Primary and Basic Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>1172</td>
<td>6,80,732</td>
<td>16,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</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>1968-69</td>
<td>19611</td>
<td>15,20,947</td>
<td>34,983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report in the Primary Schools in Assam, 1973
Thus while in 1951-52, the total number of primary schools including the Basic schools was 1,172 with 6,80,732 pupils and 16,605 teachers; it grew progressively to 19,611 schools with 15,20,947 pupils and 34,983 teachers in 1968-69.

The 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 (1952-57) made provision for an expenditure of Rs. 3.06 lakh for construction of Basic Training Schools and Rs. 1.62 lakh for the training of teachers for these schools, to be incurred up to the end of March 1954.

However, the Joint Director of Public Instruction (JDPI) of Assam gave a death knell to Basic Education in 1963. As per notification of the Government vide letter no. B/E. Eng.70/63/3509-13 dated 19-03-1963, all the Junior and Senior Basic Schools attached with the then Basic Training Centers handed over the charge of maintenance to the Deputy Inspector of each sub division. Thus, the Basic Education Act of 1954, failed to achieve the desired result. Therefore, like the other provinces of India, due to the negative attitude of the people and the powerful influence of Western education among the educated classes, Basic Education Act couldn’t be revived, although it was considered the most desirable and efficient by the leaders of Swaraj like Gandhiji. Consequently in 1962, the Legislative Assembly passed another Elementary Education Act.

The main objective of passing The Assam Elementary Education Act of 1962 was to control the Elementary Education and to provide free and compulsory education to all the children of 6-14 years age in gradual stages. This Act was to be effective all over Assam except the autonomous districts. Of course, the Governor with due consent of the district councils, could extend it to the autonomous districts also. According to this Act Primary education would cover Standards I to VIII.

Under this Act all Government M.V Schools, Senior Basic Schools, Middle Madrassa, all Primary Schools, Junior Basic Schools maintained and aided by the Government would be recognized as elementary schools. According to this Act, to advise the Government in all matters of elementary education, there would be ‘State Elementary Education Board’ with the Education Minister as President, Deputy Education Minister as Vice President and the DPI as the Secretary along with some
other representatives from different agencies. The main functions of the Board were as under:

i) To make rules for giving grants to the local authorities;

ii) To make rules for appointing teachers and conditions of their service;

iii) Amalgamation, expansion and recognition of institutions;

iv) To make rules for newly established schools.

And to perform other allied duties concerned with elementary education.

The provisions of this Act were almost similar to the other Acts of 1926, 1947, 1954 with the difference that soon after the implementation of the Act the local authority would 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 would build relation between Gaon Panchayat and the State Board of Elementary Education in those areas where the Panchayati Raj Act of 1959 had been implemented. The main functions of the local authorities are as follows:

i) Construction of school buildings and their preservation and expansion.

ii) Disbursement of pay to the teachers and other workers.

iii) Giving scholarship and other such financial help to the students.

iv) To make provision for playgrounds, material conditions of teaching, mid-day meal and welfare scheme for the workers.

Like Basic Education Act of 1954, the Elementary Education Act of 1962 proposed to build a strong foundation for elementary education by covering Classes I-VIII. However, it is very difficult to comment on how far it was judicious to handover the responsibilities of Primary education to the local authorities. Even the responsibility of providing free and compulsory elementary education was given to the local authorities. At that time the local authorities were not so efficient because of the illiterate members especially in rural areas, Village Panchayat could not work properly.
It is interesting to note that, later this thinking was not thought justifiable, and the responsibility of management and control was withdrawn from the local authorities and Local Boards and handed over to the State Board of Education. After the implementation of the *Panchayati* Raj Act of 1959, instead of Local Boards the *Panchayat* became the local authority. Again under the Elementary Education Act of 1962, the responsibility of management and control was transferred to the local authorities. These results were again not encouraging.

In 1968, the government of India formulated the First National Policy on Education based on the recommendations of the Indian Education Commission 1964-66, the first commission constituted by the government of India to review the educational system in its entirety and to make it relevant to the demands of National Development. That is why the report was titled “Education and National Development: Report of the Indian Education Commission 1964 - 66.” As the government of India decided to implement the major recommendations of this commission, the States also felt the need to review and reformulate their policies and programmes in Education. Thus, Assam enacted another Act viz. the Assam Elementary Education Act, 1968.

The Assam Elementary Education Act, 1968 provides for the management and control of elementary education and the provision of free and compulsory elementary education in Assam. Accordingly, the State Board for Elementary Education was constituted for management, improvement and expansion of elementary education in the state and to advise the government on all matters relating to Elementary Education. The members of the Board were both officials and non-officials. By this Act, the Regional Boards for Elementary Education under Deputy Inspector Schools were revived. The Regional Boards consist of the following members:

1. One Chairman to be nominated by the Government.

2. The Deputy Inspector of Schools to be ex-officio Secretary.

3. The Additional Deputy Inspector of Schools or where there is no such Officer, the senior most Sub-Inspector of Schools to be the ex-officio Joint Secretary.

4. All members of the Assam Legislative Assembly representing the areas within the jurisdiction of the Regional Board concerned or their nominees to be notified in manner prescribed.
5. Two representatives of the Mahakuma Parishad other than the members of the Assam Legislative Assembly representing the areas within the Jurisdiction of the Regional Board to be elected by the Mahakuma Parishad concerned.

6. Persons not exceeding four to be nominated by the State Government to represent such interests as deemed by the State Government.

7. One person to be nominated by the State Government from amongst the members of the Municipal Board and the Town Committee within the jurisdiction of the Regional Board.

**Administration of Primary Schools:**

The administration and control of primary schools in the plain districts of the state rest with the Regional School Board. There were a few schools which were under the direct control of the State Government. These Government schools were sought to be handed over to the School Boards, but due to various reasons this could not be done until now. The Primary Education in the Autonomous Hills Districts used to be the responsibility of both the District Council and the Department of Education. The Departmental control was exercised through its subordinate inspecting staff. In pursuance of the amendment to the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India as incorporated in the Re-organization of Assam (Meghalaya) Act, 1969 more functions were transferred to the Mikir Hills and North Cachar Hills District Councils during 1970. As a result, with the transfer of the inspecting staff to the District Councils, responsibility for inspection of primary schools passed on to District Councils in 1970.

There were a few Primary Schools managed by the Railways and other industrial undertakings. The Tea gardens/boards also established Primary Schools for the children of their employees. Primary Schools managed by the Tea Garden authorities in the Districts of Cachar and Sibsagar were taken over by the School Boards in 1967-68. Government had proposed to gradually take over primary schools under the management of Tea Garden authorities in other plains districts also.

There has been a practice of opening schools by the people themselves and run them as a purely voluntary effort. Such schools are not provided any funding by the State and are called ‘Venture schools.’ Some of these schools in course of time find it
difficult to continue due to financial constrains and as such approach the State government for takeover. The State government, if it finds it feasible to takeover, considering the status of assets of such schools and the need for the school in the area, it takes over and the process is called provincialisation. To regulate this process and make it more transparent, in 1974 an Act viz. the Assam Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Act 1974, was enacted.

The main features of this Act include:

1) All sums of money that may be needed in the Elementary Education Fund, Regional Board Fund, shall vest in the State Government.

2) All teachers of Elementary and Primary schools maintained by the Regional Board of Elementary Education, and employees of the State Board of Education shall be treated the employees of the State Government and shall be entitled to emolument as were admissible under this Act.

3) All properties of the State Board and the Regional Boards including the properties held by the various authorities constituted under the provisions of the Assam Elementary Education Act, 1962, shall vest in the State Government.

4) The Director of the Public Instruction shall be the administrative officer of elementary education and shall exercise such powers and perform such duties as required for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

5) The Government may if and when felt necessary vest the management of elementary schools in the hands of the Local Authorities of the area concerned. Provided that, it did not preclude the right of the minorities whether based on religion or language or any private body from managing their own schools.

6) The State Government will provide financial assistance to the District Council required for the management and maintenance of elementary education to meet the payment of stipend or scholarship to students, for construction, extension, improvement and maintenance of school building and for the provision of mid-day meal etc. and the payment of legal and other expenses that may be found necessary.
7) Provision for compulsory primary education wherein no fee shall be levied in respect of any child attending a recognized elementary school. The State Government, by notification, declares that elementary education would be compulsory up to a certain age to be prescribed in any area or areas of the state.

Under the provision of this Act rules were framed in 1977 called, the Assam Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Rules 1977.

These rules prescribe the qualifications for appointment of teachers for elementary schools and the conditions for taking over of schools by the State.

A. Age & Qualifications of Teachers:

1) **Age:** (a) a candidate shall be within the age limit of 18 to 36 years on 1st January of the year of advertisement; (b) the upper age limit shall be relaxed in favour of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as per rules made by the Government.

2) **Qualifications:**

(a) **Assistant Teacher:** minimum qualification is Higher Secondary or any other examination of equivalent standard having 45% marks in any one of the qualifying examination (HS / HSLC) for General Categories and minimum 40% for reserved categories for the post of Assistant Teacher in Lower Primary and Upper Primary schools;

(b) **Hindi Teacher:** HSLC Examination passed along with Hindi Visharad of Assam Rastrabhasa Prachar Samiti or Higher Secondary (HS) Examination passed with Hindi as one of the subjects or equivalent thereof;

(c) **Arabic Teacher:** Intermediate Examination passed under Madrassa Education Board, Assam, or Higher Secondary Examination passed with Arabic as one of the subjects or equivalent thereof;

(d) **Language Teacher:** Higher Secondary Examination passed with certificate of Language examination from competent authority and Board Examination at the HS Level;

(e) **Science Graduate Teacher:** Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) from any recognized university, (preference will be given to the trained candidates).
3) **Character:** A candidate shall furnish the certificate of character from - (1) The Principal / Academic Officer of the school / college last attended by the candidate, and (2) a respectable person who is well acquainted with (not related to) the candidate.

4) **Selection Committee:** there shall be a Selection Committee in each Educational District constituted as follows: (1) An eminent educationist / social worker as Chairman/ Chairperson; (2) 7 educationists and social workers to be nominated by State Government as Members, at least two each should be from women and parents and at least one should be from the weaker section to be nominated by the Government; (3) The Deputy Inspectors of Schools of the District (all) under the District Elementary Education Officer concerned as Members; (4) The District Elementary Education Officer of the District concerned as Member Secretary of the Committee. The term of the Committee is generally one year, but can be extended by the Government if necessary.

**B. Conditions for taking over Elementary schools:**

(1) Every inhabited village shall have at least one Elementary School. In a village where there are more than one schools the minimum distance from one to other should be [1.1. K.M.] provided there are more than two hundred population in case of L.P. School and Junior Basic Schools and [3 K.M.] in case of M.E., M.V. and Senior Basic Schools.

(2) The enrolment in each of the School shall not be less than 40 in case of Lower Primary Schools and Junior Basic Schools and 90 in case of M.E., M.V. and Senior Basic Schools, provided that the enrolment may be relaxed by the Government in suitable cases.

(3) The teachers of venture school may be retained at the time of taking over if they possess the minimum qualifications and age for recruitment provided that such teachers have put in at least two years continuous service immediately preceding the taking over of the school and provided further that the prescribed ratio of students and teacher is maintained in the school.

(4) A venture school should possess at least 2 bighas of land in the rural areas and \( \frac{1}{2} \) bigha of land in the urban area.
(5) Immediately after the Assam Elementary Education (Provincialization) Act, 1974 comes in to force all liabilities of the Regional Boards and State Board for Elementary Education including liabilities incurred by various authorities constituted under the provision of the Assam Elementary Education Act, 1968 shall vest in the state.

School fund- a fund shall be created and operated by the Managing Committee for maintenance of the school buildings, supply of furniture, equipment and teaching aids and maintenance of school garden. The fund shall be raised from donation, subscription and grant received from the Government. All money shall be deposited in Savings Bank Accounts in the nearest Post Office or Bank and shall be operated jointly in by the Secretary and Treasurer.

Under these rules, the government guarantees the payment of salaries of teachers and other staff as also scholarships and stipends for students under different schemes of the government. Occasionally grants may be provided for expanding the infrastructure of the school, but that is not guaranteed.

In order to run 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 to review the progress in the field of education and suggest general policy guidelines 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.

In the year 1977, the Janata Government declared its new policy with regard to Primary education. The Centre had asked the States to prepare plans for the universalisation of primary education. The Government of Assam declared its decision to start 350 schools during 1977-78, and make special provision for enforcing 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 (M.V) schools were provincialised by the Government with effect from 5-9-1979.

As a result of the implementation of the provisions of the various Acts on education and different schemes especially for elementary education in the state, this stage of
education progressed further. The tables 17-29 below summarizes the achievement so far.

Table 17 shows the growth of number of elementary schools in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11. A perusal of this table shows that in 1950-51 there were 12,875 elementary (Including Primary and Middle) schools in Assam, which increased to 18,936 in the next decade, an increase of 47%. In 1970-71, the total number of elementary schools in Assam was 22,421 an increase of 18.41%, which increased to 28,938 in 1980-81, an increase of 29.07% during the decade.

Table 17
Elementary schools in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle/ Sr. Basic</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>2057</td>
<td>3208</td>
<td>5259</td>
<td>5703</td>
<td>8019</td>
<td>12985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Basic/ Basic Primary</td>
<td>11852</td>
<td>16879</td>
<td>19213</td>
<td>23679</td>
<td>28876</td>
<td>33236</td>
<td>35065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary total</td>
<td>12875</td>
<td>18936</td>
<td>22421</td>
<td>28938</td>
<td>34579</td>
<td>41255</td>
<td>48050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The data related to 1977-78.

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate the percentage increase during the past decade.

Source: Census of India, 1951 to 2011.

There were 34,579 elementary schools in Assam during 1990-91 an increase of 19.49% which increased further to 41,579 an increase of 19.31% in 2000-01 and in 2010-11 the number of elementary schools was 48,050 in Assam an increase of 16.47% over the last decade.

These Tables shows that the progress was really very stupendous quantitatively, an increase of 47% in the decade from 1950-51 to 1960-61 i.e. during the First two Five Year Plans. Thereafter also the progress made in increasing the number of elementary schools has been steady at least 16.47% during the decade 2000-2001 to 2010-11. In other words the State has been making serious effort to expand the facilities of
elementary education to cover increasingly large number of children of the age group 6-14.

Table 18 shows the number of Elementary schools per lakh population from 1950-51 to 2010-11.

Table 18

Number of Elementary school for per lakh population in Assam
from 1950-51 to 2010-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Schools per lakh population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>12875</td>
<td>8028856</td>
<td>160.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>18936</td>
<td>11872772</td>
<td>159.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>22421</td>
<td>14625152</td>
<td>153.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>28938</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>34579</td>
<td>22414322</td>
<td>154.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>41255</td>
<td>26655528</td>
<td>154.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>48050</td>
<td>31169272</td>
<td>154.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1951-2011.

Table 18 shows that the number of elementary schools per lakh population in 1950-51 was 160.36, which was reduced slightly to 159.50 in 1960-61 again the trend was decreasing in the following decades as there were only 153.31 schools per lakh population in 1970-71, 154.27 in 1990-91, 154.77 in 2000-01 and 154.16 in 2010-11. From the above description it can be safely said that though the numbers of elementary schools had been increasing rapidly but it seems the population has been increasing faster and the number of schools per lakh population has remained almost constant from 1970-71 and the number of schools is still inadequate.

As has been the case with absolute number of schools which increased stupendously during the first two Five Year Plans, so the number of schools per lakh population was also highest (160) during that period only, after which it has remained constant without any further increase.
Table 19 shows the enrolment in the elementary schools in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11. It can be seen from the table that there were a total of 7,77,385 students at the elementary stage in Assam during 1950-51, which increased to 13,09,828 in 1960-61 an increase of 68.49%. Again in 1970-71, there were 18,62,086 an increase of 42.16%, which further increased to 47,71,995 an increase of 156.21% in 1990-91. In 2000-01, there were 51,35,991 an increase of 7.63% students at the elementary stage and 57,60,967 an increase of 12.17% students in 2010-11 over the past decade.

**Table 19**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle/ Sr. Basic</td>
<td>110566</td>
<td>217276</td>
<td>390750</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1155236</td>
<td>1850151</td>
<td>1833169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Basic/ Basic Primary</td>
<td>666819</td>
<td>1092552</td>
<td>1471336</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3616759</td>
<td>3285840</td>
<td>3927798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary total</td>
<td>777385</td>
<td>1309828</td>
<td>1862086</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4771995</td>
<td>5135991</td>
<td>5760967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

**Source:** Statistical Handbooks of Assam, 1950-51 to 2010-11.

This Table shows a rapid increase in the number of students up to 1990-91 decade, the decade which shows about 78% growth in enrolment over the past decade. However, the progress in 2000-01 and 2010-11 decades was not so impressive and remained more or less.

Table 20 gives the details of the number of teachers in elementary schools in Assam in the decades following independence. The data shows that in 1950-51, there were total 22,263 teachers at the elementary stage which increased to 37,304, an increase of 67.56% in the next decade i.e. in 1960-61, which further increased to 51,813 an increase of 38.89% in 1970-71. In 1990-91, the total number of teachers was 1,13,833, an increase of 119.7% over the previous decade and increased further to 1,43,869, an increase of 26.39% in 2000-01. In 2010-11, the total number of teachers at this stage was 2,35,072, an increase of 63.39% in Assam over the previous decade.
A perusal of the table above shows that the number of teachers in Assam was constantly increasing in the decades following independence. In the first decade it shows highest increase in proportion which slowed down in the next decade. Again in 2000-01, the progress over the past decade was not impressive, but the 2010-11 decade shows a steady increase in the number of teachers over the previous decade.

Table 21 deals with the number of teacher per schools in Assam in the decades following independence. The table reflects that, there were 1.59 teachers per Primary schools and 3.8 teachers per Middle schools in Assam during 1950-51. This number subsequently increased to 1.622 for Primary and 4.8 for Middle schools in 19060-61.
It increased further to 1.84 for Primary and 5.1 for Middle schools in 1970-71. In 1990-91, the ratio stood at 2.6 for Primary and 6.8 for Middle schools. Again in 2000-01, the ratio was 2.6 for Primary and 7.1 for Middle schools in Assam and in 2010-11, the ratio increased to 2.8 for Primary and 10.56 for Middle schools.

This data shows that the number of teachers per school has been progressively increasing and a Primary school on an average has almost three teachers and a Middle school about eleven. However, the teaching staff is not evenly distributed among the schools. There are still a large number of single teacher Primary schools along with others that are over staffed.

The table 22 gives the trend in the number of students per teacher (pupil teacher ratio) in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11. This table shows that in Assam in 1950-51 there were about 35 pupils per teacher which increased to about 36 in the following decade and to about 42 students per teacher in 1990-91 and finally in 2010-11, it reduced to roughly 25 students per teacher.

### Table 22

**Students per teacher (Pupil Teacher Ratio) in Assam, 1950-51 to 2010-11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>Students per teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>777385</td>
<td>22263</td>
<td>34.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>1309828</td>
<td>37304</td>
<td>35.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>1862086</td>
<td>51813</td>
<td>35.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>4771995</td>
<td>113833</td>
<td>41.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>5135991</td>
<td>143869</td>
<td>35.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>5760967</td>
<td>235072</td>
<td>24.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Handbooks of Assam, 1950-51 to 2010-11.

Over all, the data reflect an improving trend in the pupil teacher ratio through the successive periods since independence.

The table 23 deals with the expenditure in elementary education in Assam in the different decades following independence. This table shows that in 1950-51, the expenditure per student was only Rs. 11.78, which increased to Rs. 28.59 in 1960-61.
Table: 23

Annual expenditure per student’s in Elementary stage in Assam (In Rupees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Total expenditure</th>
<th>Expenditure per students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>777385</td>
<td>9160000</td>
<td>11.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>1309828</td>
<td>37443000</td>
<td>28.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>5135991</td>
<td>2086750000</td>
<td>406.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>5760967</td>
<td>1159000000</td>
<td>201.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Statistical Handbooks of Assam, 1950-51 to 2010-11.*

During 2000-01, the costs per pupil in elementary education reached its highest mark with Rs. 406 per students, but then it declined to Rs. 201.18 in 2010-11.

This Table shows that every year the per student expenditure has not been adequate and the decline from 2000-01 through 2010-11 has been to tune of 50%. This only shows that while the number of teachers and schools appear to be near adequate, the expenditure per student being low must have been affecting the quality of education adversely.

Besides the general or normal types of schools some special types of schools called “Ashram Schools” have been established to cater to the needs of wandering or migratory weaker sections especially in the far flung and inaccessible areas inhabited by tribals. These schools are of residential type where children are provided food and accommodation besides fulfilling their other needs.

Table 24 shows the number of Ashram schools that existed in Assam in the year 2002.

Table 24

Number of Ashram schools according to area, type and management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Number of Ashram Schools</th>
<th>Ashram schools according to</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Upper Primary</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>114 (92.68)</td>
<td>28 (90.32)</td>
<td>142 (92.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>9 (7.32)</td>
<td>3 (9.68)</td>
<td>12 (7.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>123 (79.87)</td>
<td>31 (20.13)</td>
<td>154 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 7th All India School Education Survey, 2002*
This table shows that the total number of Ashram schools was 154 out of which 123 (79.87%) were Primary and 31 (20.13%) were Upper Primary schools. Most of the Ashram schools 131 (85.06%) are Co-Education while 10 (6.49%) are for boys only and 13 (8.44%) for girls only. Out of the total 154 such schools, 145 (94.16%) were publicly funded, 8 (5.19%) were Aided and only 1 (0.65%) were un-aided. This shows that these types of institutions are primarily Government and aimed to cater the needs of some disadvantage group of population.

Table 25 shows the percentage of Elementary school teachers in Assam and All States (All India) by their Academic Qualifications in 2011-12. It shows that in Assam in that year 3.61% had below Secondary level education, 30.55% teachers had Secondary education, 32.40% teacher had Higher Secondary, 30.57% teachers were Graduates, 0.11% teachers were Post Graduates, and 0.12% teachers had M.Phil. / Ph.D. degrees and 0.42% marked as other category as academic qualification. The corresponding Tables for All India were 1.94%, 12.85%, 22.33%, 38.91%, 22.61%, 0.72%, and 0.38% respectively.

Table 25

Proportion of elementary school teachers by Academic Qualifications (excluding Contractual Teachers) in Assam and All India, 2011-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Academic Qualifications</th>
<th>Primary only</th>
<th>Pri+Upp. Primary</th>
<th>Pri+U.p+Sec +H.Sec</th>
<th>Upper Primary only</th>
<th>U.P+Sec+H.Sec</th>
<th>All Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assam All States</td>
<td>Assam All States</td>
<td>Assam All States</td>
<td>Assam All States</td>
<td>Assam All States</td>
<td>Assam All States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Secondary</td>
<td>6.59 2.63</td>
<td>1.31 1.77</td>
<td>0.83 1.42</td>
<td>1.20 1.89</td>
<td>0.69 0.64</td>
<td>3.61 1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Sec.</td>
<td>27.31 28.81</td>
<td>28.22 24.53</td>
<td>20.06 11.79</td>
<td>47.75 18.46</td>
<td>13.28 6.96</td>
<td>32.40 22.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>8.79 34.12</td>
<td>38.60 33.27</td>
<td>62.26 47.24</td>
<td>39.60 40.29</td>
<td>70.80 47.56</td>
<td>30.57 38.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduation</td>
<td>0.35 17.05</td>
<td>2.73 14.85</td>
<td>9.97 31.32</td>
<td>1.16 32.80</td>
<td>9.97 36.48</td>
<td>0.112 22.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Phil./ Ph.D.</td>
<td>0.04 0.50</td>
<td>0.17 0.47</td>
<td>0.50 1.38</td>
<td>0.08 0.58</td>
<td>0.32 1.27</td>
<td>0.12 0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.11 0.21</td>
<td>0.75 0.40</td>
<td>0.62 0.58</td>
<td>0.61 0.23</td>
<td>0.81 0.64</td>
<td>0.42 0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elementary education in India: progress towards UEE, Analytical Report -2011-12
A perusal of the table shows that in Assam 6.59% of primary school teachers had less than Secondary education and that the majority (93.5%) of Elementary teachers had educational qualification between Secondary and Graduation while the country as a whole had only 74.09% of the teachers with this level of education and only 1.94% had less than a Secondary education.

While in India as a whole over 23% teachers had studied beyond Graduation in Assam the corresponding Table was only 0.23%. Thus, on an average, teachers in Assam had very low educational attainments compare to those of teachers in All India. Over all there were 34.1% teachers with lower qualifications than Higher Secondary and those with qualification above Higher Secondary were 63.13% and that with Graduation was about 31%.

Table 26 shows the Student Classroom Ratio, Pupil Teacher Ratio at Elementary Stage in Assam and All States in 2011-12.

**Table 26**

**Student Classroom Ratio (SCR) and Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) at elementary stage in Assam and All India (2011-12)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Assam</th>
<th>All States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of districts where SCR is above 30 in All Schools</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Schools with SCR &gt; 30 in Primary schools</td>
<td>50.75</td>
<td>37.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Schools with SCR&gt;35 in Upper Primary schools</td>
<td>35.08</td>
<td>30.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Govt. Schools with SCR&gt;30</td>
<td>45.27</td>
<td>37.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Govt. Schools with SCR&gt;35</td>
<td>41.56</td>
<td>33.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of districts where PTR is&gt;30 in all schools</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Schools with PTR &gt;30 in Primary Schools</td>
<td>46.06</td>
<td>40.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Schools with PTR&gt;35 in Upper Primary schools</td>
<td>10.74</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Govt. Schools with PTR &gt;30 at Primary schools</td>
<td>49.84</td>
<td>40.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Govt. Schools with PTR&gt;35 at Upper Primary schools</td>
<td>18.03</td>
<td>32.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elementary education in India: progress towards UEE, Analytical Report -2011-12
The data shows that in Assam out of 27 districts, 13 districts had more than 30 students per classroom in all schools and 50.75% of all Primary schools had more than 30 students per classroom. While in All States it was only 37.16%. In Assam 35.08% Upper Primary schools had more than 35 students per classroom, while in All States it was only 30.32%. In Assam 45.27% Government schools had more than 30 students per classroom, while in All States only 37.16% Government schools had this ratio. In Assam 41.56% Government schools had more than 35 students per class, while in All States it was 33.17%.

In Assam out of 27 districts, 5 districts had Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) above 30 in all schools while in All States it was in 225 Districts out of 676. In Assam 46.06% Primary schools had more than 30 students per teacher, while in All States the corresponding proportion was only 40.89%. In Assam 10.74% Upper Primary schools had more than 35 students per teacher, while in All States it was only 30.77%. In Assam 49.84% Government Primary schools had more than 30 students per teacher, while in All States it was only 40.97%. In Assam 18.03% Government Upper Primary schools had more than 35 students per teacher, while in All States it was only 32.03%.

A perusal of the table shows that in Assam the average number of students per classroom (SCR) was larger than that in All States and the number of students per teacher (PTR) was lower than in All States.

Table 27 details the percentage of Female teachers, Pupil Teacher Ratio and enrolment of SC/ST in Elementary schools in Assam and All States in 2011-12.

Table 27

Proportion of Female teachers, Pupil Teacher Ratio and SC/ST enrolment in Elementary schools in Assam and All States (2011-12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Assam</th>
<th>All States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Female teachers</td>
<td>31.88</td>
<td>46.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Teacher Ratio</td>
<td>24.51</td>
<td>29.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of SC enrolment to total enrolment</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>19.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of SC girls to total SC enrolment</td>
<td>49.61</td>
<td>48.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of ST enrolment to total enrolment</td>
<td>15.10</td>
<td>10.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of ST girls to total ST enrolment</td>
<td>49.58</td>
<td>48.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elementary education in India: progress towards UEE, Analytical Report -2011-12
It shows that in Assam only 31.88% teachers in Elementary schools were female while in All States the corresponding proportion was 46.27%. The % of SC enrolment to total enrolment in Assam was 9.27% while in All States it was 19.80%. The % of SC Girls to total SC enrolment in Assam was 49.61% while for All States it was 48.49%.

The % of ST enrolment to total enrolment in Assam was 15.10%, while for All States it was 10.92%. The % of ST Girls to total ST enrolment in Assam was 49.58%, while for All States it was 48.54%.

The data shows that the proportion of female teachers teaching in the elementary schools in Assam (31.88%) was much lower compared to that in those of All States. However, the Pupil Teacher Ratio (24.51%) was better in Assam than in All States (29.76%). The proportion (9.27%) of SC Students at this stage of education was higher than that of SC population about (8%) in the state. This is true of even All States. Again while the proportion of ST to total enrolment in All States (10.92%) was much higher than the ST population of 7.5% in Assam the corresponding proportion of 15.10% was also higher than their proportion of 12% in the state’s population. The SC Girls’ and ST Girls’ enrolments to total enrolment were nearly 50% in Assam, a little more (about 49%) than in All States.

Table 28 shows the % of Elementary schools with different facilities and infrastructure in Assam and All States.

**Table 28**

% of Elementary schools having following facilities in Assam and All States 2011-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of schools having</th>
<th>Assam</th>
<th>All States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drinking water facility</td>
<td>86.89</td>
<td>94.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate toilet for Girls</td>
<td>77.86</td>
<td>84.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate toilet for Boys</td>
<td>41.35</td>
<td>65.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity connection</td>
<td>12.18</td>
<td>47.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer facility</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>20.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library facility</td>
<td>23.70</td>
<td>53.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground facility</td>
<td>52.40</td>
<td>56.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen shed</td>
<td>89.87</td>
<td>92.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducted medical check up</td>
<td>15.61</td>
<td>59.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Elementary education in India: progress towards UEE, Analytical Report -2011-12
A perusal of the table shows that the elementary schools in Assam lag behind All States on all parameters of infrastructural facilities.

The lag is especially glaring in case of (i) Electricity connection, only 12.18% of the elementary schools have it (ii) Computer facility only 6.5% (iii) Library Facilities 23.7% and (iv) Conduct of medical checkup of pupils only 15.6%, the corresponding Tables of All States being 47.11%, 20.53%, 53.86%, and 59.73% respectively.

The table also shows that, in terms of different ancillary facilities in all aspects Assam is lagging behind compared to the country as a whole.

The table 29 shows the proportion of elementary schools by their types of buildings in Assam in 2011-12. The table shows that among all schools in Assam 35.01% were in pacca houses, 17.92% were in Partially pacca houses, 21.93% were in Kuccha houses and 0.29% were in tent houses, 16.98% were in multiple types of houses,

**Table 29**

**Proportion of elementary schools by their type of buildings in Assam, 2011-12.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of buildings</th>
<th>Primary only</th>
<th>Primary+ Upper Primary</th>
<th>Pri+U.P +Sec+ H.Sec.</th>
<th>Upper Primary only</th>
<th>Upper Primary+Sec+H. Sec.</th>
<th>All Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pucca</td>
<td>37.08</td>
<td>29.43</td>
<td>25.46</td>
<td>26.98</td>
<td>40.95</td>
<td>35.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially pucca</td>
<td>16.45</td>
<td>15.07</td>
<td>15.48</td>
<td>23.86</td>
<td>22.85</td>
<td>17.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kucchha</td>
<td>22.11</td>
<td>14.10</td>
<td>15.58</td>
<td>25.42</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>21.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tent</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple types</td>
<td>15.95</td>
<td>28.59</td>
<td>19.14</td>
<td>17.98</td>
<td>25.38</td>
<td>16.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>12.62</td>
<td>24.34</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>7.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elementary education in India: progress towards UEE, Analytical Report -2011-12

7.87% schools did not respond to the survey. It shows that maximum schools were in partially pacca and kuccha houses and only 35.01% are in pacca houses and some schools are even housed in tents and multiple types of buildings.
4.10: Reconstruction in Curriculum:

The curriculum for Lower Primary stage was renewed in the year 1997 by SCERT according to the latest philosophy and scientific approach adopted in developed States and Countries involving a wider cross-section of people like students, teachers, teacher educators, guardians, educationists, psychologists, linguists, National award winning writers, etc.

The curriculum was developed on the basis of the following points:

- Learner centered teaching-learning process
- All round development of the child
- Needs of the child.
- Local specificity.
- Joyful learning, activity based and competency based.
- Use of learning in solving day-to-day problems.
- Meeting challenges of the present and the future.

The Upper Primary curriculum was renewed by SEBA after a gap of 15 years in the year 1988 as per NPE 1986. The newly developed curriculum as well as the textbooks is continuing till today without any major modification due to which a gap obviously creeps in between Lower Primary curriculum and Upper Primary curriculum developed by SEBA.

However, the renewed curriculum of 1988 has the following features –

- Development of competency was given prime importance.
- As far as possible the content was selected from real life situations.
- Emphasis on learner based learning.
- Subject-wise instructions on teaching-learning strategies were included.

The introduction of Social Studies instead of History and Geography as two separate subjects is a major change undertaken in the curriculum. Another revision of the curriculum was undertaken by SEBA in 1997-98. Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) was introduced in 1998 and for this purpose curriculum was
slightly revised along with inclusion of two distinct areas – scholastic and non-scholastic where non-scholastic areas were evaluated periodically with grades and scholastic areas by marks. In the revised curriculum, Social Studies were replaced by Social Science (a combination of History, Civics, Economics and Geography) as separate components. Other subjects remained almost the same.

**The present Curriculum at the Elementary Stage in Assam:**

However, the need for bringing changes in the new curriculum emerged from the unfulfilled task of providing free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years which was high on educational agenda of the state. Further, the declaration of Elementary Education as a Fundamental Right in 2002 triggered Government of India’s initiative of SSA for effective implementation of the Right by all States/ Union Territories, in the country. Under these pressing circumstances, it became a priority for all the State Governments to provide quality education to all children. As a first step, it became necessary to develop a holistic curriculum suitable for all children at Elementary stage up to the age of 14 years. For that the responsibility to develop the Upper Primary curriculum which was previously done by SEBA was transferred to SCERT in January’2003.

Meanwhile, new contexts emerged at the National level due to constant changes taking place in different spheres of human life across the world. In tune with such changes curriculum renewal was undertaken in the year 2000 as a first step for the first decade of the 21st century. The main focus has been given to the following points related to Elementary education throughout the world :

- To tailor school programmes so as to suit even the first generation learners whose number has been swelling as a result of unprecedented increase in enrolments.
- To suit the pedagogical implications emerging from implementation of Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL).
- To reduce curriculum load.
- To relate school to community by introducing flexibility in curriculum with a view to addressing diverse needs and contexts of different communities.
- To cater the need to refocus on value-based education to arrest noticeable erosion of values.
To emphasize meaningful manual work as an integral part of learning process.

The responsibilities undertaken by the SCERT, Assam, for preparing modified curriculum for Elementary Education included among others:

- Collection of Public opinion from Guardians, Teachers, Community and Students.
- Thorough study / review of SEBA curriculum / other States’ curricula / CBSE curriculum / ICSCE curriculum / curriculum of private institutions, etc.
- Study and preparation of a status report of the State consisting of existing educational scenario, socio-cultural background, economic condition, background of the State, etc.
- A Status paper was prepared incorporating the public opinion collected and the studies of different curricula and status report of the State.
- A series of State-level workshops were organised involving State level resource persons, educationists, subject-experts, teacher-educators, teachers, retired personnel of the Education Department, NGOs, persons from Scouts and Guids, etc. After threadbare discussions in these workshops a consensus was arrived at regarding the formulation of the curriculum and as a follow up action, a detailed curriculum was developed in workshop mode by the Core group formed for each subjects / areas involving teachers in each stage leading to the development of the present curriculum.
- After studying the present scenario of the school as well as learners at this stage and public opinion, some changes have been incorporated in the new curriculum.
- Equal importance has been given to both scholastic and co-scholastic areas for all round development of the child by making subjects and programmes of the co-scholastic areas compulsory. For example in the new curriculum, Art Education, Health and Physical Education have become compulsory subjects under the scheme of studies, making these subjects equally important as Language, Mathematics, Science and Social Science, etc.
- Another significant change was introduction of Environmental Education as compulsory subject of study for all the learners without increasing the academic load. A new outlook is given to update the Arabic and Diniyat
curriculum for Madrassa after a long 30 years and a revised curriculum are developed on the basis of philosophy and approach of the other subjects under the scheme of studies thus making it at par with Madrassa Education and other school education.

- In view of erosion of values observed in present society, Value Education as demanded by majority of the public is given due importance in the whole curriculum for both scholastic and co-scholastic areas and activities. Though Value Education is not treated as a separate subject some compulsory activities / programmes have been incorporated in the school education having scope for evaluation of these activities by continuous observation by teachers, guardians and community. Since inculcation of values is feasible through activities of Scouts and Guides/ NCC, these have been incorporated in the curriculum.

- To help children develop self-reliance and awareness and gain exposure to various vocations, Work Education has been made a compulsory subject under scheme of studies.

- In order to give technological aspect a scope for application in society and also to inculcate the value of self-reliance, the subject Science has been changed to Science and Technology. To cater to local needs Agriculture, Veterinary, Pisciculture, Horticulture and Poultry farming, etc. have been incorporated in the Science curriculum as an introduction and also to create awareness.

- Many activities which will help learners in their all round development through co-scholastic areas have now become compulsory and have been incorporated with proper weightage and time allocation in the school academic year, through which each child will get equal scope for development of his / her personality and other qualities.

- A major change has been made in the Evaluation system. Traditional Half Yearly and Annual Examination have been replaced by Periodical Evaluation spreading it over four phases with a view to reducing learning load.

- Change in pedagogy and learning process has also been suggested.

- Reflection of the areas under concern has been incorporated in the curriculum according to which content as well as activity / programme has been selected and identified on the basis of local and present context.
The curriculum load has been reduced to the extent of learning capability/ability of children at this stage, so that every child is able to cope up with all the learning areas of the curriculum to the fullest extent. This is going to ensure learning for each child.

**The salient features of new curriculum:**

1. Foundation of the present curriculum rests on three basic pillars built on the principles of
   - Equity.
   - Relevance &
   - Excellence

2. The present curriculum provides and ensures the following:
   - Quality education to all including girls and special focus group children.
   - Considers impact of globalization on today's world. Fosters desire and ability in learners to live and work together in a global village by inculcating universal values such as human rights, respect for others, etc.
   - Emphasizes Inculcation of values i.e. Personal, Social, National, Spiritual and Environmental so that the learner is able to inculcate these values both through scholastic and co-scholastic areas throughout his/her school life.
   - Links education with life skills.
   - Focuses on development of basic skills and technical know how to solve day-to-day problems at home and in the society.

3. In our curriculum slight modification in the three language formula has been made with respect to providing opportunities to different linguistic groups living in the State as per needs and demands of these groups, without altering curriculum load.


5. Relating education to work in order to develop a positive attitude towards manual work and to prepare students for pursuing any vocations of their choice in future, work education has been made a compulsory subject under
the ‘Scheme of Studies’. Thus, it aims at enabling children to become self-dependent and self-reliant.

6. Enormous scope and provision for practice in the following areas like Health, Sports, Yoga, Scouts and Guides, Morning and Evening Assembly, Cultural and Literary activities, Melas (fares), Field trips, Camps, etc.

7. Shifting from traditional teacher-centered learning strategy to the learner-centered approach where participatory, activity-based, environment based learning process has been suggested. Self learning / group learning / peer learning are also encouraged in the new curriculum.

8. Traditional Chalk and Talk teaching-learning technique is totally discouraged. Instead the teaching-learning strategy should adopt various modes such as the following:
   
   ➢ Activity based joyful learning with the use of Teaching Learning Materials.
   ➢ Discussion
   ➢ Observance
   ➢ Exploration of the environment
   ➢ Project works / Experimentation
   ➢ Data collection
   ➢ Field trips
   ➢ Excursion
   ➢ Seminars / Exhibitions / Talks
   ➢ Use of Audio-Visual Aids / Information Technology / Internet
   ➢ Cultural / Literary Activities

9. In place of theoretical knowledge based examination, Practical and Need based Periodical Evaluation and Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) is introduced for Elementary level followed by Remedial Measures till each competency is attained by each learner.

10. Selection of learning areas / content is mostly done on the basis of local socio-cultural needs and keeping an eye on meeting the future challenges and requirements in the 21st century.
11. Inclusion of Knowing the learners and Guidance and Counseling is another salient feature of this curriculum. By this, teachers are encouraged to adopt need based, innovative teaching-learning strategies for individual learners instead of adopting common teaching-learning practice for all children.

Most remarkable feature of the new curriculum is adapting integrated approach at the lower level. In this approach major seven competencies are identified for all the five subjects, which are:

I. Listening and responding, V. Solving problems,
II. Speaking and conversation, VI. Reading and writing,
III. Number and counting, VII. Observation and exploration.
IV. Working with materials,

As we know that though children learn many things before going to school but after coming to school the child is placed in such a new atmosphere where learning for her / him becomes rigid, unnatural and compartmentalized into different subjects. These create dislike and fear for subject and school atmosphere also, which is one of the major reasons why children are not motivated to come to school. Hence, integrated approach is the best possible alternative is providing free and homely environment to the child through which she/ he can be adjust herself/ himself to school situation in a better manner. That is why Integrated Approach has been introduced specially at lower level (class I and II). The class routine has also made flexible and activity based instead of traditional rigid and subject based as such only integrated textbooks have been developed for the first time for class I and II (one text book at class I, two text books at class II) for five subjects.

Immediately after reframing the curriculum the new sets of textbooks in different mediums of instructions are so designed and developed that they are totally child friendly, environment friendly, joyful, activity based, competency based and bring smiles to each child. The development and implementation of the new textbooks was undertaken in a phased manner with effect from 1999 –2003 after development of curriculum in 1998. The textbooks were also developed through series of workshops by a team involving resource person from different fields including experienced teachers. For finalization of the lessons of the textbooks training at field level was conducted by the team members as well as schoolteachers. For handling of the new
Textbooks, before implementation, mass teacher training at block and cluster levels were conducted all over the state for which training modules in different languages for teachers were prepared and distributed.

As per new curriculum changes have also been brought in the evaluation system too through:

- Introducing Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE).
- Abolishing traditional half yearly and annual examinations.
- Introducing remedial measure after each periodic evaluation.
- Using variety of evaluation tools of different types – oral, activity, writing, etc.
- Orienting teachers for evaluation.

**Reforms in upper primary curriculum:**

In 2003, in linkage with lower primary curriculum reforms were introduced in upper primary (class V to VII) curriculum also in the same manner and approach. As elementary education is made compulsory and a Fundamental Right in the year 2002 by the govt. of India, *Sarba Siksha Abhijan (SSA)* was launched by the govt. of India throughout the country to provide quality education for all children in the age group 6 – 14 years for which Assam state govt. immediately started work in reforming of elementary education in the state. SCERT, Assam, has taken the responsibility of reforming the upper primary curriculum and textbooks in linkage with primary education without any gap. Like before, this time also public opinion was collected and a number of workshops was organized for curriculum renewal at this stage. In the new curriculum both scholastic and co-scholastic areas are equally emphasized and hence incorporated varieties of school programs at this stage.

**Curricular areas at a glance:**

As Assam is the multilingual state with a number languages used by learners, there are many of mediums instruction and as such it is really a difficult and challenging task to develop curriculum, textbooks and other teaching learning materials as a large number of languages have to be handled. Utmost effort has been made to provide elementary education in a learner’s own home language.
The remarkable features of the reformed curriculum are:

- Adoption of curriculum and textbooks in different media not only in languages but also adapting to socio-cultural facts and events.
- Development of different language textbooks with different scripts in use including tribal languages.
- Training of teachers in handling different languages along with development of training modules including adaptation.

The scheme of studies: The compulsory subjects to be studied at upper primary stage of school education are as follows.

1. Three languages:
   - 1st language or Medium language
   - 2nd language or library language
   - 3rd language (Mother tongue/ language used as medium of instruction/MIL/regional language/English).

2. Mathematics
3. Science and technology
4. Social Science
5. Work Education
6. Art education (fine art, visual/ performing arts)
7. Health and Physical Education (games/sports/NCC/scout & guide/yoga.)
8. Environmental Education

As per the verdict of Honourable Supreme Court of India, Environmental Education has been introduced as a compulsory subject at Upper Primary stage of education without increasing the academic load. Hence, this subject will be treated as integrated unit of the following subjects:

   i. Science and Technology – 3%
   ii. Social Science – 3%
   iii. Work Education – 3%
   iv. Health Education – 3%
   v. Art Education (visual and performing) – 2%

Total weightage: – 14
Salient features of primary and upper primary curriculum at Elementary education in Assam:

Table 30 summarises the reformed curriculum at this stage. The Salient features of this curriculum are:

- Curriculum provided ensures equality of opportunity of all.
- It rests on equity, relevance, and excellence.
- It Emphasis achievement of competencies along with all round development of the child.
- Importance given to inculcation of values that is, Personal, Social, National, Spiritual and Environmental.
- Providing opportunity to different linguistic groups as per needs and demands of these groups, keeping the curriculum loads same.
- Emphasis governed on environmental education – its awareness, problems and solution in learners day to day life.
- Shifting from traditional teacher-centric learning strategy to the learner-centric approach where participatory, activity- based, environment- based, learning process has been stressed.

Table 30

Curricular & Co-Curricular areas at a glance (Elementary Stage)
Table 31 shows the literacy ratio trends in Assam and India from 1951 to 2011 with a breakup of Total, Male and Female. The data shows that in 1951, the Total literacy rate in Assam was 18.53% with 28.01% for the males and 7.58% only for females. In 1961, the total literacy in Assam was 32.95% with 44.28% for males and 18.62% for the females. In 1971, the total literacy was 33.94% where Male literacy rate was 43.72% and Female literacy rate was 22.76%.

Table 31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Assam</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>28.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>32.95</td>
<td>44.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>33.94</td>
<td>43.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>52.90</td>
<td>61.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>63.25</td>
<td>71.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>73.18</td>
<td>78.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **N.A:** indicate not available.
- **Source:** Census of India, 1951-2011.

In 1991, the total literacy rate was 52.90%, where Male literacy was 61.90% and Female literacy was 43.03% In 2001 it was 63.25% for total, 71.28% for Males and 54.61% for Females literacy and in 2011 the total literacy rate was 73.18%, for Males it was 78.81% and for Females it was 67.27%.

In India, the total literacy rate in 1951 was 18.33% with Male literacy of 27.16% and Female literacy of 8.86%. In 1961, the total literacy rate was 28.30% with 40.40% for Males and 15.35% for Females. In 1971, the total literacy was 34.45% with 45.96% Male literacy and 21.97% Female literacy. In 1981, the total literacy rate in India was 43.47% with Male literacy of 56.38% and Female literacy of 29.76%. In 1991, the total literacy was 52.21% with 64.13% for Males and 39.29% for Females. In 2001, total literacy was 64.84% with Male literacy of 75.26% and Female literacy of
53.67% which further increased to 74.04% for Total, 82.14% for Males and 65.46% for Females literacy in 2011.

The data shows that the progress in literacy in Assam in the decades following India’s independence is almost in tune with the national progress. In the first decade i.e. in 1951, the literacy rate in Total and Male literacy was higher than the national average, but lower in Female literacy. In the very next decade i.e. in 1961, Assam was ahead of national average in Total, Male and Female literacy rates. But from 1971 decade onwards Assam’s progress in Total and Male literacy was lower than the national average, but in Female literacy, Assam was ahead of National average in all the decades following independence except the 1951 decade.