SCHOOL EDUCATION OF THE GIRLS

IN NAGAON DISTRICT

The most valuable asset of a nation is its human resource. Developed nations are advanced not because of their high rise buildings and latest infrastructure, but because of the quality of human resource they possess. In today's world the countries who have learnt to invest in their human resource are the most progressive and developed nations. Women, the first school of the child, constitute roughly one half of the world's population. But their social, economic and political status is lower than that of men in almost all countries of the world. Of course, women do enjoy better position in some societies than in others, but their overall position everywhere is lower than their male counterparts. Even in countries and societies where there is constitutional provision for equal fundamental rights for all, the position of women remains painful.

Education is the key factor in the social, economic and political development of a society. The Third world countries have realized the importance of the social development of women in the overall development of the nation and this depends on the position of women's education, as women have an important role to play in development of a country.

The women of India have suffered neglect in the matter of education throughout the ages, seriously affecting their intellectual development and social status. The Constitution of India mandates universal and compulsory education for all. A number of programmes have been implemented and are still under implementation to improve the female literacy rate. Some states have made remarkable progress in this direction, but some have not. It is almost axiomatic to state that a literate mother is the greatest guarantor of education for the next generation with a great bearing on the socio-economic and cultural advancement of a nation.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has played a pivotal role in enhancing women's education, so as to focus the attention of the world communities on the problems and issues concerning women and to define ways and means to improve their status, health and education.

Education is a critical input in human resource development and is essential for the country's economic growth. Though the major indicators of socio-economic development, viz., the growth rate of the economy, birth rate, death rate, infant mortality rate (IMR) and literacy rate, are all interconnected, the literacy rate has been the major determinant of the rise or fall in the other indicators. There is enough evidence even in India to show that a high literacy rate, especially in the case of women, correlates with low birth rate, low IMR and increase in the rate of life expectancy. The recognition of this fact has created awareness on the need to focus upon literacy and elementary education programme, not simply as a matter of social justice but more to faster economic growth, social well being and social stability.

In a progressive society, life should be a joint venture for men and women. Men should share the responsibilities of parenthood and home-making with women and women in their turn should share social and economic responsibilities of men. Women's role in matters of building the character of future citizens, the economic reconstruction of the country and social reforms remains undeniable and unchallenged. Under these circumstances women must be mentally prepared to shoulder the responsibility that is given and expected of her.

Assam is situated in the North East corner of India, the land inhabited by people of divergent social elements having different social structure and cultural heritage. A land of hills and valleys, Assam is one of the most beautiful states of India. She played a glorious role in the country's freedom movement and produced a host of martyrs men and women.

After independence, although many changes have come, the utilization of human resources is low as most of them are illiterate and unskilled. The women folk who form half of the population did not have the opportunities to contribute their share in the developmental process. In spite of all constrains, the women of Assam are passing through a stage of social change. Education is considered a potent instrument through which the process of modernization of a society could be affected. Under these circumstances, women's education should be taken on a priority basis.

The key to the development of a state is the development in the field of education in general and in the field of women's education in particular. In this endeavour, it is essential to take a stock of the existing position and the action being undertaken by various bodies to enhance women education. It is also be important to know how parents of girls view the education of girls, as parents play an important

role in the promotion of education among girls. Very few studies have been conducted in Assam to look into these aspects of women's education. The study by Das (1979) and Bora (1995) are of a wider nature on the women's education in Assam. The studies provide picture on the issues up to a specific period. Very recently Devi (2014) has been conducted a study on women's education in Assam, but this study look into the problems of women education. As the statistics show that there is a change in the entire educational enrolment set-up, it is imperative that an investigation should be taken up to study the progress and development of girls' in Assam.

It is also to be noted that with the declaration of the International women's Year (1975), the United Nations Decade of Women and holding of World Conferences regarding women's development by various nations especially India, serious efforts are being made to enhance the educational status of women. National 'Girl Child Day' is celebrated every year on 24th January as a national observation day for the girl child. It was started by Women and Child Development Ministry since 2008 to celebrate as the national observance. The Women and Child Development Ministry had implemented a scheme called 'Dhanlaksmi' to the girl child family to fulfill the basic needs such as immunization, birth registration, school enrolment and maintenance up to the class VIII. In Assam too, its effects were felt. A number of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or Voluntary Organizations have been playing their respective roles to promote education among women especially in the rural areas.

Considering a number of factors effecting development of a state, it was felt that an investigation should be made to study the progress of Girls' Education in Assam in general and Nagaon District in particular. The available literature reveals that lot of studies have been conducted on women, girls' and girls' education in India but hardly any study has been taken up to study the status of women education in Nagaon which pursue the researcher to raise the following issues such as who goes to school? What are their statuses? What are the rates of their participation? What are the problems they come across etc. to find out the answer of these issues the present study entitled, "**School Education of the Girls in Nagaon District**" has been carried out. The investigator conducted a pilot study to find out the present status and progress of girls' education in the district of Nagaon, Assam and this pilot study is the main source of present research work. Apart from that, the study will have the educational and the social implications which motivate the investigator to conduct the study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The following are the objectives of the present study:

1) To study the participation of girl children age group 5+ to 16 years in educational programmes.
2) To find out the available programme of Girls education in addition to existing programme of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan.
3) To study the various facilities available for girls' education.
4) To study the community participation for the girls' education in the district.
5) To study the problems of girls education in Nagaon district.

Methodology of the Study

Research methodology means a systematic procedure starting from the initial identification of problem to its final conclusion. The meaningful completion of any investigation requires a systematic approach. Research methodology is always there to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of study, how research is done scientifically. Nearly all researches- experimental and non experimental- in behavioural sciences, particularly in the fields of psychology, sociology and education draw some inferences regarding a well-specified and identifiable group on the basis of some selected measures. The well-specified and identifiable group is known as population and the selected number of persons or objects is known as a sample. The generalized conclusions are technically known as the statistical inferences. A population, therefore, may be defined as any identifiable and well-specified group of individuals. A population may be finite or in-finite, and real or imaginative. In psychological and educational research on many occasions the population is imaginative. A measure based upon the entire population is called a parameter. A sample is any number of persons selected to represent the population according to some rule or plan. Thus, a sample is a smaller representation of population. A measure based upon a sample is known as a statistic. The present chapter deals with the methodological and procedural aspects of the investigation of the present

research problem. It includes the design of the study, description of population and sample, sampling procedure, tools used and their description, tool administration, scoring and analysis of data. The descriptive survey method is applied in the present study. The planning of approaches applied in the present study is explained below in detail.

Sample of the Study

The accuracy of results in research study depends upon the accuracy of selection procedure of the sample. In order to draw a representative sample for the present study the techniques of stratified random sampling have been used. With the purpose of the sampling, a list of State Government affiliated primary and secondary schools was collected from the office of the Inspector of the Schools, Nagaon, in the first stage, which is technically known as sampling frame for the current study. It was observed from the sampling frame that there are altogether 2686 schools in the district. A sample of 50 schools (20 girls and 30 Co-educational Institutions), both primary and secondary, were drawn from the total population. The method followed was stratified random sampling technique.

Research tools used:

In each and every type of research study certain instruments are required for collecting data, such instruments are called tools. Different kinds of tools are used by researchers for collecting different kinds of information most appropriate to their needs. In the present study “School Information Schedule”, “Problem Check List” and “Interview Schedule” were used as tool for gathering data. The investigator constructed these tools in order to collect relevant data pertaining to specific objectives of the study.

Collection of the Data

As the area of the present study was the entire Nagaon District, hence the sample of the study was scattered all over the district. The investigator personally went to the selected schools and filled the schedule herself with the help of the teachers/headmasters of the concerned schools. The investigator personally met the students of different classes with due permission from the authority and filled up the problems check list by the students. To know about the opinion of the parents, teachers and administrators regarding girls' education, the investigator met ten parents, five from rural and five from urban areas. In rural areas, out of five parents three were farmers, one shop-keeper and one businessman. The wives of the first four were home-makers while the businessman's wife was a primary school teacher.
In urban areas, the selected persons were administrators and teachers with their wives in the teaching profession.

Analysis of Data

In order to examine and justify the objectives of the study, the investigator used the relevant statistical techniques to summarize and interpret the raw scores. Most of the information was calculated in terms of percentage.

Findings

The general purpose of a research is not to convince the readers but to let them know what has been done, why it was done and what results were obtained. Therefore, every purposeful research ends with specific findings. In the present investigation, the main purpose was to study the participation of girls in school education in Nagaon district. Some other important objectives were associated with school education of girls in the district. These are programmes, facilities, community participation and problems of girls' education in Nagaon district. All these objectives were investigated in a very systematic and organized way with the help of different research tools. The collected data were analyzed and the results of the investigation found out. The findings of the investigation concerning the specific objectives are as follows:

5.2 FINDINGS RELATED TO PARTICIPATION OF GIRLS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION:

1. Out of 50 schools visited 21 were established during the period of 1961-1970.

2. It was found that out of the 21 schools established in Nagaon district during 1961-1970, only 7 were girls' schools.

3. Out of 7 girls' schools, 4 (57.14%) schools in Nagaon sub-division, 2 (28.5%) in Kaliabor sub-division and 1 (14.82%) in Hojai sub-division were established.

4. It was noticed from the investigation that in the session 2012-13, total number of students enrolled in the 50 schools of Nagaon district was 21,733 out of which 7347 (33.80%) were girls.

5. When the enrolment of girls is compared to the total enrolment, one finds that the girls fall very short of equaling that of boys.

6. In Nagaon sub-division the percentage of enrolled girl students in that particular session was found to be 61.88%.

7. In Kaliabor sub-division enrolment of girls was 28.87%.

8. In Hojai sub-division the girls' enrolment was the lowest of all, a mere 14.23%.

9. The statistics of the girls' participation in school indicated that the enrolment of girls in the entire district is not uniform.

10. The enrolment of the SC, ST and OBC students in the district were found to be 12.13%, 6.86% and 8.62% respectively.

11. The number of female teachers in the district is very encouraging. In Nagaon sub-division the number of female teachers were found to be 64.04% while in Kaliabor and Hojai sub-divisions it was 44.49% and 38.91% respectively.

FINDINGS RELATING TO AVAILABLE PROGRAMMES OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN ADDITION TO EXISTING PROGRAMME OF SARVA SIKSHA ABHIYAN:

1. The Infrastructure Development Scheme of MHRD was found to be most appealing feature of the schools in the district. All the 50 schools were functioning in their own buildings.

2. The programme of ICT at school was also found to be encouraging. The 86% of the sampled schools were found to be equipped with this programme.
3. In the three sub-divisions, Nagaon, Kaliabor and Hojai the implementation of the scheme was found to be 83.3%, 90% and 90% respectively.
4. In Nagaon sub-division 4 schools out of 30 use both projected and non-projected teaching aid/material to impart education in a lively and encapsulating form.
5. The implementation of Central Government scheme for construction and running of girls' hostels for Secondary schools was found to be disappointing. Out of the 50 schools only 4 in the entire district have hostels for girls.
6. Mid-day meals scheme was found to be running, and 64.6% girls are benefitted from it.
7. The post-matriculation award named "Anundoram Barooah Award" is awarded to all the students who score 60% marks or above in HSLC since 2005.

FINDINGS RELATING TO FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION:

1. In the case of the essential facility like sanitation, it was found that 94% schools have sanitation facility.
2. 84% of the sampled schools were found with toilet and lavatory facility. Regarding the toilet facility for girls it was found from investigation that the private schools had better toilet facility with running water in comparison to other schools.
3. The running water facility in the schools visited was found to be only in 38% schools. Remaining 62% schools have hand-pump sets.
4. In Nagaon and Kaliabor sub-divisions the percentage of schools with running water was found to be 43.30% and 60% respectively but in Hojai sub-division none of the schools visited has this facility.
5. Most of the schools in urban areas did not have playground.

6. In Nagaon sub-division it was found to be 80% and in Hojai it was 90% and in Kaliabor all the schools visited have spacious playground.
7. Only 16% schools availed the indoor game facility. In Hojai sub-division not a single school was found with this facility.
8. The availability of separate common room for teacher was found mostly in the affirmative, 98% schools providing this service for teachers.
9. The criteria on of well equipped science laboratory recorded a poor out come in the district. It was found to be only 26% in the district.
10. It was found in the study that 86% schools of the district have the provision of co-curricular activities and students get encouragement from their authority to participate in such.
11. Bus facilities in the visited schools showed a poor outcome. Only 4% schools providing this facility and this 4% come from private school only.
12. Out of 50 schools visited only 62% has safe drinking water facility. The remaining 38% schools do not have the provision of safe drinking water, which is dark mark in maintenance of hygiene.
13. Scouts and guides are compulsory subjects in all schools for physical, social and intellectual well being. But in real practice on 22% school visited have appointed physical instructors.
14. The provision of free health check-up facility was also very disappointing in the schools visited. Only 24% schools provide its students this health service. In Hojai sub-division not a single school was found with this facility.
15. Out of 50 schools visited only 66% have library facility for students.
16. The state Government has provided a scheme of field trips by providing grants. But only 28% schools got the benefit of this facility of the state Government.

5.5 FINDINGS RELATING TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION:

1. Almost all schools visited have constituted different school committees with Government nominees and local people. But co-operation of

parents and other community persons was found to be 52% in the district.

2. The community involvement in the developmental work of school education is now globally accepted aspect. In the present investigation it was found that only 38% schools get the opportunity of co-operation of local people in different activities.
3. In Nagaon sub-division, parents' co-operation was found to be 60%, in Kaliabor, it was 50% and in Hojai sub-division, it was only 30%.
4. 18% schools visited, faced the problem of student indiscipline in various school activities especially at the time of examination.
5. In Nagaon sub-division 10%, in Kaliabor 10% and in Hojai sub-division 50% schools faced the problem of student indiscipline.
6. Regarding the examination committee, it was found that only 38% schools constituted committee with local people at the time of examination.
7. In Nagaon sub-division, it was found to be 33.33%, in Kaliabor 60% and in Hojai sub-division, it was only 30%.
8. The study also reveals from the interviews with parents, teachers and Government officials that almost all the community personals were affirmative towards girls' education.

FINDINGS RELATING TO THE PROBLEMS OF GIRLS' EDUCATION:

1. The present study revealed that out of 455 students 28.87% students were found to be absent from their schools due to different problems. In case of girls it was 19.56% and in case of boys the percentages of absentees were 16.2%. In rural-urban comparison it was found that 26.71% students in rural schools and 24.84% in urban schools were absent from school.
2. The investigation revealed that the overall literacy percentage of the parents of 455 students is 42.9%. 9.2% parents were totally illiterate and 47.9% were partially literate. In rural areas the illiteracy of parents was found to be 11.4% and in urban areas it was 5.1%.

3. Distance of the school from home was found to be a major problem for girls. Almost one fourth, i.e.24.8% of girls surveyed still have to traverse three kilometers and above to reach school. The percentage of students whose school is approximately half kilometer was 25.1.% while who have to traverse almost one kilometer and two kilometer were 30.3% and 19.8% respectively.
4. Poverty of parents is a major problem of girls' education. 30% of parents in the present study were struggling with poverty. 3.3% parents were found to be jobless.
5. The present study revealed that in rural areas 91.9% students got encouragement from their parents towards education. But still 8.1% students did not get any kind of motivation from their parents. But in urban areas, 98.1% students got encouragement from parents and 1.9% were still deprived of such type of encouragement.
6. 11% students out of 455 do not get the advantage of electricity in their home and large section at their schools too.
7. Another problem that is implicit in contributing to the number of school children is the issue of sibling care. Out of 455 students surveyed, 24.6% revealed that they had to look after their young siblings at home and this made them miss their classes very often. When 10.05% boys were found engaged with their younger siblings at the same time 78.3% girls were taking the responsibility to look after their younger siblings at the time of study.
8. The present study revealed that out of 455 students 161 students (35.4%) did not get the benefit of free mid-day meals of Government scheme. 39.3% from rural and 28% from urban population did not get the benefit of MDMS.
9. 43.7% students out of 455 did not get the benefit of free text books. The rural-urban percentage was found to be 39.3% and 28% respectively.
10. In the present study it was found that only 38.2% girls get the benefit of attendance scholarship. In rural schools, it was found to be 32.2% and in urban it was 36.20%.

11. In the present study it was found that 89.5% students faced the problem to converse with their teachers. In rural schools it was found 66.44% and in urban it was 63.39%. In male-female comparison only 5.6% male students were found with this problem while 74.63% female were affected by the problem.

12. Present study revealed that a substantial number of girls faced the problem of parents' non co-operation in study. Due to socio-economic problem 9.42% girls were compelled by their parents to engage in different house hold and money generated activities at the time of study. In case of boys, it was found to be 5.58%.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

1. It is noticed from the investigation that in the session 2012-13 total number of girl students enrolled in 50 schools of Nagaon district was 7347. The percentage was found to be 33.81%.

2. The enrolment of SC, ST and OBC students in the district in the session2012-13 were found to be 12.13%, 6.8% and 8.62% respectively.

3. During the study the most appealing factor detected was the condition of school buildings. All the 50 schools were functioning in their old buildings.

4. Mid-Day-Meal is one of the most ambitious schemes of the Government for universalization of primary education. But only 64.6% girls get the benefit of the scheme.

5. The present study revealed that 60% girl students get free uniform from Government scheme.

6. To reach the goal of universalization of primary education Government promises to provide free text books. Only 43.7% girls get the benefit of free text books at proper time.

7. Only 38.2% girl students were awarded on the basis of attendance percentage which was implemented by the Central Government in Third five year plan (1961-66).

8. Being the precursor to the world of evolving modern technologies, computers were installed in most of the schools for computer literacy

programmes. 86% schools in the district were found under this scheme of education.

9. During the study the most appealing facility found was infrastructure. All the 50 schools were functioning in their own building.

10. It was found from the study that 86% schools in the district have the provision of co-curricular activities and students get encouragement from their authority to participate in such.

11. The provision of free health check-up facility was very disappointing in the schools visited. Only 24% schools in the district provide free health services to their students.

12. The present study revealed that 84% schools were found with toilet facility but only 38% were found toilet with running water.

13. Almost all schools visited constituted different school committees with Government nominees and local people. But co-operation of parents and other community persons was found to be 52% in the district.

14. The study also revealed from the interviews with parents, teachers and Government officials that almost all the community personals were affirmative towards girls' education.

15. Poverty of the parents was found to be one of the major problems hindering the growth of girls' education in the district. In the present study it was found that among the sampled girl students, each one parent is involved in different occupations, 33% in agriculture, 34.1% in business, 20.7% in Government services, 5.1% in private sector, 4% daily labour and 3.3% jobless.

16. From the present investigation it is found that after six decades of independence, 6% parents in Nagaon district were still unwilling to send their daughters to school.

17. Parents literacy is one of the major factors for the development of girls' education. In the present study it is found that only 42.9% parents are literate, 47.9% of parents are partially literate and 9.2% parents are found to be totally illiterate.

18. Another problem hindering to the increase in number of school children is the issue of sibling care. A substantial 24.6% which almost

accounts for a quarter of the total have to look after their young siblings at home and this makes them miss their classes very often.

19. One of the major problems that influence girls' enrolment and retention in school is the distance of school from their home. The present study revealed that 24.8% of girls surveyed still have to traverse 3 kms or more to reach school.

20. In the present investigation 48.8% of total sampled girl students of Government and provincialized schools informed that regular classes were not held due to various reasons like absence of teachers, flood, bandh by different organizations. Also it was found that examination like HSLC, AHSEC or entrances and Government interviews interrupt normal classes.

21. The student teacher relationship which can create a congenial atmosphere in the school lags behind. It was found in the present study that 89.5% girl students faced the problem of conversing with their teachers.

22. The present study revealed that after so many Government efforts and social awareness programmes a nominal number of parents still compelled their children to perform house hold activities at the time when they should have been at school. The percentage of such girl students was found to be 5.7%.