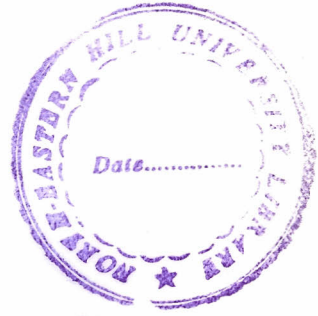


Development and Problems of **Higher Education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong Areas of Assam**



Brinda R. Bazeley

Development and Problems of Higher Education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong Areas of Assam



Dr. (Mrs.) Brinda Rymbai Bazeley



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Dedication

This entire work is dedicated to
the strong and sacred memories
of my father
Mr. P.K. Ghosh

Foreword

Education has become one of the largest activities in the world and the place of the trained and skilled and educated person has become central to national, social and economic development. Education should aim at transmitting to the new generation the lessons of the accumulated experiences of the past for further progress in the present and the future. Higher education kindles and strengthens social awareness. As a consequence people learn to rise above narrow prejudices, with this belief in equality and quality, they learn to value and protect the social and democratic right. The growth of higher education has been without doubt one of the most remarkable in today's globalised world. Though it has been affected with various problems and difficulties inspite of rapid advancement.

The book is an outcome of the Doctoral research undertaken by the scholar Mrs. Brinda Bazeley Rymbai on 'A study of the Development and Problems of Higher Education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong Areas of Assam' under my supervision. Doctorate degree in education has been awarded to her by the North eastern Hill University, Shillong. She has brilliantly brought out a wealth of knowledge and information on the development of higher education and problems in the area. The study involved three districts including an autonomous hill district (i.e., Karbi Anglong) in the area. Sample of the study were drawn from randomly selected colleges and a university in the state.

Dr. Mrs. Brinda Bazeley's initiative, drive, depth of knowledge and an untiring effort made it possible to bring out her research work in book form. She bears high potential ability in the research domain where she can further contribute.

I congratulate her for the present unique valuable contribution in the field of higher education in general particularly in North East India. I hope the book will serve the need of educational experts, policy makers, public as well as teachers, researchers and students. Indeed the book will stimulate the reader to a new interest and dimension in higher educational system. The analysis and findings are immensely significant; only those who have themselves undertaken work of equivalent difficulty will appreciate quite what a masterpiece of work and of coherent compression of complex facts she has accomplished. And as a result of this thoroughly practical analysis of higher education Dr. Mrs. Brinda Bazeley Rymbai is able to produce a series of recommendation which are of great importance for future higher education.

Dated: 7th June 2005
Place : Shillong

Prof. (Dr.) A. Henia
Former Head
Department of Education
North Eastern Hill University

Preface

"Development and Problems of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam" is a comprehensive study in the field of higher education.

It is widely believed that the single most authentic indicator of the country's future, may well be the state of its higher education.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the first Prime Minister of India, in his convocation address to Allahabad University in 1947, said, "a university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for adventure of ideas and search for truth. It stands for onward march of human race, towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people." Higher education provides people with an opportunity to react to the critical, social, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity, which is said to be a crucial factor for survival.

The Barak Valley consists of three districts viz. (1) Cachar (2) Karimganj and (3) Hailakandi. Karbi Anglong is one of the two hill districts of Assam.

This book analyses the development of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam, since the inception of its first college in 1935 up to the year 2001.

The scope of the study is comprehensive. It covers the development and problems of higher education in all the three districts

of Barak Valley and the entire Karbi Anglong district covering all the general colleges and one university, i.e. The Assam University located in Dorgakona (Silchar). It deals with the development of higher educational institutions from their inception to their present state, and also the problems related to it.

The study was based on certain objectives viz.:

- To trace the development of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam.
- To study the present system of administration and financing of higher education.
- To study the problems faced by the institution of higher education with reference to:
(i) Academic, (ii) Infrastructural dimensions, (iii) Administrative, (iv) Financial and others.
- To identify the problems faced by teachers and students of higher education.

The first chapter presents the background of the study, which includes a description of the study in terms of its objectives, need and importance, scope and limitations.

In the second chapter the development of higher education over the years, briefly on all India basis and broadly on Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas was studied from 1935–2001. Assam University, which is a central University, is also included in the study.

The third chapter constitutes a brief review of related literature so as to analyse the various aspects of the development of higher education in the country, as well as some other countries in the world.

The fourth chapter describes the method and procedure adopted for the study.

In the fifth chapter analysis and interpretation of the data are presented.

The sixth chapter deals with the major findings, implication and suggestions.

The seventh and eight chapters are the conclusion and summary of the study respectively.

The study was a descriptive survey type. The data were collected from the colleges and university; based on the responses from the questionnaires and interviews. Data was also collected

from various documents and records, maintained by different offices, located in Barak Valley, Karbi Anglong district and Guwahati, the university, colleges and various libraries.

This book is a product of my doctoral dissertation, submitted to the North Eastern Hill University in November 2001. I was awarded the doctoral degree on the 21st June 2002.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude, to my supervisor Professor A. Henia of Education Department, NEHU and also to the teachers of the department.

I place on record my gratefulness to the principals, teachers and students of the colleges of Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong, the Head of the departments, teachers, students of various departments of Assam University where the study was undertaken and who provided me with the necessary data and information.

I would like to extend my thanks to professor S.C. Saha, the then Vice-Chancellor of Assam University for giving me useful information and providing the necessary documents/reports of Assam University, thus enabling me to quickly complete my work.

I also take this opportunity to express my thanks to Shri. U.C. Das, Deputy Director of Higher Education, Assam, for providing me with all the necessary information related to administration and finance and other aspects of higher education in the state.

My efforts would have been futile but for the support of the librarian and staff, NEHU library, Education department library, NEHU, ICSSR, and NEC Shillong for supplying me with various study materials, documents, and journals relating to my study.

The success of this endeavour is due to the constant support of my in-law's, parent, brother and sister. Words alone cannot express my appreciation to them.

Above all, I would like to thank my husband who constantly encouraged and helped me out in many ways, throughout the entire period especially, spending his valuable time typing and formatting my work in the computer without which I would have had to face many difficulties.

I am grateful to the efforts of Shri A.K. Verma of Regency Publications, New Delhi, for publishing this book.

Last but not the least, I am grateful to my children, for being so patient all along and bearing with me in all those difficult times.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Education is an important human activity. It was born with the birth of human race, so it will continue to function as long as the human race lives. It has been accepted as one of the primary needs of every civilized person. The term education has been derived from the Latin word 'educare' or 'educere', which literally means to nourish or to 'bring up' the child according to certain ends or aims. John Dewey rightly pointed out by saying that "Education is the process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences. It is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities."¹

Higher Education

It is widely believed that the single most important indicator of the country's future may well be the state of its higher education. The first prime minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who laid the foundation of the process of India's modernization, declared that if all were well with the Universities, all would be well with the nation.² In his convocation address to Allahabad University in 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru summed up the role and objectives of the University. A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for adventure of ideas and search for truth. It stands for onward march of human race towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately then it is well with the nation and the people.³

The UNESCO World Conference on higher education (1998) proclaimed that education is a fundamental pillar of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace. The draft proposal on higher education for the 21st century envisages the quality of higher education as a multi dimensional concept and institutions of higher learning must play a role in identifying and addressing the issues that affect the well-being of communities, nations and global society. Hence, Universities are required to redefine the mission and establish the priorities as per the need of the society.⁴

The University everywhere in the world has become the Chief agency of higher education and professional training. It has provided the country with leaders such as legislators and jurists, civil servants, educators and so on.

Interests in higher education have greatly increased all around the world during the last 25 years. Developing countries see in higher education the most important means of scientific, technological and industrial progress, so vital for them for the removal of poverty and for developing affluent societies. Higher education is also the means for them for modernizing their societies and for producing highly educated leaders in all walks of life, who will be imbued with their highest ethical and moral ideals.⁵

The continuous and continuing provision of trained personnel of various levels by the university to the society and economy is the most concrete socio-economic change functions that the university and its department's natural, social and human sciences; fine and performing arts etc. are performing.

Thus, it is rightly said that higher education holds the key to the destiny of the nation. All key positions in the society are in the hands of educated people. All the key technical and administrative professions are manned by persons trained in institutions of higher education. Higher education provides people with an opportunity to react on the critical, socio-economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. (It contributes through the national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. (It is therefore a crucial factor of survival.) The national policy on education (NPE) 1986 has underlined the importance of higher education as crucial factor for survival, because of its potentiality to contribute to "national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills."⁶

(Higher education is in a state of crisis. It is almost a universal phenomenon and in India it is no exception.) It is a recurrent theme of conferences and committees the world over. The Indian Universities have new opportunities as never before. There is a great challenge urging them, to play a major role in national development, industrialization and social transformation. We desperately need science and technology to raise productivity, but equally we need to accomplish this without eroding or distorting the spirit of science and essential human values India has cherished over ages. It is likely that universities now are subjected to great pressures, internal and external will undergo major mutations and adjustments.

There are certain things about Indian higher education, which strikes us immediately. The first is the huge size of enrolment. The second is the inherent rigidity of the system, the existence of affiliated colleges and external examinations. The total enrolment in higher education is nearly three million in our country. It is increasing very rapidly. The growth rate exceeds 10% a year. Initially in India there were 20 Universities, but now there are 83 Universities. The vast majority of students attend some 3,500 colleges affiliated with the universities.

Since independence continuous efforts are being made to review the higher education system, the number of commissions notably, Education Commission 1948-1949, Education Commission 1964-1966, National Policy of Education 1986 and Acharya Ramamurthy Review Committee (1990) have been constituted by government of India to find out a national pattern of education for the whole country. Dr. Radha Krishnan commented, "it is for the University to create knowledge and train minds who would bring together the material resources and human energies. If our living standards are to be raised a radical change of spirit is essential". The report of the commission is very comprehensive document and it had far reaching influence on the reconstruction of university education in India in recent years.⁷

Thus, we see that higher education according to some experts seeks to promote, excellent adventure of ideas and research for truth. It is to cultivate knowledge and interpret old knowledge in the light of needs and discoveries. It is also to provide right kind of leadership in all walks of life, and identify gifted youth and help them to develop their potential by cultivating

physical fitness, developing the powers of mind, right interest, attitudes and values. (Thus, to meet the needs of the developing society, higher education should be given much importance.)

Objectives of Higher Education

The growth of higher education particularly the university depends a lot on its phenomenal increase in its number, its enrolment and most important of all the financial allocation.⁸ Regarding higher education universities are undergoing profound changes in their scope, functions and also organizations. The national policy of education 1986 was formulated to equip the country both scientifically and economically to enter the 21st century said by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in his broadcast to the nation on 5th January 1985. He observed: "Education must promote national cohesion and work ethic. The grandeur of our freedom struggle and its significance for national integration and its significance for national integration has to be brought home to every student. Our schools and colleges should acquire activities heritage and culture."⁹

As we see that universities are undergoing profound changes in their scope, functions and organization. Their tasks are no longer confined to the two traditional functions of teaching and advancement of knowledge.

The national policy of Education 1986,¹⁰ has laid down certain recommendations of higher education. In broad terms they may be said to, Emphasis on the expansion of facilities in the existing universities and colleges.

- Development of autonomous colleges in large areas until the affiliating system, is replaced by a freer and more creative association of universities.
- Change in teaching methods, with the introduction of audio-visual aids and electronic equipments.
- Higher quality of research facilities to be provided in the universities.
- Setting up of national research facilities within the university system.
- State level planning and coordination of higher education will be done through councils of higher education.

- Development of a national body, which will enhance research facilities, agricultural, medical, technical, legal and other professional fields.
- Open University has been set up for uplifting the opportunities of higher education a common example is IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University) established in 1985, in fulfillment of these objectives.

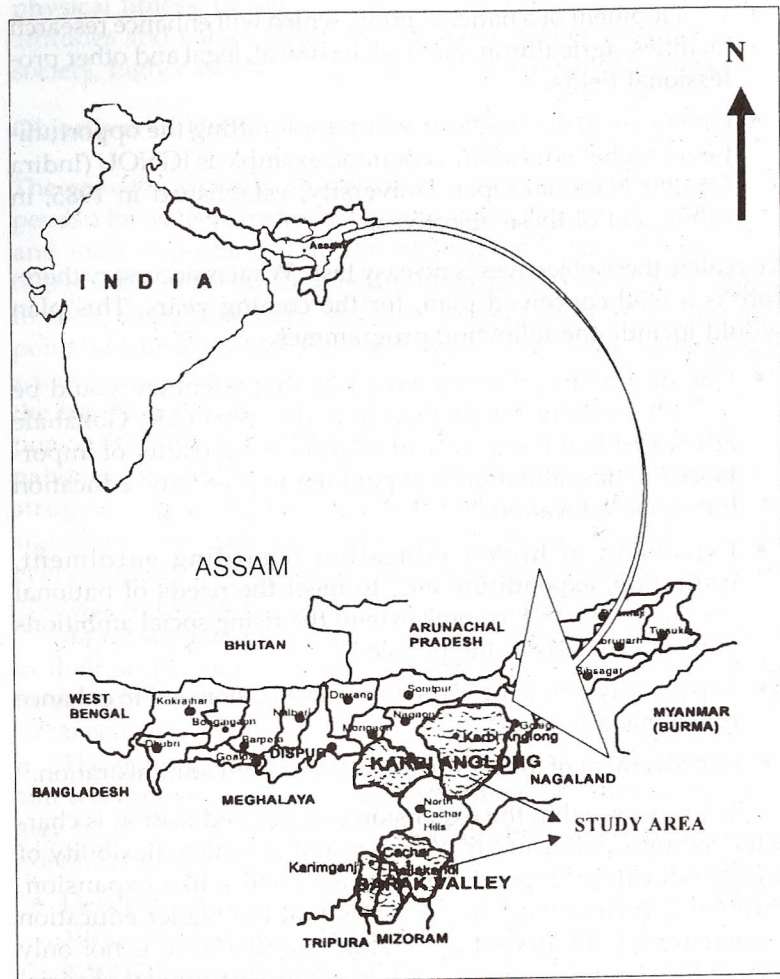
To realize these objectives is no easy task. What is necessary therefore is a well-conceived plan, for the coming years. This plan would include the following programmes.

- One of the top priorities would be that attention would be given to quality rather than quantity. Shri G.K. Gokahale advocated that the quality of education is a matter of importance.¹¹ Thus, attention was paid not to give 'any' education but 'good education'.¹²
- Expansion of higher education regarding enrolment, institution, expenditure etc., to meet the needs of national development, and to some extent the rising social ambitions and expectations of the people.¹³
- Top priority would be given to modernization and to enhance functional efficiency.¹⁴
- Improvement of university organization and administration.¹⁵

Thus, we see that the expansion of higher education is characterized by a policy of 'drift' on account of which, flexibility of higher education depends on various factors like expansion, enrolment, finance etc.¹⁶ As we know that the higher education is something to be looked upon and its importance is not only seen in India but else where too. It is thus an instrument of social change and national development.

A Profile of Assam

Assam is the anglicized form of the name of the premier state of N.E. India. A region most strategically situated close to India's international borders with as many as four countries, i.e. China, Burma, Bhutan, Bangladesh.¹⁷ Administratively Assam at present comprises of 23 (twenty three) districts.



Map 1
Location of the Study Area

Assam located in the North East corner of the country, has a unique geographical personality and socio-cultural milieu. It is well endowed in natural resources. The mighty Brahmaputra, its perennial tributaries, evergreen forests, fertile soil, invigorating climate and numerous mineral resources are unparalleled in the country.

'Stretching over an area of 78,483 sq. km and supporting a population of 22,294,562 (1991) with a density of 284 (1991) persons per sq. km.' The state of Assam is located between 24°18'N to 27°50'N and between 89°48'E to 97°4'E longitude. It has natural boundaries on three sides. Its northern frontiers from the river Sankosh on the west to the entrance of the mighty Brahmaputra into Assam is guarded by the Eastern or Assam Himalaya as, lies a series of sub-Himalayan ranges.¹⁸ In the past it was known as 'Kamrupa.' According to some of the experts the word Assam is the outcome of uneven topography of the country known as 'Assamese' or 'Asama' in contrast to the plains of the adjacent province of Bengal.

According to the former scholar and writer Gait, the present name of Assam is derived from the word 'Ahom' the past rulers of Assam.¹⁹ The most dominating feature in the topography of Assam is the course of the river Brahmaputra. It has carved out its gigantic valley between the parallel ranges, i.e. The Assam Himalayas in the north and the Meghalaya plateau in the south.

The river Brahmaputra debouches the plain near Sadiya from where it assumes the name of Brahmaputra, and runs directly westwards for nearly 720 kms., traversing almost every district of the Assam Valley from West to East until it crosses the Garo hills and turning due south it enters the plains of Bangladesh²⁰ to the south and east of Meghalaya plateau in the Barak Valley. This valley is also of alluvial origin. Sylhet having gone to Bangladesh, Cachar and Karimganj are the only districts of this natural units of the State of Assam.²¹ Climatically it is situated in the subtropical latitudes, but owing to the aerographic features the climate of the valley is humid monsoonic.

The people and their culture

Assam is often described in the academic circles as the anthropologists paradise, and justifiably too. Both racially and culturally

there is such a superfet of diverse elements, and these elements mingle with one another in such an extra ordinary state of juxtaposition that they constitute an almost inexhaustible source of material for study.²²

Basic elements of ethnicity

Racially, there is in the population of Assam practically all the basic elements that go to make up the Indian people, the Austro-Asiatic, the Dravidian, the Indo Aryan and the Indo-Mongoloid. The earliest inhabitants of the land had been the Astro-Asiatics who were followed by the Dravidians. Traces of their racial and cultural traits are still discernible in Assam. Since very early times one of the major routes of Aryan migration has been through Assam and successive hordes of Indo-Aryans have settled here at different points of history incorporating this particular racial strain into the local stock. But it is the Indo-Mongoloid element that predominates in the overall make up of the Assam's population. Even in the Vedic times the Kiratas or Indo-Mongoloids were very much a part of the scene of this region. Waves after waves of Mongoloid groups have continued to flow since then and to fit themselves in the local environment — infact becoming true autochthons.²³

The majority of the population in the plains is made up of caste Hindus speaking the Aryan Assamese language. But the Aryan racial strain is prominent only in the upper caste, most of the other showing distinctly mongoloid features and a very large population of the Assamese speaking are of the tribal stock. The majority of the tribal groups belong to the Tibeto-Burman family, such as the Bodo-Kacharis, the Rabhas, the Tuiras (Lalungs), the Misings, the Sonowal Kacharis, the Deuris and the Barmans in the plains, the Rengma Nagas, the Zemi Nagas the Kukis and the Hmars in the Hill. To the Siamese-Chinese family of Tai affiliation belong to the Hinduised Ahoms and a number of small Buddhistic Communities like the Khamtis, the Khamyangs, the Aitous and the Phakes.²⁴

Religion

Hinduism is a flexible religion, it absorbed most of the people in Assam and also the traditional beliefs that prevailed in the early

times amongst primitive men. Most of the people in Assam are "Siva Worshipper" known as Saktism. Buddhism was penetrated beyond Assam from India into Burma though not the principle religion, it flourished to a great extent, in the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa as evidence Ahoms. Assam at one point of time was identified as Tantrik Saktism, one of the most important centres of the Hindu cult, being located at the famous shrine of Mother-Goddess Kamakhya. Even today Siva and the Mother Goddess in various forms enjoy veneration and propitiation at the folk level in large sections of the Assamese Society, both tribal and non-tribal

'Vaishnaism'²⁵ also had made a fairly early entry, but earlier it was nothing much more than a cult. But, what gives uniqueness to this neo-vaishnava movement ushered in by Sankaradeva is that it left untouched practically no aspects of Assamese society, even today its influence peruates the entire range of Assamese culture, cutting across religious and sectarian beliefs and practices.²⁶

Population

The history of peopling of Assam is a record of constant impulses of immigration from the east, south-east and west directions.²⁷ The population of Assam according to the 1991 census is 22,294,564. The rapid increase in population is mainly due to immigration from different sources.

The major sources of imrnigration may be classified as:

1. Tea garden labourers,
2. East Bengal immigrants or Mymensinghis,
3. Nepali grazers,
4. East Bengal displaced persons.²⁸

According to the 1991 census 74.28% of India's population was rural and 25.72% as urban. Assam has only 11.08% of its total population in the urban centres (1991) and the remaining 82.92% reside in the rural areas.²⁹

Guwahati is the largest city, a hub of industrial, cultural and administrative activities. Guwahati is an ancient city. Its name was Pragjyotishpur. It was not known when the name was changed to Guwahati, the first historical description of the town was given by Hueng Tsang who visited it about A.D. 640.³⁰ Since 1901 the growth of the population of the town, has increased tremendously.

The projected population for 1981 was 19,896,843. Now Guwahati has a large urban agglomeration, which includes various complexes. The population of which is 51% during the 1981-1991 decade. At present it is growing at a much higher growth rate.³¹

Literacy rate

Literacy has been defined as the ability to read and write with understanding. A person, who can merely read but cannot write, is not defined as literate. Children below 5 years of age are treated as illiterate. Literacy reflects the socio-economic and cultural set up of the nation, ethnic group or community. The literacy rate in a country or region is determined largely by the historical, social, cultural and economic factors. The main factors that determine the literacy rate are:

1. Cost of education,
2. Political/Ideological background,
3. Type of economy,
4. Standard of living,
5. Degree of urbanization,
6. Stage of technological advancement,
7. Religious background,
8. Status of women in the society,
9. Availability of educational instructions,
10. General value systems.³²

In Assam the literacy rate according to 1991 census 52.9%, which is marginally higher than the literacy rate of 52.21% in 1991, at the national level.³³

Table 1.1 Literacy Rate by Areas (1991)*

Category	Literacy Rate (%)		
	Total	Male	Female
Total	52.89	61.87	43.03
Rural	49.32	58.66	39.19
Urban	79.34	84.37	73.32

* Sinha Anil, Mazumdar Sulekha, Barua, P.K. Educational Administration in Assam, p. 27, 1999.

Source: Statistical Data base for literacy final population and literacy, 1991. National Institute of Adult Education, New Delhi 1993.

Introduction to Barak Valley and Karbi-Anglong Areas of Assam

The Barak Valley of Assam comprises of 3 (three) districts.

1. Cachar district
2. Karimganj
3. Hailakandi.

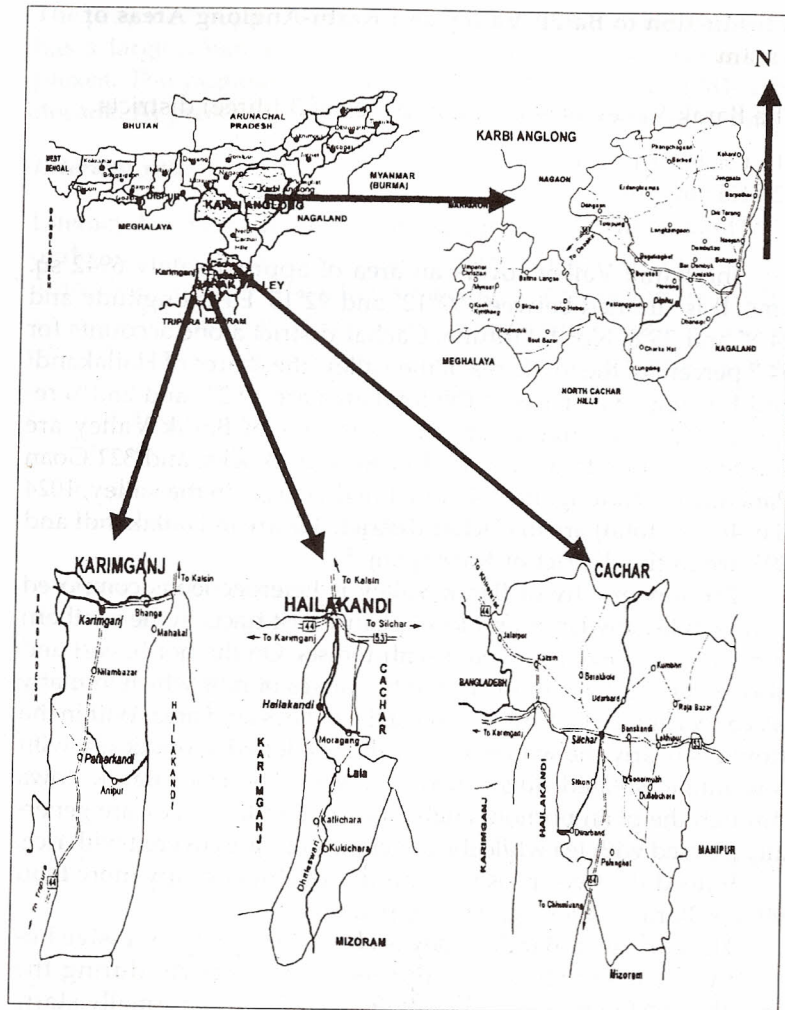
The Barak Valley covers an area of approximately 6942 sq. kms. It is situated between 92°12' and 92°15' East longitude and 24°8' and 25°8' North latitude. Cachar district alone accounts for 54.7 percent of the total area of the valley; the shares of Hailakandi and Karimganj districts in the total area are 19.2% and 26.1% respectively. The three constituent districts of Barak Valley are subdivided into total of 4 subdivisions, 27 Blocks, and 321 Goan Panchayats. Among the 2244 inhabited villages in the valley, 1024 (i.e. 46% of total) are in Cachar district; 327 are in Hailakandi and 893 are in the district of Karimganj.³⁴

The topography of Barak Valley is heterogeneous composed of high hills, low lands and level plains. Vast tracts in the southern part of the valley are covered with forests. On the north, east and also on south, it is almost shut in by ranges of hills which in many places occupy considerable parts of the valleys land area. Within the frontiers nearly the whole of the valley is dotted sporadically with low range isolated hills called "Tillahs". The river Barak flows through the plain portion. High lands within the valley are generally planted with tea while the lower portions are covered with rice.

Indeed the two crops rice and tea together occupy more than 90% of Barak Valleys gross cropped area.³⁵

The climate of Barak Valley is characterized by excessive humidity. Heat sometimes is oppressive, particularly during the months of May to September. Rainy season also normally starts from May and continues till air remains surcharged with moisture and the rainfall is extremely heavy. November to February is normally cool. January being the coolest month of the year.

Forest covers more than a third of Barak valley's total reported land area. Of course, ceaseless deforestation during the last 5 (five) decades has led to rapid depletion of the forest resources. The forest cover in the valley has come down from 44.4% in 1951 to 34.9% in 1994-1995.³⁶



Map 2
Map showing Assam with the Districts of Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong taken from the Study

Besides forests, substantial part of the valley's total reported areas are occupied by barren tracts, permanent pastures and otherwise uncultivable lands. Regarding population, the net accretion to the valley's population during the last 5 (five) decades has been phenomenal.

If one considers the first 90 years of the current century, the total increase in population was 295.3%. The valley's total population in 1991 was 24.91 lakh, as per expert committee's projections in the Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Population of Barak Valley (District wise)

Sl. No.	Year	Cachar district	Hailakandi district	Karimganj district	Barak valley total
1.	1991 (actual)	12.15	4.49	8.27	24.19
2.	1998 @ (estimated)	14.21	5.25	9.67	29.13
3.	2000 @ (estimated)	14.73	5.44	10.02	30.19

@ The population estimates for 1998 and 2000 are on the basis of the methodology of the expert committee on population, projection, Registrar General of India.

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Assam.

Barak Valley is now more populous than at least 5 out of the 7 states in North Eastern region. Rural population constitutes bulk of the total population. Literacy ratio in Barak Valley has all along been very high. Male literacy in the valley in 1991 was 66.4%, female literacy in that year was 46.1%. These were well above the prevailing literacy ratios at the national level.³⁷ Regarding occupation distribution of Barak Valley's working population, around 70% of the valley's workers are engaged in agriculture and other primary sector activities. Another 23% of working population is occupationally tied to the service sector. The remaining workers (6.3%) are engaged in secondary sector activities. Thus, Barak Valley is said to be a land where there is enough scope of modernization, expansion programmes and reinvestment.

Cachar

Cachar was a part of the Dimasa Kachari Kingdom for centuries. In 1750 the capital of the Dimasa Kachari kingdom was shifted to Khaspur from Maibong. It was annexed by the British in 1832 and placed under the Chief Commissioner of Bengal. Along with the

area now known as Sylhet, it was called the Surma Valley Division. When the Chief Commissioner of Assam was formed in 1874, the Surma Valley division was tagged to Assam.

During the partition of India in 1947, Sylhet was handed over to Pakistan (now Bangladesh) but Cachar was retained in India. It then included the hill areas of Haflong. These hills were separated from Cachar in 1953 to form the North Cachar hills subdivision of the then United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. According to the 1991 census it has a population of approximately 1,215,385 people.

Karimganj

Karimganj was a subdivision of Sylhet till 1947. After partition, Karimganj was made a subdivision of Cachar. It was upgraded to a district during 1983. According to 1991 census; it has a population of approximately 827,063 people.

Hailakandi

Hailakandi is a part of the old Cachar district. It was a subdivision till the early 1990's, when it was upgraded to a district. According to the 1991 census, it has a population of approximately 449,048 people.

Karbi Anglong

Karbi Anglong is one of the two districts of Assam (i.e. North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong Hills). During the reorganization of the North Eastern region to create a separate state out of the hill areas of Assam the then United Mikir and North Cachar hills district opted to remain with Assam. In return the Assam government bifurcated the erstwhile-United Mikir and North Cachar hills district into two districts, viz., the North Cachar hills district and the Karbi Anglong district.

It is an autonomous district under the Sixth schedule to the Constitution of India, with head quarters at Diphu. As such, the development administration of the district vests in the Karbi Anglong autonomous District Council. Karbi Anglong district covers an area of approximately 10,332 sq. kms. and has a

population of 662,723 people as per 1991 census 89.3% or 5.85 lakhs of its population live in rural area with about 64 people per sq. kms. Forty-five percent of its population practice Jhum cultivation.

The Karbi community who is Schedule Tribes predominantly inhabits Karbi Anglong. The principal town and growth centres of Karbi Anglong are Diphu, Hamrem, Bokajan, Donkamokam, Dokmoka, and Howraghat. It has a population of 6,55,415 people out of which 3,43,649 are male and 3,11,766 are female, according to the annual plan of 1996-97, in respect of the 6th Schedule area of Karbi Anglong district of Assam.³⁸

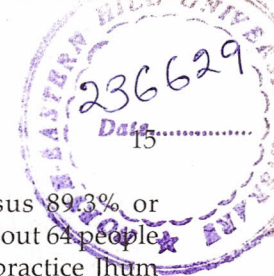
The People of Barak Valley

The original people of Barak Valley were the Cacharis. W.W. Hunters regarded the Cacharis of the 18th Century as hill tribes. Captain Fisher who took great pain in ascertaining the early history of the race was of the opinion that the tribe acquired an empire in Assam, Sylhet and Mymensingh.

About 250-300 years ago when they came to the plains of Cachar from the Mikir hills, Jaintia and Central Cachar, they made their settlements at Phulbari, Vikrampur, Kalain, Udharbond, Barkhola, Yatrapur, Raikarkhalelpara, Ambikapur, Lakhipur, Sonai of Silchar, Pagurgram of Hailakandi etc.

Cachar was a part of the Dimasa Cachari kingdom for centuries. The word "Cachar" is said by Gait to be a Sanskrit word meaning bordering region.³⁹ The Cacharis are the earliest indigenous inhabitants of Assam. They are known under different names in different places, in the North Cachar hills they are called as Dimasa. In the Brahmaputra Valley they are called as Bodo.

They reigned over the entire Barak Valley since time immemorial.⁴⁰ Apart from the outlying members of the race, there are within the limits of Assam itself at least 1,000,000 souls, probably many more who belong to the Cachari race.⁴¹ Cachar was annexed to the British domain by a proclamation issued on the 14th August 1832. South Cachar comprises of Silchar, Hailakandi, districts of Assam and Karimganj, which included the Sylhet district of East Bengal, was known by the local people by the name of "Barak Valley" where we trace the history of this area to 1700. We come across an important kingdom called Heramba. The



kingdom was called by the local inhabitants of Sylhet as Cachar a stretch of lands at the foot of the mountains.⁴² The picturesque valley of Barak was included in the various kingdoms that had emerged during the early historic periods like Ganda, Vanga and Samalata.⁴³ In the 13th century the valley was ruled by the Tipprehas a section of Bodos now popularly known as the Cacharis.

Cachar with its stunning natural beauty, is a natural continuation of Bengal plains and was historically, geographically and culturally an extension of the Gangetic plain. After the annexation of the British, the local officials realized that unless the depopulated land was resettled, the material progress would be adversely affected.⁴⁴ Thus, the government to increase the population followed a systematic policy. Captain Fisher the then Superintendent of Cachar created some Manipuri villages and invited the Bengalis from the lower province to accept land in Cachar.⁴⁵

As a result, hundreds of immigrants migrated from Sylhet, Myme singh, Komilla and even from Birbhum and Bordwan. Thus, the earliest inhabitants of Cachar belonged to the agrarian communities, i.e. Nath, Patnis, Jogis, Namasudra.⁴⁶

During the British rule Bengalis of all castes had migrated to Cachar and settled down in various professions. The Bengalis, Manipuris, Hindustanis who migrated home and bulk of them as some historians claim use Bengali as spoken language.⁴⁷ Though the original Cacharis use the Cachari language. The original people of Barak Valley known to us as Cacharis differ in some material ways from their Hindu and Musulman neighbours.

The Cacharis

The people known to us as 'Cacharis' differ in some material ways from their Hindu and Musulman neighbours alike in things material and moral. They are certainly not a tall and handsome race as the Nepalese and as a rule they are shorter and stouter than the people of North West India. In face and figure they show distinct approximation to what is known as Mongoloid type, i.e. they have square set faces, projecting cheek bones, with almond shaped eyes and scanty beard and moustache.

In this way they are well fitted for all sorts of outdoor (field and factory) labour that require strength rather than skill and may very reasonably be regarded as the 'navies' of Assam.⁴⁸

As their origin seem to point to Tibet and China from where they migrated to the North Eastern in the rich valley of Brahmaputra. But, however this may be, there would seem to be good reason for believing that the Cachari (Bodo) race is a much more. The Cacharis are divided into a (1) Northern (2) Southern group, the Brahmaputra being the dividing line.⁴⁹ The only branch of this widely spread race that may be said to have anything like an authentic history is that settled in what is known as the once powerful kingdom of Kamrupa (Koch) the reigning family of which is now represented by the Rajas of Koch-Bihar, Bijni, Darrang and Beltola.⁵⁰

Social and domestic life

In their domestic life, the Cacharis of the district do not differ materially from their Hindu neighbours, to the subordinate castes of whom they are no doubt very closely allied.⁵¹ The Cachari village is very compact and houses are built more closely together, domestic livestock of various kinds eg. ducks, fowls, goats, pigs, cattle etc.⁵²

Furniture, utensil

It may be noted that a Cachari house is filled with earthen ware vessels which are used frequently for the preparation of rice beer. Furniture are mostly made of Bamboos and Cane.⁵³

Agriculture

Cachar was essentially a rural area and the Cacharis in general are agriculturist. The soil of Cachar is highly fertile for the cultivation of rice. Thus, rice is the staple food of the Cacharis. Both in hot and cold weather rice is cultivated.⁵⁴ They are also expert in cultivating other agricultural products which is grown there, e.g., cash crops.

Food

As regards food the Cachari is as a rule by no means limited and restricted like his Hindu and Musulman neighbours. On the contrary he enjoys and practices a freedom in this respect, which no doubt goes far to account for his magnificent physique. With the

exception of beef he denies himself almost nothing.⁵⁵ Pork is his delicacy and a Cachari village is always found itself swarming with pigs. There is of course, one common article of food, which a Cachari will never touch i.e. milk, as he says that he is unwilling to deprive the calf of its natural support.⁵⁶ Among another delicacy of the Cachari is what is known as dried fish (na gran).⁵⁷

Women

The Cachari women do not perhaps occupy quite the same influential position, as their sisters in the Khasi hills. This prejudice is shared by the Garos and by many other members of the Mongolian race where something like a matriarchate apparently holds the field of social and domestic life. The Khasi husband or householder has neither sympathy, nor tolerance for that degrading and demoralizing creed, "which says that woman is but dust, a soul less toy for tyrants' lust." On the contrary, he treats his wife with distinct respect, and regards her as an equal companion. Khasi women enjoy a large measure of freedom.⁵⁸

Laws and custom

The laws and customs vary among the different sub-tribes.⁵⁹

Marriage

It is said that the tribe believes in endogamy, i.e. marriage between the sub tribe is a crime. Marriages can take place only between sub tribes, which are not related to one another. Remarriages of widows are permitted, the one limitation being that a widow may marry her deceased husbands younger brother, but not the elder.⁶⁰

Inheritance of property

Among the Cacharis the laws and customs relating to the inheritance of property seem to be very vague. Generally speaking, on the demise of the head of the house, the property passes on to the eldest son; who takes care of his mother, his brothers and sisters.⁶¹ In case there are no sons, then the property is passed on to the person's eldest surviving brother,⁶² who then takes care of the entire family.

Religion

The religion of the residents of Barak Valley varies according to the race, which has settled down there from time to time. But, the original people, i.e. the Cacharis had a religion commonly known as "animistic" which literally means "fear" or "dread".⁶³ They believe in invisible spiritual beings known usually as "Modai"⁶⁴ all possessing powers and faculties far greater than those of man. The rate of superstitions was also high. Now many of them have converted to Christianity, as it seemed to be much simpler and devoid of any kind of superstitions. Earlier apart from the original animistic Cacharis, the 2 (two) major religious communities were the Hindus and Muslims. But, now with the advent of the Missionaries, a church was set up in 1861 at the Silchar town.

Economy of the Cacharis

The land was rich in minerals, jungles, and rich in timber, cane and bamboo.⁶⁵ Rice was exported to Sylhet and adjacent districts of Bengal.⁶⁶ The economic condition of the people was really sound, can best be understood from the fact that no villager would agree to act as labourer and the government faced the problem of labour scarcity. To meet this problem, day labourer was imported from Sylhet and Bengal.⁶⁷

Besides agriculturists they were traders, workers, artisans but their number was very small. The essential commodities were very cheap. The people always kept themselves free from debt. The exchange was made of native coin called Tulik or Sonat. Sicca and Tanka which was the unit of currency in Medieval Bengal.⁶⁸ The most remarkable innovation of the British Raj for Socio-Economic development of Cachar was the introduction of 'Tea Industry' and the 'Spread of Education'⁶⁹ which completely changed the very character of the district. The indigenous tea plants grew in almost all parts of Cachar Valley.⁷⁰

The People of Karbi Anglong District

The Mikirs of the earlier days are presently known as the Karbis, who constitute one of the major fractions of the Tibeto-Burman population.⁷¹ They reside both in the plains and in the hills, but

the most predominant group of their population reside in the Mikir hill district, which is now known as Karbi Anglong. Hamrem is said to be the ancient dwelling place of the Mikirs, the Karbis. The Karbis of the hills are mostly cultivators.

Climate

The climatic condition of Karbi Anglong is mainly featured by heavy rainfall and high temperature, foggy and shivering cold in winter. The climate is favourable for luxuriant vegetation growth. The district is endowed with rich supply of timber.⁷²

Population

The Karbis occupy an important position among the tribal communities of Assam. The vast tract of land in the centre of the state is their habitat.⁷³ The total population of the schedule tribe in the district according to 1971 is 55.37% of the gross population. Hence, the tribal population in actual number is 2,10,039.⁷⁴

Family

The Karbis live in joint families and for economic reasons, the family is split and a new unit is formed. The society does not give any individual any authority over his lands and therefore he does not feel the eternal craving for land.

Food

Rice is the most staple food among the Karbis. Fish either fresh or dry is largely eaten. Meat is also eaten and vegetables are grown at home.

Dress

Regarding dress, a Karbi man wears a loin cloth called 'Rikong'. The upper portion of the body is covered by a jacket whose front is open. It is called 'choi'. His cap is called 'Poho'. The Karbi women wore a Pini (Mekhala), Pekola (Chador) and Wamkok (It is worn round the waist). All these clothes are home made.⁷⁵

Higher education in Karbi-Anglong

The Karbis were educationally backward before the oncoming of the British. Practically no attempt was made to educate the Karbis during the British period. After independence the state government and the district council are engaged in expanding education in the district. The expansion is quite remarkable. Starting from the zero level, the education has now reached every nook and corner of the district and is likely to expand more.

Regarding higher education, Diphu College was established in 1964 with few students. Though the progress of the college was very unimpressive in the beginning, but later on during the 1970's, it picked up momentum with the construction of staff quarters, college building and student hostel etc.

Like wise many other colleges came up like the Bokajan College, Rukasen College etc. They were initially affiliated to the Guwahati University, but now they have come under the affiliation of Assam University.

Economy of the Karbis

The Karbis generally habit the hilly terrains. Like many other hill tribes they adapt in 'Jhuming', which means slash and burn method.⁷⁶ In the Karbi language it is called 'Inglong Arik'. It is their way of life whether good or bad it is likely to stay.⁷⁷

The economic resources in the plains consist of live stock and agricultural tools. The gift of nature dominates the economic life of the hill people. Before, limitless lands were available but now with the increase of population increase of pressure of land is seen.⁷⁸

Religion of the Karbis

The word 'religion' comes from the Latin word 'religio' which means together or observe.⁷⁹ There is a belief that religion is a product of civilization⁸⁰ and the tribal societies are best example, where religion is practiced at the grass root level. The Karbis worshipped the natural forces and the deities or gods.

Originally most of the Karbis were Hindus but with the oncoming of the Christians, some of them have taken to Christianity and have given away with all kinds of superstitions.⁸¹

Marriage

The Karbis follow exogamy. No person is allowed to marry in his own 'Kur'. A person belonging to 'Teran Kur' cannot marry in the 'Teran Kur'.

The marriage within the same clan is prohibited and the name is called 'Laicherem'.⁸² The Karbis have a good system of widow remarriage. The widow of the deceased may marry her brother-in-law. It is called 'the pateng parju'.⁸³

Tattooing

An interesting feature of a Karbi woman is the vertical black line drawn on her nose. Opinion differs on its origin. Some say it was the result of the frequent kidnappings of Karbi women by the Cacharis.

To save their women from the marauding Cacharis, the Karbi society ordered the women folk to tattoo their face. Thus, tattooing concept was not meant for beauty but was fear that drove them to it.

It was forbidden to those who accepted Christianity.⁸⁴

Need and Significance of the Study

There is a general appreciation of the fact that higher education provides the competencies that are required in different spheres of human activity, ranging from administration to agriculture, business, industry, health and communication and extending to arts and culture.

The World Bank document states that "Higher education is a paramount importance for economic and social development."

Institutions for higher education have the main responsibility for equipping individuals with the advance knowledge in government, business and the professions."⁸⁵ It adds "Higher education investments are important for economic growth. They increase the individuals productivity and incomes, as indicated by rate of return analysis, and they also produce significant external benefits not captured by such analysis."⁸⁶

UNESCO (1995) in its policy paper on 'Change and development of higher education' emphasizes that state and society

must perceive higher education, not as a burden but as a long time investment, in order to increase economic competitiveness, cultural development, and social cohesion."

UNESCO (1998) stressed that the far-reaching changes now taking place in the world, and the entry of human values into society based on knowledge and information, revealed how overwhelming important education and higher education are.

The present study deals with the development and problems of higher education in Barak-Valley and Karbi-Anglong areas of Assam. It is intended to trace the development since, its inception to its present state and to find out the problems of higher education in the areas and suggest for its improvement.

As we know, that the state of Assam comprises of a vast area with 23 districts. It has a rapid growth of population and a vast educational field too.

The need for investigating the area on the development of higher education in Barak-Valley and Karbi-Anglong areas of Assam is strongly felt because of the following reasons:

1. Educational facilities have expanded all over the country, ever since independence. However, the pattern of growth is not the same everywhere. It is different from one state to another. So also in Assam there is an unequal rate of educational development among the districts. For e.g., some districts are very well developed at all stages, of education whereas some are not. Many parts of lower Assam are still found to be backward especially in the field of higher education compared to the other districts of the state. The areas mentioned here are Barak Valley and Karbi-Anglong areas if Assam are still lagging behind regarding higher education, i.e. there is a dearth of research in the field of higher education in the state especially the southern part of Assam.
2. As a matter of fact, very less research was done regarding higher education in Bark Valley and Karbi-Anglong areas since independence. It gathered little momentum only after 1948; and was stabilized after coming up of the universities. The analysis of growth and research reveals that very little work was done in Higher education. There is practically less systematic study regarding development of higher education, and problems of higher education in Barak Valley and

Karbi-Anglong areas of Assam. It was noticed that very few research work had been done regarding higher education in that area. This suggests the needs to explore the areas in higher education with adequate priority.

3. In the recent years, particularly from the seventies a great deal of attention has been focused on new colleges and Universities, which as a result brought changes to the entire higher education system as a whole with the coming up of more institutions, the problems has also risen, which needs to be studied.
4. The Assam University is a newly established central university situated in Barak Valley (Silchar), has made the study more necessary.
5. The problems of higher education are immense and are growing day by day. Thus, by highlighting the problems of higher education in these districts, the investigator may suggest a solution to its problems, which would result in providing better education in these areas for the well being of the society as a whole.

**Table 1.3: Enrolment by Stages/Classes in Assam
(As on September 1996)***

Sl.No.	Stages/Classes	Assam
1.	Ph.D./D.Sc./M.Phil.	298
2.	M.A.	5654
3.	M.Sc.	3321
4.	M.Com.	813
5.	B.A.	120796
6.	B.Sc.	26181
7.	B.Com.	13830
8.	B.E./B.Arch.	3323
9.	B.Ed./B.T	2575
10.	M.B.B.S.	2356
11.	Junior Colleges/P.U./P. Degree	168432
12.	Higher Secondary (XI & XII)	125290
13.	High Schools (IX & X Classes)	539132
14.	Middle Schools (VI-VIII Classes)	1304504
15.	Primary School (I-V Classes)	3816603
16.	Primary Stage	23240
17.	Teacher Training Schools	89
18.	Poly Technique	4424
19.	Technical & Industrial School	4389

* Assam University: Fourth Annual Report, p. 119.

The above table when compared to all India level shows remarkable difference.

Table 1.4: Enrolment of Higher Education in all India Level

Sl. No.	Year	Total
1.	1990-1991	4039541
2.	1991-1992	4319253
3.	1992-1993	4541184
4.	1993-1994	4763731

Source: University Grants Commission, Statistical Abstract, 1998. p. 473.

Table 1.5: Enrolment of Higher Education in all Assam Level

Sl. No.	Year	Total
1.	1993-1994	118581
2.	1996-1997	170893
3.	1997-1998	340282*

* Assam Statistical handbook, Assam 1999. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Guwahati.

Source: a) Selected Educational Statistics, 1996-1997, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi.

b) North Eastern Council, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Shillong, Basic Statistic of North Eastern Region 2000.

There is an acute dearth of research work in higher education. When compared with the national level the picture of Assam is very discouraging, and even more discouraging is Barak Valley and Karbi-Anglong areas of Assam. Thus, there is an issue of concern of higher education. The need for research, the importance of higher education, the curriculum context, importance of introducing new courses, which should cater to the needs of the millennium etc., are perhaps some of the important issues to be decided urgently for overall interest of the people of that area, which calls for a need to study different alarming aspects of higher education at length which has not been conducted so far.

Statement of Problem

The statement of the problem is "A study of the development and problems of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam."

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of the present study, the following words have been accepted:

Development

It refers to progress of education over a period and to the quantitative as well as qualitative changes in higher education.

Higher Education

It refers to education in the Collegiate and university level, after the +2 stages. This does not include professional education. The stage of higher education covers the following stages — graduate, post-graduate and research levels.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To trace the development of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam.
2. To study the present system of administration and financing of higher education.
3. To study the problems faced by the institution of higher education with reference to
 - a. Academic,
 - b. Infrastructure dimension,
 - c. Administration,
 - d. Finance,
 - e. Others.

To investigate into the problems faced by teachers, and students of higher education.

Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to all the general higher institutions imparting higher education and a university (Assam University) falling under the Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is comprehensive. It covers the development and problems of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi

Anglong areas of Assam since its inception, i.e. when the first college was set up in the area up-to the year A.D. 2000.

The study also includes the various aspects of educational development of colleges confined to arts, science and commerce courses. A university is also included in it, where along with the colleges the growth of enrolment, examination, results, changes in academic courses, expenditure on higher education along with all their problems are studied. It also deals with the system of administration and financing of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam. The present study covers all stages and type of higher education in the area, i.e. Under graduate, Graduate, Post graduate and Research levels.

This study has been delimited only to the regular colleges (i.e. colleges comprising of arts, science and commerce) leaving out the professional colleges (i.e. Colleges of Engineering, Medical Science, Teachers Training, Law and Polytechnics etc.) A University, i.e. the Assam University is included in the study. As none had up-to date made a thorough study regarding higher education in that area especially after setting of the university, the investigator felt it necessary to take up the study. The present study will help for further study of the higher education in the North Eastern region.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is subjected to certain limitations:

1. The present study was limited to availability of relevant records and documents, official records and documents, regarding the development of higher education in that area especially Barak Valley was rather difficult to obtain. The only sources were offices/libraries of various places. Thus, the investigator had to depend only on these sources to trace the development of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam.
2. Questionnaires were administered to the principals of colleges and teachers and students of both colleges and university; to get first information about the development and problems of colleges.

3. The academic performance of students in the colleges for some years could not be made due to lack of relevant sources, since before the inception of Assam University, all the colleges in that area were affiliated to Guwahati University thus the study was limited to the availability of records from the Guwahati University. In this introductory Chapter, the background of the study is presented, highlighting the need and importance of the study, the objectives, scope, and limitations of the study. The finding of the present study will provide a full picture of the development and problems of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam. It is also expected that the findings of the present study will bring out, certain qualitative changes in higher education.

The next chapter deals with the development of higher education in Assam, especially from the mentioned areas, i.e. Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam.

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This book is an in-depth study of the development and problems of higher education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong areas of Assam. It traces the development since its inception and finds out the problems of higher education in the area. Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong are two small areas in Assam.

Barak Valley having three districts viz.; Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj. It is a natural extension of the Bengal plains with the socio-economic milieu similar to that of Bengal. Whereas Karbi Anglong is one of the Hill district of Assam having an autonomous council under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India with the headquarters at Diphu. The Karbi's are schedule tribes and predominantly inhabit Karbi Anglong district.

The need for investigation was felt due to the unequal expansion of higher education in the area, lack of systematic study in higher education, problems due to rapid growth of institutions which lack quality. Higher education has practically become a business and accessible to any one. Karbi Anglong area of Assam needs special attention as the area is lacking badly in higher education. Very little effort is being done by the government and private parties to uplift higher education.

The Assam University in Cachar district is a newly established university which has its own problems. Thus in this book Development and Problems of Higher Education in Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong, importance is given to the need of higher education, the curriculum context, the need for research, the need for introducing new courses and most of all giving higher education a very important place.

A thorough investigation has been done by the author and all the necessary maps, charts, data are provided for its readers.

This book should be useful for those readers who are interested in higher education particularly in this area.

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US \$ 40/-

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