Student Support Services in Assam's Higher Education: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Student support, encompassing scholarships, counseling, and various administrative services, is essential for accommodating the increasing diversity within the student population. This empirical study examines the student support services in higher education institutions in Assam, particularly focusing on NAAC-accredited colleges. The study identifies and analyzes the mechanisms available for facilitating students' academic and career aspirations, aiming to foster holistic development.Using secondary data from Self Study Reports of 26 accredited colleges over five years,from 2016-17 to 2020-21, the research assesses various components such as the relationship between institutional performance, scholarship distribution, capacity-building initiatives, and student progression. The findings indicate that while government support significantly surpasses institutional resources, there remains a pressing need for enhanced career guidance and skill development programs. The study concludes with recommendations for optimising student support systems to align with the diverse needs of students, thereby improving their academic outcomes and career trajectories.

Key Words: Higher Education, Student Diversity, NAAC Accreditation, Career Guidance, Holistic Development.

1. Introduction

Student Support and Progression are two most important aspects for any academic institution.Student Support refers to the assistance provided to the students in form of scholarship, counselling and administrative services, for them to access post-secondary programs including continuing education programs. Student Support is necessary owing to the increasing diversity in the students. Therefore, the students support system in educational institutions should

be able to cater to the diverse needs of the students. The students need to have access to the resources which includes academic and other resources that can help them progress in their studies and strive for excellence in learning. The necessary support and guidance can ensure better learning for the students and enable them to explore and reach their full potential. The student support can range from mentoring, tutorials, remedial classes, career counselling and other services which can ensure a holistic development of the students both physically and mentally. On the other hand, the student progression can be considered as a indicator for the quality of the institution. Therefore, the students support resources should be extended in such a manner that it ensures a critical thinking ability in the students and help them overcome their problems along with skills and knowledge to succeed in life.

Various studies tried to link students' diversity with dropout rates of the students in higher education. Tinto, 1993 gave an integrative model of student departure with six progressive phases viz. student pre-entry attributes; early goals/commitments to study; institutional experiences; integration into the institution; goals/commitments to the institution; ending in a departure decision. Among these institutional experiences and integration as defined by Tinto suggests that students who do not relate emotionally, socially and academically to the institutions culture may dropout from the institution.

Casey et al. (2003) in their study pointed out the increasing diversity of the students in universities of UK especially post-1992, which is a result of their academic background, their prior experiences and having a broader range of qualifications which is different from traditional academic routes. Besides the universities also have international students which results in diversity and thus the various aspects of student life have become harder to understand and manage. In this context Audin & Davy, 2003 observed student support have become increasingly important for Higher Education Institutions. University of Melbourne, 2002 maintains that students come to university for both academic aspirations and personal development and therefore there is a need to satisfy the social and emotional needs of the students.

The Criterion 5 (i.e. Student Support and Progression) of NAAC focuses on how well the educational institutions can help students with their studies and personal growth. This Criterion looks at how the institutions create a supportive and friendly environment for students. In the Self Study Reports (SSRs) for NAAC, the Criterion 5 requires data on student support and progression. This criterion four metrics, viz. Student Support; Student Progression; Student Participation And Activities; and Alumni engagement. The first metric student support assesses Government Scholarships & Freeships, Institutional and Non-government Scholarships & Freeships, Capacity Development and Skills Enhancement Activities, Guidance for Competitive Examinations and Career Counselling and Student Grievance Redressal. The second metric Student Progression assesses the Average Percentage of Placement of Outgoing Students during the last five years; Progression of students to Higher Education and the performance of students in Competitive Examinations at various levels, including state, national, and international arenas. The criterion also assesses a third metric Student Participation in various sports and cultural activities. The students also need to maintain an active and dynamic Student Council. Further the criterion assesses the continued alumni engagement and involvement, which provide valuable support services, both financial and non-financial, having a lasting impact on the institution's growth.

In this context the present study aims to understand the student support and progression in higher education in Assam especially the NAAC Accredited Colleges of Assam.

2. Research Gap and Rationale of the Study

While several studies have explored the relationship between student diversity and dropout rates in higher education, most of these studies have focused on the emotional, social, and academic integration of students into institutional culture. The existing literature has primarily concentrated on institutions in Western contexts, such as the UK and Australia, where diversity and institutional experiences may differ from other regions, such as India.

There is a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific student support and progression mechanisms in Indian higher education institutions, particularly in the context of NAAC-accredited colleges in Assam. Although the NAAC accreditation framework emphasises the importance of student support and progression through its Criterion 5, the existing research does not adequately address how these support systems function in diverse and under-researched educational settings like Assam. Additionally, the existing studies do not comprehensively examine how institutional resources such as government scholarships, capacity development activities, career counseling, and alumni engagement directly impact student progression and academic success in this region.

The present study seeks to fill this gap by analysing the effectiveness of student support and progression mechanisms in NAAC-accredited colleges in Assam. It focuses on understanding how these institutions cater to the diverse needs of their students, support their holistic development, and influence their academic and career outcomes, thereby providing a much-needed regional perspective on this important issue.

3. Objective

The study focuses on the specific conditions and practices in NAAC-accredited colleges in Assam, offering insights into the successes and shortcomings of student support and progression systems in this unique regional context. As such the study has two-fold objective:

a. To identify and analyse the various student support mechanisms available within the institution that facilitate the achievement of students' academic and career goals in the higher institutions of Assam.

b. To explore strategies for optimising these support mechanisms to foster the holistic development of students, encompassing academic, personal, and professional growth.

4. Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on secondary data collected from the Self Study Reports of accredited colleges in Assam, covering the period from 2016-17 to 2020-21, from NAAC website. The focus of the study is confined to the metric "Student Support and Progression" as outlined by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). The sample consists of 26 colleges across Assam, accredited during the specified period, ranging from Cycle 1 to Cycle 3. The data is presented through tables and graphs for clarity and analysis.

5. Results and Discussion

To address the objectives of this study, the following components were examined: the comparison between institutional CGPA and C-5 point average; the government and institutional scholarships available in the sampled colleges and the number of beneficiaries; the number and nature of capacity building initiatives in the sampled

colleges; the number of beneficiaries from career guidance; the number and nature of placement in the sampled colleges; the number and Nature of progression to higher education from the sampled colleges; the number of students appearing and passing the competitive examinations; the relationship between progression and alumni contribution. The results and discussion for each component are outlined in the sections that follow.

"India has one of the largest and diverse education systems in the world. Privatization, widespread expansion, increased autonomy and introduction of Programmes in new and emerging areas have improved access to higher education. At the same time, it has also led to widespread concern on the quality and relevance of the higher education. To address these concerns, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) and the Programme of Action (PoA, 1992) spelt out strategic plans for the policies, advocated the establishment of an independent National accreditation agency. Consequently, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994 as an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission (UGC) with its Head Quarter in Bengaluru. The mandate of NAAC as reflected in its vision statement is in making quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)." (http://naac.gov.in/index.php/en/assessment-accreditation#accreditation)

Table 1 presents the number of colleges in Assam during the assessment period from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

Table 1: Cycle-wise Colleges for the Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21

Cycle	Number of colleges
Cycle 1	11
Cycle 2	03
Cycle 3	12
Total	26

Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs

As shown in Table 1, there are 11 colleges in Cycle 1 during the assessment period from 2016-17 to 2020-21, while Cycles 2 and 3 have 3 and 12 colleges, respectively. The subsequent results are discussed based on Table 1 and the components outlined in the Methodology.

(A) Comparison of institutional CGPA and C-5 point average (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21):

"NAAC has identified a set of seven criteria to serve as the basis of its assessment procedures. NAAC has categorized the Higher Educational Institutions into three major types (University, Autonomous College, and Affiliated/Constituent College) and assigned different weightages to these criteria under different key aspects based on the functioning and organizational focus of the three types of HEIs. Institutions are graded for each Key Aspect under four categories, viz. A, B, C and D, denoting Very good, Good, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory levels respectively. The summated score for all the Key Aspects under a Criterion is then calculated with the appropriate weightage applied to it and the GPA is calculated for the Criterion. The Cumulative GPA (CGPA), which gives the final Assessment Outcome, is then calculated from the seven GPAs pertaining to the seven criteria, after applying the prescribed weightage to each Criterion." (http://naac.gov.in/index.php/en/assessment-accreditation#accreditation)
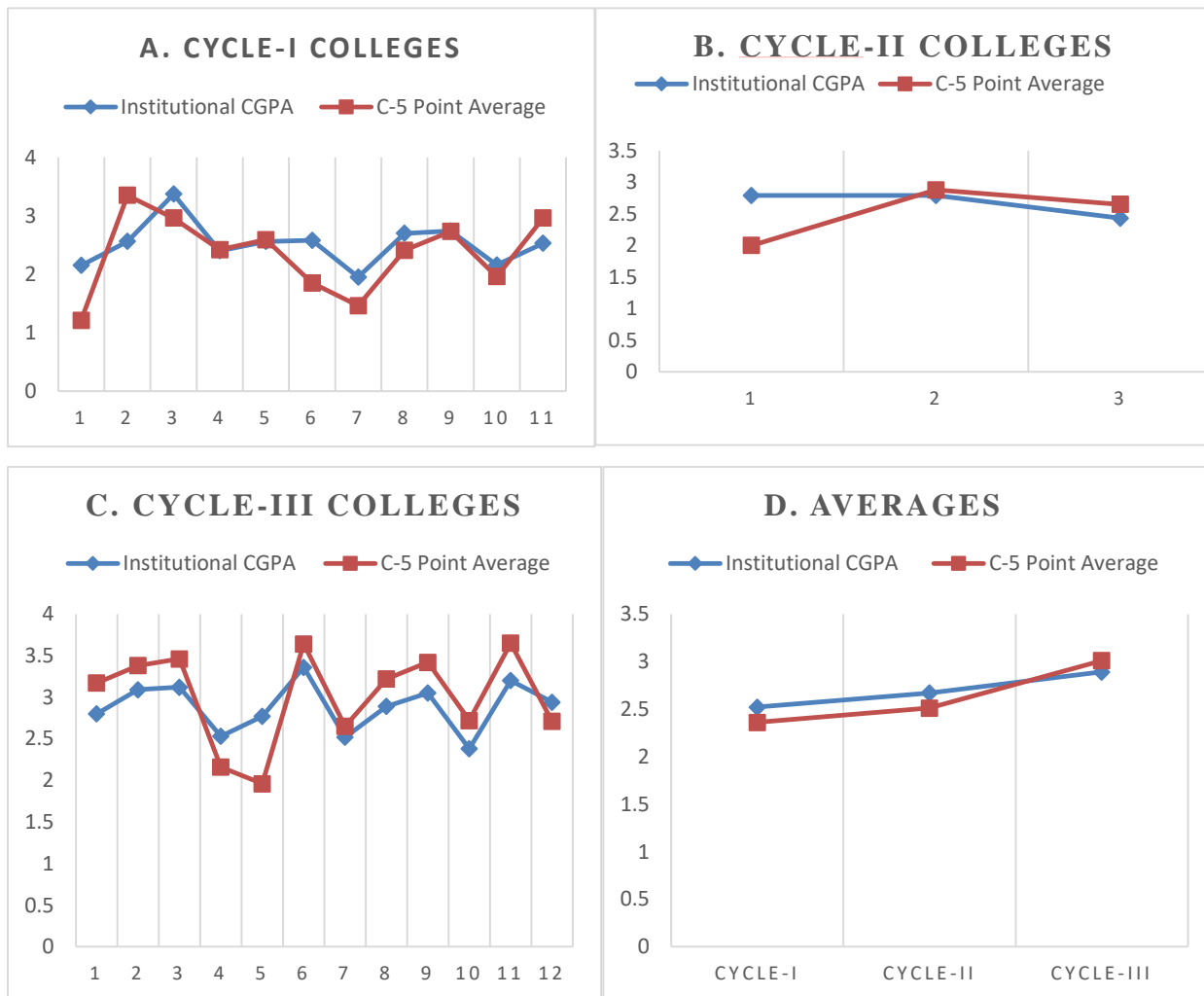
Table 2: Institutional CGPA V/S C-5 Point Average (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21)

Cycles	Name of College	Institutional CGPA	C-5 point average
Cycle 1	Jonai Girls College	2.15	1.21
	Beltola College	**2.56**	**3.35**
	Mayang Anchalik College	3.37	2.96
	Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia College	2.40	2.42
	Sarbodaya College	2.56	2.59
	Eastern Karbi Anglong College	2.58	1.85
	Thong Nokbe College	1.95	1.46
	Don Bosco College	2.70	2.41
	Chandra Nath Bezbaruah College	2.74	2.73
	Narangi Anchalik Mahavidyalay	2.16	1.96
	KK Handique Govt. Sanskrit College	2.53	2.96
Cycle 2	Dikhowmukh College	2.79	2.00
	Lalit Chandra Bharali College	2.79	2.88
	Tangla College	2.43	2.65
Cycle 3	Pub Kamrup College	2.80	3.17
	Dr. B.K.B College	3.09	3.38
	Golaghat Commerce College	3.12	3.46
	Rangia College	**2.53**	**2.16**
	Dhemaji College	**2.77**	**1.96**
	Bahona College	3.36	3.64
	Rupahi College	2.52	2.65
	Chandra Kamal Bezbaruah Commerce College	2.89	3.22
	Debraj Roy College	3.05	3.42
	Barama College	2.38	2.72
	Hemo Prova Borabora Girls College	3.20	3.65
	Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College	**2.94**	**2.71**

Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs

A comparison between the institutional CGPA and the C-5 point average indicates that, with the exception of Beltola College, the C-5 point average for colleges in Cycle 1 is either less than or approximately equal to the institutional CGPA. On the other hand, for colleges in Cycle 2, with the exception of Dikhowmukh College, the C-5 point average exceeds the institutional CGPA. Similarly, in Cycle 3, all colleges, except Rangia College, Dhemaji College, and Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College, have a higher C-5 point average than their institutional CGPA. This trend is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Institutional CGPA V/S C-5 Point Average (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21)

Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs

Note: Figure is based on the basis of secondary data of institutional CGPA and C-5 Point Average from NAAC SSRs.

Figure 1(D) also illustrates the average Institutional CGPA and C-5 Point Average. It is evident from the figure that colleges in their third cycle of accreditation perform better in both metrics. This can be attributed to the fact that most colleges in Cycle 1, with the exception of K.K. Handique Sanskrit College, were established in the 1980s, 1990s, or post-2000, while those in Cycle 3 were founded much earlier, with some having over 50 years of existence. As a result, the colleges in Cycle 3 of NAAC assessment, particularly, are better equipped to provide enhanced support to students due to factors such as resource development, stronger alumni networks, and increased institutional expertise. Additionally, the availability of grants and financial assistance contributes to a more robust support mechanism, significantly improving the colleges' performance. The more experienced faculty and staff further enhance the effectiveness of these institutions, enabling better outcomes in terms of both Institutional CGPA and C-5 Point Average.

(B) Beneficiaries from the Government and Institutional Scholarships and the Career Guidance Programmes (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21):

The number of students receiving government scholarships and freeships varies annually, depending upon eligibility criteria and the availability of funding. These programs are designed to support economically disadvantaged students, facilitate access to education, and alleviate the financial burden on deserving candidates. In addition to government initiatives, scholarships and freeships are provided by the institution and non-governmental organisations. These awards are based on various criteria, such as academic merit, financial need, and specific talents or achievements. The institution also conducts a range of capacity-building and skill enhancement activities to enrich the educational experience of students. These activities, including workshops, seminars, guest lectures, internships, and industry interactions which are designed to complement the academic curriculum and foster a comprehensive learning environment

Table 3: Number of Beneficiaries from the Government and Institutional Scholarships and the Career Guidance Programmes (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21)

Cycles	Name of College	Government Scholarship	Institutional Scholarship	Career Guidance
Cycle 1	Jonai Girls College	2672	1123	79
	Beltola College	1562	0	213
	Mayang Anchalik College	2531	111	333
	Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia College	2195	7	69
	Sarbodaya College	2669	0	124
	Eastern Karbi Anglong College	2156	0	76
	Thong Nokbe College	1294	1294	0
	Don Bosco College	592	348	1
	Chandra Nath Bezbaruah College	999	2	526
	Narangi Anchalik Mahavidyalay	127	0	0
	KK Handique Govt. Sanskrit College	163	163	8
Cycle 2	Dikhowmukh College	526	0	185
	Lalit Chandra Bharali College	1994	59	699
	Tangla College	7190	53	549
Cycle 3	Pub Kamrup College	7919	7199	450
	Dr. B.K.B College	3706	79	2044
	Golaghat Commerce College	3402	47	1350
	Rangia College	4810	5131	142
	Dhemaji College	4430	128	5
	Bahona College	2629	192	3190
	Rupahi College	7338	154	2173
	Chandra Kamal Bezbaruah Commerce College	1661	20	866
	Debraj Roy College	2983	8	2807
	Barama College	3625	0	2437
	Hemo Prova Borabora Girls College	4053	87	2770
	Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College	3409	0	1031

Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs

Table 3 presents the number of beneficiaries of both government and institutional scholarships, as well as those who benefited from career guidance programs. It serves as the basis for drawing conclusions regarding the nature of scholarship and assistance available in the colleges, including both government and institutional support. Additionally, the data from Table 3 was utilised to generate Figure 2.

Figure 2: Number of Beneficiaries in Each Cycle
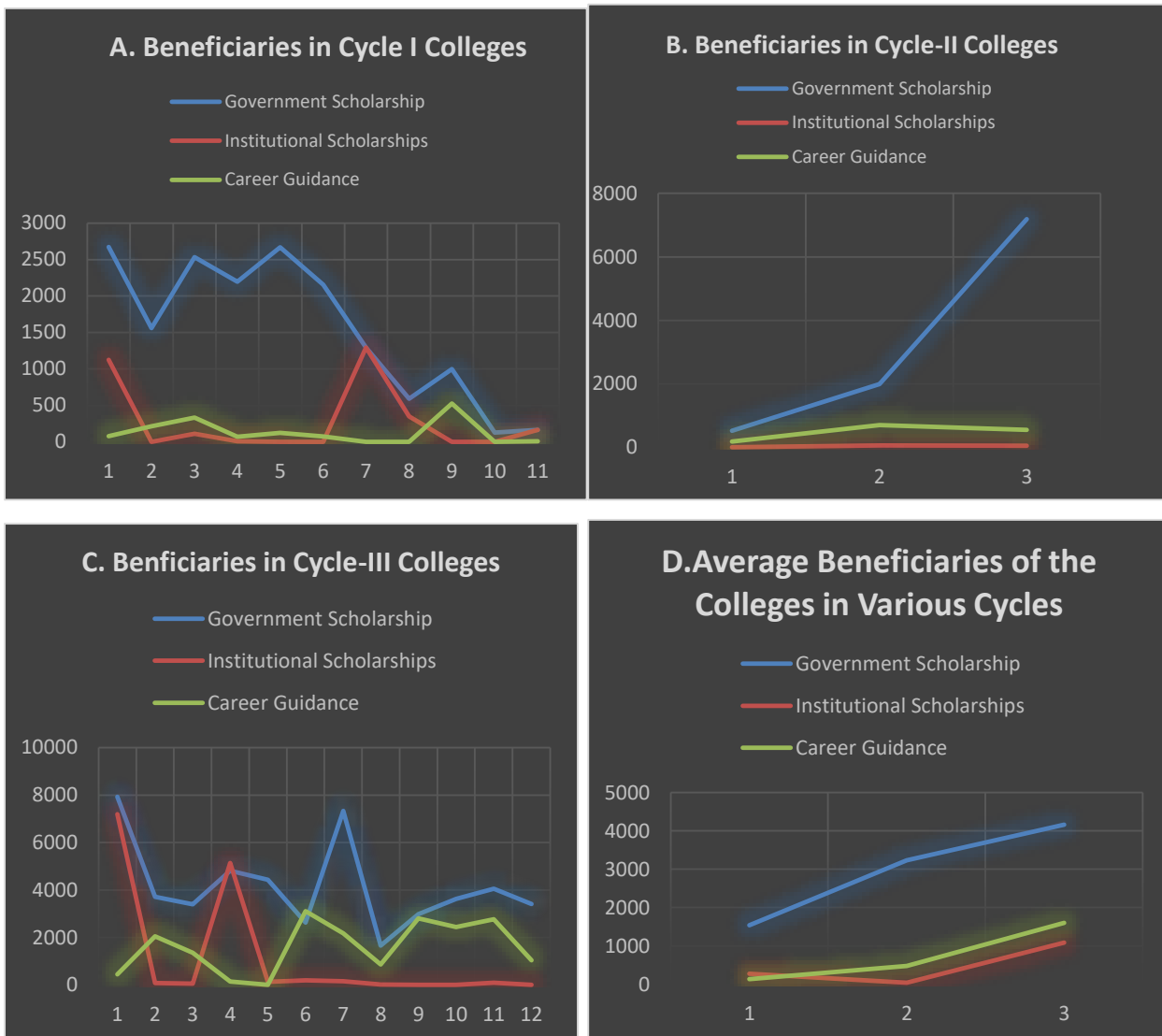
Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs as available from the website

Note: Figure is based on the basis of secondary data of government scholarships, institutional scholarships and career guidance from NAAC SSRs

An analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data from the SSRs reveals that the institutions provide financial and other forms of assistance to their students. Financial support is available through various schemes and scholarships at both the government and institutional levels. For government scholarships, colleges offer provisions such as free admissions and a range of scholarships, including post-matric scholarships for ST, SC, OBC, TGL, and PH students. Some colleges also provide the Ishan Uday Scholarship for students from the northeastern region.

Between 2016-17 and 2020-21, female students received the Banikanta Kakoti Award, commonly known as the free scooty scheme.

The college also offers various institutional scholarships in the form of awards, individual assistance, book grants, support from the students' union, and departmental assistance, both in cash and in kind. However, it was observed that some colleges lacked institutional assistance for students across the three cycles of the NAAC assessment. The data shows that colleges in Cycle 3 have better career guidance facilities. However, this does not suggest that the colleges in Cycles 1 and 2 are falling behind. All three cycles of colleges have been striving to enhance career guidance for their students through tutorials, extra classes, seminars, quizzes, field studies, awareness programs, value-added courses, skill-based guidance programs, health support initiatives, health camps, career counselling, and personality development programs. Figure 2 (D) indicates that, on average, colleges in Cycle 3 perform better across all three aspects compared to those in the other two cycles. An analysis of the SSRs reveals that the colleges in Cycle 3 offer more diversified career guidance and capacity-building programs, attributed to increased expertise.

(C)   Number and nature of Capacity Building Programmes, Placement and Progression to Higher Education during (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21):

Table 4 presents the number of capacity-building programs, placements, and progressions to higher education between 2016-17 and 2020-21. An analysis of the SSRs and Table 4 indicates that various stakeholders, such as the Cells under IQAC, NSS, NCC, Women's Cell, Students' Union, and college departments, prioritize conducting capacity-building programs that influence student placement and progression to higher education. The analysis highlights a range of such programs, including research paper writing, academic counselling, motivational talks, workshops on diverse topics, student seminar presentations, and the observation of local, national, and international events and commemorative days. These programs have a positive impact, raising student awareness of various economic and social aspects and helping them adapt accordingly. Additionally, these initiatives prepare students for holistic personal development and motivate them toward achieving their career goals.

Table 4: Number of Capacity Building Programmes, Placement and Progression to Higher Education during (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21)

Cycle	Name of College	Capacity Building Programmes	Placement	Progression to Higher Education
	Jonai Girls College	6	2	32
	Beltola College	13	70	43
	Mayang Anchalik College	24	55	42
	Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia College	80	30	41
	Sarbodaya College	10	20	21
Cycle 1	Eastern Karbi Anglong College	3	43	25
	Thong Nokbe College	11	0	19
	Don Bosco College	3	5	18
	Chandra Nath Bezbaruah College	8	95	117
	Narangi Anchalik Mahavidyalay	12	58	59
	KK Handique Govt. Sanskrit College	1	15	12

Cycle 2	Dikhowmukh College	35	37	51
	Lalit Chandra Bharali College	53	43	139
	Tangla College	15	45	87
Cycle 3	Pub Kamrup College	14	169	362
	Dr. B.K.B College	26	74	98
	Golaghat Commerce College	34	286	104
	Rangia College	44	80	549
	Dhemaji College	0	73	0
	Bahona College	160	150	455
	Rupahi College	47	29	57
	Chandra Kamal Bezbaruah Commerce College	31	40	159
	Debraj Roy College	18	251	530
	Barama College	37	17	92
	Hemo Prova Borabora Girls College	39	0	292
	Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College	18	133	585

(D) Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs

In terms of placement, it is evident that, upon graduation, students not pursuing higher education acquire skills that enable them to secure employment in private banks and other private institutions. Some pursue teacher training and work as teachers in government or private schools, junior colleges, and provincialized UG and PG colleges, while others opt for professional courses and careers in law, among other fields. Regarding progression to higher education, pursuing a master's degree in various disciplines, both through regular and distance modes, is the most common choice among students, followed by B.Ed. and D.El.Ed. programs. Additionally, some students choose professional courses such as PGDCA, DCA, LLB, CCA, Developer Certification, Montessori Teacher Training, and B.Voc in IT.

Table 5 represents the average number of Capacity Building Programmes, Placement and Progression to Higher Education during 2016-17 to 2020-21 in the colleges under various cycles.

Table 5: Average Number of Capacity Building Programmes, Placement and Progression to Higher Education (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21)

Cycle	Capacity Building Programmes	Placement	Progression to Higher Education
Cycle 1	16	36	39
Cycle 2	34	42	92
Cycle 3	39	109	274

Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs

Note: Average is calculated is based on the basis of secondary data of capacity building programme, placement and progression records from NAAC SSRs

Table 5 indicates that, on average, colleges in Cycle 3 perform better in conducting capacity-building programs, facilitating placements, and supporting progression to higher education, followed by colleges in Cycle 2. As previously mentioned, the performance of colleges improves as they gain more expertise. Capacity-building

programs are a key form of student support, and colleges in Cycle 3, with a higher average number of such programs, are able to provide stronger support to their students. This increased support is reflected in the higher rates of placements and progression to higher education.

(D)The number of students appearing and passing the competitive examinations (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21):

Regular career counselling and guidance sessions are essential to enable students to make informed decisions regarding their academic and professional trajectories

Table 6: Number of Students Appearing and Qualifying Competitive Examinations (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21):

Cycle	Name of College	Competitive Exams Appeared	Competitive Exams Qualified
Cycle 1	Jonai Girls College	0	0
	Beltola College	0	0
	Mayang Anchalik College	16	15
	Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia College	4	4
	Sarbodaya College	1	1
	Eastern Karbi Anglong College	6	6
	Thong Nokbe College	0	0
	Don Bosco College	2	1
	Chandra Nath Bezbaruah College	124	37
	Narangi Anchalik Mahavidyalay	9	5
	KK Handique Govt. Sanskrit College	20	3
Cycle 2	Dikhowmukh College	34	4
	Lalit Chandra Bharali College	12	10
	Tangla College	15	9
Cycle 3	Pub Kamrup College	33	32
	Dr. B.K.B College	11	11
	Golaghat Commerce College	60	20
	Rangia College	43	38
	Dhemaji College	0	0
	Bahona College	255	92
	Rupahi College	444	26
	Chandra Kamal Bezbaruah Commerce College	1	1
	Debraj Roy College	754	96
	Barama College	0	0
	Hemo Prova Borabora Girls College	166	58
	Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College	247	21

Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs

Table 6 indicates that, while a significant number of students participate in competitive examinations, the number of those who qualify is relatively low. Table 7 presents the average number of students appearing for and qualifying in competitive examinations for colleges in each cycle.

Table 7: Average Number of Students Appearing and Qualifying Competitive Examinations (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21):

Cycle	Competitive Exams Appeared	Competitive Exams Qualified	Average %
Cycle 1	17	7	41.18%
Cycle 2	20	8	40.00%
Cycle 3	168	33	19.64%

Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs as available from the website

Note: Average is calculated is based on the basis of secondary data of competitive exams appeared and qualified from NAAC SSRs

Table 7 shows that colleges in Cycle 3 are performing poorly in terms of the average number of students appearing for and qualifying in competitive examinations. This suggests that, although career guidance and capacity-building programs are conducted in therse institutions, they are insufficient to help students succeed in these examinations. While colleges in Cycles 1 and 2 perform better on average than those in Cycle 3, the overall number of students appearing for these exams remains low. Furthermore, the SSRs reveal that most students have qualified for the TET-Assam exam, while very few have appeared for or qualified in other competitive exams such as APSC/UPSC, CLAT, JAM, and NET/SET. Therefore, colleges in all three cycles need to design programmes that better motivate and guide students to both participate in and succeed in competitive examinations.

(E)Relationship between progression and alumni contribution (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21):

The Alumni Association plays a crucial role in the development and progress of the institution. Through sustained engagement, alumni offer valuable support, both financial and non-financial, which significantly contributes to the institution's growth. The association acts as a link between the alumni and their alma mater, fostering a sense of belonging and cultivating a strong network of graduates dedicated to the institution's continued success.

Table 8: Alumni Contributions (Assessment Period 2016-17 to 2020-21):

Cycle	Name of College	Alumni Contribution
Cycle 1	Jonai Girls College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Beltola College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Mayang Anchalik College	**More than 5 Lakh**
	Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Sarbodaya College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Eastern Karbi Anglong College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Thong Nokbe College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Don Bosco College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Chandra Nath Bezbaruah College	**More than 5 Lakh**

	Narangi Anchalik Mahavidyalay	Less than 1 Lakh
	KK Handique Govt. Sanskrit College	Less than 1 Lakh
Cycle 2	Dikhowmukh College	More than 5 Lakh
	Lalit Chandra Bharali College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Tangla College	Less than 1 Lakh
Cycle 3	Pub Kamrup College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Dr. B.K.B College	3-4 Lakh
	Golaghat Commerce College	1-3 Lakh
	Rangia College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Dhemaji College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Bahona College	**More than 5 Lakh**
	Rupahi College	1-3 Lakh
	Chandra Kamal Bezbaruah Commerce College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Debraj Roy College	Less than 1 Lakh
	Barama College	1-3 Lakh
	Hemo Prova Borabora Girls College	1-3 Lakh
	Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College	**More than 5 Lakh**

Data Source: Secondary Data, NAAC SSRs as available from the website

Table 8 indicates that, in Cycle 1, apart from Mayang Anchalik College and Chandra Nath Bezbaruah College, which received alumni contributions exceeding ₹5 lakh during the period 2016-17 to 2020-21, other colleges had contributions of less than ₹1 lakh. Similarly, in Cycle 2, with the exception of Dikhowmukh College, the remaining two colleges had alumni contributions below ₹1 lakh. In Cycle 3, except for Bahona College and Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College, which received more than ₹5 lakh, alumni contributions in other colleges ranged between less than ₹1 lakh, ₹1-3 lakh, and ₹3-4 lakh. Analysis of the SSR data shows that colleges with stronger and more active alumni associations receive greater alumni support. Various factors may influence financial contributions in colleges where contributions are less than ₹1 lakh, such as the economic status of alumni, with some not yet affluent or still seeking employment.

6. Conclusion

The primary limitation of this study is its theoretical and qualitative nature. While many factors influence an institution's student support system, this study did not account for all such factors. Additionally, student support was examined in isolation from other components of the SSRs, leaving room for further analysis not covered in this research. However, the analysis suggests that as institutions progress through various stages of NAAC accreditation, they improve their student support systems due to increased expertise and resources. It was observed that students receive more financial support from government sources than from the institutions themselves. Therefore, career guidance needs to be strengthened to benefit a larger number of students.

Moreover, capacity-building initiatives should not be limited to academic programs and the observance of commemorative days. They should focus on enhancing students' skills, preparing them for the job market. Student progression should not only emphasize traditional education but also encourage enrollment in professional and skill-based courses. Career guidance should be enhanced, with a focus on increasing the number of students

appearing for and qualifying in competitive examinations, as well as fostering entrepreneurship and other career pathways.

Institutions should continuously evaluate their standards and make adjustments to improve and upgrade their student support services. This requires a shift in the mindset of academic staff, encouraging them to offer timely assistance both inside and outside the classroom, with a focus on students' holistic development. Additionally, institutions should establish mechanisms to track students' progress after graduation. Strengthening alumni networks and integrating alumni into institutional activities will further enhance student morale and contribute to the institution's growth.

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