

State of Primary Education: Regional Experience for Northeast India

Sahidul Ahmed

Literacy is growing fast in all the regions of the world. In India too more children are now getting education than before. But it is important to ask whether all the regions and states of India are growing equally or is there a variation, whether children are getting the minimum facilities in school, and all the regions and states of India are equally providing educational facilities to their children. This paper aims to analyse the status of primary education in India's North East. The analysis is carried out on the basis of some parameters associated with primary education, and it indicates the existence of intra-regional disparities in development of primary education.

Keywords: Primary education, Educational facilities, Northeast States

Introduction

Education is an important aspect of human resource development. Imparting of education leads to the improvement in understanding, perception, attitude and efficiency of working population (De: 2004: 12). Education helps in raising the quality of leadership of an individual, who attains the ability to guide the others in his/her group (Ghosh & De: 2002: 25). Education is the primary means to improve the quality of human life. The North East Region (NER)¹ of India comprised of seven states - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Though NER is very much rich in natural resources,² the region still comes under the backward states of India. The North Eastern States (NES) have some common characteristics like tribal concentration,³ hill area, high rurality, predominance of agriculture, industrial backwardness etc. (Ali & Das: 2003: 173). Table 1.1 shows the total population of the NES and their decadal growth rate along with density.

According to provisional 2011 Census, out of 44,980,293 people in NER about 31,169,272 people live in Assam which is about 69.29 percent population of NER and the rest is distributed in other six states. Among the north eastern states Meghalaya has the highest decadal population growth rate followed by Arunachal Pradesh. Nagaland

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Table 1.1: Population of the NER and Decadal Growth Rate

States	Total population	Decadal growth	Density		Sex Ratio
	2011		2001-2011	1991	
AP	1382611	25.8	10	13	920
Assam	31169272	16.9	284	349	954
Manipur	2721756	18.7	82	107	987
Meghalaya	2964007	27.8	78	103	986
Mizoram	1091014	22.8	33	42	975
Nagaland	1980602	-.5	73	120	931
Tripura	3671031	14.7	262	304	961

Source: for population and decadal growth of population, Census of India 2011 (provisional) and for density Census of India 2001.

has the lowest decadal growth (negative) rate. According to the 2011 Census, Kurung Kumey district of Arunachal Pradesh has the highest decadal population growth (111.01 per cent) in India. Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland have sex ratio below the national average and the rest of the NES have sex ratio above the national average. Manipur has the highest sex ratio among the North Eastern States.

It is a well known fact that knowledge is power and the main gateway to knowledge is education. Thus, education is the fundamental requirement not only for individuals but also for the success of a democratic system. Primary education is the initial stage of education. Free and compulsory education to all children up to the age 14 is a constitutional commitment in India.

In this paper the primarily concern is with the status of primary education of North East India. An analysis of the status of primary education of the North Eastern States is done on the basis of several parameters like literacy rate, access, growth of school, gross enrolment rate, dropout rate, number of teachers working in primary schools, teacher pupil ratio, single teacher school, academic qualification of teachers, professional qualification or training of the teachers, single classroom primary school, student classroom ratio, drinking water facilities in school, toilet facility in school and learning achievement of the students.

Literacy in North-Eastern States

Like many states of mainland India, the NES have also succeeded in increasing the literacy rate manifold and some NES even performed better than the national average (De 2004: 13). The performance of Mizoram is best among the NES and is placed third position among the Indian states, only behind Kerala and Lakshadweep. The growth of literacy in NER from 1971 to 2011 (provisional) is presented in table 1.2.

Among the states of NER, Mizoram has the highest literacy rate (91.58) and Arunachal Pradesh has the lowest (66.95) literacy rate. Arunachal Pradesh lies far behind the other states in spite of the fact that the literacy rate has increased many times since 1971 in Arunachal Pradesh. Of course, out of the seven states in the region five states are having higher literacy rate than the national average as per 2011 census (provisional).

Table 1.2: Literacy in NES, 1971-2011

States	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011 (P)
Arunachal Pradesh	11.3	25.4	41.2	54.4	66.95
Assam	28.2	--	53.4	64.2	73.18
Manipur	32.9	49.6	68.1	68.8	79.85
Mizoram	53.8	74.2	81.2	88.4	91.58
Meghalaya	29.5	42.0	48.2	63.3	75.48
Nagaland	27.4	50.2	61.3	61.3	80.11
Tripura	31.0	50.1	60.3	60.3	87.48
India	29.5	43.3	52.1	65.3	74.04

Source: Various census reports and provisional census report of 2011

-- = census has not done in Assam in 1981

The literacy rate of Assam is 73.18 according to 2011 census and it is below the national average. It is also notable that the literacy rate of Assam was higher than the national average in the year 1991, but in the subsequent censuses (2001), the literacy rate of Assam came below the national average. The provisional census report of 2011 has also revealed this fact. According to some Goswami (2009: 29), this is happening because of the influx of Bangladeshi immigrants into this region.

The male-female literacy difference varies among the NES significantly. Table 1.3 presents the male-female difference in literacy among NES. In the entire North Eastern Region male literacy is higher than their female counterparts. But when we compare the female literacy of NES with all India average, we find that the states of this region are doing well in case of female literacy. Except Arunachal Pradesh, all other states of NER have higher female literacy rate than the all India average. Among the NES, Mizoram has the highest female literacy (89.40) rate followed by Tripura (83.15). On the other hand Arunachal Pradesh (59.57) and Assam (67.27) are placed at the bottom. The States/UTs which could reduce male-female literacy gap under 10 percentage points or less are: Chandigarh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, Lakshadweep, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Out of the eight states in India which have achieved this milestone, four are from NER.

In Assam, the difference of literacy between male and female is lower compared to the difference at the national level. The difference of literacy between male and female in Assam is 11.54 percentage points on the other hand in India, it is 16.68 percentage points. So we can say that though the literacy rate in Assam lower than the national average but Assam is doing better in terms of gender equality in educational opportunities.

In terms of social status, the population of India may be divided into four categories: Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Other Backward Class (OBC) and General Category. The greatest concentration of SC population in India can be found in

Table 1.3: Difference in Literacy between Male and Female (in per cent)

States	1971		1981		1991		2001		2011	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
A.P	17.8	.37	28.9	11.3	51.45	20.69	64.07	44.24	73.59	59.57
Assam	37.2	19.3	--	--	61.87	43.03	71.93	56.03	78.81	67.27
Manipur	46.0	19.5	53.3	29.1	71.63	47.60	77.87	59.70	86.49	73.17
Mizoram*	--	--	64.5	54.9	85.61	78.60	90.69	86.13	93.72	89.40
Meghalaya	34.1	24.6	37.9	30.1	53.12	44.85	66.14	60.41	77.17	73.78
Nagaland	35.0	18.7	50.1	33.9	67.62	54.75	71.77	61.92	86.49	73.17
Tripura	40.2	21.2	51.7	32.0	70.58	49.65	81.47	65.41	92.18	83.15
India	39.5	18.7	46.9	24.8	64.13	39.29	75.85	54.16	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India, various issues, *Basic Statistics of North-Eastern Region, 1980
 -- = Data not Available, M= Male, F= Female

Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, West Bengal, Utter Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Orissa. ST populations are mainly concentrated in NER, besides, ST population is also found in Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

As per the 2001 Census, the average literacy rate of STs of India is 47.1 percent and among SCs, it is 54.7 percent. The literacy rate of ST population is 42.2 percent in rural area and 70 percent in urban area. About 53.8 percent male population of ST community is literate against 30.1 percent for female. The literacy rate of SC population in rural area is 46.6 percent and in urban area, it is 66.2 percent. About 58.8 percent male population of SC community is literate against 33.6 percent for female. There is a significant gap in the literacy of general category people and SC and ST people in India.

In table 1.4, we have presented the literacy position of the marginalised groups of NER. SC and ST population are found in all the NES of India, except in Nagaland where SC population is not available (Census: 2001). All the NES have high literacy rate of SC population compared to the all India average. The same is also true in case of ST population as well.

Access

Among the components of quality education, universal access is the most important through which free access to both primary and upper primary schooling facilities are judged. Universal access in India is measured in terms of availability of primary and upper primary schools within a distance of one and three kilometers respectively from the habitation.¹ The national norms of distance and population size are indicative in nature as the states have their own norms in view of factors like hilly areas, bordering districts, difficult areas, SC and ST dominant areas, etc.

Assam has the highest number of habitations among the NES. About 68.37 percent population of NER lives in Assam (table 1.1). Table 1.5 exhibits the habitations with

Table 1.4: Literacy Rate of SC and ST in NER

States	Schedule Caste	Schedule Tribe
Arunachal Pradesh	67.6	49.6
Assam	66.8	62.5
Manipur	72.3	65.9
Meghalaya	56.3	61.3
Mizoram	89.2	89.3
Nagaland	NA	65.9
Sikkim	63.0	67.1
Tripura	74.7	56.5
India	54.7	47.1

Source: Census 2001

primary schools/sections at different distance in 2005. It is observed from table 4.5 that among the NES, Assam is placed second from the bottom on the subject of lowest percent (56.13) habitations with a primary school. The condition of Tripura is very pathetic having only 46.30 percent of its habitations with a primary school. In NER, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam are the states which have less number of schools within a habitation.

Table 1.5: Habitations with Primary Schools at Different Distance (in km), 2005

state	Habitations With Primary Schools/Sections at a Distance (in km) of							Total
	Within the habitation	Up to 0.5	0.6 to 1.0	Up to 1.0	1.1 to 1.5	1.6 to 2.0	More than 2.0	
Assam	56.13	13.40	18.52	88.05	5.16	4.10	2.70	100
Arunachal Pradesh	69.17	1.98	7.72	78.87	1.27	5.37	14.49	100
Manipur	75.29	8.99	6.89	91.16	12.3	2.87	4.73	100
Meghalaya	84.13	4.24	5.29	93.65	0.69	2.66	2.99	100
Mizoram	97.13	0.04	0.44	97.73	0.04	0.28	1.95	100
Tripura	46.30	14.26	27.73	88.29	0.48	8.05	3.18	100
Nagaland	95.91	0.12	0.49	96.23	0.19	1.41	1.87	100
India	78.17	6.69	9.31	94.17	1.66	2.51	1.66	100

Source: <http://gov.ua.nic.in/NScheduleData/main3.aspx?flag=2>

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) had made norms that there should be a primary school in a habitation within one kilometer. When we compare the states on this norm, we found that only 88.05 percent habitations of Assam have a school within in a distance of one kilometer. Among the other NES, Arunachal Pradesh has the lowest habitations with a primary school within one kilometer (78.87 percent). Mizoram has the highest number of habitations (97.73 percent) with a primary school within one kilometer distance.

The data on child population age 6 to below 11 years and 11 to below 14 years are not widely available. Very recently some data are available regarding the child popula-

Table 1.6: Estimated Child Population in NER

States	6 to below 11 years	11 to below 14
Assam	3646710	2119684
Arunachal Pradesh	168456	93331
Manipur	281505	187974
Mizoram	108782	68651
Meghalaya	351067	209778
Tripura	376290	270939
Nagaland	285821	192768

Source: <http://gov.ua.nic.in/aises/national/fs2.htm>

tion with categorisation. We compare the data of child population among the NES; it becomes clear that Assam has the highest reservoir of child population both between 6 to below 11 years and 11 to below 14 years categories. Table 1.6 exhibits the estimated child population in NES. The total number of 6 to below 11 children in Assam (3646710) is more than the total number of 6 to below 11 children in all other 6 NES (1571921). This is also true for 11 to below 14 years children category.

From these data we can say that in near future Assam needs more number of primary schools and upper primary schools. The existing facilities for primary and upper primary schools will not be sufficient. Only 88.01 percent of habitations of Assam have a primary school within a distance of 1 kilometer and about 88.36 percent of habitation of Assam has an upper primary school within a distance of 3 kilometer. On the other hand the most educationally backward state of India, Bihar has a better condition than Assam. For Bihar it is 95.40 and 89.33 respectively.

Growth of Schools

India has experienced a high growth of educational institution especially in primary education. Table 1.7 shows the growth of primary educational institution in NES since independence. To improve the accessibility of primary education, government of India has given special importance in establishing new schools where primary schools are not available. In North Eastern States also, it has been observed that since independence the number of educational institution has increased many time. State governments have tried to increase the number of primary education in the states. As a result, in every states of NER, the number of primary school has increased.

From table 1.7 it is clear that in NES the total number of primary schools has been increasing gradually. State governments of every state have tried to establish primary school in every corner of the states where the facilities are not available. In spite of government endeavor, there are many places and habitations where primary school is yet to be established. But considering all the aspects, we can say that the NES are quite successful to increase their number of primary school since independence.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

As the data of net enrolment ratio is not available for all the states of NES, except Assam and Meghalaya, so we have used the GER data to interpret the enrolment scenario of the

Table 1.7: Growth of Schools in NER States

States	1978	1996	2006
Arunachal Pradesh	841	1256	1380
Assam	21315	30140	30499
Manipur	3516	2548	2552
Meghalaya	3477	4235	5851
Mizoram	518	1268	1688
Nagaland	1114	1414	1520
Tripura	1572	2045	1863

Source: For 1978 and 1996, Basic Statistics of North Eastern States and for 2005-06, Selected Educational Statistics (those data are only for government schools)

Table 1.8: Gross Enrolment Ratio NES

State	2009-10
Arunachal Pradesh	231
Assam	115
Manipur	161.5
Meghalaya	206.5
Mizoram	207.7
Nagaland	142.2
Tripura	141.41
India	115.63

Source: DISE 2009-10

North East. Despite significant achievement in few states, some other states remained far behind, reporting a high gross enrolment ratio. This means that school aged children are not enrolled in school in due time.

From table 1.8, it is clear that Arunachal Pradesh (231) has the highest GER among the NES followed by Mizoram and Meghalaya. Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura are having GER higher compared to the national average. This means that in those states school aged children are not enrolled in primary school in proper time or in other word we can say that over aged children are reading in primary school.

Dropout

The saddest part of our education is the discontinuing of education by students in the process. In our education system dropout still exists though governments have taken many measures to reduce the dropout rate especially in primary stage of education. Researchers very often find out the reasons of dropouts and there is a common tendency that students and family are blamed for the dropouts. Table 1.9 represents the dropout scenario of primary education in NER.

From table 1.9, it is clear that NES are suffering from the cancer (dropout is treated as a cancer of education). The dropout rate in Arunachal Pradesh is 20.70 percent which is the highest among the NES followed by Meghalaya (17.28) and Nagaland (11.41).

Table 1.9: Dropout Rate in NER States (Primary Education) (in per cent)

State	2007-08	2008-09
Arunachal Pradesh	16.60	20.70
Assam	12.66	9.64
Manipur	19.62	10.48
Meghalaya	18.59	17.28
Mizoram	7.28	5.28
Nagaland	2.78	11.41
Tripura	2.68	8.82

Source: DISE 2009-10

Table 1.10: Number of Teachers in Primary Schools, NER

States	Male	Female	Total
A. Pradesh	2518	1112	3630
Assam	53811	29077	82888
Manipur	4939	3094	8033
Meghalaya	7300	6445	13745
Mizoram	3015	2954	5969
Nagaland	5159	2968	8127
Tripura	6145	1891	8036
India	1318660	842006	2160666

Source: DISE-2007-08

Another important observation regarding the dropout in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Tripura is that the same has increased in 2008-09 compared to 2007-08. On the other hand Mizoram has the lowest dropout rate among the NES.

Number of Teachers and Teacher Pupil Ratio in Primary Education

The teacher plays the main role in enhancement of learning provisions in school setting. It is not possible to achieve quality education unless the teachers are committed to it. Committed teachers can bring all concerned, individuals and institutions, in providing quality education. It is thus important to understand them, their academic grounding and training, teaching load, teacher-student ratio, etc.

Table 1.10 exhibits the total number of teachers working in primary schools in NES. Table 1.10 shows that Assam has the highest number of teachers and Arunachal Pradesh has the least number of teachers working in primary schools among NES. Table 1.11 shows the Teacher Pupil Ratio (TPR) of NES. From table 1.11 it is clear that Assam has the highest (27) TPR among NES. Tripura has occupied second (22) position in the list. Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Meghalaya are having TPR of twenty. The average TPR of NES is 21, whereas Assam's ratio is 27.

We observe that though enrollment has increased by several times over the years, the number of teachers has not increased at the same pace in many cases and hence TPR has increased at the detriment to proper teaching.

Table 1.11: Teacher Pupil Ratio, NER

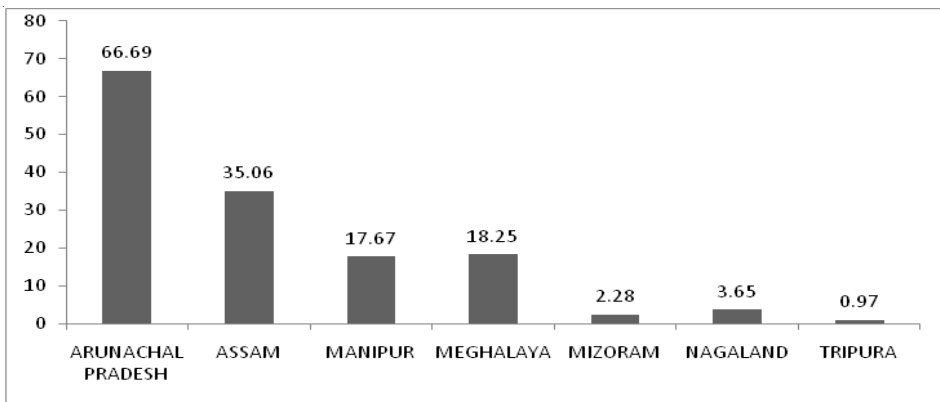
States	TPR
Arunachal Pradesh	20
Assam	27
Manipur	20
Nagaland	18
Mizoram	20
Meghalaya	20
Tripura	22

Source: Elementary Education in India, Analytical Report 2007-08

Single Teacher Schools (STS)

The percentage of STS over a period of time has declined significantly. However, a fairly good number of schools both in rural and urban areas are having only one teacher. According to Elementary Education in India (EEI) 2007-08, 95 percent of STS are located in rural areas and remaining 5 percent are situated in urban areas. Figure 1.1 shows the picture of STSs in NER states. The problem of STSs is mainly a rural problem in general and hill and tribal concentrated areas in particular. Arunachal Pradesh have the highest STSs (66.69 percent) followed by Assam (35.06 percent). Practically every second schools of Arunachal Pradesh and every fourth schools of Assam is an STS. About 18.25 percent primary schools in Meghalaya and 17.67 percent primary schools in Manipur are STSs. On the other hand states and union territories like Delhi, Chandigarh and Daman and Diu have reported no STS in their state. Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura are having very few schools where only one teacher is responsible for all school related activity.

There are several causes for STS in NER. Among those shortage of teachers is the major cause and there is no doubt about it. But, we have also observed that teachers' apathy to go to hilly and remote areas is also a reason for STS. As we all know that insurgency is at its zenith in all NES and hence, teachers are not willing to risk their life by moving into the remote areas.

Figure 1.1: Single-Teacher School in NER States (in percent)

Source: Elementary Education in India, Analytical Report 2007-08

Teachers' Academic Qualification

The state-specific distribution of teachers in primary schools by academic qualifications (table 1.12) reveals that about 8.44 percent of Assam, 4.78 percent of Manipur, 13.6 percent of Meghalaya, 17.94 percent of Mizoram, 15.22 percent of Nagaland, and 31.95 percent of Tripura's primary teachers were having academic qualification below secondary level. On the other hand only 9.08 percent of Assam, 33.50 percent of Manipur, 11.69 percent of Meghalaya, 14.36 percent of Mizoram, 18.41 percent of Nagaland and 5.46 percent of Tripura primary teachers are having graduation degree.

A very nominal percent of primary teachers are having post-graduation degree or M.Phil or PhD degree. Most of the teachers are only secondary or higher secondary passed. States like Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Delhi, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the majority (above 50 percent) of primary school teachers are graduates and above. Uttarakhand has more post-graduate primary school teachers (35.92 percent) than teachers having graduate degrees (31.47 percent) and the percentage of such female teachers is more than their male counterparts.

Table 1.12: Academic Qualification of the Teachers

States	Below secondary or secondary level	Graduate
Arunachal Pradesh*	*	*
Assam	8.44	9.08
Manipur	4.78	33.50
Meghalaya	13.6	11.69
Mizoram	17.94	14.36
Nagaland	15.22	18.41
Tripura	31.95	5.46

Source: Elementary Education in Rural India, where do we stand? Analytical Table 2008-09

*= data not available

Teachers' Professional Qualification

Teachers' professional qualification is one of the vital factors which make teaching-learning process more effective and lively. In Assam, only 37.23 percent school teachers (both regular and para-teachers) are having training or professional qualification. It is more for regular teachers (39.15) compared to para-teachers (15.23). Only 27.78 percent teachers (both regular and para-teachers) of Arunachal Pradesh are having professional qualification and 37.86 percent teachers of Manipur are having professional qualification. Mizoram is the only states of NER, where more than fifty percent teachers are having professional qualification.

From table 1.13, it is observed that the percentage of teachers with professional qualification have decreased from the previous years in most of the NES but Nagaland and Tripura are exceptional among NES where teachers with professional qualification has increased in 2007-08 compared to 2006-07. The main reason for increase in the number of teachers without professional qualification or training is the new appoint

ments of the teachers without professional qualification under Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) (especially para-teacher) to meet the shortage of the teacher.

A significant number of para-teachers are imparting education to children, both in rural areas as well as urban areas. It has already been mentioned earlier that less number of para-teachers have professional qualification, though the government had taken the matter (in-service training) seriously. Most of the para-teachers (primary level) are offered very short time training programme.

An evaluation study by Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata in 2005 on assessment of in-service teachers training programme has revealed that though the training programmes have been successful in sensitising the teachers about the need for learning modern pedagogical tools, they have not been effective in orienting teachers with regard to inter-group disparities. A substantial number of teachers say that gender issues and issues related to disabled children have not been adequately focused in the training programmes.

Table 1.13: Percentage of Teachers with Professional Qualifications or Training

States	All Teachers (Regular & Para-Teachers)		Only Regular Teachers		Para-Teachers				
	2006-07	2007-08	2006-07	2007-08	Under All Managements		Under G. M.	Under G.	Under All P.M.
					2006-07	2007-08			
Assam	39.77	37.23	41.54	39.15	15.72	15.23	15.35	9.14	11.94
Arunachal Pradesh	35.02	27.78	37.21	31.97	21.42	7.78	7.15	40.00	15.74
Manipur	39.43	37.86	39.64	38.17	23.86	18.04	31.45	6.90	11.46
Meghalaya	33.81	29.54	34.52	30.47	22.35	15.85	28.85	14.02	13.33
Mizoram	60.48	56.62	70.61	70.33	16.61	14.61	23.20	12.20	3.77
Nagaland	15.92	19.70	15.93	19.69	13.82	21.47	22.86	100.0	17.65
Tripura	38.47	40.25	39.15	40.85	19.75	20.90	20.76	20.00	22.73
India	78.21	77.68	81.85	80.90	44.88	45.54	46.06	60.09	52.99

Source: Elementary Education in rural India, where do we stand? Analytical Table 2007-08

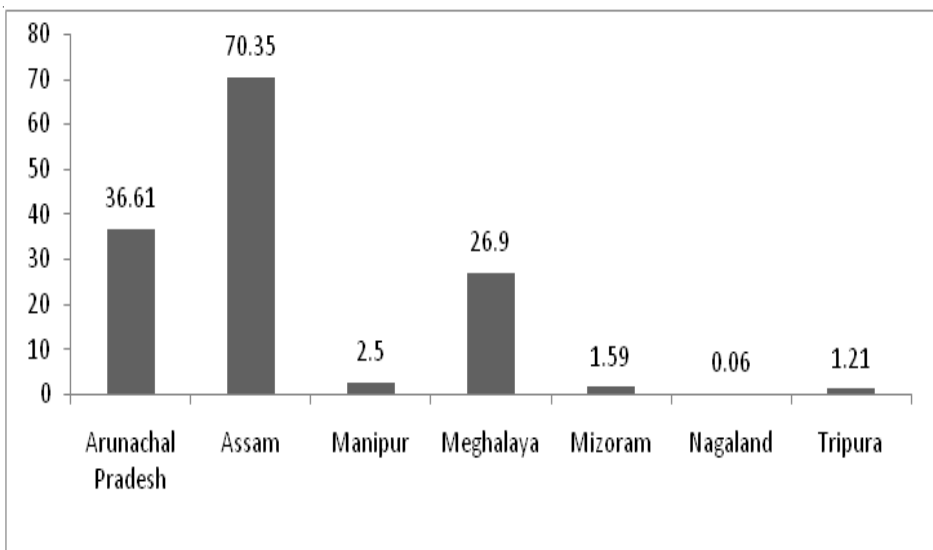
* Percentage is computed based on all teachers including those who have not responded and reported not having professional qualification.

Single Classroom Schools (SCS)

Having adequate number of instructional rooms with requisite facilities is an essential requirement for effective learning in every school. In this context, the Government of India initiated the Operation Black Board 1987. Each school which is covered under the scheme was to be provided with two classrooms and a verandah. The District Primary Education Programme, launched in 1994-95, had also provided additional classrooms to a number of schools. In 2001, the remaining districts were covered under SSA and a number of new schools and class room have been constructed in the schools where there is shortage of class room.

For quality learning in primary schools, sufficient space and an organised class room is very important where children can act learning activities comfortably and safely. Most of the child centric education systems always advocated for adequate space in class room for effective teaching and learning. Children maximum physical growth is observed in the age between 6 to 14 when they are studying in primary school. So, in every class room there must be adequate space for the activities through which they can get the minimum facilities for psycho-motor development. Figure 1.2 presents the percentage of SCS in NES. It reveals that Assam (70.35) has the highest percentage of schools which have only single classroom followed by Arunachal Pradesh with 36.61 percent and Meghalaya with 26.9 percent. On the other hand only 0.06 percent of Nagaland, 2.5 percent of Manipur and 1.56 of Mizoram's schools are SCS. Another matter of concern is that the conditions of the existing primary school classrooms are also not in good condition. In Assam, about 32.16 percent classrooms in primary schools needed minor and 37.06 percent major repairs.

Figure 1.2: Percentage of Single Classroom Primary Schools



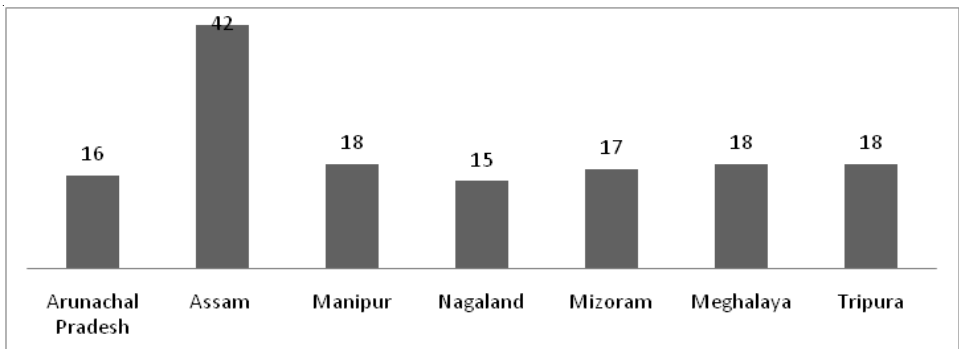
Source: Elementary Education in India, Analytical Report 2007-08

Student Classroom Ratio

Student-Classroom Ratio (SCR) is also considered as one of the indicators to measure the standard of education. SCR presents average number of pupils sitting in one classroom. Figure 1.3 shows the picture of SCR in NES. It is clear from the figure that except Assam, all other NES have excellent SCR. They have one class for every twenty or less students. Among all the states of the Indian Union, Assam occupies fourth position with 42 students for every classroom. Bihar (97:1), Jharkhand (70:1) and West Bengal (46:1) are the top placed states. The comparisons of Assam with other NES reveal the seriousness of the problem regarding SCR in the state.

The average SCR in Assam was 42 for the year 2007-08, while this figure is not exceeding 20 for all other NES. High student class room ratio means less space in class room which seriously influences the learning of the students.

Figure 1.3: Student Classroom Ratio



Source: Elementary Education in India, Analytical Report 2007-08

Drinking Water in School

Water is essential for human's life. Availability of drinking water in school is the most essential facility which every school must provide. Elementary education in India 2007-08 report has revealed about the drinking water facilities in primary schools of India. Table 1.14 exhibits the drinking water facilities in the schools of NES. It shows that drinking water facility is worst in most of the NES. Though there are variations among the NES, all the states lay below the all India average. In Meghalaya, the scenario is more acute compared to the other NES, where only 52.21 percent primary schools have drinking water facility, and in Assam this is only 63.05 percent. Mizoram (78.78) has the highest primary schools having water facilities followed by Manipur (73.40). The provision of drinking water facility is somehow better in the primary schools which are attached with upper primary schools or with secondary or higher secondary schools in all NES.

Schools Having Toilet Facilities

Like drinking water, toilet facility in school is also very important to maintain hygiene in

Table 1.14: Percentage of Schools having Drinking Water Facility

States	Primary school
Arunachal Pradesh	59.53
Assam	63.05
Manipur	73.40
Nagaland	69.14
Mizoram	78.78
Meghalaya	52.21
Tripura	72.19
India	85.40

Source: Elementary Education in India, Analytical Report 2007-08, Data for Government Schools only

the school. It helps the school managements and the teachers to keep the school surroundings neat and clean and also to maintain discipline, especially in the higher grade of primary stage. Separate toilet facility for the girls is a must in the upper primary school and higher stage of education. UNICEF is giving importance in providing gender-responsive sanitation facilities in schools, because it ensures privacy and safety. When talking with girls, it was found in the field survey that many students especially girls do not want to go school as there is no toilet facility in school. Many parents said that when they (students) feel the need to go to toilet they use to come home and they are not willing to go to school again.

Table 1.15 shows the percentage of primary school having toilet facility. Among the NES Arunachal Pradesh has the highest percent (11.89) of primary schools which do not have toilet facility in school followed by Assam. Only 22.47 percent primary schools of Assam have toilet facility. Only 35.83 percent of Manipur and 24.99 percent of Meghalaya are having toilet facilities in primary schools. Form the above figure it is clear that in terms of toilet facilities in primary schools, most of the NES are below the national average.

A separate toilet facility for girls in primary school is very important especially in upper grades of primary school which secures privacy and security. But it has been found that NES are not giving much importance on this matter. Few schools are having separate toilet facilities for girl students separately (figure 1.4). Only 10.2 percent schools of Meghalaya and 10.5 percent schools of Assam have separate toilet facilities for girls. Only 11.9 percent schools of Arunachal Pradesh and 18 percent schools of Manipur have separate toilet facilities for girls. In Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura this facility is a bit better than the above mentioned states. About 23.5 percent schools of Mizoram, 27 percent schools of Nagaland and 22.6 percent school of Tripura are having separate toilet facilities for girls.

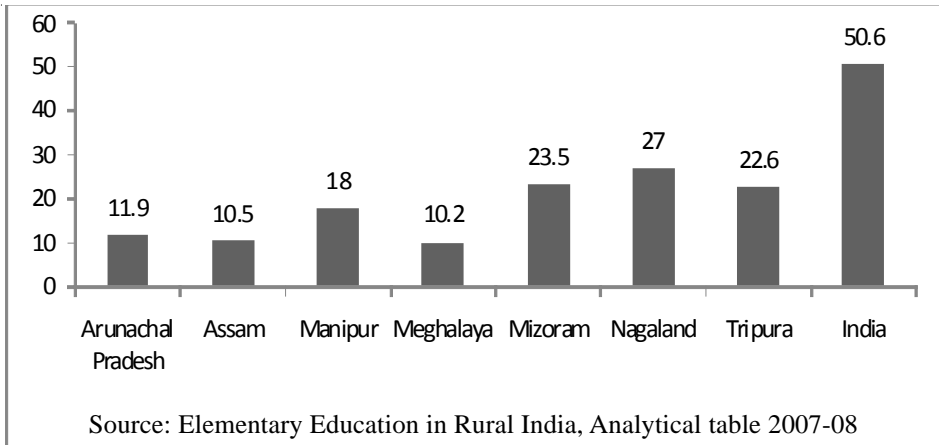
Learning Achievement of the Students of NER States

Here we have used mainly National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) and Annual Status of Educational Report (ASER) data to analyse the status of

Table 1.15: Schools with Toilet Facility

States	In Per cent
Assam	22.47
Arunachal Pradesh	11.89
Manipur	35.83
Mizoram	69.26
Meghalaya	24.99
Nagaland	76.30
Tripura	62.88
India	57.90

Source: Elementary education in Rural India, Analytical table 2007-08

Figure 1.4: Schools having Separate Toilet Facilities for Girls (in per cent)

the learning achievements of the students of NES.

National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 has recommended the conduct of periodical achievement survey at all stage of school education. This aspect of measurement has also been given importance by the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2000.

A number of learning achievement survey have been conducted in India by various policy making institutions, central government institutions, state government institutions, independent institutions, NGOs and other scholars. Though there are many studies in this field of learning achievement of the students, the literature is not easily available. Very less numbers of studies are available in print format. To conduct the study different agencies or institution have used different methodology. Moreover, both the subject and level of education differ in them. So it is not authentic to make comparison among these data sets. Therefore, to compare the status of learning achievement of students of primary education, we have only used those studies which have used same methodology and have conducted the study simultaneously in all the NES. And for this, we only used

two reports to compare the learning achievement of the students of NES, namely Learning Achievement of Class V students - a base line study by NCERT and ASER by Pratham.

NCERT study

In Learning Achievement of class V students - a base line study conducted by NCERT, six states of NER, except Meghalaya, have participated. In the survey of students learning on environment studies, Manipur has performed well among the NES followed by Arunachal Pradesh. Nagaland, Mizoram and Assam are the states who have performed below the national average, though the difference of Nagaland and Mizoram with national average is very nominal i.e. less than one point. But the difference between Assam and national average is very high i.e. above seven points as indicated in Table 1.16.

Manipur has occupied first position in mathematics achievement followed by Arunachal Pradesh. In mathematics also Assam was at the bottom among the north eastern states. In language, Manipur again was the best performer among the NES. The performance of Mizoram was far better in language than environment and mathematics. Mizoram students were placed second in language test among the NES whereas Arunachal Pradesh was placed third. It is very important to observe that all the NES have high learning achievement in language than all India average except Assam. So from the above analysis we can say that Assam is the only state which performed consistently worst among the NES in all the tested subjects of class V.

Manipur, the most insurgency affected state of NER has performed best among the NES in the NCERT learning achievement survey. We tried to find out the reasons with the help of secondary data but could not arrive at any conclusion as it needs more time and efforts (researcher has to visit Manipur and has to conduct learning achievement test, interview with the students, parents and school teacher) but our research area, scope and time do not permit us to do so. However, it appears that the strong push factor at home has acted as the motivator for the students to excel in studies in Manipur. Many students from Manipur go out of their state for higher studies as their parents wish to keep them away from the war front and as a result they have to face competition at the time of admission. It is plausible that this phenomenon makes the students of Manipur more competitive than students of other NES. However, this phenomenon calls for explanation based on further empirical research.

ASER study

We have analysed the learning achievement of the students of different states of NES on the basis of Annual Status of Education Report (ASER).⁵ In the ASER 2010 there is an article titled "Challenge of ASER in north east" where the authors discussed about their experience in the NER during collection of raw data from the rural areas of the NES. They felt that it was very challenging. Most of the NES are affected by insurgency problems.

Table 1.17 presents the leaning achievement of the students of different NES in ASER survey. Among the NES, Mizoram has performed well in language in ASER 2010 followed by Meghalaya. In mathematics too Mizoram is placed first position and followed by Manipur. Arunachal Pradesh is the worst performer state in language and Assam

Table 1.16: Performance of the States in Different Subjects

States	Environment studies	Mathematics	Language
Arunachal Pradesh	60.40	53.47	61.33
Assam	42.90	40.03	49.16
Manipur	73.60	74.46	73.39
Mizoram	49.93	41.07	66.91
Nagaland	50.05	45.71	59.55
Tripura	54.50	52.71	63.79
India	50.30	46.51	58.57

Source: NCERT, Learning achievement of class V students Baseline Study 2001

Table 1.17: Performance of NES in ASER**Table 1.17: Performance of NES in ASER**

States	2010		2009		2008	
	% students of a state of standard III-V who can read level one text or more	% student of a state of standard III-V who can do subtraction or more	% students of a state of standard III-V who can read level one text or more	% student of a state of standard III-V who can do subtraction or more	% students of a state of standard III-V who can read level one text or more	% student of a state of standard III-V who can do subtraction or more
A. Pradesh	57.5	61.7	75.5	89.8	64.9	72.6
Assam	59.2	46.5	58.5	50.4	59.4	45.3
Manipur	72.4	69.1	77.3	81.5	80.3	80.2
Meghalaya	76.5	63.8	59.6	61.5	66.6	64.5
Mizoram	89.2	84.3	73.5	79.3	87.2	92.0
Nagaland	69.4	65.3	69.0	73.1	71.7	68.6
Tripura	70.0	65.3	52.1	58.1	56.7	47.0

Source: ASER, various issues

is the worst performer state in mathematics in ASER 2010.

We have compared the trend of learning achievement of the students of class III-V over the years and have found a very alarming fact. Out of seven states for which we have compared the learning achievement trend, six states have experienced negative growth of learning achievement either in language or in mathematics. Tripura is the only state of NER which has experienced a positive growth of learning achievement in both language and mathematics. Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur have a negative growth in student learning achievement in both subjects. Arunachal Pradesh has a -7.4 point growth and Manipur has -7.9 point growth in reading and on the other hand Arunachal Pradesh has a -10.9 point growth and Manipur has a -11.1 point growth in mathematics. Assam and Nagaland have a negative learning achievement growth of -.2 and -2.3 respectively in language. On the other hand Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura have a positive growth in students learning achievement.

Meghalaya and Mizoram have a negative learning achievement growth of -.7 and -7.7 respectively in Mathematics. On the other hand Assam, Nagaland and Tripura have a positive students leaning achievement growth in Mathematics. From the above discussion it is evident that most of the NES are experiencing negative learning achievement growth rate which have several effects on individual and societal level as well.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, we can say that in term of literacy, except, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, all other NES are doing well compared to other states of India. Most of the NES are having very low gender literacy gap, high ST and SC literacy rate which signify that NER is providing equal educational opportunities for all section of the society.

Our regional experience in this chapter indicates the existence of intra-regional disparities with respect to development of primary education. In terms of learning achievement of the students, NES are also having similar kind of problems faced by India as well as the world such as poor performance by the students in learning achievement tests, gender difference, rural-urban difference etc. However, some NES have reached a satisfactory position compared to other states of India.

J.S. Mill, the famous English philosopher once observed that education does not perform anything but there is hardly anything which education does not perform (cited in Bhat, 2006). The Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, stresses upon the importance of education in general and elementary education in particular for the development of a country (The Guardian, 2003). The resources spent on development of human capital are inevitable investment for the growth of a nation. Education is, thus, considered as the main instrument of development. A well planned and standard educational system can resolve the problems of underdevelopment of an area to a large extent.

The regional specific position and requirements for the NES in relation to educational opportunities are listed below:

1. Dropout rates, particularly among girls should be reduced at the primary stage of education. All the NES are having drop out problem, even though in some states it is not as serious as other states of NER. Compared to other NES, the state of Meghalaya and

Arunachal Pradesh have to take the matter of drop out seriously and initiate specific programs for wastage and stagnation.

2. NEER of India is a hilly region. So, the geographical condition of this region is not similar with other regions of India. Both, state and central governments have to give some relaxation in opening a new school in NES compared to other states of India.

3. Fresh appointments are required to reduce the single teacher schools and TPR. In the process of teacher recruitment for primary schools female candidates should be given preference. Academic qualification of teachers must be considered at the time of appointment in primary schools.

4. Strengthening teachers training institution of NES and pre-service training should be made compulsory for all the teachers at primary level.

5. Special strategies need to be devised to ensure greater access to schools for children in backward regions, remote locations, and children belonging to SC/ST and Muslim communities and Other Backward Class (OBC).

6. Adequate facilities such as drinking water and toilet in schools need to be created for hygiene and safety.

Notes

¹ Northeast India refers to the easternmost region of India consisting of the contiguous [Seven Sister States](#), [Arunachal Pradesh](#), [Assam](#), [Manipur](#), [Meghalaya](#), [Mizoram](#), [Nagaland](#) and [Tripura](#).

² Natural oil, coal, wood etc.

³ Adis, Apatanis, Angami, Ao, Rengma, Nyishi, Garo, Khasi, Jaintias, Lushais, Kukis, Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Deori, Boro, Bhutani, Lepchas, Rieng and Tripuris.

⁴ The norms are often relaxed in the case of hilly and tribal areas, different terrains and border districts.

⁵ We use District Information For School Education (DISE) data to analyse the points. Net enrollment rate data for all the NE states are not available in DISE.

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