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**Abstract**

Historically low average pass rate has been a perennial challenge for the universities and provincialised colleges in the North-Eastern states of India (Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh). Pass rate refers to the proportion of students promoted from one semester to the next and also the proportion of students who pass the final examination to be a graduate. The paper attempts to trace the key parameters for quality improvement for higher education in the region and subsequently augment the pass rate. An inductive content analysis was conducted based on focus group interviews at various levels at Assam University, Silchar and its affiliated provincialised colleges. The four broad categories thus identified (academic, administrative, socio-economic and placement issues) were subjected to Pareto 80-20 principle to identify the issues that are to be given priority for evolving the system. The study would help the administrators to measure the quality of higher education system in a hostile environment characterised by adverse topography, political disturbances, skewed distribution of income, widespread poverty and lack of

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