

Need to Study Higher Education Status in Kerala: Access, Equity and Quality

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ABSTRACT

The ultimate aim of education is to make an individual independent in life socially and economically both. Higher education plays an important role in transforming a graduate into a skillful youth. There are several reasons for unemployment that may vary between countries still a good higher education plays a vital role in reducing unemployment in that region. Kerala is a state of paradox where despite of an exemplary primary education system there exist high unemployment. Therefore, there is a need to study the higher education status existing in Kerala and its outcome. This study is focused upon need to identify backward districts in Kerala in terms of human development index and to know the higher education status in these districts. In the end, Access, Equity and Quality are identified as three pillars of higher education that needs to be studied upon and make necessary changes in these three areas in order to improve the higher education status of Kerala.

Key Words : Kerala, Higher education, Backward districts, Human development index, Access, Equity, Quality

INTRODUCTION

Education:

Education is an instrument which is applied to bring certain individual or desired social changes. The instrument is seen in varied forms by different people as per their preference. An economist would see it as a profitable instrument to be invested in by the community for future benefits. Etymologically, the word 'Education' is derived from the Latin words 'educare' and 'educere' which means to 'bring up' and 'to draw out' respectively. Some believe that the word has been derived from the Latin word 'educatam'. 'E' implies a movement from inward to outward and 'duco' refers to progressing. Therefore, education acts as a medium which nourishes the environment around the child to bring out and develop the latent potentiality hidden inside him.

Human being is the embodiment of rich inherent potentialities and it is the task of the education to realize, enhance and further develop these potentialities. These

innate potentialities are to be tapped right from the birth of a child and nurtured through his growth and development of adulthood. Thus, there is a need of educating the child from childhood to adulthood stage, formally and informally both. Formally, a child is undergoing the educational process at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. The three levels of education are described in succeeding paragraphs elaborately.

Levels of education:

The informal education of a child takes place in the society where he is living. This happens outside the classroom, in after-school programs, community-based organizations, museums, libraries, or at home. In Indian context formal education of a child starts at the age of five years of age and lasts for 12 years of schooling and further it extends for three plus two years of collegiate education.

Primary level of education:

Primary level of education starts at the age of five

years of age (NCERT) in a school set up. This stage lasts upto next 12 years. Primary education is also known as the elementary education. It is also known as education of masses (Woods Despatch, 1854). Its role is to bring about broad development of students. Education at this level should develop cognitive, social, emotional, cultural and physical skills to the best of their abilities. The primary aim at this stage is to develop the powers of reasoning, judgment and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for a mature life. The ultimate aim should be to prepare them for secondary school stage.

Secondary level of education:

This stage starts at the age of 10+ years of age. A student starts his journey from the sixth standard and goes upto the twelfth standard. It is an important link between the primary and tertiary level of education. The purpose of education at this level is to enable students to acquire fundamental knowledge and skills for the development of basic cultural competence attained at primary level. This can be achieved by the subject and discipline knowledge to have interpretation about the real world. At this level, education aims to convey students the essential elements of culture, human aspects, artistic, scientific and technological aspects, strengthen the habits of learning for themselves, promote teamwork. For this reason, necessity of introducing the vocational courses at this stage was proposed by Kothari Commission 1964. Skills can be mastered during higher education if one has gained quality secondary education. The secondary education makes an individual aware of all the happenings in the society, country and the world as a whole. This in turn makes him self-confident. Even the importance of secondary education was stated by the Radhakrishnan Commission in 1948. At that time, the commission considered the status of secondary education as the weakest link between primary and higher level of education. In its report the commission diverted the government attention towards secondary education. Secondary education is including the non-academic *i.e.* vocational part also. The education at this level makes an individual capable of understanding the complexity of politics and political processes. Thus, the individual can elect a democratic government as a responsible citizen.

Higher education/ Tertiary level:

An institution of higher education starts after the class twelfth. The education is for freedom and

democracy, for knowledge and innovation and for humankind and their environment. At this level, education is provided by Universities, Colleges and other institutions that award academic degrees. Higher education is strongly vocational and professionally oriented. Higher education improves the life span of college graduates, better access to health care, better health practices and greater economic stability. It increases greater community service and leadership, more volunteer work, more self-confidence. Armed with a bachelor's degree, we can make more than a High School diploma. In modernized global scenario, the technological infusion during vocational and skill development period increases the factor productivity. Barro (1999) observed that economic growth is positively related to the starting level of average years of adult male schooling at secondary and higher levels. This is insignificant related to years of primary attainment. A strong significant relation of secondary and higher schooling was interpreted by Barro while analyzing a panel of about 100 countries observed between 1960 and 1965.

From the above discussion, we can say that, the ultimate aim of education at any level is to allow all individuals to develop their full potential and full access to intellectual and skill development opportunities that will enable each individual to develop his or her full potential. Generally, in developing and under-developed countries government prefers to invest and give more attention to elementary level as it influences major vote bank in elections. Rather there should be balanced contribution from the state at every level without any disparity for a balanced economic growth.

Higher education in India and historical development:

Philosophical thoughts of highest order are embodied in Indian education system. As a result of its highly and deep philosophical in nature the Indian higher education system is still ethical oriented. Parishads and sammelans were examples of organizing body meant for gathering of higher education. Most important educational centre for higher education in India dates back to sixth century BC at Takshashila. Many Kings had sent their princes to Kashi for higher learning. Later in fourth and fifth century AD the Universities at Nalanda and Vikramshila were established. These places were discussed by Fahein and Yuan Chewang during their visit to the country. Even Hiuen Tsang had mentioned about several Buddhist

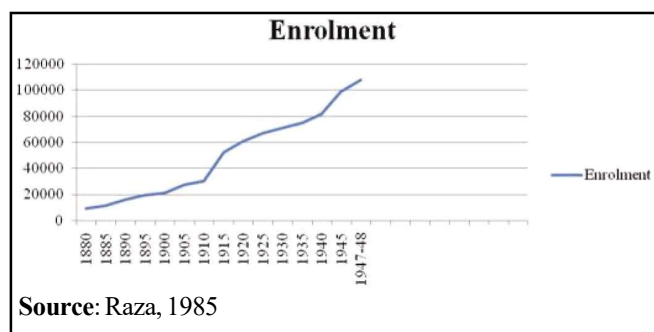
centers (monasteries), where he stayed during his travels in India. Kanchi was the place of higher learning in South India and its main activity was to spread Buddhism and Jainism in that part.

In the medieval period Islamic education was on the top of the propagation graph due to Mughal accession. Madrasas were the centres of higher education with important centres at Delhi, Agra, Jaunpur and Bidar. Students were taught advance language skills, koranic exegesis, prophetic traditions, Islamic law (sharia) and related subjects.

Higher education in pre-independence period:

During pre-independence period and after the medieval period, most of the time Indian higher education was totally dependent upon the efforts of the British Empire.

Enrolment in Higher Education during British Period:



Charter Act 1813 with its ‘Downward Filtration Theory’ and Macaulay minutes (1835) with its ‘English as Medium of Instruction’ had tried to create western thoughts in Indian blood. The partial behavior towards orientalist and development of vernaculars had led to the uneven concentration of institutes of higher learning across the country. The seeds grown at that time have developed into trees of inter and intra-regional disparities which are still flourishing. This impartial system was challenged by the anti-imperialist movement. Eminent socialists and freedom fighters who contributed in the development of education were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dadabhai Naroji, CR Das, A Ghosh, R Tagore, Nehru, Abdul Kalam Azad, Gandhiji and Swami Vivekananda.

Enrolment in Higher Education Courses during British Period:

	1916-17			1947-48		
	Enrolment	Total	Female	Enrolment	Total	Female
General	47394	554		General	60614	7285
Law	5426	-		Law	7576	55
Medicine	2481	30		Medicine	8850	1615
Engineering	1139	-		Engineering	6437	10
Teaching	716	46		Teaching	3087	871
Agriculture	445	-		Agriculture	3759	9
Veterinary	461			Veterinary	809	
	416				14658	75
Forestry	161	-		Forestry	256	-
Total	58639	727		Total	106043	9920

Source: Raza, 1985

From the above table we can analyze that 80 per cent of students have enrolled for general course and rest of the students for other courses in 1916-17. Out of whom only 1.2 per cent are female candidates. This number of total students have just doubled at the time of independence. Out of the increased students only one third had enrolled in general courses. There was an increase of 13 times in female candidates’s enrolment. We can easily conclude that during the British Period more enrolments were in general education in order to produce graduates who can perform the duties of a clerk for the British Empire.

First three Universities were established at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. This all happened because of Woods Despatch (1854) which recommended for the establishment of Universities for the expansion of Western knowledge through English language. The first ever Commission for Higher Education *i.e.* University Commission was an ineffective step by the British Empire in 1902. It rarely contributed to any revolutionary changes but it was considered as a step towards re-organization and strengthening the existing system. Upto the time of independence, Universities were only behaving the part of affiliating the colleges. Till 1947, there were around 500 colleges and few Universities.

Higher Education Post-Independence Period:

India inherited the education system from the colonial set-up. At the time of independence the percentage of literacy was only 14 per cent. There were only 25 universities imparting education mostly in arts and science stream only. It was a great challenge in front of the Government of India to re-organize the whole education system in a democratic way. There was a need to build a self-reliant and growth oriented economy which

can be attained through the integration of the whole country (Raza and Aggarwal, 1991). The ultimate responsibility to re-shape the diversified socio-economic growth of the country rests on the shoulders of the higher education due to varied geography, economy, religion, society and languages. University Education Commission was set up in 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr. S Radhapalli Krishnan, who said

'If India is to confront the confusion our times, she must turn for guidance not to those who are lost to the exigencies of the passing hour but to her men of letters and men of science, to her poets and artists to her discoverers and inventors. These intellectual pioneers of civilization are to be found and trained in the universities, which are the sanctuaries of the minor life of the nation'.

There were a lot of challenges before the commission to make recommendations on the line of democracy, secularism and socialism. Emphasis was to wipe out dogmatism, fundamentalism and prejudices and promote a rational outlook and nurture scientific temper among the youth. With the realization of falling standards and quality of students, University Grants Commission was given a statutory set up in 1953 and the Act came into existence in 1956. The concerns of University Education Commission were visible in the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) also. Numerous steps were taken quantitatively as a result of the first plan. But it had resulted in affecting the quality of education aptly and the effect was realized in the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61). It had proposed measures like improvement of buildings with increase in number, introduction of three degree year course, stipends for meritorious students, scholarships for research and to increase the salaries of faculty members. In these two plans, emphasis was also laid upon science and technology education as well as research. During third plan (1962-66) most of the qualitative recommendations of the second plan were implemented. These implementations included improvement in teacher pupil ratio, examination reforms, funds for research and publications, organization of seminars and provision of student amenities.

The major reform in Indian education system was after the Kothari Education Commission (1964-66). The committee had advised universities to encourage individuality, variety and dissent within a climate of tolerance which will make to live wisely and intelligently. The commission had set out the aims to establish unity in

diversity and to produce a community of values and ideas among educated men and women. There should be steady loyalty to the abiding elements of respect for human personality, obligation to promote human wellbeing and freedom of belief and expression for all citizens. Country is in need of scientists without conscience and technicians without taste along with vocational and technical education. Universities should run on the lines of democracy, justice, equality and fraternity. The task is not limited to traditional functions of teaching and advancement of knowledge.

During the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74), emphasis was on improving the library and laboratory facilities along with strengthening of staff number. In the Fifth Five Year Plan, there was adoption of the new pattern of higher secondary education that resulted in enrolment declination to some extent. The Sixth Five Year Plan was greatly affected by the political drama during these years. The main emphasis in the late seventies was on the qualitative improvement of higher education in India. During Seventh Five Year Plan emphasis was on promoting quality programmes and interdisciplinary studies. Training of teachers in higher education was also given special attention in the plan.

Draft National Policy 1979 suggested for the establishment of centres of excellence. The standard of these centres should be comparable to the best in the world. In 1986, the Government of India undertook a policy which was themed upon the cardinal principle that education is a unique investment in the present and future. This policy contributed to the national development through dissemination of specific knowledge and skills. The policy urged upon all round development and immediate future should be on the consolidation and expansion. The policy has not only emphasized upon school education but also covered many higher education aspects. It suggested for lifelong education opportunities to be provided to the youth, housewives, agricultural and industrial workers and professionals to continue their education. Centers in rural areas are to be established for continuing education. Workers should be educated through the employers, trade unions and concerned agencies of government. Technology should be utilized for mass and group learning. Autonomous colleges should be set up having the freedom in terms of administration and curricula framework. On the recommendations of the committee, Open University System has been initiated in the form of Indira Gandhi National Open University in

1985. There is a big challenge of micro-planning at grass-root level to resolve the issue of transportation for students in rural areas. Institutions and programmes of Gandhian Basic Education will be supported along with the General, Health, Agriculture subjects. Technical and Management education should be imparted on the large scale. Even it emphasized upon the education for equality of women. There is need to neutralize the accumulated distortion of the past for females. Extra activities in the form of NSS, sports and NCC are the requirement of the time. The committee has given importance to teacher education and covered the pre-service and in-service components which are inseparable. DIET is to be established with the capacity to organize pre-service and in-service courses for elementary school teachers and personnel working in non-formal and adult education. Selected Secondary Teacher Training Colleges are to be upgraded to complement the work of State Councils of Educational Research and Training. The main motive of NPE 1986 was to facilitate inter-regional mobility in education irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. The potentiality should have ease in access to quality education. In service teachers training and refresher courses were introduced after the recommendations of the Ramamurthy Review Committee (1990). Integrated model of teachers training as suggested by the committee has been practiced by the four RECs. Curriculum Development Centre was also established by UGC in 1990. The 21st century has been recognized as the key driving force and this can make India as a globally competitive player by enhancing its knowledge sources. Indian higher education system is the third largest system after United States and China. A systematic transformation of the entire knowledge spectrum was felt in 2005 and National Knowledge Commission (NKC) was constituted in June 2005. Commission emphasized upon building excellence in the educational system to meet the market demand and promote the creation of knowledge in science and technological laboratories. It emphasized the promotion of knowledge application in Agriculture and Industry. The commission has recommended the establishment of a National Knowledge Network connecting all our knowledge institutions in various fields. Creation of national web based portals on certain key sectors such as water, energy, environment, teacher's related area, bio-diversity, health, agriculture, employment, citizen's rights etc. were emphasized. The NKC recommended on increasing the flexibility of vocation education training within the

mainstream education and emphasized upon expansion, excellence and inclusion. To invigorate research and development, it has recommended various steps to improve the quality of research. More focus should be on a national ICT infrastructure, developing web-based common open resources for distance education. Recently, a policy on education was drafted in 2016 by the National Democratic Alliance government. The policy emphasized upon literacy and life-long learning by adult literacy programme to incorporate skill development programmes in higher education system. A concerted effort to be made to make ICT an integral part of education across all domains of learning. A transparent and merit based norms and guidelines for recruitment of teachers is to be formulated in consultation with state governments. A Central Educational Statistics Agency (CESA) is to be established for central data collection and compilation for predictive analysis and manpower planning. Restructuring of NAAC and NAB as well as redefining methodologies are some other important areas to be looked upon. ODL/ MOOCs are to be put in place to ensure quality, promote, innovation and reshape the programmes. Internationalization of education and faculty development are other areas focused in the draft. There should be performance-linked funding of higher education.

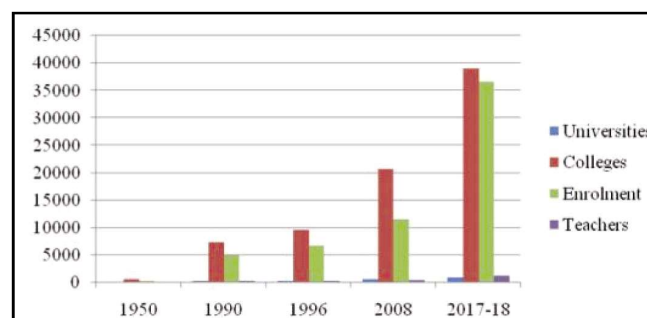
Quantitative growth of institutions and students:

Let us have a statistical glimpse on growth of institutions of higher learning, students and teachers since independence:

	1950	1990	1996	2008	2017-18
Universities*	25	177	214	431	903
Colleges	700	7346	9703	20677	39050
Enrolment	263	4925	6755	11612	36600
Teachers	15	272.7	321	505	1285

* excluded standalone institutions

Source: Compiled from Higher Education in India: Issues related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance, UGC 2008 and AISHE report 2017-18 and www.nitgov.in



Higher Education in Kerala and its development:

Historical, cultural, political and social factors are imperative while assessing educational development. Before 1956, Kerala was administered as three political and cultural units *viz.*, Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. Out of these, Travancore and Cochin were princely states and the Malabar was the part of the erstwhile State of Madras. Traders like Romans, Greeks, Arabs and Phoenicians from foreign came to the state in search of spices in as early as third millennium BC. This is evident from the literary work like 'Shilappdikaram'. Megalithic were the first inhabitants in ancient Kerala but they were conquered by the Dravidians. These, Dravids migrated to the state of Kerala by the last millennium BC. Centuries before the Christian Era, the Dravidians were superceded by the Aryans who came from the North India. These emigrants were resisted by the Chera Kings in the southern part. Above narrated historical brief is necessary to understand the educational development in the state.

Earliest known places of learning in the state of Kerala were places of expression of religious nature. The history of education in Kerala started during the Sangam Age. This is the first five centuries of the Christian era. Elementary schools were known as Kudipalli. Kalarys were schools of military and physical training and carrying out Dravidian tradition. Padsalas were Vedic schools and known as Brahmanical centres. Higher education was imparted in 'Salais' in South Kerala and 'Subh Matts' in Central and North Kerala. Salai was a kind of boarding school where Brahmin used to get free boarding and lodging. These were the places of undergoing the instructions in the allied subjects of Sanskrit and the 'Vedas'. Salais flourished during the reign of Kulasekharas. Kandalur Salai was known as the 'Nalanda of South'. Other famous Salais were at Parthivase, Muzhikulam, Tiruvalla and Kharapuram. The Chola-Chera conflict in the 11th century has led to the decline of Salais. Sabha Mutts were founded by Adi Sankara at Trichur that came up in place of Salais by the 13th century AD. These Mutts were centres of Vedic studies meant for Namboothiris. Ezhuthupalli's were other educational institutions which were meant for non-Brahmins. Ezhuthapalli under the teacher 'Asan' were in operation in each Kara or village in Kerala till the commencement of the British Empire. From the above discussion we can say that the Chera Kings were mainly the patrons of flourishing the arts and learning in Kerala.

The standard of general education and literacy started declining due to Aryanisation and the increasing hold of the caste system. Higher learning was restricted to Brahmins while non-Brahmins received elementary schools.

The educational growth was prominent during the Portuguese and Dutch visit. Aspirants learned from Malpans orally. A college was established in the 16th century at Quilon by the Jesuit Missionaries to promote Christian theology. Both the European cultures made significant contributions in the field of education and learning in Kerala. The Portuguese founded seminaries and colleges at Cochin, Cranganore for Liturgical and Biblical education. Portuguese founded educational institutions in Cochin and Angamali of Kerala. They were replaced by the Dutch in 1663. Dutch were not enthusiastic about seminaries but contributed significantly to ideological studies. They had compiled for 'Hortus Malabaricus', the monumental work on Indian Botany.

Modern Higher Education in Kerala:

In 19th century, the protestant missionaries of Europe laid the foundation of modern higher education in Kerala. These missionaries were settled in various parts of Travancore and Cochin of early Kerala. British rulers gave impetus for the growth of English and higher education by encouraging the missionary works. Nagercoil, Quilon, Allepy and Kottayam were the centres of schools of English education. Later these centres were developed into colleges which were affiliated to the princely University of Madras. This century witnessed the presence of three missionary societies in Kerala. They were the London Missionary Society (LMS), Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Basal Mission. The LMS influenced the Tamil speaking and a portion of Malyalam speaking region of Travancore through their activities. While, activities of LMS were extended to Travancore and Cochin. Basel Mission operated only in the northern Malabar region. All these societies were aware of that education which is needed for liberation. They were regarded as the pioneers of modern education of Kerala. Simultaneously, British empire had already expressed their intention of producing Indian clerks who have English taste through vernacular education as provisioned by Charter Act 1813 and Magna Carta 1835.

The higher educational development in Kerala is shown in tabular form shown below.

Pre-Independence Higher Educational Development (1800-1950):

Year	Development
1816	Syrian Catholics established college at Kottayam
1818	Rev. Mead the Nagercoil seminary founded first institution in Travancore
1834	HH Swathi Thirunal, Maharaja of Travancore started an English school at Thiruvananthapuram. Started Maharaja's College which was affiliated to University of Madras.
1838	Government Victoria College, Palakkad
1862	Brenen High School, Tellicherry
1877	Sh. PK Manavi Karma Maharaja Bahadur, Zamorin of Calicut started a school that got converted to college in 1888
1890	Brenen College
1937	First University was set up in the Princely State of Travancore under an Act promulgated by HH Maharaja of Travancore, Sri Bala Ram Varma. Maharaja was the first Chancellor. Sir CP Ramaswamy Iyer-Dewan of Travancore was the Vice Chancellor. 10 Colleges which were formerly affiliated to the University of Madras were transferred to the University of Travancore.
1939	Control of all government colleges transferred from Department of Public Instruction to the University of Travancore.
1949	After merger of Cochin and Travancore the colleges in Cochin which were affiliated to the University of Madras came under the University of Travancore.

Post-Independence Higher Educational Development (1850-1950):

Kerala was formed as a result of re-organization in 1956. At the time of independence the state of Kerala was under the regime of three states namely princely state of Travancore, Cochin and British Malabar. Obviously, there were three separate education systems in the three states. From the above short brief discussion we can say that Travancore was far ahead of other two regions in terms of development in higher education. On the other hand Malabar was far behind the other states in school and college education. Immediately after the independence concerted efforts were made for quantifying the institutions of higher learning in Kerala. During 1948-68 period, there was a tremendous growth in college education. Their numbers grew by several folds due to the pressure exerted by the major communities like Nairs, Ezhavas and the Christians. On the other hand government also acted as a contributory factor. Though Nair Service Society (NSS) was founded in 1914 by

Mannathu Padmanabhan but it acted forcibly only after independence. These societies knew that education can be used as a powerful instrument for building strong socio-economic foundation for their communities. NSS established their first college the Mahatma Gandhi College at Thiruvananthapuram and Sree Narayana College by Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) at Quilon. Later, NSS set up colleges at Changnassery, Pandalom and Woman College at Thiruvananthapuram between 1949-51. The SNDP set up their first college in 1948 at Faroke near Kozhikode. NSS and SNDP are the two biggest private corporate managements in Kerala which has several colleges against their credit as of now across the state. In 1956, Kerala University Act, 1957 replaced the Travancore University Act 1937 under Mr. Joseph Mundasserry the then minister of education. Dr. John Mathai was the first Vice Chancellor of the University and all colleges in the state came under its jurisdiction. At the same time Medical College and Regional Engineering College came up at Kozhikode in 1956. TKM Engineering College was the first private college in the area of professional education. On the similar path of NSS and SNDP, Muslim Education Society (MES) was founded under the leadership of the visionary Dr. PK Abdul Ghafoor in 1964. First Muslim MES college was set up at Manpad at Mallapuram in 1965. In 1964 a two-year-pre-university course was introduced as a part of college education. This can be preparatory to the three year degree course. In 1968, under the chairmanship of Prof. Samuel Mathai 'University of Calicut' was established at Thejppalam. The University made notable achievements in academic fields such as examination reforms and syllabus reforms as well as started new departments like management, life-sciences and drama. The 'Cochin University of Science and Technology' also came into being with a new orientation as a federal university in 1971. Departments like marine, engineering, industrial fisheries and ship technology were established. Kerala Agricultural University at Thrissur came up in 1971. It had made remarkable contribution in hybrid seed. Mahatma Gandhi University Kottayam was established in 1983 which runs various vocational and semi professional courses such as para-medical courses, bio-technology, nursing and so on. One more affiliating University was established in 1995 by the name of Malabar University that got renamed as Kannur University in 1996. It was opened to impart higher education to the students of Kasargod and Kannur.

Universities and Higher Educational Institutes in Kerala:

Affiliating University	Deemed University	Others
University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram	Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram	Central University of Kerala, Kasargod Sree Sankaracharya Univ. of Sanskrit/ Kalady Kerala Agricultural Univ. Thrissur Cochin University of Science and Technology Indian Maritime University, Cochin
University of Calicut	Amrita University, Cochin	Kerala Univ. of Fisheries and Ocean Studies Tunchath Malyalam University, Malappuram
MG Univ Kottayam	Kerala Kalamandalam Cheruthuruthy	Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Wayanad
Kannur University		National Univ. of Advanced Legal Studies, Cochin
Institute of National Importance		
IIIT Kottayam		APJ Abdul Kalam Technical Univ. Thiruvananthapuram
IISER, Thiruvananthapuram		Sree Chithira Medical Centre, Thiruvananthapuram
IIT, Palakkad		
NIT, Kozhikode		

Source: Economic review 2016, MHRD

Present scenario:

Apart from four affiliating State Universities and a Central University of general in nature, there are 217 Arts and Science Colleges in the State comprising 156 private aided colleges and 61 government colleges. In 2016-17, Ernakulam had 25 Arts and Science colleges (A&S) which is the largest number in Kerala followed by Kottayam which has total 23. Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode have 10 government colleges which is the largest figure in the state. These colleges are under the regulation of Kerala Higher Education Council which was established in 2005. It has functions to render advice to the Government, Universities and other institutions of higher education in the state; coordinate the roles of the government, Universities and apex regulatory agencies in higher education within the state; evolve new concepts and programmes in higher education and provide common facilities in higher education without impinging upon the autonomy of other institutions of higher education. The council has set up various committees to improve the

quality of education in the state since its inception in 2007. Total 2.96 lakhs of students enrolled in various Arts and Science Colleges (excluding unaided colleges) under the four general universities in Kerala during 2016-17 session. Out of this 68.68 per cent are girls. The enrolment of SC students in degree and post graduate course in the state is 33,968 and 4,847, respectively. SC students constitute 13.13 per cent of total students in 2016-17. Among SC students, girls constitute 72.02 per cent of total students in A&S colleges. The number of ST students enrolled for courses in arts and science colleges in 2016-17 was 5,952. The enrolment of ST students in degree and post graduate courses is 4,623 and 1,329 respectively. Girls constitute 66.81 per cent of the total ST enrolment in Arts and Science colleges. The number of teachers in Arts and Science Colleges in the state in 2016-17 was 9,742, out of whom 56.12 per cent are women. A total of 2,393 guest lecturers were working in Arts and Science Colleges of the state in 2016-17. There are 180 engineering colleges in the state with a sanctioned intake of 57,544 in 2017. Out of these engineering colleges, 168 (93.33 %) are self financing colleges (unaided), 9 (5 %) are government colleges and 3 (1.67 %) are private aided colleges. The number of students enrolled in government and aided engineering colleges for graduate courses in 2017-18 increased to 6,222 from 5,134 in 2016-17. The proportion of girl's enrolment has also increased to 39.86 per cent in 2017-18 from 36.42 per cent in 2016-17.

Title of the study:

The present study is titled as "Need to Study Higher Education Status in Kerala: Access, Equity and Quality".

Need of the study:

Indian society is a socially, culturally, economically and politically diversified one. This is evident from the above discussion that education system of India has grown exponentially in quantitative terms. Every ruler from Vedic age to the modern age has tried to include people from every strata of the society in education system. Still, some fraction of the society remained inaccessible to education and this has ultimately affected the educational development of the country. Earlier the main reason behind inaccessibility was the categorization of the society based upon caste, creed and religion which is still continuing. Every ruler had tried to spread their religion through education and always gave preference to the people of their ethnicity. Hence, non-preferred

category remained away from accessibility to educational services. There was an appreciable growth in literacy rate and exponential growth in number of educational institutions, teachers and students after independence in the country as well as in Kerala. Still, the whole country is facing the demon of unemployment in its every state. The state of Kerala is also facing the same demon despite of high literacy rate. Here, Travancore and Cochin region remains always a head of Malabar in all aspects of development. The number of educational institutions, teachers and students increased tremendously after independence. Still, the state is facing unemployment crisis. It seems as if there are many persisting concerns and challenges in education system which is unable to produce employable youths. There are issues related to access to and participation in education despite of great massification after independence. Quality of the education has failed to generate employment skills in the youth population. Issues like equity in education, system efficiency, governance and management, research and development, and financial commitment is also affecting the education development. Hence there is need to assess the strength of three pillars of higher education in Kerala *i.e.* access, equity and quality.

Significance of the study:

Higher education is the one of the stages of education and considered to be responsible for skill generation in youth. It is the duty of the state to provide quality education to every eligible and potential student to make them employable. The present study contributes in the access, equity and quality direction of higher education by following manner:

(i) Present study is going to help planners in finding out the availability of institutes of higher education and courses in them within the vicinity of eligible and potential candidates. This will help them to plan the establishment of the institutes of higher learning and preferred courses by students within their reach.

(ii) The outcomes of the study will help planners to find out the students from different marginalized communities who are unable to access higher education. The study will also help in finding out the factors acting as barriers in accessibility to institutes of higher learning and measures to remove the inequity.

(iii) This is an attempt to search out for factors considered to be responsible for deteriorating the quality of higher education. During the course of study measures

have been discussed from the perspective of faculty and management to improve the quality of higher education in Kerala.

Scope of the study:

This study focuses attention upon the development status of higher education in Kerala. Another focus of the study is to do a comparative study of professional and non-professional courses. This study is a way to find out the human development in each district and to be more attentive about the backward districts for planning and resource allocation. The aim is to improve the social and economical condition of those belonging to the marginalized community in backward districts by providing them quality education. The attempt will also improve the condition of people from backward community in other parts of the state by normative resource allocation for the needy ones as one of the welfare means.

Definition of key terms:

Access:

Access to tertiary education lies in its availability, eligibility and affordability. It has been defined as 'the ability of people from all backgrounds to access higher education on a reasonably equal basis' (Global Higher Education Rankings, 2005). This comprehensive definition takes into account the participation and equity issues. The potential candidates should be able to enroll in the courses of their preference within their vicinity. This includes availability of number of institutions and courses in them, their distance from the place of residence and can be assessed by the Gross Enrolment Ratio of the institution.

Equity:

Equity in higher education refers to creating opportunities for equal access and success in higher education among historically under-represented student populations, such as ethnic minority and low income students (Univ. of South California- ASHE). Equity requires securing all children's rights to education and their rights within and through education to realize their potential and aspirations. This is important so that none of the potential candidates should be left behind in the race. The first dimension of equity is fairness, which includes personal and social circumstance e.g. gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin. The second is

inclusion, for example that everyone should be able to read and write. Equity can be broadly categorized into four dimensions-gender, region, caste/community and unequal opportunities based on economic status.

Quality:

Provisions made for access and equity are worthless if not fuelled by the good quality of education. Quality of education depends upon many factors like- student teacher ratio, faculty and their qualification, training and orientation programmes for faculty, course content, skills development, opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, pedagogies and assessment, use of teaching aids, modernization of library and labs, support for research and innovation etc. The quality aspect is one of the important factors in today's context which also needs to be studied upon. In this study we have included curricular aspect; teaching-learning and evaluation; research and extension; infrastructure and learning resources; organization and management. These factors are considered to be affecting the quality of education greatly.

Conclusion:

Higher education makes a student employable by equipping skills as per market demand. Kerala is struggling with the problem of high unemployment. There is a need to identify backward districts in Kerala and strengthen Access, Equity and Quality of higher education imparted to students. There is a need to make necessary arrangements for the accessibility of desired courses within the reach of the potential student. More emphasis should be to identify, assess and remove the barriers to bring equity in access to institutes of higher learning. The accessibility should not be obstructed by the socio-economic status of students. There is also a need to make provisions to impart quality education to students by improving the conditions in an institution with respect to curricular aspect, teaching-learning and evaluation; research and extension; infrastructure and learning resources; organization and management.

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