



DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN KERALA DURING POST LIBERALISATION PERIOD

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Abstract: This paper gives information about the development of higher education in Kerala during the post liberalization period. The expansion of higher education in Kerala has been significant since the introduction of economic reforms in 1991. There was also an increase in the number of self-financing or unaided Arts and Science colleges offering courses especially in the non-conventional subjects. Number of higher education institutions under government sector has increased only in engineering, nursing and polytechnic colleges. Further a close look at the distribution of technical institutions reveals a sincere attempt from the part of the government to bring job orientation to the youth of Kerala. The paper gives an attempt to explain the development of higher education in Kerala during post liberalization in all sections of higher education.

Index Terms: Higher Education, Liberalization, Enrolment, Institutions, Kerala

1. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of higher education in Kerala has been significant since the introduction of economic reforms in 1991. In fact, it is phenomenal since 1995. This has been mainly due to the policy shift of the government towards the self-financing sector and the starting of self-financing colleges which offer courses for engineering, medical and para-medical, management, computer Science, etc. There was also an increase in the number of self-financing or unaided Arts and Science colleges offering courses especially in the non-conventional subjects. Besides, a number of government and aided colleges themselves started conventional and non-conventional courses which were largely unaided by the government (Salim, 2018). There is the rapid increase in the number of 'non-formal' educational institutions. These are not affiliated to any university or government. Most of them offer job-oriented courses and are run merely on commercial basis. There is no reliable estimate of the number of these institutions or the students enrolled in them. However, there are reasons to believe that their number is not small (Kumar and George, 2009). In terms of enrollment also, there is phenomenal growth in higher education for general and professional courses. The following section discusses the growth of higher education institutions and their enrolment in Kerala during the period since the introduction of reforms in 1991.

1.1 Growth of Higher Education Institutions in Kerala

In terms of tertiary education infrastructure, there are 17 university level institutions, including one central university and 14 state universities in Kerala in 2018. There also exists nearly 1212 colleges including 219 Arts & Science colleges, 164 Engineering colleges and 24 Medical colleges in Kerala (KSPB, 2018). Ernakulam (26) had the largest number of arts and science colleges in the State followed by Kottayam (23). Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode have the largest number of Government

colleges (10) in the State. And the least is shared by Kasaragod and Wayanad. Ernakulum district is also having the largest number of Engineering colleges (32) and the least is in Wayanad.

The number of unaided colleges was very few in number during 1991 and their presence was evident only in *Ayurveda* colleges and B.ED colleges later, the number of unaided higher education institutions had increased and then, about 560 unaided colleges appeared in Kerala by 2011. At the same time aided colleges also showed positive growth. Number of higher education institutions under government sector has increased only in engineering, nursing and polytechnic colleges. By 2011, almost 61 percent of the total institutions were professional and technical in Kerala. Overall, there is a massive rise in engineering and medical colleges, predominantly in the self-financing sector. Over a period of 25 years from 1991, the state had gradually moved from a public funded system to a private funded one; the share of self-financing private colleges rose from 13% to 62%. The number of higher education institutions further increased from 306 in 1991 to 900 in 2011 to 1102 in 2015 and to 1280 in 2018, an increase of 318% percent within a period of 27 years. Of the total number of colleges, 37 percent constitutes Arts and Science colleges. Number of colleges under various arts, science and commerce courses had increased from 172 in 1991, 350 in 2011, 444 in 2015 and to 621 in 2018. It shows an overall increase of 261% times during the period (Table 1). The number of engineering colleges rose to 183 during the period; medical/Nursing/Dental/pharmacy/Ayurveda/Dental / Homeo colleges increased to the extent of 53.03 percent. B.Ed colleges rose by 11.9 percent and polytechnics by 12.12 percent. However, number of Polytechnic and ITI colleges was less in number. At present in Kerala, higher education institutions are under the control of a few community based organizations. For instance more than 51 percent are under the control of Christian denominations, 32 percent under Nair Service Society (NSS), Sree Narayana Trust, and other Hindu denominations and the rest 17 percent under Muslim Educational Society (MES) and Muslims (Anvar 2015: 91). These philanthropic institutions of yester years have now turned to be increasingly commercial which has serious adverse implications on equity and access.

Table 1
Growth of Higher Education Institutions, 1991- 2018
Source: Compiled from Anvar, P (2016); Salim, 2018

Number of students passing out of secondary school education had influenced the demand for engineering courses and further it increased the demand for engineers. Until 2001, sanctioned intake and actual intake were almost at same level. But this trend has

Type of Institution	1991				2011				2015				2018			
	Govt.	Aided	Unaided	Total	Govt.	Aided	Unaided	Total	Govt.	Aided	Unaided	Total	Govt.	Aided	Unaided	Total
Arts & Science College	40	13	0	17	40	15	16	35	58	15	23	444	66	17	62	861
Engineering Colleges	5	3	0	8	9	3	13	14	9	3	16	175	9	3	17	183
Medical/Nursing/Dental/	21	11	1	33	25	18	13	18	-	-	-	247	43	14	19	408
B.ED Colleges	4	17	40	61	4	17	14	16	-	-	-	170	4	10	41	188
Polytechnics	26	6	0	32	43	6	9	58	-	-	-	66	45	6	23	74
Total	96	16	41	30	12	21	56	90	67	15	39	110	24	20	82	128
		9	6	6	4	6	0	0		5	7	2	8	4	8	0

started changing from 2002 onwards by diverging the two from each other. In other words, the actual intake has considerably become less than the sanctioned one. Then again, the two have started moving in tandem from 2006 onwards (Table 2). After 2008 the gap widely increased mainly due to the proliferation of colleges and courses which are mostly conventional and poor quality. Number of engineering colleges had increased significantly. About 29 new colleges were sanctioned during in 2002. From 2002 onwards, there was a gradual increase in the number of self-financing colleges in the state. But its growth was faster in the second decade of the 21st century. Almost all these new colleges are self-financing colleges in the private sector. Usually this becomes a subject for violent debate, which results in discussion on the consequences of privatization of education and its repercussions on

quality of instruction.

Table 2

Number of Engineering Colleges, with Sanctioned and Actual Intake, 1991-2018

Year	Number of engineering colleges	Intake	
		Sanctioned	Actual
1991	9	2810	2795
1995	16	3930	4441
2000	36	8820	8739
2001	45	11293	11147
2002	77	18280	16143
2003	81	19889	16563
2004	87	23643	16837
2005	91	24526	21857
2006	91	26349	25471
2007	91	28578	27975
2008	94	30069	29635
2015	175	58165	37007
2017	180	56139	34467
2018	183	57100	30195

Source: NTMIS nodal centre for Kerala; KSPB, Economic Review, various years.

Privatization of higher education is one of the main reasons for increase in number of professional courses. The significant growth in the number of professional and technical institutions in Kerala reflects the attitude of the people towards these courses which is expected to give more skills and employability. But in reality many of these new-born institutions are no way different from the old which offer conventional and less skill oriented and non-practical courses. Innovative and experimental courses are very few in new born colleges; hence large number of seats in these institutions remains vacant. For instance in 2015/16, nearly 25000 seats (almost 40 percent) in the private self-financing engineering colleges remained vacant without students. However, it is interesting to find that all the seats in the government and aided colleges under the Directorate of Technical Education were filled in 2015/16. The factors contributing to this paradoxical situation need to be found by an in-depth understanding of the issue.

Further a close look at the distribution of technical institutions reveals a sincere attempt from the part of the government to bring job orientation to the youth of Kerala. Table 3 indicates that in 2015 only 38 percent are Arts and Science colleges while the rest are professional and training colleges and in 2018, no significant shift is seen in this ratio. Table 4 reveals that only seven percent of the technical institutions under the government control are engineering colleges while 30 percent are polytechnics and 89 percent are technical high schools and institutes of fashion designing. Thus there is an attempt to offer new generation courses under technical education. It is interesting to find that seven polytechnics with the courses which are more suitable to girls, are started in different parts of Kerala for providing safer and employable education to women. The establishment of IIT in Kerala in 2015 helped the State to take a leap forward in the higher educational front. The new IIT was established in Palakkad district by the Central government in the land provided by the state government. It is expected that the new IIT can overcome the qualitative and quantitative backwardness in technical education, and Research and Development in the State. The inception of new IIT can also facilitate strong linkage with industries and thereby promote industrial and overall development of the State.

Table 3

Distribution of Colleges in Kerala by their Types, 2015- 2018

Type of college	2015		2018	
	No. of colleges	Percent	No. of colleges	Percent
Arts/science/commerce	444	37.72	821	46.27
Professional (engineering and medical)	422	35.85	591	33.31
Polytechnic colleges	66	5.62	74	4.17
ITI colleges	75	6.37	100	5.63
Bed Training colleges	170	14.44	188	10.58
Total	1177	100	1774	100

Source: CEE official website, Official Website of Technical Education, 2016, 2018; KSPB, 2018

Table 4

Technical Institutions under Directorate of Technical Education, 2015- 2018

Institutions	2015		2018	
	Nos.	Percent	Nos.	Percent
Govt./Aided Engineering Colleges	9	5.43	9	5.43
Private Aided Engineering Colleges	3	1.80	3	1.80
Govt. Polytechnic Colleges	36	21.70	38	22.61
Govt. Women's Polytechnic Colleges	7	4.21	7	4.21
Govt. Aided Polytechnics	6	3.61	6	3.61
Fine Arts Colleges	3	1.80	3	1.80
Govt. Technical High Schools	39	23.50	39	23.50
Govt. Commercial Institutes	17	10.25	17	10.25
Govt. Institutes of Fashion Designing	42	25.30	42	25.30
Vocational Training Centers	4	2.40	4	2.40
Total	166	100	168	100

Source: KSPB, Economic Review 2015, 2018; percentages calculated by the author

1.2 Higher Education Enrolment and Nature of Courses in Kerala

Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education (GER) in Higher education in India is calculated by dividing the total enrolment in higher education by total population in 18-23 age groups. The GER of higher education in Kerala was low at 22.9 percent in 2012/13; some districts in Kerala were having low GER that was below 12 percent. Malappuram had the lowest GER (8.04%). The GER among women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Kerala was higher than the ratio in India as a whole. In 2012-13, the GER among women was 26.9 per cent compared to 18.9 per cent among men. Kerala is the only state where the enrolment favours women. Further, inequality in educational attainment across individuals, calculated using the education Gini index is projected to be very low in Kerala at 7.66 percent as against the all India average of 9.95 percent in 2002-03.

Table 5 shows that the total number of students enrolled in various Arts and Science colleges (excluding unaided colleges) under the four general universities in Kerala during 2014-15 was 2.27 lakh. Of this 1.56 lakh (68.66%) were girls. Interestingly the representation of girl students for science courses is almost 73 percent. In 2017/18, the percentage of girls had further improved to almost 79 percent. In BA courses, the representation of girls is almost 90 percent. Thus the campuses in Arts and Science colleges

are flooded with girls. It is observed that there is a general apathy from the part of boys towards conventional system of education which offer not many chances for employment. Boys generally prefer skill oriented and short-term courses which offer better chances of employment in spite of these courses fetching low salaried jobs. Table 5 further exhibits that out of the total students enrolled for degree courses, 43.01 percent are enrolled for BA degree courses, 40.19 percent enrolled for BSc and 16.80 percent enrolled for B.Com degree courses. More students are enrolled in BA course and then in B.Sc. course. In 2017/18, the students going for BA courses declined to 38.7 percent while those enrolled for B.Sc. increased to 42.6 percent and those registered for B.Com rose to 18.7 percent. Both financial and non-financial factors are responsible for this. Children from middle and poor families prefer to join for courses which are more economical and suitable to their educational background. Children from such families lack strong academic capabilities, proficiency in language, soft skills etc. Therefore, they prefer BA/B.Sc. courses and some prefer B.Com. Twenty seven subjects are offered for BA degree courses. Among the subjects, Economics has the largest number of enrolment of students. 31 subjects are offered for BSc course and the Mathematics has the largest number of student enrolment.

In Technical education sector in Kerala, 88.07 percent of the seats were in conventional streams like Electronics and Communication, Mechanical, Civil, Computer Science and Electricals and Electronics (see Table 6). Seats for new generation branches like Dairy Science and Technology, Agricultural Engineering, Food Technology, Printing technology, etc. are very few; that too in self-financing sector. Most of these new generation courses are given by the self-financing institutions and the fees and other academic costs of these courses are heavy; the economically deprived students can't afford the new generation and job oriented courses.

Table 5

Enrolment of Students in Arts and Science Colleges, 2014-15 to 2017-2018

Course	2014-2015				2017-2018			
	Total Students	Girls	Boys	% of Girls	Total Students	Girls	Boys	% of Girls
BA	97415	64993	32422	66.72	92753	83356	9397	89.87
B.Sc.	91038	66676	24362	73.24	102134	76699	25435	75.1
B.com	38047	23851	14196	62.69	44732	28369	15700	63.43
Total	226500	155520	70980	68.66	239610	188424	50532	78.64

Source: Directorate of Collegiate Education (2015, 2018)

Table 6

Branch-wise Distribution of Seats in Engineering Colleges, 2015-16 to 2017- 2018

Name of Course/Branch	2015-16		2017- 2018	
	Total Sanctioned Seats	Percent	Total Sanctioned Seats	Percent
Conventional Engineering Courses*	51293	88.07	49835	87.27
New-born Engineering Courses**	6944	11.93	7265	12.73
Total	58237	100	57100	100

Source: Salim, 2018. * includes Civil Engineering, Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics and Communication, Electricals and Electronics, Mechanical Engineering.

** includes Agricultural Engineering, Bio-medical Engineering, Bio- Technology, Chemical Engineering, Dairy Science and Technology, Industrial Engineering, Polymer Engineering, Printing Technology and so on.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the efforts of the government have resulted in the rapid growth of higher education in Kerala particularly during the post reform period. The reforms of the government at the level of higher education have resulted in the opening of more colleges particularly the massive opening of colleges in the self- financing sector since 1991. In fact, educational development during the period since 1991 has been impressive both in terms of growth rate of institutions, enrolment and expenditure. In fact, the Kerala experience of educational achievement has few parallels among the states in India and countries in the world. However, much remains to be done in uplifting the Malabar region to the level of the Travancore-Cochin region particularly at the level of higher education (Salim, 2002). With 41.5% of the total population of Kerala, Malabar has only 30% of the Arts and Science colleges. The picture is similar in the case of professional and technical education. Though sweeping changes have taken place, the SC/ST and the backward communities, particularly the Muslims, lag behind the rest of the population. Further the quality of higher education has been fast deteriorating which calls for urgent attention of the government.

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