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Problems of Higher Education in Tripura

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Abstract

The New Education Policy emphasizes that education should be accessible and affordable with thrust on equity and excellence and it may be structured in such a way that 'gross enrolment ratio' should increase and number of 'dropouts' come down effectively. One of the greatest challenges to higher education in India is providing access to the growing segments of the population demanding post- secondary education (meaning raising gross enrolment ratio or GER). On the other hand, quality growth of higher education in India is debatable contradicting the very objective of equity within the social growth of the country. Similarly the quality of higher education in Tripura is at a mismatch stage. The present paper seeks to portray the GER in North eastern region, Government Expenditure on Education in Tripura as wellas the factors inhibiting the quality of higher education in the state. The paper is based on the secondary data collected from various websites of different organizations, reports, discussion paper and publications in various journal and newspapers etc.

Keywords*: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Quality, Expenditure and Infrastructure.*

Introduction

The purpose of higher education is to pave the way for students to move from known to unknown by the application of knowledge, innovative thinking and creative process. The goal of higher education is to train the mind to undertake a continuous thought relevant to emerging circumstances and offer solutions to the emerging needs. National Commission on Higher Education (1986) translated the vision of Radhakrishnan Commission and Kothari Commission in five main goals for higher education, which include greater access, equal access (or Equity), quality and excellence, relevance and value based education. The Proposed National Education Policy emphasizes that (a) education must be accessible and affordable with thrust on equity and excellence and (b) it must be structured in such a way that "gross enrolment ratio" should increase and number of 'dropouts' come down

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effectively. The above account makes it amply clear that greater access and quality in higher education are common in all reports and policies.One of the greatest challenges to higher education in India is providing access to the growing segments of the population demanding post secondary education (meaning raising gross enrolment ratio or GER).On the other hand, quality growth of higher education in India is debatable contradicting the very objective of equity within the social growth of the country. The quality of higher education in Tripura is no exception to national scenario and it is below par the requirement of common people and growing unemployment of educated youths like other parts of thecountry is appalling, raising qualms in the prevailing higher education system of Tripura.

Given the above, the present paper highlights dilemmas relating to the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and quality in Higher Education in Tripura. The present paper seeks to portray the GER in North eastern region, Government Expenditure on Education in Tripura as well asthe factors inhibiting the quality of higher education in Tripura. It may be mentioned that the estimate of GER varies from organization to organization. The present discourse takes into account theestimate of GER available from Ministry of Human Resources Department. Conversely, in the absence of uniform definition of 'Quality' applicable to all types of institutions across diverse geographical conditions and culture etc, herein the paper, quality is meant by academic quality and the factors influencing the academic quality in Higher Education. Thus, quality is considered from the concept of 'purposeful'. The whole paper is based on the secondary data collected from various websites of different organizations, surveys, reports, discussion paper and publications in various journal and newspapers etc. The key hypothesis of the paper is that increasing GER may impact quality of higher education in Tripura if there is lack in the required level of infrastructure and adequate fund.

Tripura, erstwhile princely state, had merged with the Indian Union after Independence on 15th October 1949 and itis the third smallest State of the country, located in the North Eastern Region. The partition of India in 1947 placed Tripura at a huge disadvantage in terms of connectivity resulting in massive infrastructural and economic set-backs. Ultimately education sector had also suffered to some extent. But presently literacy level of Tripura is good and praiseworthy and it ranks top in the country with a literacy rate staggering at 95.16% as per survey conducted by the ISI Kolkata in 2013. The present population is about 40 lakh based on the census of 2011 comprising 31% ST population and 17% as SC population. The economy is agrarian. The per capita income of the State was Rs. 105044 in 2017-18[†] (provisional). Although the state is industrially undeveloped and it suffers from inadequate infrastructure, educational infrastructure is much better than those of many states in the country. In 2017-18, there were 2,397- Primary Schools, 1,246- Senior Basic Schools, 661- High Schools, 444-Higher Secondary Schools and 180- Madrassain Tripura for a population of 40 lakh ensuring better and easy access of education to almost all. Higher Education sector is also not lagging behind. The State has one Central University (Tripura University), one State University (MBB University) and one private University

[†] Economic Review of Tripura 207-18, p-10.

(ICFAI), 24-General Degree Colleges, 3- Engineering Colleges, one National Institute of Technology, 2-Medical Colleges, 6-Polytechnic Institute, 2- Teachers Training Colleges (IASE), 1-Government Law College, 1-Government Music College, 1-Tribal Folk Music College, 1-Art & Craft College, 1-Agriculture College, 1-Fishery College, 1-Veterinary College, 1Paramedical College, 1-Pharmaceutical College, 1-Physical Education College, 3-Nursing Colleges, 6-B.Ed. Colleges, 1-State Government museum, 1-State Archives and 25-Public libraries including Birchandra State Central Library etc.

Meaning of GER

Gross enrolment ratio called GER is a measure to assess the access of higher education. It is a ratio of persons enrolled in Higher Educational institutions to total populations in the age group of 18-23. 'Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is the total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given academic year. It is calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age by the population of the age-group which corresponds to the given level of education and multiplying the result by 100'[‡]. 'A high GER generally indicates a high degree of participation, whether the pupils belong to the official age group or not. A GER value approaching or exceeding 100% indicates that a country is, in principle, able to accommodate all of its susceptible population, but it does not indicate the proportion already enrolled. The achievement of a GER of 100% is therefore a necessary but not sufficient condition for enrolling all eligible population in higher education institutes' (Ghara, 2016). GER at each level of education should be based on total enrolment in all types of educational institutions irrespective of public, private and all other institutions that provide organized educational programmes. GER may exceed 100% if over-aged and under-aged pupils/students are included.

The estimates of GER are compiled by various organizations like MHRD, and population census and national sample survey (NSS). In other words, three alternative sources namely Selected Education Statistics, (SES) National sample Survey (NSS) and Population Census (PC) provide data on number of student enrolment and there exists some differences in the GER calculated by above bodies. Available records establish that SES data is less than NSS and PC data. The SES data under estimates enrolment rates because of the underreporting of enrolment in unrecognized institutions and also due to non-reporting of enrolment data on an annual basis by some of the state governments. The problem with the NSS and also census data is that as it is collected from households, it is likely to overestimate the student enrolment in colleges and universities as it might include those who are doing diploma or training programmes (e.g. computer training) in unrecognized institutions also. A further problem that lies with population Census data is that it does not distinguish between enrolment in professional degree and diploma programs. In this paper, GER and quality related all information are SES data collected from UGC publications or MHRD publications. GER of the country is depicted in TABLE 1 as compiled from different sources:

[‡] GOI, MHRD, Statistics of Higher and Technical Education 2007-18, p. A3.

Table 1: GER in India since 1983

Year	1983	1988	1991	1994	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10*	2014-15*	2017-18*
GER	4.04	4.69	4.63	4.80	7.22	12.6	17.1	23.6	25.8

(Source: AISHE, 2014-15, 2016-17 and 2017-18, MHRD. Statistics of Higher and Technical Education, 2010, MHRD)

At the time of Independence of the country, access to higher education in India was very limited and elitist and enrolment of less than a million students in 500 colleges and 20 universities. 'Until 1947, opportunities for higher education in India were limited. There were only hundred thousand students in education enrolled in 500 colleges and in a few universities' (Shodganga)[§]. Women accounted for only 1.25 per cent of the total enrolment in the year 1916-17. In 1947- 48 their percentage share in the total was less than 10.[**]'In the early 1950's the enrolment ratio was less than one per cent' (Arunachalam, 2010). Since Independence, India made various efforts to improve higher education system. This includes the establishment of UGC in 1956 as per recommendation of Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49). In 1950-51 the enrolment rate was 0.7%, which increased to 1.4% in 1960-61. At the end of 2017-18, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India rose to 25.8%, calculated for 18-23 years of age group. It shows that over a period of 25 years, the GER in the country has gone up by 6.4 times with some variation across the states, regions and gender.It needs to re-iterate that although government policy mandates the compulsory free education for all the children aged 6-13 years to elementary school, little attention has been paid to the fact that after this stage, it is downhill all the way. Roughly half the children are out of school by the time they attain senior school age. 'In higher education, the situation is much worse, with gross enrolment ratio tottering at 24-25%. In most advanced countries, the ratio is close to the 50% mark. So, about 71 million youth are still out of the higher education system. Enrolment ratios are lower for Dalits and Adivasis, and dropout rates higher. So they need to be reached out to, especially in remote areas' (Verma, 2017). In the following pages an attempt is made to gauge the present status of GER in the NER with a comparison of its impact in different states and gender.

GER in North Eastern Region including Tripura

The North Eastern Region of India (NER) endowed with rich bio-diversity and natural resources holds an important position from a geo- strategic point of view as states in the NER share long international borders with other countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and China. The zigzag terrain, lack of socio economic development and historical factors such as language/ethnicity, tribal rivalry, migration, control over local resources and a widespread feeling of exploitation and alienation have rendered the NER states in a fragile security situation resulting in violence and diverse demands by various Indian Insurgent Groups (IIGs) to some extent. 'Education, which is one of the core features of any state or country's infrastructure, is *inadequate* in these states. Every year hundreds and thousands of students have to go out of their homes to other states in the country to be able to achieve standard

[§]http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/27039/12/12_chapter2.pdf, p-58.
[**]http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/27039/12/12_chapter2.pdf, p-57.

higher education' (Naskar, 2009). It may be mentioned that 'in 2008 there were 626 colleges in the region, including 48 professional colleges and 12 universities' [††](suggesting that the development of education has been starkly uneven from state to state in the region.Table 2 shows that GER for the NER states at the end of 2017-18 with a comparison on all India GER, GER for Male and Female population and GER among the ST and SC population. Table shows that All India GER for male population is 26.3% and for females, it is 25.4 % at the end of 2017-18. The GER for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes at the end of 2017 - 18 stands at 21.8% and 15.9% respectively. The scenario of GER of all the NER states is given in Table 2 below:

Table 2: GER in NER STATES at the end of 2017-18

SN	STATES	All Categories			ST			SC		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Arunachal Pradesh	31.5	27.8	29.7	36.2	30.2	33.1	27.3**	21.8**	24.5**
2	Assam	18.6	17.8	18.2	22.4	19.5	20.8	20.1	18.7	19.4
3	Manipur	31.3	32.2	31.8	23.0	21.0	22.0	72.2	62.7	67.4
4	Meghalaya	24.2	25.1	24.7	18.4	20.6	19.5	50.4	37.4	44.3
5	Mizoram	24.8	21.0	22.9	25.0	21.2	23.1	121.5	100.0	113.7
6	Nagaland	17.8	17.9	17.8	16.6	17.8	17.2	NA	NA	NA
7	Sikkim	33.9	41.1	37.4	29.6	39.0	34.4	37.6	27.3	32.3
8	Tripura	23.7	18.8	21.2	16.3	11.7	13.9	20.2	16.2	18.2
9	NER*	25.73	25.21	25.46	18.48	18.71	18.58			
10	All India	26.3	25.4	25.8	17.0	14.9	15.9	22.2	21.4	21.8

(Source: AISHE, 2017-18 (*Calculated by author and average is meant by arithmetic mean) ** (AISHE 2015-16))

The Table above indicates that the Average GER for the NER states is not bad; rather it is almost at par with all India average. GER for some NER states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Sikkim is better irrespective of average GER, GER for male and female population, which is really good. Not only has this, but Sikkim and Manipur had also better female GER among the ST population. The states having lower GER compared to all India average GER are Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Assam. Table 2 also establishes that Tripura has lowest GER for ST population among the NER states warranting better access for tribal people in higher education.

Expenditure on Education by Government of Tripura

At the outset, it needs to be mentioned that Government of Tripura is giving highest priority on 'Education'as an important agenda of development since it attained statehood in 1972[‡‡] and allocates about one-fifth of the budgetary expenditure on Education. History establishes that even during the reign of Maharajas', the Kings of Tripura would give much

[††]https://www.ibef.org/download/North_Eastern_States_140109.pdf
[‡‡] Government of Tripura , Economic Review of Tripura, 2016-17, p-239

emphasis on education and they led it from the front. Many schools had been established by the kings of Tripura and education was fee-free during the supremacy of kings. Girl's schools had been established by Queen Tulsabati, wife of King Radhakishore Manikya Bahadur to spread education among the women and pristine Maharaja Bir Bikram College, the oldest higher education institution in Tripura was established by King of Tripura in Agartala. The legacy continued since October 15, 1949 when Tripura joined the Union of India as Part C state. All political parties that came to power in Tripura, over the years, laid much emphasis on education and allocated fund incessantly in this sector. At present there are about '4866 schools in the state with 81 exclusively for girls and 46828'[§§] teachers are appointed in various schools to support the fee free education in government schools. Even higher education in government run colleges is without any fee (except Rs 12 as admission fee and Rs 100 as development fee[***]). Rather the various financial supports in the form of scholarship, stipend to the students are granted to students. Number of higher education institute which was only one at the time of merger of the state with Indiarose to 51 at the end of 2017 of which 43 are run by government[†††] . Despite all efforts by the state government, higher educationin Tripura could not reach zenith level as evidenced by GER and the spending of government of Tripura on higher education is not encouraging. The following Table shows the allocation of state-government on the higher education in Tripura from 2012-13 to 2014-15:

Table 3: Budgeted expenditure of Government of Tripura in Education with special reference to Higher education

Expenditure type	2012-13			2013-14(Total exp=Rs 180526 lakh**			2014-15(Total exp- Rs 237958 lakh) **		
	SOCIAL (%)	SCHOOL (%)	HIGHER* (%)	SOCIAL (%)	SCHOOL (%)	HIGHER*(%)	SOCIAL (%)	SCHOOL (%)	HIGHER*(%)
NON-PLAN	5510	76288	7989	11632	92419	7245	11968	99541	11227
PLAN	14784	13087	3882	15935	13971	2381	17440	16512	5683
CSS	17863	20991	270	--	-	-	27663	44030	3924
NEC			169	25671	9663	1609		-	-
TOTAL	38158 (23.7)	110355 (68.6)	12280 (7.6)	53238 29.5	116053 (64.3)	11235 (6.20)	57041 24.0	160083 (67.3)	20834 (8.7)

Budgeted expenditure in Tripura in 2012-13and (Rs. in lakh)

Source: http://tripura.gov.in/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Budget_Ataglance_2013.pdf (date of access 30/3/2018), *Higher education includes technical education also.

The Table above shows that allocation of fund on school education was praiseworthy in Tripura. It ranged from 64.3% in 2013-14 to 68.6 in 2012-13 followed by the allocation on social education and higher education respectively. It needs to be mentioned that the allocation on higher education also includes allocation of technical education. It is noteworthy that although the budgeted expenditure on Education in Tripura in 2013-14 and

§§ Government of Tripura, Economic Review of Tripura, 2016-17, p. 238 and p. 245.
*** It came into being with effect from June 2019.
††† All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18, MHRD, Government of India, p. 70.

2014-15 was 19.2%, while allocation for higher education was 1.67% ** in 2014-15 compared to 1.30% ** in 2013-14 evincing the fact that the budgeted expenditure on higher education in Tripura was always dismal. In 2002-03, expenditure on education constituted 7% of GSDP while the expenditure on Higher Education was only 0.67% of GSDP[‡‡‡]. In 2018-19 budget estimates for higher education was Rs 19575 lakh out of total expenditure of Rs. 1662721 lakh[§§§] constituting only 1.2% but the share of expenditure for overall education sector was 22.54.[****] Budget estimates also shows that 78% of budgeted expenditure on higher education in Tripura is from Revenue account while 22% comprises capital account.

Problems of Higher Education in NER with special reference to Tripura

At present, higher education in NER and Tripura in particular has been suffering from many cumbersome problems which are region and culture specific and off-shoot of lackadaisical policy of the various state governments. Higher education in NER is entangled in a culture of mediocrity, with little competition either among institutions or academics. All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18 shows that there are about 7.89 lakh students and about 890 colleges and 21 Central and state universities in NER but students do hardly receive high quality education and training. Students, educators and business leaders opine that there is a heavy stress on obeisance and a neglect of marketable skills and the whole scenario is worse than national phenomenon. The GER in NER states is still staggering and Tripura is lagging behind many other states NER states either in GER and college per lakh population, which is only 12 compared to 27 in Nagaland, 26 in Manipur, 23 in Mizoram etc (AISHE, 2017-18). The main reasons that inhibit the Gross enrolment ratio in Tripura and the causes hinderingthe quality of higher education in Tripura are many and list would be too big to shorten. According to the author, the following are the main impediments:

1. Lack of quality higher education institute is really a factor. A study conducted by North East Support Centre & Helpline in March 2011 clearly reveals that the lack of higher educational infrastructure is the main factor for people to migrate to the megacities. North East Council's 2020 vision reveals that only 6% of students graduating from a 10+2 school system enroll in Government colleges in the region. Ninety per cent of these students opt for the Arts stream. The rest migrate to other cities of India for further studies and employment in private companies (Madhu Chandra, 2011). Besides there are insufficient vocational training institutes and low quality of existing vocational institutes in the region that inhibit the students to learn much needed skill for their gainful employment. If NAAC accreditation is considered as one of the index of quality institute, it may be mentioned that 64% of colleges are accredited in Tripura but no Government degree college in Tripura could attain A grade till-date and not a single degree college in Tripura could be declared by UGC as Potential for Excellence justifying the lack of quality institute in the state. Although Government of Tripura has taken a policy decision to establish one general degree

‡‡‡Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Tripura, Profile of college, 2017-18, p. 1.
§§§ Government of Tripura, Budget at a Glance 2018-19, p. 18 and p. 21.
https://finance.tripura.gov.in/sites/default/files/At%20a%20Glance%202018-19.pdf
**** Ibid, page 7.

college in each sub-division, no appreciable quality institutions are yet to emerge in Tripura.

2. Lesser number of colleges and higher education institutes is really a factor particularly in rural areas. A brief note on number of colleges in Tripura is already given. However, number of higher education institutes is inadequate as evidenced by the college per lakh population compared to other NER states and All India average which is 28 colleges[††††] per lakh population and 698 as per college enrolment [‡‡‡‡]respectively.
3. Poor Infrastructure – Lack of faculty and uneven distribution of faculties tops the list as regards infrastructure in higher education in Tripura. This shortcoming is perhaps the chief of all ills in quality education. While overcrowding of students is noticeable in the urban areas, the same is not replicated in most of the rural areas. Establishment of quality higher education institutes in the rural area is one of the reasons acting as serious deterrent for the rural community in particular. Inadequate faculty causing student teacher ratio higher is at a lamentable state. On an average the teacher student ratio in the colleges of Tripura is 1:57[§§§§]. Reality shows that it is lower in the urban areas while the rural areas take the brunt of the scene with a disproportionately higher ratio. The student teacher ratio would be worse if the number of Post-Graduate Teachers (PGT) and Guest Lecturers (GL) is excluded from the total available faculties. Student –Teacher ratio in government degree colleges without PGT and GL stands at 89 establishing a hotchpotch condition. Lack of infrastructure like smart class rooms, adequate class rooms, lack of proper ambience in the colleges like absence of common room, good canteen, proper transportation system are no mean for below par bench mark achievement regarding quality in higher education. Lack of Science education at the undergraduate level in colleges is another factor besides below par good laboratories, equipments and internet facilities.
4. High dropout ratio: In NER, the drop out ratio in higher education is also an issue. 'But, the drop-out ratio of students is comparativelymore in the rural colleges of North-eastern region sincemost of them are first generation learners of higher education' (Konwar and Chakraborty, 2013). The scenario is not different in Tripura. A study on the number of students admitted to 1st semester students and number of students passed out at the end of sixth semester in any government college speaks about this lacuna. For example, average number of students admitted to 1st semester class in Bir Bikram Memorial College over the last four years (2014 to 2017) was 1650[*****] while number of students passed after fifth semester[†††††]was 1002 in 2019. Almost same picture prevails in other colleges of Tripura. It amply establishes a huge gap indicating yawning education system in vogue.
5. Fee free education: Fee free education has made students reluctant. The commitment of students has come down significantly as higher education involves no cost on the

[††††]AISHE 2017-18*, MHRD, Government of India
[‡‡‡‡] Ibid.
[§§§§] Profile of the colleges, DHE, 2016-17 and 2017-18.
[*****]Self study Report of Bir Bikram Memorial College for NAAC accreditation in 2018.
[†††††] Website of BBMC (bbmc.nic.in) data collected on 10/12/2019.

part of students. The attendance of students in the classroom is at low ebb. The importance of classes has gone down due to waiver of fees and students now assemble in the private houses for notes, selective question-answers and study materials instead of attending classes.

6. Lack of Autonomy: Absence of autonomy including academic, financial and administrative autonomy is equally important. College administration has no academic, financial and administrative autonomies to run the colleges. In Tripura, academic autonomy is tied at the hand of university while financial and administrative powers lie with the Directorate of Higher Education.
7. Lack of training of faculties, non teaching staff and principal are fleecing the efficacy of the institutions as a whole. Prevailing system allows training facilities for Assistant Professors/ Associate Professors while Post graduate teachers and guest lecturers do hardly get any opportunity to be trained.
8. Fear of audit is really a matter that haunts the Principal and college administration to spend fund properly as per norms. After audit is conducted in each college, the college authority remains busy in mitigating the disputed issues raised during audit relating to the expenditure incurred by the college. It is a fact that there are many financial rules like general financial rules, procurement policy and Treasury rules, Public Fund Management System on which Principal / DDO has hardly any training. But they are compelled to utilize the fund for the smooth running of the college. This is really a matter for which academic part of the Principal and other faculties engaged by the Principal do suffer.
9. Poor quantum of fund released is a noteworthy problem. It is observed that funds are released by the government at the end of each quarter but the fund released by the higher authority is very poor. Funds released for outsourcing staff, chemicals and normal expenses like contingencies and stationery are too meagre to the needs of the college. At present the funds allocated to the colleges for chemical and purchase of books and other infrastructure by Government of Tripura are not encouraging.
10. Lack of commitment from society, government, students, teachers and guardians are really responsible for the predicament situation of higher education in India. In Tripura, the commitment of people towards government run institutions is very less and hardly the guardians and society as a whole is participatory and thus institutions lack commitment to the society. Poor results of students do not bother the guardians and they hardly come to the institutions to know the reasons for the poor performances of their wards nor they enquire from the faculties whether their wards do continue studies in the institutions .The attendance of guardians and alumni's during NAAC accreditation process is found starkly poor.
11. The management of higher education institutes is nowadays very difficult and itis ubiquitously true in Tripura as well. Principals / Principal in charge of the different degree colleges are overburdened with administrative as well as academic work. Right from the admission of students to arrangement of examination and arranging stipend and monotonous work etc in time bound manner are very difficult for the principal. This is the reason senior faculties in Tripura are not willing to embrace the charge of Principal fearing additional work with least monetary benefits as well as staying away

from home. Many colleges are being run by some junior faculties with hardly silken touch of sheer experience causing the quality of education to dip down sharply.

12. Interferences of students, teachers and others over the day to day activitiesof the Principal are no minimum. It is a fact that over the last twenty five years, the state of affairs of higher education gets disturbed when the students' election takes place and it would occupy central stage in the college administration. The colleges of Tripura became a breeding ground for politics. No principal, faculty and office staff had the capacity to work against the wishes of students' leaders even if the decision of college authority was student–friendly. The students union was so decisive that except one / two principals, none could deliver the goods according to his/ her wishes if the students' council would disapprove the decision. Almost all decisions would have been taken by ruling dispensation much earlier than the college authority. In true sense, college authority was converted into a translating authority of the wishes of political party run students' union.
13. Incompetency of some non teaching staff is a big blow. It is afact that most of the colleges in Tripura are running without adequate trained and qualified non-teaching staff. Thus, the college administration and management lacks the speed of implementing the decisions of department in an efficient manner. Only paltry staffs in every college are nowadays efficient and skilled enough to meet the growing challenges of digitized country. Many staffsare yet not computer and internetfriendly. The ratio of teaching and non-teaching staff in some colleges with more than 3000 students is really disproportionate like 4:1.
14. Semester system has complicated the higher education scenario in Tripura. It isa fact that semester system is good but it is not a blessing for Tripura due to inadequate faculties and untrained personnel to cope with the changing needs of Choice Based Credit System (CBCS). Due to the semester system, the college authority nowadays is busy in arranging admission and examination process. In Tripura, evaluation of answer-scripts conducted by two universities does take place centrally where all examiners, scrutinizers and Head examiner assemble from different colleges impacting the normal classes badly for a month at least. Not more than 60 days are available to the students for regular classes in a semester, which also gets affected due to arranging many programmes in the college like cultural activities, sports and observance of some important days and conduct of students' union election etc affecting the ambience of classes seriously. Ultimately teaching –learning process got disturbed and the quality withered.
15. Absence of a transfer policy for all staff is another major hindrance to the quality of higher education in Tripura. It is found that a lion portion of faculties works in one place/one College year after year without any change in place of posting. Persons working away from their residences find the transfer of his/her nearest to residence very difficult unless he/she has political influence or affinity. As a result the efficient and dedicated faculties are de-motivated to serve his/her duties for want of a transparent transfer policy.

16. Cost of higher education is high but students are busy with private tuition. It is found to be around at Rs 23000[‡‡‡‡‡] in case of Women's College, Rs 12493[§§§§§] for Udaipur College and Rs 9886[******] for Dharamangar College Rs 20,873[††††††] for MBBC and Rs 13524[‡‡‡‡‡‡] for Government Degree College, Kamalpur, as per self study report submitted by the college during their NAAC accreditation. In reality, a student pays Rs. 12 only as fees for admission to the college compared to at least Rs. 800 p.m for each student borne by the government. Thus higher education is totally free of cost and this is one of the reasons that made the general students least interested for higher education in general degree colleges. Conversely, students are mostly inclined for private tuition than free study at the college considering the lectures delivered in college classrooms as insipid and less productive from their examination point of view due to easy internet accessibility. Students do register their name in general Degree College only to utilize their idle time and to avail of stipends/scholarships.

23 Lack of job guaranteed courses: Education is always seen as a medium to guarantee livelihood prospects in future. But in today's competitive world, when whole world is running after professional courses, the educational institutions in NE region are still venturing for traditional courses. Although in recent years the situation has changed, the higher educational institutions in Tripura have failed to provide the infrastructure for campus recruitment or somehow not fulfilling the guarantee to provide services. Except some technical institutes, campus interview hardly takes place and present unemployment of youths is at a staggering stage rising to 7.41 lakh[§§§§§§] (about 19% of population).

24. Lack of monitoring the quality control measures**:** Last but not least pit in the higher education of Tripura is the lack of quality ensuring and quality controlling measures. Since fag end of twentieth century or the beginning of twenty first century, a paradigm shift in the policies of Higher Education Department is observed. Quality controlling and quality ensuring measures are found to occupy the backseat. Although UGC/ AICTE scales are implemented, minimum standards are not fully followed either in appointment or promotion of faculties to higher grade like Associate Professor / Principal as per the guidelines of UGC. As a result, many underserved candidates are either promoted or appointed to higher level causing the academic standards of higher education to fall down appreciably and ultimately the students and society became worst sufferers. These can be gauged from notifications of advertisement issued from time to times and notifications relating to Career Advancement Scheme adopted by Government of Tripura.

‡‡‡‡‡Self Study Report of Women's College, Agartala, Tripura, p. 28
§§§§§Self Study Report of Netaji Subhash Mahavidyalaya, Udaipur, Tripura, p. 21
******Self Study Report of Government Degree College, Dharmanagar, Tripura, p. 24
††††††Self Study Report of M. B. B. College, Agartala, Tripura, p. 26
‡‡‡‡‡‡Self Study Report of Government Degree College, Kamalpur, Tripura, p. 21
§§§§§§GOT, Economic Review of Tripura 2017-18, p. 13

Conclusion

In a nut shell, it may be mentioned that the higher system in Tripura is embroiled and beset with many issues that hinder quality due to chronic shortage of faculties, poor quality teaching, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability, lack of quality assurance measures, separation of research and teaching and lack of adequate fund. Increasing GER in higher education is easier than achieving quality and subsequently its sustenance is difficult, for which massive investment is the obvious necessity. But the present scenario is ominous as the expenditure incurred by government on education and social sector is dipping and the share of higher education is miniscule. Socially, India remains highly divided; access to higher education is uneven with multidimensional inequalities in enrolment across population groups and geographies. Thus there is an urgent need for the affiliated colleges to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Raising the quality of teaching and learning should be the highest priority of most institutions, in the state institutions in particular. Though the state government has been trying to bring radical changes, both in policy and action, but quality cannot be achieved overnight/ over a short period of time. The hefty burden of unrelieved issues and growing expectations of guardians, students and political masters for a quick way-out are hardly achievable within a short time.

To conclude it needs to be mentioned that nature and utility of higher education are fast changing in digital learning age where technology exerts an important role. Thus the students need to be imparted some basic skill associated with technology. Linking skills in the curriculum of higher education institutes should not be a choice, but obligatory if employability is to be ensured and increased. As skill is marketable, private colleges, private universities and business houses and industries may be invited and involved under Public – Private Partnership model in higher education and the stakeholders should also come forward to share a portion of expenditure burden for national interest.Prolonged subsidy concept has subsided the hunger of knowledge, omnipotent for survival. The benefit of look east policy, BIMSTEC agreement and BCIM corridors are expected to yield self-employment opportunities in Tripura in particular but the prevailing system of higher education, unless rigorously streamlined, can hardly provide gainful employment and income and attain sustainable development, while attaining quality would be a distant dream.

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