

Education developments in kerala- A Critical review

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Introduction

Education is an important form of human capital that improves productivity, health and nutrition of the people of a country, and slows down the population growth. Education is a corner stone of economic growth and social development, that it would improve the level of living and knowledge of the people and that it would encourage modern attitudes. The educational scenario in Kerala is far advanced than other states of India. The Kerala model of development owes its attributed success to the achievements in the area of education and health.

Major Developments

The service conditions including pension of the staff in the aided schools and colleges are the same as those of their counterparts in the government run institutions. The service conditions of staff have improved considerably. There is also job security. The salary and pension of staff in the aided schools and colleges are revised along with that of the government staff periodically. The appointment of teachers in the aided schools and colleges however is done *de facto* by the managements, while the salary and all other benefits are paid by the government. It appears that the privatization of education in Kerala is only 'pseudo privatization' (Tilak, 1991). With improving salary and service conditions, employment in aided educational institutions has become very attractive. This Attractiveness in the context of the high unemployment of the educated in the State has led to totally unintended results. The freedom in appointments has been misused by a large number of private managements with impunity. The worst practices of corruption, nepotism and communalization in

appointments are in vogue. The appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff has become an easy way of mobilizing resources, not all of which are used for developing educational institutions. It has become a means for building up patronage networks and strengthening the economic and political clout of the communities, which run these institutions. Instances of auctioning appointments are common.

Large sums of unaccounted money, running into lakhs change hands. Obviously, quality of teachers suffers (K.K.George, George Zachariah and N.Ajith Kumar, 2003) Under the decentralised system introduced in the wake of the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution, pre-primary, lower primary and upper primary schools come under the jurisdiction of the Grama Panchayats and urban local bodies. High schools come under the District Panchayats, Municipalities and Corporations. The jurisdiction of the local bodies however is confined to the government schools. Some of the financial, administrative and developmental functions of education management were transferred to these bodies though there is still dual control over the staff. The salary of the staff continues to be paid directly by the government. The renewal of the school curriculum and the textbooks is a hotly debated issue in the state. In 1996, responsibility of renewing the curriculum and textbooks in schools up to Class IV was entrusted with the state unit of DPEP, which adopted a child-centered curriculum, and an activity oriented pedagogy.

The task of revising the curriculum and textbooks is now with the SCERT. Curriculum changes in higher education are not taking place frequently as they have to undergo time-consuming processes. A major trend noticed from the nineties is the growth of unaided schools and self-financing courses. There had been phenomenal growth in self-financing institutions for imparting technical, medical and paramedical education. There is also growing presence of self-financing institutions in the teachers training segment. Most of the job-oriented courses are now run on self-financing basis, either in the newly started unaided institutions or in the existing aided colleges themselves. There is no job security for the teachers in these institutions and their service conditions are in most cases much worse than in the government owned/aided institutions. As a result, many of these institutions are not able to attract good quality teachers. Turnover of teachers is also quite high. There is phenomenal increase in the number of 'non-formal' educational institutions, in the unorganized sector. These are not affiliated to any University or government agencies. Most of them offer job-oriented courses and are run on commercial basis. There is no reliable estimate of the number of these institutions or the students enrolled in them.

Conclusion

The low quality of education at all levels and in all types of institutions is a major issue of concern. Providing adequate Opportunities for higher education particularly in technical subjects have become another major issue from the mid eighties. It was this concern, in the context of high demand for job oriented courses and the massive exodus of students to other states in search of such courses that has led to the starting of self financing educational institutions on a large scale in the State. The capacity, (or the lack of it,) of the State to finance education and alternate modes of financing became important issues in the discussions on education in the nineties. An allied issue, of access and equity also came to the centre stage.