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INFRASTRUCTURAL PROBLEMS OF COLLEGES IN ASSAM – A CASE STUDY



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Abstract: Infrastructure plays a very important role in the teaching, learning, research, extensions and consultancy process of the colleges which are the basic components of higher education. Though, the University Grants Commission(UGC), State Government and other various agencies are providing financial support to these colleges of India in general and Assam in particular but, they are lagging behind the infrastructural development. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the problems of infrastructures in the degree colleges of Assam with references to Lakhimpur district.

Keywords: Libraries, Canteens, Classrooms, Playgrounds, Staff quarters.

INTRODUCTION

Adequate infrastructure is the basic need to develop and to maintain a good academic atmosphere in a college. However, it is accepted by a large section of educational experts that most of the colleges of India in general and Assam in particular have not adequate infrastructural facilities. They have not well equipped library, laboratory, class room facilities, etc. Some colleges have no any hostel, canteen, cycle shed, auditorium, etc. Even some of the colleges have not adequate space for arrangement of classes as well as seating arrangement of teaching and non-teaching staff. Teachers are required to seat together in a small room called common room for their study. It was found that some of the colleges have the required infrastructure but due to the lack of proper maintenance and management, students as well as teachers have not been much benefited.

There is enough scope for the development of infrastructure in these colleges, but lack of fund is a common factor to all of them. Of course, it cannot be denied that mis-utilisation or non-utilization of State Government and UGC fund in proper heads is one of the prime reasons for lack of infrastructure development of these colleges.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Since independence of our country, a number of steps have been undertaken by the Government for development of higher education. Degree colleges as higher educational institutions have playing an important role in this respect. In the development of higher education of Lakhimpur district, it is strongly believed that a study on the problems of infrastructures in the degree colleges which was functioning under deficit grants-in-aids system till 31st December, 2006 and at present running under provincialization system of the Government of Assam is quite significant. Considering the above point of view, the

broad objectives of the study are as follows:

- To analyze the problems of Libraries;
- To study the problems of classrooms;
- To focus the problems of hostels;
- To know the problems of staff quarter facilities;
- To make a detailed study of the problems of canteens, playgrounds and sports facilities.

The Study area:

Colleges are playing a vital role in the development of higher education of our country. These colleges may be Government or private or deficit grants-in-aid colleges. The State Government in all respects purely controls Government colleges whereas private colleges are controlled and administered by the private parties or trusts. But a deficit grants-in-aid college is neither purely Government College nor private college. A deficit grants-in-aid college is one where State Government provides fund for staff payment, etc. after adjusting some portion of the student tuition fee to this required fund. In case of Lakhimpur district which is our study area, only 12 deficit grants-in-aid colleges are functioning under the affiliation of Dibrugarh University.

The study district Lakhimpur is situated in the north bank of the river Brahmaputra with a total geographical area of 2277sq.km and population of 889325 as per the Census Report of 2001. For the convenience of administrative work, the district is divided into two sub-divisions viz. North Lakhimpur and Dhakuakhana and 9 numbers of Community Development Blocks with 81 village panchayats.

METHODOLOGY:

The researcher has analyzed the infrastructural problems of these colleges on the basis of distributing structured questionnaires to 240 sample respondents

consisting of 12 numbers of principals, 60 numbers of teachers, 48 numbers of non-teaching staff and 120 numbers of students from the sample colleges. Further, some information is also collected through direct interview with principals, teachers, non-teaching staff and students of the 12 sample colleges. On the basis of this information the researcher has tried to focus some of the infrastructural problems faced by the sample colleges in the study district Lakhimpur. The data used in this study are up to the year 2001-2002 only.

PROBLEMS OF LIBRARIES:

A college library can be said as the store of knowledge for the students' community and teachers. In higher education the students not only need text books and reference books but also news papers and journals etc. for acquiring up to date and required knowledge in the field of education. However, during field survey it was found that out of 120 sample students from different colleges 70 students have not received their required books in their respective libraries. Separate reading room for students and teachers are also not comfortable except 3 colleges in the study district. Out of 12 colleges, 3 college libraries are functioning with one Librarian and one bearer only. In the most of the colleges the books and journals for libraries have been purchased by the principal without consultation with the librarian and teachers. Moreover, some Librarians said that due to the shortage of manpower in the libraries they are overburdened in performing their duties systematically during working hours. Some of them also blame the college authority for non-introduction of computerized system for maintaining overall information of the library. Out of 12 Librarians of the study colleges 8 Librarians opined that a large number of teachers have used many books for taking the classes year after year without returning to the libraries within stipulated time. It has not only violated the rules and regulations of the Library books borrowing system but also depriving a good number of students from using of these valuable books.

During field survey it is also found that the supply of international as well as national journal and newspapers are very poor in the libraries of the study colleges.

Out of the 12 sample colleges only 2 colleges i.e. North Lakhimpur College and Lakhimpur girls' College have only more than 25,000 books in the library. Even, in the North Bank College which was established in 1961 at Ghilamora, the total number of books in the Library is less than 12,000 which also include 40% of reference books in total. Scarcity of text books in the library is a great hindrance for acquiring knowledge amongst the student community basically, which are economically poor.

PROBLEMS OF CLASS ROOM:

Class room plays a very important role for the development of good academic environment in the college. The size of the class room should be adequate and well furnished for teacher and student in teaching learning process. However, during field survey it was found that in most of colleges, the teachers can not take the classes regularly due to the non-availability of classroom for some elective subject. The facility of desks-bench is also very poor

and outdated. It should be mentioned here that Lakhimpur Kendriya Mahavidyalaya, one of the sample college of the study, still have to run some of their classes under the shade of a veterinary department of the Government of Assam. Similarly, Bihpuria College, which was established in 1973, is still, running some of their classes in two rooms of its Girls' Hostel. Though, a few sample colleges like North Lakhimpur College, Lakhimpur Commerce College and Lakhimpur Girls' College have adequate number of classrooms but they are not well-maintained. It was also found that 2 sample colleges located in rural areas viz. North Bank College and Nowboicha College have proper class room space, but they have no pacca floor and well connected electricity to all of their class rooms.

PROBLEMS OF HOSTELS

Hostel facility is more essential for the college students who are coming far from their institutions. However, hostel facility is not available in all the 12 sample colleges of the study district. The following table shows a clear picture in this regard as on 2000-2001.

Hostel facilities in the sample colleges as on 2000-2001

Sl. No.	Name of the colleges	No. of Hostels		Seat Capacity		Number of boarders	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1	North Lakhimpur Girls' College	1	1	80	80	55	70
2	Madhabdev College	1	1	42	42	0	15
3	Lakhimpur Girls' College	na	1	na	180	na	160
4	Bihpuria College	1	1	30	40	13	0
5	Dhakuakhana College	1	1	50	125	19	47
6	Lakhimpur Commerce College	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	North Bank College	0	1	0	23	0	16
8	L.T.K. College	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Sankardev Mahavidyalaya	0	1	0	40	0	22
10	Panigaon OPD College	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Nowboicha College	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Lakhimpur Kendriya Mahavidyalaya	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Tabulated from field data.

The above table reveals that out of 12 sample colleges, 5 colleges have not yet been provided the hostel facilities to the students. Two colleges viz. North Bank College and Sankardeva Mahavidyalaya have provided hostel facilities to the Girls students only, though these are co-educational institutions.

Again, it is observed that the total numbers of borders in the hostels of these two colleges are very poor in comparison to the seat capacity of the hostels. This is because of the non availability of good infrastructural facilities in the hostel

Regarding the absence of hostel facilities in 5 sample colleges it is found that due to non receipt of any fund from the UGC they are not in a position to construct the hostel for the students. However, it is interesting to note that out of these 5 sample colleges 2 colleges viz. Lakhimpur Commerce College and Panigaon O.P.D College are not yet submitted any proposal to the UGC for receiving the grant for construction of hostel. Though the other 2 colleges viz. Nowboicha College and Lakhimpur Kendriya

Mahavidyalaya submitted their proposal in Ninth Plan so far they have not received any fund from the UGC. However, the Principal of Lakhimpur Kendriya Mahavidyalaya informed that the college came under Section 2(f) and 12(B) of UGC Act, 1956 in the year 2000. So, he will submit a proposal at the beginning of the Tenth Five Year Plan i.e. in the month of April 2002.

PROBLEMS OF STAFF QUARTERS:

Staff quarters facilities is also much essential for the teaching and non-teaching staff who are coming far from the institution. But, during field survey it is found that except North Bank College there is no any staff quarter in the study colleges. The North Bank College has 8 number of staff quarters in the college campus including the Principal's residence. Dhakuakhana College has some temporary buildings (Katcha Ghar) which are personally constructed by some staff members in the college campus.

Here, it should be noted that the UGC provide financial assistance for many purposes including construction of staff quarters in the college. But, during the time of discussion with the Principals of 11 sample colleges it was found that if they received any fund for construction of staff quarters, then they could receive a meager amount of assistance for some of the basic requirement like procurement of books, journals, equipment, computer, library building, men's hostel, women's hostel, etc. Therefore, they prefer to seek assistance for most essential items of the college than the construction of staff quarter. There is also no any such scheme from the State Government for the said purpose. However, college employees received house rent allowance up to Rs.500/- per month which is very much inadequate basically who are residing in rented house in urban area of the study district. The Principal of the North Bank College informed that authority constructed the existing 8 number of staff quarter during the year 1977-78 with the financial assistance granted by the UGC to construct staff quarter and a portion of fund given by the then Flood Control Minister, Government of Assam, Late Lalit Kumar Doley of the Constituency.

It also affects the regular routine work of those teachers who are daily coming far away from the college. Due to the lack of proper communications as well as frequent movement or bandh called by various organizations they fail to take their classes regularly. The irregularity of the teachers in taking classes badly affects the student community basically in the completion of their course syllabus before their examination. Therefore the sponsoring agencies including the Government should think over it. However, college can also take certain steps for creation of a fund in the name of staff quarter by conducting/organizing lottery, theater, charity show etc.

PROBLEMS OF CANTEENS

College canteen is essential both for the student and staff for taking a cup of tea and sweets, etc. in recreation time of each and every working day. A college canteen can provide not only sweets and snacks but also food in lunch time. However, during the field survey it was found that out of 12 colleges only 5 colleges viz. North Lakhimpur College,

Lakhimpur Girl's College, Lakhimpur Commerce College, Madhabdev College and Bihpuria College have open college canteen at their campus. But, quality of sweets and food provided by the canteens are not good according to the information received from the students and staff of respective colleges. Besides these, out of these existing 5 canteens only 2 of them have the seating arrangement of 50 students/teachers at a time. Of course, all these 5 canteens are run by private parties on rental basis. At the time of discussion with the Principal of remaining 7 colleges it was found that since a number of restaurant and tea stall are located near to the college campus, so Principal do not take any initiative for opening of college canteen within the campus. It is to be mentioned here that though the 5 colleges have own canteen in the campus out of which Bihpuria and Madhabdev College opened it just before 2 months back of the field survey done by the research scholar in the said colleges.

PROBLEMS OF PLAYGROUND AND SPORTS FACILITIES

Playing games is one of the most essential co-curricular activities of student. Therefore, every college should have proper playground for this type of co-curricular activities. It is to be mentioned here that all the sample 12 colleges have their playgrounds but these are not well maintained. It was found that 3 college's viz. North Lakhimpur College, Lakhimpur Girls' College and Madhabdev College who have developed play ground along with minimum sports facilities were in a position to show the better performance in the intercollege competition organized by Dibrugarh University from time to time.

The play grounds of remaining 9 colleges can not be used by the students in all season. Most of the play grounds of these colleges are under water during the rainy season. The sports facilities provided by 6 sample colleges viz. Bihpuria College, Lakhimpur Commerce College, Nowboicha College, L.T.K. College, North Bank College and Dhakuakhana College are very limited for the students. There is no any indoor stadium in the sample colleges of study district. Only a few colleges have badminton and table tennis facilities inside a hall which are used as indoor stadium-cum-class room.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS:

From the forgoing discussions the important findings emerged and the suggestions on the basis of the findings are mentioned below:

Major Findings:

The deficit grants-in-aid colleges of the study district are facing a lot of problems in their field of operation. It was observed that 75% of the sample colleges in the study district are running without well equipped library, laboratory and class room facilities. Some sample colleges have no any hostel, canteen, cycle shed and auditorium. Even, two of the sample colleges have not adequate space for arrangement of classes as well as seating arrangement of teaching and non-teaching staff. Teachers are required to seat together in a small room called common room which are also used for

their study.

It was found that out of 120 sample students from 12 study colleges, 58% students have not received their required books in their respective libraries. Separate reading room for students and teachers are also not comfortable except 3 colleges in the study district. Out of 12 colleges, 3 college libraries are functioning with one Librarian and one bearer only.

Regarding class room facilities it was found that in 75% of the colleges, teachers can not take the classes regularly due to the non-availability of class room in some elective subject. It is to be mentioned here that Lakhimpur Kendriya Mahavidyalaya, one of the sample college of the present study, which came under deficit grants-in-aid system of the State Government in 1998 still have to run some of their classes under the shade of a Veterinary Department, Government of Assam. The Bihpuria College which was established in 1973, still running some of their classes in two rooms of its Girls' hostel.

It was also found that except 3 colleges, the playgrounds of remaining 9 colleges can not be used by the students in all season. Most of the play grounds of the study colleges are under water during rainy season.

SUGGESTIONS:

In the present globalize era the colleges are required to develop its infrastructure up to a mark. Therefore, to maintain a congenial environment in the college, the principal may constitute a co-ordination committee with the representative(s) of teachers, non-teaching staff and students.

The committee should organize the meeting at a regular interval to discuss the academic and infrastructural problems of the colleges.

There should be proper plan and policy for procurement of equipments like computer, overhead projector and laboratory equipments etc., which will help both the student and staff for recording and preserving up to date data through the use of information technology.

At the time of purchasing books, journals and equipment, the Principal should consult the concerned person/staff of the respective departments.

The State Government may implement certain new policies, so that the colleges are not required to face any major problem in its overall management.

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