



CULTURAL AWARENESS OF STUDENTS OF DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Culture embraces all the manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives and the products of human activities as determined by those habits (Boas,1930). Each culture has its own identity with features like language, religious practices, dresses, code of ethics, norms, rituals, customs etc. as the culture itself is the way of life. To ensure one's belongingness and membership to town culture, one must acquire some social & communication skills associated with that particular cultural group. So every individual has to learn about own cultural practices because going beyond the track may invite risk of being eliminated from the group. In case of culturally aware persons, when something apparently peculiar or random happens they have a mental frame to distinguish whether it is explained by culture or it is something unique to particular person or organization. Thus, knowledge and awareness of different culture help in formulating the mental frame by which one can handle new situations. In the present study, an analysis of the Cultural Awareness of Students of Dibrugarh University, Assam was made by using Normative Survey Method. The study was carried out on a sample of 250 students of Dibrugarh University selected purposively from 8 Departments and 8 Centres of studies. The study revealed that a very less number of students of Dibrugarh University were highly aware about the cultural diversities of North-East India. It further revealed that there exists no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University studying under professional programmes and liberal programmes. It was also found that there is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their gender and discipline of the study.

KEYWORDS: Culture, Awareness, Cultural Awareness, Dibrugarh University.

INTRODUCTION:

Culture influences from the time of conception of a baby in his/her mother's womb till its death, covering each stage of development in the entire lifespan. Even after death, one's dead body is vanished away following the means shown by the culture. The process by which one can confine himself/ herself with his / her own culture is not very simple, because in several daily activities one needs to interact with people of different places with different cultures, and so it is inevitable to be influenced by other cultures. There is an uncountable variety of culture. Some cultures are formed on the basis of the members belonging to a particular tribe, caste, community, religion, state, nation etc. Even within the same tribe, there may be different groups like clans, and each of them may vary due to their unique cultural practices. Studies have shown that no two cultures are alike. There is a possibility of existence of similar cultural practices among two different cultures but most of them show contradictory features. The heterogeneous nature of cultures may cause inner and outer conflicts among the individuals. The task of adjusting in such situation is more critical in the present globalized world. Today, no country can survive alone in the world. Each of them is economically and politically dependent on one another. The advancement of communication, science and

technology has made this dependency thicker and inevitable in recent years. The most interesting fact is that no culture is completely free from other culture today.

Culture embraces all the manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives and the products of human activities as determined by those habits (Boas,1930). Culture is not only some patterns and rigid rules, but it is also a way of harmony and unity among human beings. The knowledge about different cultures and cultural practices brings assimilation among the people. The mental differences created in the minds of human due to physical, geographical, racial, ethnic, social distances can be reached by succeeding culture. Knowledge about similarities and differences of own culture with others creates curiosity as well as a sense of acceptance of others' practices. It is universal human nature that all individuals generally show negative attitude towards the things which are totally new or unusual for them. But if we can at least make them feel curious about cultural issues around their surroundings it will be a powerful weapon against prevailing crimes, criminalities and all the inhuman practices in the name of caste, sex, religion, territories and so on. North-east India is the land of many tribes, castes, religions and communities. Almost all of the tribes, castes and communities have their own culture and social practices. A number of differences can be observed among these people on their visions of life, lifestyles, values, norms, aspirations, priorities, etc. In North-east India, there are some cultures which have rich heritage and glorious history of survival during the past era of human civilization. But due to ignorance and misapprehension of modern world these cultures and their glories are either disappearing or may become disappear. A bit of knowledge about those cultures and their unique practices will not only make us familiar about them but also to respect and accept them as they are. In this way the great image of Indian culture can be made greater and glorious.

Cultural awareness can be defined as the ability to adopt a third culture perspective in intercultural interactions in order to enact culturally appropriate behaviour and to establish meaningful relationship with individuals from cultures different from one's own (Osula & Irvin, 2009). 'Cultural Awareness' is the term used to denote knowledge about own culture along with culture of surroundings. Cultural awareness becomes fundamental when we have to work together with people from other cultures. Culture is the system of learned behaviour shared by and transmitted among the members of a group. Man begins to learn it since his birth. By picking up the culture and by trapping the heritages of his past, man becomes distinctly human. Man is therefore called the culture-bearing animal. Culture is social product which is shared by most members of the group. It is an acquired quality; therefore cultural behaviour is also a learned behaviour. Culture is linked with past. It passed from one generation to another generation through traditions and customs. People grasp, understand and assess things in different ways. What is considered as appropriate behaviour in one's culture is frequently inappropriate in another one. Here primarily misunderstanding occur when people fix awareness within own and impose them on others. Again for adjusting with people from other culture, it is particularly important to overcome one's ethnocentrism. The ethnocentrism is a universal phenomenon occurred when behaviours and actions are according to standards of one's own culture. Cultural awareness works like antidotes to handle the harmful effects of ethnocentrism.

There are uncountable evidences of innocent people becoming victim of socio-cultural evils in passing years of human civilization. All these socio-cultural evils like superstitions, prejudices, blind believes, dowry, witch hunting, animal hunting, scarifies of animals in the name of deities, wars in name of religion, territory, caste, crimes against girls and so on. There is a serious necessity to prevent all these socio-cultural calamities that already created threats to life & livelihood of entire species in the earth. It can only be possible if we have a sense of respect towards others' lives and livelihoods.

Again, education equips an individual to adjust himself / herself in the changing cultural patterns. Education is not only concerned with transmission of culture but it also builds new cultural patterns. New cultural patterns are necessary in ever changing human societies. Indian culture is blamed for its social stratification, as it divided in to different groups, classes and castes containing own identity and differences with one another. Today there are attempts to modify the rigidity of the stratified structures for which the new generation again need sound knowledge about the culture (Mathur, 2014). Therefore, like education,

cultural knowledge is also essential for everyone, especially in the context of globalization. We must have proper knowledge and understanding of own as well as others' cultures.

Cultural awareness refers to developing consciousness of culture and ways in which culture shapes values and beliefs (Burchum, 2002). Cultural awareness denotes identification of own personal beliefs and values shaped by their cultural heritage. It allows individual to recognize the similarities and differences in cultures and various aspects that can make influence in life.

This study holds importance on the point that its target group is the students studying in a University, with an improved knowledge of different cultural practices of different places of the globe and they can better adapt their own ways of self-adjustment in those places. It may be the basic necessity for those who belong to other states of India, presently studying under Dibrugarh University and facing cultural diversities. Therefore, Cultural awareness is essential to make adjustment after completion of their education, as the students will have to engage in various fields of works in different socio-cultural setup. They must have to join the broad society and survive in diverse cultural situations. Cultural awareness is very important for each student because the entire world is diverse, changing rapidly and globalised. Moreover, the cultural diversity is the profound cause of discrimination among people. The history of mankind shows number of evidences of wars, prejudices, biasness, and decay of endogenous ethnic cultures due to the heterogenic nature of each neighbouring culture. This type of social evils can only be prevented by knowledge and awareness about cultures and their diversities which can create sensitivity and respect towards others' cultures in the minds of new generation. The present study is an attempt to examine the Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University regarding cultural diversities of North-East India. This study is aimed at significant contribution towards field of Education with a futuristic outlook of students' capability to adjust in cultural diversity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Cakir (2006) studied cultural awareness in language learning classroom and found that developing cultural awareness in the classroom is important to help students distinguish between the cultural norms, beliefs or habits. Students should enable to discuss their native culture with their foreign-speaking friends and at the same time they are provided with a real experiential content.

Wiesendanger and Tarpley (2010) studied how to develop cultural awareness through literature and concluded that an excellent way to promote multiculturalism is to connect literature to ethnic themes. This gives teachers an opportunity to infuse into the curriculum all aspect of multiculturalism. Thus, multicultural education must be integrated into the curriculum and focus on the appreciation of all cultures and ethnic differences. Students should study the content, concepts and themes that reflect other cultures. It is possible to achieve this through the inclusion of high quality multicultural literature.

Srivastava (2015) studied awareness of Cultural Heritage among the Teachers at University Level. The study aimed to compare the awareness of cultural heritage of male and female teachers in context of national symbols, cultural literature, religion and history, performing arts and visual arts. The findings revealed that overall score of female teachers was better than that of male teachers. The female teachers were significantly more aware on cultural literature than the male teachers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The following were the objectives of the present study-

1. To find out the levels of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University.
2. To find out the extent of Cultural Awareness of students of Assam and students belonging to other states of India studying under Dibrugarh University.
3. To compare the Cultural Awareness of students of professional programmes and liberal programmes of Dibrugarh University.
4. To compare the Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their

4.1 Gender (Male/Female).

4.2 Discipline of Study (Arts/Science/ Commerce).

HYPOTHESES:

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University studying under professional programmes and liberal programmes.
2. There is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their gender.
3. There is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their disciplines of study.

CONCEPTUAL & OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:

The operational and conceptual definitions of the important terms are given below:

Cultural Awareness: Cultural Awareness refers to developing consciousness of culture and ways in which culture shapes values and beliefs (Burchum, 2002). In the present study, the scores obtained in the Cultural Awareness scale have been considered as Cultural Awareness of the student of Dibrugarh University. Higher the score obtained higher is the cultural awareness.

Discipline of study: According to Oxford English Dictionary discipline of study means a branch of knowledge, typically one studied in higher education. In the present study Arts, Science and Commerce streams have been considered as discipline of study.

Professional programmes: The professional programmes are the programmes in which one studies about the various professional skills and competencies that can help the learner to be engaged in a profession. In the present study, the programmes B.Ed., B.Pharm, BBA, BCA, BA (LLB), LLM, B.Tech, MLI.Sc, M.A in Performing arts, M.A in Journalism and Mass communication, M.Ed. MBA (FT), MSW, MCA, M.Pharm, M.Tech in Petroleum Geology, M.Tech in Petroleum Technology and M.Tech in Exploration geography offered by different Departments, centres and institutions under Dibrugarh University are considered as professional Course.

Liberal Programme: Liberal programmes are the programmes of pure/basic interdisciplinary in nature covering the various fields like humanities, social science and natural sciences etc. in the present study programmes viz. M.A in Assamese, M.A in Anthropology, M.Sc. in Applied Geology, M.Sc. in Biotechnology, M.Sc. in Bioinformatics, M.Sc. in Chemistry, M.A in Economics, M.A in Education, M.Com in Finance and Marketing, M.A History, M.A in Political Science, M.A in Sociology, M.A in Psychology, M.A in Philosophy, MA in Psychology, M.A in Geography, M.Sc. in life Science, M.Sc. in Physics, M.Sc. in Mathematics etc. offered by different departments and centres under Dibrugarh university are considered as liberal programmes.

METHODS USED IN THE STUDY:

Normative Survey method was used to study the present problem.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY:

The population of the present study comprised of all the students studying (during 2017) in various programmes under different Departments/Centres for Studies/Institution of Dibrugarh University.

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY:

In the present study a sample of 250 students were selected from 8 Departments and 8 Centres for Studies of Dibrugarh University using purposive sampling technique. The present study is limited to students studying in different departments/centres for studies of Dibrugarh University during the year 2017 only and it is also limited to Indian students only.

TOOL USED:

In order to study the cultural awareness of students of Dibrugarh University, a Cultural Awareness Scale was constructed and standardized by the researchers. The scale consists of 42 multiple choice-type items regarding culture of five states of North-East India viz. Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. The dimensions of culture included in the scale are: language, religion, festival, customs/beliefs, deities, dance, society/social administration, dress/ornaments, marriage and food. The content validity of the scale was established in consultation with four experts seeking judgements about the coverage of the dimensions of culture as well as the content of the items of the scale. It was found satisfactory. The split-half reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be .70. A score of '1' is awarded for a correct response and '0' for a wrong response in scoring the items of the Cultural Awareness Scale. For interpretation of scores, three categories of Cultural Awareness scores are determined, viz. 'Below Average' ranges from (0-9), 'Average' from (10-19) and 'Above Average' from (20 & above) using the properties of Normal Probability Curve.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

- **Establishing the Criterion of Parametric Test through Normal P-P Plot for studying Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University:**

To establish the criterion of Parametric Test for Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University, the Normal P-P Plot was used.

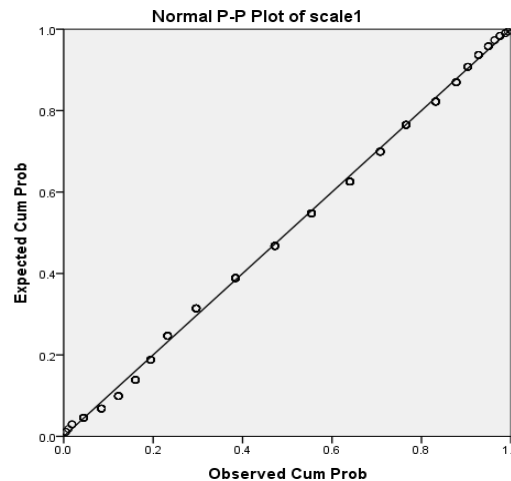


Fig.-1: Normal P-P Plot representing the distribution of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University

It is clear from the Fig-1 that all the small circles in observed versus expected cumulative probability curve relatively touch the base NPC line. Thus, it can be concluded that the distribution of Cultural Awareness scores obtained by the students of Dibrugarh University is normal in nature. Thus parametric tests are applicable to analyze the data.

- **Level of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University:**

The scores obtained by the students of Dibrugarh University in the 'Cultural Awareness scale' were used to calculate Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis. Table-1 shows the level of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University:

Table-1: Level of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University

Category	No. of students	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Total	250	14.40	4.97	0.14	-0.16

It is revealed from the table that the value of Mean and Standard Deviation of the distribution of Cultural Awareness scores obtained by the students of Dibrugarh University are 14.40 and 4.97 respectively. The value of skewness is 0.14. Thus the distribution of Cultural Awareness scores obtained by the students was skewed positively. It means more students are scored at the low end of the scale. The value of kurtosis is -0.16. Thus the distribution is platykurtic in nature and the peak of the curve is slightly lower than the normal curve.

- Extent of Cultural Awareness of students of Assam and students belonging to other states of India studying under Dibrugarh University:**

The scores obtained by the students in 'Cultural Awareness scale' were used to study the extent of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University.

Table-2: Extent of Cultural Awareness of students of Assam and students belonging to other states of India studying under Dibrugarh University

Category	Students of Assam	Students belonging to other states
Above average (20 & above)	15.38%	2.38%
Average (10-19)	75%	28.57%
Below Average (0-9)	15.38%	66.67%

Table-2 reveals that 15.38% of students of Assam scored within 'Above Average' (20 & above) category on the 'Cultural Awareness scale', only 2.38% students belonging to other states of India scored within the 'Above Average' category. Again 75% students of Assam scored within the category of 'Average' (10-19) on 'Cultural Awareness scale'. However, 28.75% students belonging to other states of India scored within the 'Average' category. And 15.38% students of Assam scored within 'Below Average' (0-9) category on 'Cultural Awareness scale'. On the other hand, 66.67% students belonging to other states of India scored within the 'Below Average' category.

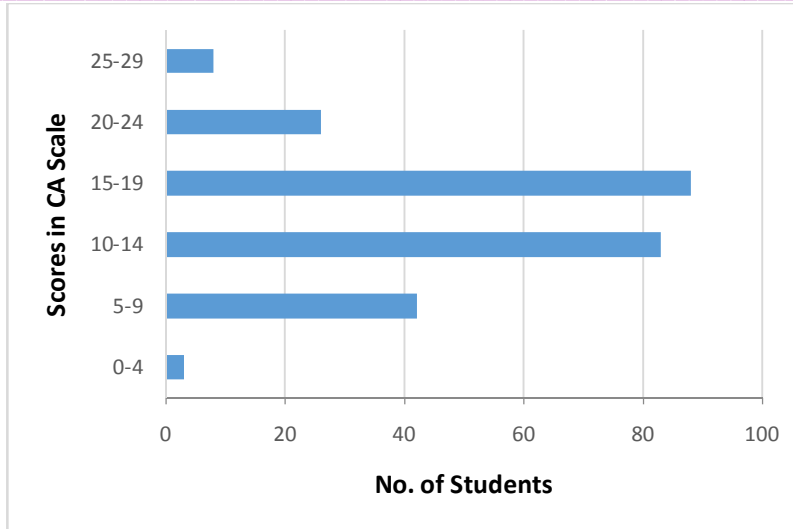


Fig.-2: Extent of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University

Fig.-2 shows the distribution of scores obtained by the students in ‘Cultural Awareness scale’. The total reachable score by the students in the scale is divided in to some range at an interval of 5 presented in the vertical axis in the Fig.-2. Again the total number of students is presented in the horizontal axis. From the Fig.-2, it is clear that majority of students scored within the range of ‘15-19’ which comes under category of ‘Average’ level of Cultural Awareness.

• **Comparison of Cultural Awareness of students of Professional programmes and Liberal programmes of Dibrugarh University:**

In order to compare the Cultural Awareness of students of Professional programmes and Liberal programmes of Dibrugarh University, ‘t-test’ was used. Table-3 shows the comparison of Cultural Awareness of students of Professional programmes and Liberal programmes of Dibrugarh University:

Table-3: Comparison of Cultural Awareness of students of Professional programmes and Liberal programmes of Dibrugarh University

Category of students	N	M	SE _p	df	t	Significance
Professional programmes	144	13.60	.71	248	.27	Not significant at .05 level
Liberal programmes	106	13.79				

To examine if there is a significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University studying under Professional Programme and Liberal Programme, the null hypothesis was formulated as- ‘There is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University pursuing Professional programmes and Liberal programmes’. The ‘t’ value is .27, which is not significant at 5% level of significance. Hence, null hypothesis could be accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University studying under Professional programmes and Liberal programmes.

- **Comparison of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their gender:**

The 't-test' was used to compare Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University. The Table-4 shows the comparison of Cultural Awareness of students with reference to their gender.

Table-4: Comparison of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their gender

Category of student	N	M	SE _D	df	t	Significance
Male	128	14.01	.7	248	.27	Not significant at .05 level.
Female	122	14.20				

To examine if there is a significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students with reference to their gender, the null hypothesis was formulated as- '**There is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their gender.**' The 't' value is found to be .27, which is not significant at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis could be accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their gender.

- **Comparison of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their discipline of study viz. Arts/Science/Commerce:**

'F- Ratio' was used to compare Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their discipline of study. The Table-5 shows the comparison of Cultural Awareness of students with reference to their discipline of study.

Table-5: Comparison of Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their discipline of study viz. Arts/Science/Commerce

Variable	No. of student	M	V _w	V _a	F	Inference
Arts	88	13.65	6137.15	67.24	1.35	Not significant at .05 level
Science	85	14.06				
Commerce	77	14.91				

To examine if there is a significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their discipline of study, the null hypothesis was formulated as- '*There is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their discipline of study*'. The F-ratio was found 1.35 which is not significant at 5% level of significance. Hence null hypothesis could be accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of Students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their discipline of study.

CONCLUSION:

The present study revealed that the distribution of scores obtained by the students of Dibrugarh University in 'Cultural Awareness scale' was Skewed positively i.e., a majority of students of Dibrugarh University scored at the low end of the scale. The study also revealed that a few students of both the group i.e., students of Assam and students belonging to other states of India scored 'Above Average' in the Cultural Awareness scale. It was also found that the majority of students of Assam have 'Average' Cultural Awareness and a few students belonging to other states of India have 'Average' Cultural Awareness. And a least number of students of Assam scored within 'Below Average' category on 'Cultural Awareness Scale'. On the other

hand, a majority of students belonging to other states of India scored within the 'Below Average' category on Cultural Awareness scale.

The present study also revealed that there exist no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University studying under professional programmes and liberal programmes. It was also found from the present study that there is no significant difference in Cultural Awareness of students of Dibrugarh University with reference to their gender and discipline of the study.

Thus it can be concluded that a very less number of students of Dibrugarh University are highly aware about the culture of North-East India.

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