



## Studies on Kerala Economy

Edited by  
**Dr. Rajeev C. Bharathan**

Despite low growth in commodity producing sectors, Kerala has achieved admirable human development between 1960's and 1990's. This modest effort at egalitarian growth has won universal acclaim as the Kerala Model. In recent years, alternative development paradigms such as Karnataka, Gujarat and Tripura models have emerged, necessitating a reassessment of the Kerala Model. The present volume is an in-depth analysis of the contemporary profile of the Kerala economy based on recent studies on development. It also enquires into the sustainability of the Kerala model of socio-economic development in the coming decades.

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English

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## Contents

Contributors 7

Acknowledgement 8

Introduction - Rajeev C Bharathan 9

### Section I. Growth and sectoral issues

1. Growth and structural changes in Kerala Economy 18  
*Shyjan D*
2. Agricultural sector in Kerala: An Introduction 41  
*Babu CC*
3. Structure & growth of manufacturing sector in Kerala 60  
*Muraleedharan S & Smrithilal K*
4. Informal sector of Kerala: An Exploration 85  
*Martin Patrick*

### Section II. Development Issues

5. Interpreting Human Development Trajectory of Kerala  
*Vipin Chandran KP* 101
6. Health Sector of Kerala: Prospects and Challenges 120  
*Simon TD*
7. Higher Education in Kerala - A spectral analysis 140  
*Chacko P Jose, Bindu Balagopal*
8. Migration, Remittances and the Kerala Economy 158  
*Ajit D and Rajesh Many*

## Higher Education in Kerala: A spectral Analysis

Chacko Jose P, Bindu Balagopal

### Introduction

The achievements in social infrastructure in a country depends on the importance the country attaches to it and the financial provision the country is willing to allocate for the same. In fact, along with physical infrastructure, the economic development of the country is defined by its social infrastructure. Higher education and its quality is thus an economic parameter of development.

The level of higher education is determined by the size of institutional capacity of higher education system in the country. The size of higher education system in turn, is determined mainly by three indicators, namely number of educational institutions like universities and colleges, number of teachers and number of students. The higher education in India has witnessed many fold increase in its institutional capacity since independence. (UGC working papers 2008)

'Kerala Development Experience' is largely characterized by high levels of growth in social sector, achieved mainly due to pioneering ventures in education. However the pioneering efforts in educational endeavours achieved by Kerala since early days got confined to general education and did not take the natural transformation to excellence in higher education. Kerala lags behind most states of India when it comes to excellence of higher education. The number

of quality institutions be it, professional, technical, knowledge based or academically acclaimed universities, most other states are better placed. This is quite surprising in the context of Kerala being ranked first in most of the human development indicators.

### Higher Education in Kerala

Kerala occupies an enviable position in terms of social indicators and human development. It is considered as one of the most awakened and literate state of the country. Kerala has been ahead in many respects, particularly in the Human Development Index and Universal primary education. One of the major contributions to progressive outlook and higher literacy levels are due to the rich heritage, royal patronage for education as well as, the missionaries who established schools and colleges over a century ago. The positive political interventions and the government policies also contributed to the progress of higher education in Kerala.

Kerala enjoyed immense historical advantage, in terms of massive historical investments in education. But unfortunately, Kerala concentrated rather exclusively on general education and ignored higher education. Kerala's well publicized achievements in education pertained largely to primary and secondary school education. It has been pointed out that on higher education, Kerala fell behind several Indian states on several dimensions of access but especially on the availability of educational opportunities within the state relative to population and the number of students enrolled in these institutions (Tilak 2001). Increased need to universalise elementary education has resulted in serious focus on elementary education and at the same time rather total neglect of higher education.

A historical perspective of growth of higher education in Kerala is given by Gopinathan Nair and Ajit (2009) in their study on Parallel Colleges in Kerala. "At the time of the formation of Kerala state in 1956, there existed in the region twenty-eight arts and science colleges with an enrolment of 0.25 lakh students. The enrolment in higher education increased to 1.531akh in the late 1970s and to 2.121akh in 1979-80.

During the 1970s, three major developments took place in the field of higher education in Kerala. The first was the granting of permission for private registration of candidates for university

examination at Kerala University in 1971 and at Calicut University in 1976, as a result of which a mushrooming of private coaching institutions called 'parallel colleges' ensued. The other two significant developments of the decade were the expansion of 'evening colleges' started in 1965-66, and the opening of the Institute for Correspondence Courses by the University of Kerala in 1976. Thus the doors of higher education were thrown open to persons who could not avail of the facilities of regular colleges."

Since the 1990s, higher education in Kerala has been subject to significant policy shifts, which hold long-term implications for the general arts and science segment. At least three sets of policy moves in the recent past have altered or hold the potential to alter significantly the context of general arts and science education in the state. First, the opening of the doors to self-financing colleges, somewhat ambiguously in the 1990s but with full force since 2000, initiated full-fledged private participation in the sector whereas previously private participation had been publicly funded through the private aided colleges, which receive public funds but are managed by private establishments mostly of the nature of voluntary or charitable trusts. Second, 1998 onwards the pre degree courses were delinked in a phased manner from arts and science colleges and brought under the higher secondary schools as plus two courses, a process that was completed in 2001. Third, the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) has initiated reforms in undergraduate arts and science education, which envisages a radical overhauling of the existing structure and practices.

For analysis, this chapter concentrates on 'arts and science' colleges and largely relies on data from the 'All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18'.

**Table 1: Number of Private and Government Colleges**

State/UTs	Private Un aided	Private Aided	Total Private	Government	Total
Kerala	842(3.42)	203(3.99)	1045(3.52)	238(2.85)	1283(3.37)
India	24620	5083	29703	8358	38061

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

As per the All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18, Kerala with 1283 colleges has a share of 3.37 % of all colleges in India and ranks 11 in terms of total colleges in any state in India. Uttar Pradesh ranks first among all states in India with 6629 colleges followed by Maharashtra (4294). Even the South Indian states lead much ahead of Kerala. Karnataka is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> (3535 colleges), Andhra Pradesh is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> (2572 colleges) and Tamil Nadu is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> (2470 colleges). However if we examine the proportion of Government colleges in total, we can see that Kerala comes to the fourth position. (Table 2)

**Table 2: Proportion of Government colleges**

Rank	States	No. of Govt. Colleges	No. of Total Colleges	% of Govt. Colleges
1	Uttar Pradesh	819	6629	12.35
2	Maharashtra	853	4294	19.86 (I)
3	Karnataka	659	3535	18.64 (III)
4	Rajasthan	542	2758	19.65 (II)
5	Andhra Pradesh	302	2572	11.74
6	Tamil Nadu	337	2470	13.64
11	Kerala	238	1283	18.55 (IV)

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

Kerala also lags behind when it comes to diversity of universities as evident from Table 3.

**Table 3: Type wise universities**

State	Central University	Central Open University	Institution of National Importance	State Public University	Institution under State Legislature Act	State Open University	State Private University	State Private open University	Deemed University Government	Deemed University Government Aid	Deemed University Private	Total
A P	-	-	6	21	1	-	1	-	1	-	4	34
Karnataka	1	-	3	26	-	1	14	-	4	-	11	60
Kerala	1	-	5	13	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	22

TN	2	-	7	20	-	1	-	-	-	2	26	58
All India	45	1	101	351	5	14	262	1	33	10	80	903

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

Table 3 shows that Kerala has no presence at least with respect to 6 types of universities. Diversity is a sign of growth and Kerala higher education sector is lagging behind not in comparison to national scenario, but with the neighbouring states as well.

### University and Higher Education

There are 14 universities functioning in the State. Out of these, four universities viz. Kerala, Mahatma Gandhi, Calicut and Kannur are general in nature and offer general science and arts subjects courses. SreeSankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kerala Agricultural University, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Science University, Kerala University of Health Sciences, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies and Kerala Technological University offer specialised courses in specified subject areas. Besides these, the National University of Advanced Legal Studies (NUALS) established in 2005 and the Central University established in Kasargod district are also functioning in the State.

### Arts and Science Colleges

There are 217 Arts and Science Colleges in the State comprising 156 private aided colleges and 61 Government Colleges. In 2016-17, Ernakulam (25) had the largest number of Arts and Science colleges in the State followed by Kottayam (23). Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode (10) have the largest number of Government colleges in the State. District-wise number of Arts and Science colleges in the State in 2016-17 is given in Appendix 4.1.26. In addition to the government and aided colleges there are large number of unaided arts and science colleges functioning in the State.

**Table 4: District wise Number of Arts and Science Colleges (Government & Private Aided) in Kerala 2016-2017**

District	Government	%	Private	%	Total
Thiruvananthapuram	10	45.45	12	54.55	22
Kollam	2	13.33	13	86.67	15
Pathanamthitta	1	10.00	9	90.00	10
Alappuzha	1	7.69	12	92.31	13
Kottayam	1	4.35	22	95.65	23
Idukki	2	25.00	6	75.00	8
Ernakulam	4	16.00	21	84.00	25
Thrissur	5	22.73	17	77.27	22
Palakkad	7	46.67	8	53.33	15
Malappuram	8	38.10	13	61.90	21
Kozhikode	10	55.56	8	44.44	18
Wayanad	2	33.33	4	66.67	6
Kannur	4	30.77	9	69.23	13
Kasargod	4	66.67	2	33.33	6
Total	61	28.11	156	71.89	217

Source: Kerala State Economic Review 2017-18

### Gross enrolment of students

Total number of students enrolled in various Arts and Science Colleges (excluding unaided colleges) under the four general universities in Kerala during 2016-17 is 2.96 lakh. Of this 2.03 lakh (68.68 per cent) are girls. (Table 5).

**Table: 5 Enrolments of Students in Arts and Science Colleges in 2016-17**

Course	Total	Girls	Boys	% of Girls
B. A.	117,874	77,334	40,540	65.61
B.Sc.	99,017	73,809	25,208	74.54
B.Com.	42,519	26,819	15,700	63.08

Total	259,410	177,962	81,448	68.60
M.A.	13,733	9,307	4,426	67.77
M.Sc.	16,772	11,705	5,067	69.79
M.Com	5,632	4,009	1,623	71.18
Total	36,137	25,021	11,116	69.24
Grand Total	295,547	202,983	92,564	68.68

Source: Kerala State Economic Review 2017-18

Out of the total students enrolled for degree courses, 45.43 per cent are enrolled for BA degree courses, 38.17 per cent enrolled for BSc and 16.39 per cent enrolled for B.Com degree courses. Girls constitute 68.68 per cent of total enrolment for degree courses.

Table 6 shows the gross enrolment ratio for the period 2010 to 2018. The growth rate of gross enrolment ratio in the case of Kerala is 65.29. For all India level the growth rate in enrolment ratio is comparatively lesser (32.98). The growth rate in female enrolment ratio is also higher in Kerala equal to 60.95, whereas in all India level the growth rate in female enrolment ratio is only 41.89.

Table 6: Gross Enrolment Ratio during 2010-2018

Year	Kerala			India		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2017-18	32.0	40.4	36.2	26.3	25.4	25.8
2016-17	28.3	40.1	34.2	26.0	24.5	25.2
2015-16	26.6	35.3	30.8	25.4	23.5	24.5
2014-15	24.1	33.3	28.7	25.3	23.2	24.3
2013-14	21.1	28.7	24.9	23.9	22.0	23.0
2012-13	18.5	25.8	22.1	22.7	20.1	21.5
2011-12	17.8	25.6	21.8	22.1	19.4	20.8
2010-11	18.8	25.1	21.9	20.8	17.9	19.4

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

Table 7 shows the average enrolment per college across different states for the period 2010 to 2018. Growth rate is highest for Tamil Nadu equal to 60%. Kerala has a negative growth rate. Among the nearby states, only Tamil Nadu shows a promising growth. The all India level growth rate is also negative.

Table 7: Various college indicators - average enrolment per college

State	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	GR
Kerala	557	538	555	585	517	521	510	554	-0.5
TN	574	772	816	831	854	895	922	919	60.1
AP	493	490	473	526	516	494	469	493	0
Karnataka	414	401	436	438	434	438	381	416	0.4
India	700	703	715	742	731	721	659	698	-0.2

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

Table 8 shows the growth in the number of colleges across states for the period 2010 to 2018. Among the neighbouring states, Kerala shows the highest growth with 35.75%. Andhra Pradesh shows a negative growth rate. Tamil Nadu shows a growth rate of 24.53 just behind that of Kerala. The all India growth rate is less, equal to only 18.42%.

Table 8: Various college indicators - number of colleges

State	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	GR
Kerala	962	1033	1064	1151	1259	1302	1334	1306	35.75
TN	1985	2302	2372	2460	2477	2368	2368	2472	24.53
AP	4780	4815	2527	2568	2673	2532	2663	2642	-44.73
Karnataka	3098	3068	3205	3310	3492	3555	3753	3593	15.97
India	32974	34852	35525	36634	38498	39071	40026	39050	18.42

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

Table 9 shows foreign student enrolment across states. Kerala has the lowest percent of foreign student enrolment in both UG level and PG level. In undergraduate level Kerala has only 0.2% foreign student enrolment, whereas in Karnataka it is 28.1%. In the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu it is 7.6%. For PG courses also Kerala has only 0.3% enrolment of foreign students. In Tamil Nadu it is 10.1% and in Karnataka it is 22.49%.

**Table 9: Foreign student enrolment**

States	Under Graduation			Post Graduation		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Kerala	57	26	83(0.2)	17	7	24(0.3)
TN	1688	1032	2720(7.6)	432	263	695(10.1)
AP	1537	272	1809(5.06)	175	64	239(3.5)
Karnataka	6005	4046	10051(28.1)	897	636	1533(22.49)
India	23934	11789	35723	4782	2033	6815

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

Table 10 shows the gender parity index in higher education. GPI is used to measure the relative accessibility to education by females and males. A higher GPI indicates females have higher accessibility to education. More than 1 GPI shows that the index is favourable for females. Kerala has the highest GPI in all categories which is higher than the all India index. For SC/ST students also the GPI is higher in Kerala compared to other states.

**Table 10: Gender parity index in higher education (18-23 years)**

States	All categories	SC Students	ST Students
Kerala	1.26	1.81	1.45
TN	0.98	1.02	0.78
AP	0.78	0.83	0.77
Karnataka	1.05	0.97	0.97
India	0.97	0.96	0.87

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

Table 11 shows the growth in student enrolment in Kerala in both UG and PG level during the period 2010 to 2018. Growth rate for UG level for the period 2010 to 2018 is 59.28%. But for PG level the growth rate is comparatively less, equal to 25.23%. Another significant difference is that the growth rate of male students for UG classes is 64.28 which is higher than that of female students which is equal to 55.36. But in the case of growth rate of male PG students it is only 3.95% where as that of female students, it is 39.43%.

**Table 11: Student Enrolment at various levels**

Year	Under Graduation			Post graduation		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
	Kerala	Kerala	Kerala	Kerala	Kerala	Kerala
2017-18	397008	479224	876233	39873	80106	119979
2016-17	353262	492327	845589	33141	74233	107374
2015-16	328135	419352	747487	36860	76166	113026
2014-15	293757	401852	695609	39239	74595	113834
2013-14	256199	342378	598577	37915	67065	104980
2012-13	216060	303868	519928	31239	59147	90386
2011-12	218915	308894	527809	31422	54578	86000
2010-11	241664	308449	550113	38359	57452	95811
GR	64.28	55.36	59.28	3.95	39.43	25.23

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education 2017-18

The GER for Kerala shows that Kerala has tended to fall below the all India average in terms of enrolment in higher education institutions within the state. This should be a matter for concern given that Kerala has near total enrolment at the primary and upper primary school levels and significantly higher levels than all India at the secondary school level (Tilak, 2001). Though the GER in higher education in Kerala has tended to be lower than for all India, it is striking that girls in Kerala register significantly higher GERs than boys.

Kerala also has certain unique issues not fully addressed for a long time. One of them is the private student system nurtured for a long

time, where the student writes university examinations, without really exposing himself to a university system of education. Some universities of Kerala offer programmes through Distance Education with no distinction between these students from the regular students and common Degrees are awarded. But the explosive privatization of higher education which swept the country in the recent decades has also been experienced by the state of Kerala. At the same time, it is also true that the GER in Higher education remain at 16-18% and this figure is not uniform through-out the state as there are many areas like Malappuram, Palakkad, Wayanad, Kannur and Idukki districts whose GER is less than 10%.

### Professional Education

The scenario of professional education in Kerala is given in Table 12.

**Table 12: Professional Education Scenario in Kerala (2018)**

Type of Institution	Government	Government Sponsored Self Financing	Private Self Financing	Total
Engineering Colleges	19	25	122	166
Architecture	3	0	28	31
MBBS	10	1	22	33
Dental	5	1	19	25
Ayurveda	5	0	12	17
Homoeopathic	5	0	0	5
Sidha	0	0	1	1
Unani	0	0	1	1
Fisheries	1	0	0	1
Forestry	1	0	0	1
Agriculture	4	0	0	4
Veterinary	2	0	0	2
Law	4	0	19	23
Pharmacy	4	3	36	43
Nursing	6	16	125	147

Source: Commissioner of Entrance Examinations, Government of Kerala. <https://cee.kerala.gov.in/collegelist/main/index.php>

The professional education scenario of Kerala is dominated by Engineering colleges followed by Nursing colleges. However Engineering education in Kerala is facing crisis as a large number of seats are laying vacant. According to statistics provided by Commissioner of Entrance Examinations, 40 % of engineering seats in Kerala remained vacant during the academic year 2017-18. Every year, the number of vacant seats increases by 5% in the state for the past few years, whereas nationally there were 45% unfilled seats in 2017-18. Though the sanctioned strength was 58,844 in 2017-18, the colleges together sought permission from KTU for filling only 52, 163 seats. In the current academic year (2018-19) there is a further reduction in the number of engineering seats. This academic year, the 155 engineering colleges affiliated with the APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University together have 54,225 seats, compared to the figure sanctioned by AICTE last year - 58,844. The drop in the number of seats is the direct result of various colleges, especially in the self-financing sector, surrendering their courses for want of students.

The actual number of seats to be available in engineering colleges is expected to come down further this year as the colleges seldom prefer to seek the affiliating university's permission for offering all the courses sanctioned by AICTE. Interestingly many of the Engineering colleges that have failed to fill majority seats, have sought permission from the Government to convert the college to polytechnic colleges or even Arts and Science Colleges.

### Financing Higher Education

Higher education everywhere is financed by the state to a substantial extent. On the whole, India is no exception to this. But recent efforts are towards reducing the role of the state in financing higher education. Compared to international experience, and also many universities in India, state support to universities in Kerala is on a lower side. In general quite a few universities in Kerala receive 40-70 per cent of their total revenues from government in the form of grants. The rest is contributed by students in the form of fees, and other internal sources, including donations and endowments (Tilak 2001). Though Kerala has been spending on education sector, as a proportion of the total government expenditure (budget), quite high



compared to many other states and the national average, the level of expenditure on higher education in Kerala is not particularly high.

**Table 13: Plan Outlay and Expenditure in the XII Five-Year Plan (in Rs. crore)**

Sector	Annual Plan 2012-13		Annual Plan 2013-14		Annual Plan 2014-15		Annual Plan 2015-16		Annual Plan 2016-17		12th Five Year Plan		
	Outlay	Exp	Outlay	Exp	Outlay	Exp	Outlay	Exp	Outlay	Exp	Outlay	Exp	% of expenditure
School	287.15	290.6698	337.15	318.5813	367.81	302.3843	379.75	341.6872	502.51	503.4127	1870.37	1756.735	93.92
Higher	202.8691	188.7499	247.4577	292.4577	367.97	206.5545	510.42	418.5926	592.81	243.0481	1919	1349.522	70.24
Technical	101.09	139.2316	117.86	152.9403	143.22	145.8392	184.45	366.6027	235.41	166.9842	782.03	971.598	124.24
Total	590.24	618.7705	699.97	763.9793	879.8	654.778	1074.62	1126.83	1330.73	913.445	4573.59	40773.8	89.16

Source: Kerala State Economic Review 2017-18

During the first year of the 11th Five-Year Plan 590.24 crore had been earmarked for education sector of which 98.78 per cent was expended. The outlay has increased significantly during these five years with 1,330.79 crore being earmarked in 2016-17. The percentage share of higher education has increased significantly over these five years whereas outlay of technical education has increased only marginally during this period. General education got more than 80 per cent of the total allocation in all these five years. It is also seen that the percentage allocation for technical education is lower, but its percentage expenditure is better. (Table 13).

Though the total outlay for all the three sub-sectors is increasing over these five years, except for the last year, the percentage share of school education shows a declining trend during this period. It decreased from 56 per cent in 2012-13 to 37.8 per cent in 2016-17.

This may be due to the fact that the State has achieved most of the primary targets in school education.

Higher education is essential to build a workforce capable of underpinning a modern, competitive economy. The 12<sup>th</sup> Plan Document states that higher education needs to be viewed as a long-term social investment for the promotion of economic growth, cultural development, social cohesion, equity and justice. It is viewed that there must be a strategic shift from mere expansion to improvement in quality higher education. As a consequence, enrolment in higher education would have to be significantly increased in a demand driven manner. Government of India is proposing a new scheme named Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan for funding the State Universities and colleges. The scheme is envisaged as a prime vehicle for strategic funding of state institutions so as to ensure that the issues of access, equity and quality are addressed in an equitable manner with the state as a composite unit of planning.

**Table 14: Education - detailed break-up of expenditure as per Kerala Budget 2018(₹ in crore)**

Item	2015-16	2016-17	2017-19 (R.E.)	2018-19 (B.E.)
University	2157.92	2603.87	2825.82	3274.92
Education	(13.79)	(13.85)	(13.62)	(14.66)
Total	15650.40	18794.35	20752.58	22332.64

Source: Budget in Brief, 2018-19, Finance Department, Government of Kerala

### Quality of Higher Education

External Quality assurance was conceived in India in 1990s as a solution to the deteriorating higher education quality in India. There are three main agencies to evaluate quality of institutions: The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), National Board of Accreditation (NBA) for technical education, and the Accreditation Board (AB) for agriculture institutions. It shows that majority of accreditation process is carried out by NAAC. But as accreditation is voluntary, except for in some states, only 161 universities and 4508 colleges have been accredited by NAAC.

**Table 15: Status of accreditation of Arts and Science colleges in major states (March 2014)**

Grade → States ↓	A++		A+		A		B+		B		C		Total	%		
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%				
AP	0	0	5	2.08	83	34.58	20	8.33	19	7.92	100	41.67	13	5.42	240	100
Karnataka	1	0.16	9	1.47	128	20.85	60	9.77	54	8.79	316	51.47	46	7.49	614	100
Kerala	1	0.50	6	2.99	97	48.26	12	5.97	23	11.44	61	30.35	1	0.50	201	100
Tamil Nadu	2	0.39	11	2.15	171	33.46	31	6.07	36	7.05	253	49.51	7	1.37	511	100
Gujarat	0	0.00	1	0.45	38	17.04	11	4.93	16	7.17	145	65.02	12	5.38	223	100
MP	0	0.00	4	1.81	37	16.74	11	4.98	21	9.50	124	56.11	24	10.86	221	100
Maharashtra	2	0.19	34	3.20	311	29.26	90	8.47	122	11.48	447	42.05	57	5.36	1063	100
Haryana	0	0.00	1	0.70	30	21.13	7	4.93	11	7.75	82	57.75	11	7.75	142	100
Punjab	0	0.00	4	2.42	64	38.79	15	9.09	10	6.06	65	39.39	7	4.24	165	100
Rajasthan	1	0.68	1	0.68	15	10.27	7	4.79	9	6.16	96	65.75	17	11.64	146	100
UP	0	0.00	3	1.30	33	14.29	13	5.63	17	7.36	132	57.14	33	14.29	231	100
Assam	1	0.79	0	0.00	14	11.02	11	8.66	17	13.39	76	59.84	8	6.30	127	100
Bihar	0	0.00	0	0.00	10	7.69	1	0.77	14	10.77	81	62.31	24	18.46	130	100
Odisha	0	0.00	0	0.00	20	10.15	16	8.12	33	16.75	103	52.28	25	12.69	197	100
West Bengal	1	0.34	1	0.34	45	15.15	36	12.12	62	20.88	138	46.46	14	4.71	297	100

Source: NAAC website

Table 15 reveals diversity of the Indian higher education as reflected in the NAAC accreditation process as well. Colleges are

graded into different categories ranging from A++, A+, A, B++, B+, B, A and C. If we examine the colleges accredited at A++, Kerala has only one college, while Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have two colleges each which is the maximum. For A+ grade, the maximum number of such colleges is in the state of Maharashtra, there are 34 colleges with Agrade. In Kerala there are 6 colleges with A+. Tamil Nadu has a higher number of A+ colleges equal to 12. It can be observed that 48.26 percent colleges in Kerala are accredited at A grade. Kerala is followed by Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. On the other end of the spectrum, the states of Odisha and Gujarat have the lowest number of colleges with A grade.

In the B++ grade category, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra has the highest number of colleges. Maharashtra has the highest number of 122 colleges in B+ category. In B category the highest percentage of colleges is seen in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar. Kerala has the lowest percentage of colleges accredited at B Grade.

In colleges accredited with C grade, Odisha and Gujarat top the list and many states share the lower spectrum. What is interesting to be noted is that only one college in Kerala is accredited at C grade.

### Issues and Challenges

The higher education scenario in Kerala has undergone a paradigm shift towards deregulation, liberalization, and internationalisation. The last decade or so has witnessed many changes and new trends in the field of higher education like the tremendous growth in professional and technical institutions, emergence of more autonomous colleges, increased role of private initiatives and movement towards quality assurance in higher education. The present scenario of higher education in Kerala is bleak. There is severe quality deterioration, lack of innovation and creativity. The unholy nexus between political parties and private educational agencies has made education the best investment opportunity with high return and low risk. The government instead of ensuring the principles of inclusion, equity and access, left the students to the mercy of banks for finding funds for financing higher education in the private sector. Such policies certainly cannot lead to the formation of an egalitarian society. In a world where knowledge

creation has assumed great importance, it is imperative that Kerala pushes forward to new heights in Higher education.

A major challenge faced by the higher education system in Kerala is the employability of graduates, be it from general stream or professional stream. The employment providers always complain about the lack of employable skills of the graduates passing out from the state. The Government and the higher educational intuitions are trying to solve the issue by providing employability skills through initiatives like finishing schools for graduates. Students are also given training in soft skills and communication skills even in professional colleges. Such efforts, it is hoped, will improve and solve the problem of employability in the long run.

Another challenge is the attitude of faculty members towards the teaching learning process. While the ideal situation demands the higher educational institutions contributing to knowledge creation on a large scale, they mostly remain as disseminators of knowledge. Only when a higher education system fulfils its responsibility of knowledge formation, the sector can accomplish its expected objective.

Kerala's educational spectrum when compared with the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka lags behind. This can be witnessed in the GER, number of colleges in the state, quality accreditation, number of foreign student enrolments etc. Though Kerala has high social indicators the investment in higher education does not lie on par with other development criteria. The only area where Kerala has better indicators is in the case of female higher education. Gender parity index is high in Kerala, as also the number of female students opting for higher education in Kerala. This is much higher than their male counterparts.

It is hoped the collective effort of the government, the Kerala State Higher Education Council, universities, individual institutions and even individual participants will turn the wheel of Kerala higher education into the path of excellence by 2020.

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