

The Impact of Higher Education in Rural Areas- A Case Study

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Abstract: *The backbone of contemporary civilization is higher education. It has the ability to turn people into human resources. Along with urban areas, it plays an essential part in the development of rural regions and rural peoples. In order to see the impact of higher education in rural areas, a case study is conducted at Borpathar village, a nearby village of Dibrugarh University of Assam, which is one of the leading institutions of higher education in North-East India. This study aims to examine how establishment of a leading higher educational institute can change socioeconomic status of the people of nearby rural areas and leads to rural development. The present study is a primary data based study.*

Key words: higher education, human resource, rural areas

Introduction: Education is a key indicator of socioeconomic growth. Higher education was initially introduced in India in 1854, when the British government put up the Wood Despatch Commission, which recommended the establishment of three universities in Madras, Pune, and Kolkata. The British-India government established many commissions for higher education over time, and higher education steadily extended throughout India through the establishment of colleges and universities. Following independence, the Government of India established the Radhakrishnan Commission, the Kothari Commission, the National Educational Policy, NCERT, UGC, DEC, AICTE, and other commissions to promote higher education in India. Higher education prepares students for a variety of economic responsibilities in society and promotes technical innovation, which fuels economic growth. It is critical that the country's higher education capacity is linked with the economy's need for skills, which includes the demand for instructors within the education system. Because higher education cannot produce employment on its own, a mismatch between demand and supply of quality and quantity of graduates will result in jobless graduates and/or a scarcity of graduates with certain skills (Agarwal, 2006). Higher education is critical in North East India for developing a knowledge-based society for the twenty-first century. "In the 21st century, higher education is the mandate to bridge the knowledge gap between countries and communities enriching dialogues between people, culture, international living and networking of ideas, research and technologies" (UNESCO report). The institutions where post 10+2 education is provided are generally regarded as higher educational institutions. An institution of higher education is a school that grants a bachelor's and master's degree or a two-year programme that gives credit toward a higher degree. It offers at least one year of training leading to gainful work or is a two-year-old vocational programme that offers training

leading to meaningful employment. Prior to independence, the north-eastern region had only 16 colleges, the bulk of which were in Assam (Das, 2020). The establishment of the first university in Guwahati in 1948 provided a significant impetus to the spread of higher education in North East India, from pre-university through postgraduate and doctorate levels (Changmai, 2017). North East India now has total 11 Central Universities and Assam alone has 17 state universities. In addition, several new universities are being built.

Objective: To investigate how the building of a prestigious higher educational institution might improve the socioeconomic situation of individuals in the surrounding region and contribute to rural development.

Data Sources and Methodology: The present study is mainly based on primary data. In order to understand how higher education leads to rural development and changes people's socioeconomic status, Borpathar Village in Dibrugarh district (Assam), a nearby village of Dibrugarh University, has been taken as a sample village. It is located 14 km south of the district headquarters of Dibrugarh and 399 km from the state capital, Dispur. A sample survey is done in 50 randomly selected households and the acquired information is used to explain the real life situation of the local people. Primary sources also include interaction through discussions and interviews with local inhabitants of the sample area.

The secondary data was acquired from a variety of reliable sources, including certain governmental and semi-governmental organizations, to supplement the original data in the study. This study is mainly analytical and descriptive in nature.

Discussion and Findings: The goals and purposes of higher education include promoting, disseminating, and generating information, lively wisdom, tolerance, adventure, critical thinking, and the pursuit of truth. For all economic, political, and social progress, higher education is critical. It is a significant stride forward in any country's educational system, since it sits at the pinnacle of the whole educational framework. In comparison to other states in the North-East India, Assam, the largest economy in the North-East, has a comparatively well-developed and diverse educational system. Traditionally, universities and colleges have had three functions (Cooparat, 1998), namely –

- a). To provide higher education to the public, mostly students.
- b). To do research in various fields in response to both academic and societal demands.

c). To provide academic and professional services to their communities.

Universities may help the rural people of their nation in a variety of ways –

First, they can offer degree programs to rural residents on their typical campuses. Certain institutions have a quota system in place to give university education to some of their rural students.

Universities can provide degree programs on their extended campuses or in collaboration with provincial community colleges.

Thirdly, universities might broaden their academic activities to include short-term training courses, seminars, workshops, and so on for provincial or rural communities. In several developing nations, there is a need for academic and professional training from universities in their local communities from university graduates and people from all walks of life. Universities can play an active role in agriculture management, vocational education, and educational professional development. Universities are no longer bound by their buildings, but have spread out to seek out and serve the wider population, rather than waiting for students from rural and provincial regions to save enough money to go to cities to pursue their studies.

Fourthly, universities can perform research and development in rural development-related fields. Rural issue advocacy can be used by institutions of higher learning with a strong research focus to apply knowledge collected from their research efforts in rural development. Universities are well positioned to influence policymakers by providing alternative rural development management strategies.

Dibrugarh University, India's easternmost university was set up in 1965 under the rules of the Assam Legislative Assembly's Dibrugarh University Act. The institution is located at Rajabeta, which is about five kilometers to the south of the premier town of Dibrugarh in the eastern part of Assam as well as India. After interacting with locals, it was discovered that when this university was founded, just a few students from adjacent villages were able to secure seats. Furthermore, many rural parents do not believe that higher education is beneficial to their children. As a result, the bulk of the seats went to deserving and motivated students from other parts of the country.. But after implementation of local quota system for the students of nearby villages, the scenario became improved. Now the system is that 5 seats (2 each in Arts and Science and 1 in Commerce) are reserved for students of under mentioned selected Panchayat and villages –

a). Rajabeta Gaon Panchayat: Kamargaon, Tekelachiring Gaon, Rajabeta F.S, Japaragaon, Mohpoalimora Gaon

b). Borpathar Gaon Panchayat: Borpathar Konwar Gaon, Konwar Handique Gaon

c). Chiring Dainijan Gaon Panchayat: Dainijan gaon, Japaragaon, Nirmaligaon, Chring Gaon (outside the Dibrugarh Municipal area)

The candidate must be the son or daughter of inhabitants of the above villages to be eligible for admission under this local quota scheme. The applicants and either of their parents must

reside for a period of not less than ten years immediately preceding the academic year for which admission is sought. Every year since the adoption of this method, some students from adjacent communities have been able to receive preferences. The number of persons with a higher education is steadily growing in adjacent areas. After completing their study, some students went to Dibrugarh University to work as teachers in various disciplines. Some have been employed as college teachers at various institutions in Dibrugarh and beyond. Many Borpathar residents also serve as teachers at the university's Model School. Students are also benefited from various vocational courses provided by the university.

As individuals grow more educated, their village's socioeconomic situation improves as well. Parents who are educated recognise the importance of education and want higher education for their children. As a result, the number of educated individuals in adjacent communities progressively grows.

Moreover, unemployed educated young also develop businesses outside the Dibrugarh University campus, such as hotels, bookstalls, grocery stores, and pharmacy stores. The establishment of a university provides local residents with the option to conduct various businesses to the local people.

The infrastructure of adjacent villages is also being upgraded. Universities, as we all know, have excellent infrastructure. The road conditions and livelihood of residents in adjacent villages have improved as a result of the development of this university. Local people are also able to enjoy the benefits of ATM facilities, banking facilities (SBI, Dibrugarh University Branch) etc. Otherwise, they will have to travel to Dibrugarh town to take use of these services.

Apart from that, residents in adjacent villages are becoming self-sufficient by providing hostels for Dibrugarh University students. The number of students who can stay in university hostels is limited. As a result, many students have to reside in private hostels outside the university campus. During the case study it has been observed that many local people have hostels in their home. Mainly women are involved in this business. Many private hostel owners of Borpathar told that it is their main income source. According to the local people of Borpathar, their lives become stable all because of Dibrugarh University. Aside from that, the foundation of Dibrugarh University opens up a slew of new chances for the residents of the surrounding villages.

Conclusion: Rural development is influenced by factors such as education, economic growth, and physical and social infrastructure. The emphasis on locally created economic development techniques is another feature of rural development (Chandra, 2014). Based on the foregoing discussion, we may conclude that the founding of Dibrugarh University benefits the residents of adjacent villages in a variety of ways. Universities and colleges have the potential to make a significant contribution to rural development. In fact, universities and colleges are capable of far more than they currently are. Universities may have a big influence on rural development if they employ information technology correctly in their teaching and training operations.

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