

# PROGRESS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN ASSAM SINCE INDEPENDENCE

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**Abstract:** *Having realized the significance of education as a mechanism of social engineering and as an essential input in to the economic development of the country, educational opportunities were equalized by the constitution. Thus, Article 45 provided for free and compulsory education to all children in the age group 6-14 years and now this provision has become a Fundamental Right under Article 21A as a part of Right to Life. However despite the independent India's efforts over past six and a half decades and despite making commendable progress, educational opportunities though equal, the achievements by different sections and regions are still unequal. 100% literacy or even enrolment in Primary schools continues to be elusive and the state of Assam is not an exception. Therefore, an attempt has been initiated here to find out the progress of elementary educations in the state of Assam since independence. As it is considered that, the reasons for our failure to achieve 100% enrolment, even after 70 years of effort, do not lie just in the present social or political system but have historical roots. The study will be a great help to the academician, researcher, planner to devise and plan educational decisions so as to reconstruct the system of education and ensure that all eligible children get enrolled for at least elementary education and complete it successfully.*

**Keywords:** *Elementary Education, Development, Planning, Decision, Enrolment, Achievement.*

Assam Government, in its attempt to revamp the education system after independence, enacted the Assam Compulsory Primary Education Act in 1947 and introduced Free and Compulsory Primary Education for all children of 6-11 years of age. In 1954, The Assam Basic Education Act was passed adopted the Basic Education Model proposed by M. K. Gandhi. Subsequently, in 1962, the Assam Legislative Assembly passed another Elementary Education Act with a view to control the Elementary Education and to provide free and compulsory education to all the children of 6-14 years age in gradual stages.

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. Again, 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 and 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. This Act of 1968 provides for the management and control of elementary education and the provision of free and compulsory elementary education in Assam.

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 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.

However, to regulate the process of provincialisation and to make it more transparent, the Assam Government has enacted another Act in 1974 viz. The Assam Elementary Education (Provincialisation) Act 1974.

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 1-9 below summarize the achievement so far.

Table 1 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 1**  
**Elementary schools in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11**

Types of educational institutions	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71	*1980-81 (1977-78)	1990-91	2000-01	2010-11
Middle/ Sr. Basic	1023	2057	3208	5259	5703	8019	12985
Jr. Basic/ Basic Primary	11852	16879	19213	23679	28876	33236	35065
Elementary total	12875	18936 (47)	22421 (18.40)	28938 (29.07)	34579 (19.43)	41255 (19.31)	48050 (16.47)

\*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. Table 2 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.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Elementary schools for per lakh population in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11**

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

**Source:** Census of India, 1951-2011.

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.

Table 3 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%.

**Table 3**  
**Enrolment in elementary schools in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11**

Types of educational institutions	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	2000-01	2010-11
Middle/ Sr. Basic	110566	217276	390750	NA	1155236	1850151	1833169
Jr. Basic/ Basic Primary	666819	1092552	1471336	NA	3616759	3285840	3927798
Elementary total	777385	1309828 (68.49)	1862086 (42.16)	NA	4771995 (156.21)	5135991 (7.63)	5760967 (12.17)

Figures in parentheses are percentages.

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

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 4 gives the details of the number of teachers in elementary schools in Assam in the decades following independence.

**Table 4**  
**Teachers in elementary schools in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11**

Types of educational institutions	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	2000-01	2010-11
Middle/ Sr. Basic	3901	9882	16371	NA	38546	57059	137141
Jr. Basic/ Basic Primary	18362	27422	35442	NA	75287	86810	97931
Elementary total	22263	37304 (67.56)	51813 (38.89)	NA	113833 (119.7)	143869 (26.39)	235072 (63.39)

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

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.

Table 5 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.

**Table 5**  
**Number of teacher per school in Assam from 1950-51 to 2010-11**

Years	Number of schools		Number of teachers		Number of teachers per school	
	Primary	Middle	Primary	Middle	Primary	Middle
1950-51	11852	1023	18362	3901	1.59	3.8
1960-61	16879	2057	27422	9882	1.62	4.8
1970-71	19213	3208	35442	16371	1.84	5.1
1980-81	23679	5259	NA	NA	NA	NA
1990-91	28876	5703	75281	38546	2.6	6.8
2000-01	33236	8019	86810	57059	2.6	7.1
2010-11	35065	12985	97031	137141	2.8	10.56

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

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.

The table 6 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 6**  
**Students per teacher (Pupil Teacher Ratio) in Assam, 1950-51 to 2010-11**

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

**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 7 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 7**  
**Annual expenditure per student's in Elementary stage in Assam (In Rupees)**

Years	Number of students	Total expenditure	Expenditure per students
1950-51	777385	9160000	11.78
1960-61	1309828	37443000	28.59
2000-01	5135991	2086750000	406.3
2010-11	5760967	1159000000	201.18

**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.

Table 8 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 8**  
**Proportion of elementary school teachers by Academic Qualifications (excluding Contractual Teachers) in Assam and All India, 2011-12**

Level of Academic Qualifications	Primary only		Pri+Upp. Primary		Pri+U.p+Sec+ H.Sec		Upper Primary only		U.P+Sec+H.Se c		All Schools	
	Assam	All States	Assam	All States	Assam	All States	Assam	All States	Assam	All States	Assam	All States
Bellow	6.59	2.63	1.31	1.77	0.83	1.42	1.20	1.89	0.69	0.64	3.61	1.94

Secondary												
Secondary	56.81	16.47	28.22	24.53	5.77	5.53	9.61	5.32	4.14	6.29	30.53	12.85
Higher Sec.	27.31	28.81	28.22	24.53	20.06	11.79	47.75	18.46	13.28	6.96	32.40	22.33
Graduation	8.79	34.12	38.60	33.27	62.26	47.24	39.60	40.29	70.80	47.56	30.57	38.91
Post Graduation	0.35	17.05	2.73	14.85	9.97	31.32	1.16	32.80	9.97	36.48	0.112	22.61
M.Phil./ Ph.D.	0.04	0.50	0.17	0.47	0.50	1.38	0.08	0.58	0.32	1.27	0.12	0.72
Others	0.11	0.21	0.75	0.40	0.62	0.58	0.61	0.23	0.81	0.64	0.42	0.38

**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%.

Table 9 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%. 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%.

**Table 9**  
**Literacy Ratio Trends from 1951 to 2011 in Assam and India (Male & Female)**

Year	Assam			India		
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
1951	18.53	28.01	7.58	18.33	27.16	8.86
1961	32.95	44.28	18.62	28.30	40.40	15.35
1971	33.94	43.72	22.76	34.45	45.96	21.97
1981	NA	NA	NA	43.57	56.38	29.76
1991	52.90	61.90	43.03	52.21	64.13	39.29
2001	63.25	71.28	54.61	64.84	75.26	53.67
2011	73.18	78.81	67.27	74.04	82.14	65.46

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

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.

### Conclusion:

Therefore, the discussion made above revealed the following findings regarding the progress of elementary education in Assam since independence:

1. The progress of elementary education 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. There was 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.
5. A perusal of the study 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.
6. The study also revealed 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.

7. The study 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.
8. The data on teachers' qualification shows that, 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%.
9. The data shows that the progress in literacy rate 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.

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