



Trends in Higher Secondary School Education in Kerala: Statutory Base and Efforts for Time Bound Review and Revamp

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Abstract

In the matter of socio-educational development, the achievement of the state of Kerala is far ahead, in comparison with other Indian states. The Kerala Education Act, 1958 and the Kerala Education rules, 1959 and the amendments to the same from time to time vested regulatory powers upon the state government for a uniform growth of the school education system under the government, private aided and private unaided managements, which also protected and safeguarded the interest of teaching and non-teaching staff and the pupils at large. The ongoing quality manifestations to uplift the academic standards of government, private aided and private unaided schools are totally indebted to the creativity and indulgence of the state in the matter of education. The primary objective of the paper is to study the trends in higher secondary school education in Kerala. The study also intends to review the legal and administrative framework and quality improvement programmes in higher secondary school education in Kerala.

Keywords: Higher Secondary School, Quality Education, Aided School, Government School

I. Introduction

In the matter of socio-educational development, the achievement of the state of Kerala is far ahead, in comparison with other Indian states. Prior to the independence and before the formation of the state of Kerala there was a striking imbalance in the growth of education in the different regions of the state. On the whole, the percentage of enrollment of both boys, as well as, girls was lower in Malabar than in Travancore-Cochin area and there were also differences in the growth in the number of

schools in these two regions (Salim & Nair, 2002). Efforts were made by the Government of Kerala to bring about balanced regional development in education, after the formation of the Kerala state, in 1956. Kerala was declared as a totally literate state on April 18th 1991 with the highest effective literacy rate of 89.81 per cent, and at that time, the literacy in the all India level was only 52.51 per cent. The female literacy rate was 86.17 per cent in Kerala compared to 39.29 per cent at the national level (Kerala Development Report, 2008).



Table 1: Trend in Literacy-India and Kerala

Year	India (per cent)			Kerala (per cent)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1901	5.35	9.83	0.60	11.14	19.15	3.15
1911	5.92	10.56	1.05	13.31	22.25	4.43
1921	7.16	12.21	1.81	19.02	27.88	10.26
1931	9.50	15.59	2.93	21.34	30.89	11
1941	16.10	24.90	7.30	N.A	N.A	N.A
1951	16.67	24.95	7.93	40.47	49.79	31.41
1961	24.02	34.44	12.95	56.85	54.97	38.90
1971	29.45	39.45	18.68	60.42	66.62	54.31
1981	36.03	46.62	24.73	70.42	87.74	75.65
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	89.81	93.62	86.17
2001	64.8	75.3	53.7	90.92	94.2	87.86
2011	74.0	82.1	65.5	93.91	96.02	91.98

Source: Census of India and Kerala, Various Decadal Volumes.N.A. Not Available.

In 2011, the literacy level in Kerala rose to 93.91 per cent. It has a high gender parity index (GPI) of 0.97 in the primary classes, a low level of disparity in literacy among different districts in Kerala (2.6 per cent)¹, a narrow disparity between male and female literacy and lowest school dropout rates among other Indian states (0.81 per cent in 2006-07). The teacher-student ratio has also improved marginally. However, the teacher-student ratio is high

(1:60) in higher secondary schools. The repetition rates of the students are also lower in Kerala due to the all promotion policy (Government of India, 2008). Kerala boasts wider distribution of schools, increasing the accessibility to education, by having schools even in the remotest regions. Thus educational accessibility is equitable, region wise and also gender wise (Kerala Development Report, 2008; Government of Kerala; George & Kumar,

¹Computed from the data on literacy of different districts in Kerala as per 2011 census (censusindia.gov.in/2011, Government of India, Ministry of home affairs.)



1999). The Kerala Education Act, 1958 and the Kerala Education rules, 1959 and the amendments to the same from time to time vested regulatory powers upon the state government for a uniform growth of the school education system under the government, private aided and private unaided managements, which also protected and safeguarded the interest of teaching and non-teaching staff and the pupils at large.

The on going quality manifestations to uplift the academic standards of government, private aided and private unaided schools are totally indebted to the creativity and indulgence of the state in the matter of education. This paper analyses the trends in the higher secondary school education in Kerala and also portrays the efforts taken by the state for qualitative improvements in the higher secondary school education.

II. Framework for the Review

This paper aims at to examine the evolution of higher secondary school education in Kerala and review its legal and administrative framework and the efforts taken by the state for qualitative improvements. The secondary data were mainly collected from the published reports of the Directorate of Higher Secondary Education, the Directorate of Public Instruction, Economic Reviews of various years and other published reports. In order to concise the data percentage analysis is done in appropriate sections of the paper.

III. Results and Discussion

In Kerala, there are higher secondary divisions functioning under government, aided and unaided schools. As per the records of the Directorate of higher secondary education, as

on academic year 2011-12, there are 2,583 batches in the various higher secondary schools in Kerala. The number of students in government schools comes to 1,49,544 and those in aided schools total up to 1,46,629 in 2,431 batches. The total number of teachers in the language group comes to 5,527, in Science comes to 8,982, in humanities group there are 5,778 teachers and in commerce there are 1,657 teachers.

III (A). Growth in Number of Schools

Plus two was introduced in 1990/91 in thirty one government schools, one in each educational district. Later by the year 1997, the number of higher secondary schools in Kerala has increased to, 49 government, 33 aided and 3 unaided schools. It was during the 9th plan, shifting of pre-degree from colleges was accelerated and 842 higher secondary courses were introduced. Therefore by the end of the 9th plan, there were 932 higher secondary schools, showing approximately 19 times increase compared to 1997, with an annual sanctioned strength of 1,74,300 students in 3,486 batches (Government of Kerala, 2003) and the growth in the number of schools was more in the government and aided sectors and there was no change in the number of schools in the unaided sector. A major change in the number of schools, after the period of 2001-02, was in the year 2004-05. This is due to the number of additional schools allowed in the higher secondary level in the government sector. Table 3.2 shows a 68.75 per cent increase over the previous year. There is not much change in the number of aided schools in the same period. However, there is marked difference in the growth rate, in the number of higher secondary schools under government and aided sector on one side and unaided sector on the other.



Table 2: Number of Higher Secondary Schools (HSS) in Kerala

Year	Govt.	Growth (%)	Aided	Growth (%)	Unaided	Growth (%)	Total	Growth (%)
1990-91	31	-	0	-	0	-	31	-
1991-97*	49	58.06	33	-	3	-	85	174.19
1997-98	150	206.12	34	3.03	8	166.67	192	125.88
1998-00	255	70.00	261	667.65	8	0.00	524	172.92
2000-01	416	63.14	508	94.64	8	0.00	932	77.86
2001-02	416	0.00	508	0.00	8	0.00	932	0.00
2002-03	416	0.00	508	0.00	330	4025.00	1254	34.55
2003-04	416	0.00	512	0.79	339	2.73	1267	1.04
2004-05	702	68.75	523	2.15	431	27.14	1656	30.70
2005-06	699	-0.43	524	0.19	441	2.32	1664	0.48
2006-07	729	4.29	529	0.95	439	-0.45	1697	1.98
2007-08	735	0.82	529	0.00	439	0.00	1703	0.35
2008-09	735	0.00	529	0.00	439	0.00	1703	0.00
2009-10	760	3.40	686	29.68	461	5.01	1907	11.98
2010-11	760	0	686	0	461	0	1907	0
CAGR (%)	15.79		17.46		42.91		18.60	

Source: Records of Higher Secondary Directorate.* No change in the number of schools during 1991 to 1997.

Table 2 shows, the year by year growth of higher secondary schools in Kerala, over a period of twenty years. The compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) was calculated from the year 1991 to 2011, for a period of 14 years. On the whole the compounded annual growth rate shows that the growth in the number of unaided schools (42.91 %) was higher than the growth in government (15.79 %) and aided (17.46 %) higher secondary schools. This is a clear indication of the intention of the government in retracing its steps away from the responsibility of providing education and encouraging the private providers of education. Among the districts, Malappuram has the largest number of higher secondary schools (233) in the state followed by Thrissur (190) and Ernakulam (179) respectively, in the year 2010-11 (Government of Kerala, 2011).

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III (B). Number of Higher Secondary School Teachers

In 1994-95, there were 368 teachers (57.68 %), (including both full time and part time), in

government schools and 270 teachers (42.32 %) in aided schools. There was an increase in the number of teachers appointed, as a consequence to the increase in the number of schools under higher secondary education.

Table 3: Number of HSS Teachers in Kerala

Year	Government	Aided	Total
2008-09	9310 (45.81)	11014 (54.19)	20324
2009-10	9310 (45.81)	11014 (54.19)	20324
2010-11	9310 (45.81)	11014 (54.19)	20324
2011-12	9310 (45.81)	11014 (54.19)	20324

Source: Records of Higher Secondary Directorate.*Economic Review, various issues.

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages to total.

By the end of 2003, there were 16,292 teachers; with 6,883 in government and 9409 in aided higher secondary schools. The increase in the number of teachers is as a result of appointments, and also promotions, from the school level to the higher secondary level, in order to organize a full-fledged higher secondary course in the state. Out of the total 16,292 teachers in the year 2003, majority (58 %) belonged to the aided schools. Table 3 shows that after 2008-09, there is little change in the number of higher secondary school teachers in the years from 2009 to 2012.

Majority of the teachers (54.19 %) belonged to the aided higher secondary schools. The data on the number of teachers under unaided higher secondary schools are not available.

III (C). Classification of Higher Secondary Teachers as per Subject

The total number of higher secondary school teachers in aided and government schools is 20,324. Out of this majority of the teachers are teaching Science subjects (44.19 %), followed by Languages (27.19 %) and Humanities (20.46 %).

Table 4: Subject-wise Classification of HSS Teachers in Kerala

Year	Science	Commerce	Humanities	Languages	Total
2009-10	8982 (44.19)	1657 (8.15)	4158 (20.46)	5527 (27.19)	20324
2010-11	8982 (44.19)	1657 (8.15)	4158 (20.46)	5527 (27.19)	20324
2011-12	8982 (44.19)	1657 (8.15)	4158 (20.46)	5527 (27.19)	20324

Source: Records of Higher Secondary Directorate. Figures in parentheses represent per cent to total.



Table 5: Subject wise Classification of Government HSS Teachers in Kerala

Year	Science	Commerce	Humanities	Languages	Total
2009-10	3970 (42.64)	799 (8.58)	2105 (22.61)	2436 (26.17)	9310
2010-11	3970 (42.64)	799 (8.58)	2105 (22.61)	2436 (26.17)	9310
2011-12	3970 (42.64)	799 (8.58)	2105 (22.61)	2436 (26.17)	9310

Source: Records of Higher Secondary Directorate. Figures in parentheses represent per cent to total.

Table 5 shows the subject wise classification of government higher secondary school teachers. Out of the total 9,310 teachers, majority of the

teachers are teaching Science subjects (42.64 %), followed by Languages (26.17 %) and Humanities (22.61%) subjects.

Table 6: Subject wise Classification of Aided HSS Teachers in Kerala

Year	Science	Commerce	Humanities	Languages	Total
2009-10	5012 (45.51)	858 (7.79)	2053 (18.64)	3091 (28.04)	11014
2010-11	5012 (45.51)	858 (7.79)	2053 (18.64)	3091 (28.04)	11014
2011-12	5012 (45.51)	858 (7.79)	2053 (18.64)	3091 (28.04)	11014

Source: Records of Higher Secondary Directorate. Figures in parentheses represent per cent to total.

In the aided higher secondary schools, there are 11,014 teachers, out of which majority (45.51 %) teach Science. Language teachers are 28.04 per cent and Humanities teachers are 18.64 per cent to the total number of higher secondary teachers in the aided sector. Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 reveal that there is no major change in the number and subject wise Constitution of higher secondary school teachers in the recent years, from 2009-10 to 2011-12.

III (D). Enrollment in Higher Secondary Schools

In 1990-91 there were 1,748 students enrolled with the plus two stage. Later in 1995-96 the enrollment increased to 10,449 and thereafter to 1,33,399 in 1999-2000, along with the increase in the number of higher secondary schools. In 2006-07, there were a total of 3,48,240 students enrolled in the higher secondary schools. Out of them 1,29,780 (37.27 %) were admitted in government and 1,34,100 (38.51 %) were in aided and 84,360 (24.22 %) were enrolled in unaided higher secondary schools (Government of Kerala, 2010; Government of Kerala, 2011).



Table 7: Enrollment of Students in HSS in Kerala

Year	Government	Aided	Unaided	Total
2008-09	144330 (50.09)	103083 (35.77)	40736 (14.14)	288149
2009-10	140204 (48.12)	117216 (40.23)	33931 (11.65)	291351
2010-11	150231 (46.43)	143665 (44.40)	29664 (9.17)	323560

Source: Economic Review, Various Issues, Statistics for planning 2009, *Department of Economics and Statistics, page 605).

Figures in parentheses represent per cent to total.

In 2011-12, there were 1,49,544 students in government higher secondary schools in 2,583 batches and 1,46,629 students in 2,431 batches in the aided sector (Data excerpted directly from the higher secondary directorate records). The total number of students in unaided sector is not available from a reliable source.

III (E). Higher Secondary Examination Result

Table 8 shows that after the implementation of the new teaching methodology, in 2005, there has been tremendous improvement in the results secured by the students under the higher secondary education. The pass percentages were 55.60, 57.67, 59.04, 59.25, 59.09 and 59.90 per cent respectively from the years 2000 to 2005 (Economic Review, various issues).

Table 8: Examination Results of HSS in Kerala (School Going) (in lakhs)

Year	Appeared			Passed			Percentage of Pass
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
2005-06	175794	190729	366523	N.A	N.A	217012	59.21
2006-07	112395	130466	242861	N.A	N.A	175742	72.36
2007-08	116457	139452	255909	N.A	N.A	207389	81.05
2008-09	121422	139997	261419	86341	113533	199874	76.46
2009-10	127538	148922	276460	87432	119723	207155	74.93
2010-11	126541	149574	276115	96944	130168	227112	82.25
2011-12**	136613	156499	293112	N.A	N.A	258179	88.08

Source: Economic Review, Various issues. **Records of Directorate of Higher Secondary Education. N.A.: Not Available.



The pass per cent of students in higher secondary courses has increased to 88.08 per cent in 2011-12 from 59.21 per cent in 2005-06. The pass percentages in the subsequent years after the introduction of the activity based curriculum in 2005 show tremendous change. It increased to 72.36 per cent in the year 2007, when the first batch of students exposed to the new system of learning gave their examination. The positive trend in pass percentages continued to 88.08 per cent in 2012.

IV. Evolution of Plus-Two Education in Kerala

India was following varying pattern of school education before 1966. Till the end of the 19th century, schools were under the control of the universities, which conducted the matriculation examination. Most of the states in India followed a pattern of either 10+2+2 or 8+3+3 or 11+3 which indicated the number of years of schooling in different levels (Shah, 2005). Various commissions appointed by the central government recommended for the separation of the pre-degree from higher education. Even though, there were difficulties in the implementation of the recommendations for the common pattern of education structure, both political and financial, some of the states were ready to implement, but some showed reluctance and thus different patterns of education co-existed in India. From 1968 onwards, efforts were made to create uniformity in the pattern of school education by implementing the National Education Policy, 1968, by replacing the existing systems of 10+2+2 and 8+3+3, which were prevailing in many states, with 10+2+3 (Chauhan, 2004). In Kerala, the higher secondary education was a part of the higher education system and the plus two classes were offered as pre-degree courses in arts and science colleges. The pre-degree course was gradually de-linked from the higher education system and was brought under the school system by partial induction

of plus two in vocational higher secondary courses in 19 schools, in 1983-84. Later in 1990, the Kerala Higher Secondary Department was formed with the main objective of imparting best quality education. The government issued a number of orders for the commencement of the higher secondary school education in the state. These orders facilitated the necessary steps to be taken to reorganize secondary and collegiate education in the state in accordance with the National Education Policy. Even in 1990, the pre-degree course continued to be controlled by the universities (Government of India, 1990) and plus-two was introduced only in 31 selected government schools, one in each educational district. At that time science group, comprising of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics and Biology, was started in 16, humanities group, comprising of History, Geography and Economics with Hindi or Malayalam, in 15 schools. There was only one course and one batch for each school and each batch had a maximum of 60 pupils. NCERT syllabus was followed with suitable modifications to suit local conditions, with English as the medium of instruction. The tuition fees and the examination fees were set as the lowest of the prevailing in the three universities and the general orders regarding fee concessions, lump sum grant, scholarships, stipend etc for pre degree students were extended to higher secondary course also (Government of Kerala). Department of Higher Secondary Schools conducts examinations, for the first year, as well as, for the second year in March.

Even though higher secondary was a part of school education there is a separate identity for its entire academic and co-curricular activities distinct from the high school. The purpose of delineating plus two achieved its purpose of concentrating on the turbulent adolescents in an effective manner paving way for the holistic development of these students and ushering them into higher education/ profession or a vocation effectively.



V. Legal and Administrative Framework

The fundamental rights of the citizens of India are included in Articles 12 to 35 of Part 111 of the Constitution of India and education became a fundamental right when Article 21 A was inserted by the Constitution (86th amendment) Act, 2002, which unequivocally states that the government shall determine and provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age between 6 to 14 years. Supporting this, the Article 24 strengthens the idea by illegitimizing the employment of a child below the age of 14 years. Articles 14, 15, 16 and 17 deals with equality before law and form the basis for framing legislation on education, by both the centre and the state governments. The interest of the minorities is protected through Article 29 of the Constitution, according to which, citizens shall not be denied admission on grounds of religion, race, caste, language and Article 30 deals with the right of linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions. The Constitution contains the subject matters coming under the union list, state list and the concurrent list, and education comes under the concurrent list. This means that, both, the parliament and the legislature of the state, are vested with absolute power for making legislation on education but it has been clarified by Article 251, that if any provision of law made by the legislature of the state is repugnant to any provisions of law made by parliament, then the law made by parliament shall prevail over the law made by the legislature of a state, if there is inconsistency between these two (Pandey, 2006).

Apart from the Constitutional provisions (Articles 12 to 35 of Part 111 of the Constitution of India), the Kerala Education Act, 1958 and amendments in 1959, 1960, 1969, and 1985 provided for the better organization and development of educational institutions in the state. The Act came into effect by repelling the

Travancore Primary Education Act, 1121, the Cochin Free, Compulsory Primary Education Act XI of 1123 and Madras Elementary Educational Act, 1920, which was in force in the then Malabar district. The Act provided for setting up of a State Education Advisory Board, which advises the government on matters pertaining to educational policy and administration (Section 4 of the Kerala Education Act, 1958). The Kerala Education Act, 1958, is included with 39 sections, which defines an aided school, educational agency, existing school, local educational authority, a minority school, a private school, a recognized school, the state (Pandey, 2006). The Act vests powers with the government, to regulate different stages of education, to determine the courses of instructions in government, private aided and private unaided schools, to take necessary steps for providing facilities for general education and special education and training of teachers, and the government is having the power to establish and maintain schools or recognise and permit others to establish and maintain schools (Section 3 of Kerala Education Act, 1958). Accordingly, the Government has established a number of schools in the state, from Aganvadi to Plus Two levels and invests directly in the infrastructural development of government schools and indirectly through grants to the aided schools (Section 5). These maintenance grants are given to the aided schools for the purpose of purchase, improvement, repairs of land, building or equipment. The teachers were appointed through the Public Service Commission of the state till 1960. After 1960 the right of appointment, as per the prescribed qualifications (Section 10, chapter 31 of KSR introduced w.e.f 5/12/1972), in the aided schools were transferred to the managers of aided schools. Originally as per section 11 of the Act, the appointment of teachers of aided schools was to be from among the PSC hands. But the absolute power of appointment of teachers in the



aided schools was transferred to managers through the amendment Act, 35, of 1960, which came into force on 27/12/1960, the effect of which was, dilution of the legislation itself. The Act although provides scope for exercising disciplinary powers of the government over teachers of aided schools, has vehemently protected the interest of teaching and non-teaching staff by including in its section, criteria for appointment, dismissal and other conditions relating to service including proceedings relating to provident fund, age of retirement, pension, etc (Section 12) and payment of salary (section 9) and also for taking over the management of the school with the support of the legislative assembly (section 14). The Act provides for establishing local educational authorities for stimulating local interest in the educational affairs and for the purpose of associating people with the administration of education. The local educational authorities assess the educational needs of the local area and prepare schemes for the development of education, each year and submit the same to the government, supervise the implementation of the scheme of noon day feeding of school children, promote conferences, exhibitions or other measures designed to create interest among the public in education (Section 18). The inspection of the schools and the officers by whom inspection shall be made; the mode of keeping and auditing of the accounts of the schools, the standards of education and the modes of study, also follow provisions of this Act (Hamsa, 2003; Mohanan, 2000; Nair, 2005). In connection with the commencement of the higher secondary school, after delinking the pre-degree course from the colleges, as a part of the National Education Policy 1986, a number of government orders were issued and the spirit of such government orders were later incorporated in chapter 32 of Kerala Service Rules (KER) (in connection with aided higher secondary schools) and special rules for the Kerala higher secondary

school education state service and the special rules for the Kerala higher secondary school education subordinate service. The method of appointment and qualifications of teachers and non-teaching staff in aided higher secondary schools have been well defined as per Chapter 32 of the Kerala Education Rules 1959. A higher secondary school teacher has a workload of 15 or more period per week per subject and a junior teacher has a workload of less than 15 periods per week per subject. Principal of an aided higher secondary school acts as the academic and administrative head of the higher secondary school. A higher secondary school consists of Principal, higher secondary school teachers in 39 subjects from English to electronics, librarian, laboratory assistants, lower division clerk and a menial. Chapter 32 was incorporated in the Kerala Education Rules, 1959 and apart from that a number of government orders and circulars were issued, for defining, regulating and for streamlining the function of higher secondary education, all over the state. Steps were initiated, by the higher secondary department and the government of Kerala, for proper legislation by making proper amendments in the relevant statutes and rules (Hamsa, 2003; Nair, 2005; Mohanan, 2000).

The enactment of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, in 2010 aimed at ensuring free education and the right of quality elementary education to every child in India. The Act provides for free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school to all children aged 6-14. All schools are to comply with certain infrastructure and teacher norms, like two trained teachers for every 60 students at the primary level. Schools constitute School Management Committees (SMCs), comprising of local officials, parents, guardians and teachers, which in turn will monitor utilization of government grants and the school environment. The programme envisages the teachers to be at the core of implementation



of RTE. The state governments have the role to undertake household school mapping to ensure that all children are sent to school and together with the local bodies have to establish primary schools within 1 km of the neighborhood (Government of India, 1993; Chaube, 1988).

VI. Quality Up-gradation Initiatives

Government of India and the state governments have formulated innumerable schemes for the purpose of quality up gradation of education. Policy measures have been implemented from earlier periods, which have been highly innovative and have hastened the process of expansion of school education, ensuring equity and equality in education. Some of them were compulsory and free education, which is legalized through the amendments in the Constitution of India, direct payment of salaries to private school teachers by the state government, reduction of regional and inter community disparities in school education by including Articles in the Constitution of India for minority protection and promotion of female education. The schemes sponsored by the Union Government, such as DPEP, SSA and RMSA are some of which that have had remarkable impact on school education by achieving access, equality and quality (Kerala Development Report, 2008; Desrochers, 1987; Kamat, 1989; Mathew, 1987; Pandey, 2006; Salim & Nair, 2002). Universalisation of education was achieved, through, programmes like DPEP, which, aimed at reducing the differences in enrollment, school dropout and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than 5 per cent. DPEP worked under the supervision of 'The National Elementary Education Mission'. A Non Formal Education Programme (NFEP) was also started for children, from 6 to 14 years of age, to include dropouts of formal schools, children who have to remain in house to do chores and also to include

girls. NFEP was under the responsibility of the Village Education Committees and it focused on educationally backward states and also urban slums, hilly, tribal and desert areas in other states. Operation Black Board was another scheme introduced, for qualitative improvement of primary education, since 1987-88, and it stressed on, the minimum infrastructural facilities and minimum number of teachers required in a primary school. The scheme gave priority to rural areas, SC/ ST areas and schools solely for girls.

Another programme was the Minimum Level of Learning (MLL), which, focused on the basic learning that should be secured by the students. MLL strategy has been formulated, so as to secure, quality with equity and that all children irrespective of caste, income and gender have access to education of a comparable standard. MLL programme emphasized the importance of focusing on concept formation. The programme emphasized the fact that burden of non comprehension and overload of content forces the children to resort to rote memorization, and this should be eliminated. Consequent to this, one of the major changes in evaluation methods was avoidance of text book based questions in the examination and focus on creative writing, which has had a detrimental effect on the vocabulary and communication ability of the students. What is argued against rote learning? The concept of learning 'by heart' was misconceived. It only means to learn through your heart - to understand and then learn. However, the MLL programme deprived the children of basic communication skills – the language itself. It is high time the authorities realized that activity oriented learning emphasizing creative writing should only compliment and not replace traditional rote learning.

VI.(A) National Policy on Education

The need for a radical reconstruction of the educational system in the country was brought



about by the first National Policy on Education announced by the Government of India in 1968. The major areas, which, received attention were, examination reforms, minority education, development of science education and research, improving teachers' status, supply of low priced text books, preprimary education etc. The implementation of NPE resulted in providing schooling facility to more than 90 per cent of the rural population, within a radius of one kilo meter. Even though, a review once in every five years was envisaged, further review took place only in 1985 and a new National Policy on Education was formulated in 1986. Some of the highlights of NPE, 1986 were, early childhood care and education, introduction of Navodaya schools meant for providing quality education to be set up in various parts of the country, mainly in rural areas, universal access and enrollment, universal retention up to 14 years of age, and substantial improvement in the quality of education. In 1992, the Programme of Action (PoA) were framed, strictly as per the policy statements made in the EFA (Education For All) summit, which includes basic education for children, improving quality, access and eliminating disparities. NPE 1992 stressed on improving quality at all stages of education, improving science and technology and cultivation of moral values in students. The NPE brought into effect, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), containing a common core. Accordingly, examination reforms were envisaged through the introduction of evaluation, as an ongoing process (*continuous and comprehensive internal evaluation*), for the purpose of improvement in teaching and learning, and also stressed on the development of professionalism among the teachers, by providing training and education to them (Chaube, 1988; Government of India, 1993).

In 2004, following the "Total Quality" envisaged by the educational authorities, a vision-

mission statement was developed, in a Training Need Analysis (TNA) workshop, and ever since it has been used in the entire official documents (Government of Kerala). The vision envisages, a central agency, of the state government, to promote all round excellence in higher secondary education, by establishing appropriate philosophies, adequate institutional network, effective administrative systems, and well qualified, competent and motivated staff, necessary to carry out academic and administrative responsibilities. The mission provides to serve as a professional institution in formulating and maintaining the standards of higher secondary education and in providing need based timely, effective and sustainable services to the students and teachers (www.kerala.gov.in).

VI.(B) Quality through Technology

On the administration side of the higher secondary school education, the Directorate has introduced a number of e-governance initiatives viz, Single Window Admission Process, Central Admission Registry, Online Teacher Transfer, Electronic Pay roll system - SPARK etc for the purpose of achieving overall efficiency and development. One such initiative is the 'HSCAP' which is a centralized single window admission process system. This system of admission would eliminate corruption and thereby, establish social justice, in the admission process, by introducing transparency and efficiency. Apart from being a centralized allotment process for merit seats, HSCAP, has been functioning as the pivot, around which, many departmental activities like Central Admission Registry, Nominal Roll for Examinations, Staff Fixation etc revolve. The examination wing was computerized, from the year 2001. All activities in the examination branch, from registration of candidates to publication of results are done online, through the department web portal. Another remarkable technological



facilitation was the employee payroll and administrative system, 'Service and Payroll Administrative Repository of Kerala' (SPARK), to manage the employee payroll and administrative activities of all schools and offices under the department. All the staff including gazetted officers of the department generate salary bill through the SPARK. The system received two national awards and one state award, for its unmatched performance: CSI-Nihilent Award 2008-09, National e-governance Award 2009-10 and Kerala State e-governance Award 2009. The IT@school project is being implemented in government, aided and unaided schools including higher secondary for mobilizing resources for IT education and empowerment of the teachers using technology to teach the subjects and languages in classrooms, conduct of IT melas, e-governance initiatives etc. The project has two channels of EDUSAT ViCTERS through which educational programmes are being telecast.

VI.(C) Programmes for All round Development of Students

The department of higher secondary education has initiated a number of programmes for the all-round development of the students. Kalakshethra is one such programme, wherein, special training/coaching in fine arts, music and dance, is given to artistically talented, but, financially backward students on the basis of merit cum means scholarship at a district training centre. In order to motivate meritorious students and also as part of social welfare measures, government has introduced a comprehensive scholarship scheme of the higher secondary level for students, belonging to Below Poverty Level (BPL) families. It was also decided to promote the quality of education at the higher secondary level by providing scholarships to students of government and aided schools. Another programme, introduced was the remedial coaching

for weak students in selected government higher secondary schools, having a pass per cent below 50. One such school was the Model Boys School, Thiruvananthapuram, which has the remedial teaching session called 'Search for Alternative Meaningful Education' (SAME), which is being conducted for students, after regular class hours (Government of Kerala, 2011). An amount of twenty lakh was proposed in the annual plan 2011-12 for the purpose of providing remedial coaching. Directorate of Higher Secondary Education has 400 National Service Scheme (NSS) units with a volunteer strength of 40,000, spread across the state. Leadership practice, life-skill acquisition etc through the NSS programmes help to bring about positive change in social perspective, creative thinking and positive attitude making them self-reliant, self-confident and self-respecting, and builds up personality and character emphasizing the emotional quotient of the youth learner. Various community development programmes and other special programmes are organized, like 'Aaksharam', a literacy programme, 'Krishikootom', an organic farming and food security programme, 'Sahayanam', a socio cultural mix programme, 'Nervazhi', a road safety programme, are being implemented by the NSS cell, through its 400 units across the state during the year.

In order to equip the plus two students emotionally, as well as, to provide proper guidance to choose a suitable career, Career guidance and Counseling units function in higher secondary schools. There are 789 Career Guidance and Counseling Units, in Higher Secondary Schools, throughout the State. These centers aim to help the students to obtain an orientation to the employment sector and develop transferable skills, such as, effective communication, leadership, teamwork and management. Adolescent counseling and health care programmes are also conducted. 'Souhrida clubs' are formed in Higher Secondary Schools,



to improve the physical, academic, social and interpersonal skills of the adolescents and to lead them towards a successful adult-hood, by conducting awareness classes on physical, mental, and social issues, faced by the students. At present, there are 140 'Souhrida Clubs' functioning throughout the state (Government of Kerala, 2000; Government of Kerala). Importance is also given for work oriented education in secondary schools and higher secondary education, with the general aim of helping the students to develop skills for work and regard for manual works. The students and teachers are given training in socially useful productive works, training in, jobs connected with traditional areas. Functioning of school production centers under the scheme of SUPW and formation of work experience clubs in schools, are the major activities, proposed under this scheme in the annual plan 2011-12. Work experience fairs, in sub district, educational district and state level, are conducted along with the state schools science fairs every year (Government of Kerala, 2011).

VI.(D) Quality through Infrastructure

In school education, trust is given on improving the academic standards and sufficient attention is also given on improving the infrastructural facilities. The amount for Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is Rs. 3,500 lakh for the annual plan 2011-12. A proportion of 25 per cent of the project cost has to be met by the state government. Under this programme allocation is proposed for the development of laboratories and libraries in government higher secondary schools, toilets for girls in HSSs, improving vocational competence of the youth, three teacher training institutes for differently abled children, incentive awards to PTAs, and improvement of Pareekshabhavan. Schemes are envisaged to strengthen the heritage schools, which are government schools of more

than 50 years of life, accommodating 2000 students or more. These schools are selected for improvement in both infrastructural and academic activities (Government of Kerala, 2011). An outlay of Rs.1,942 lakhs is set apart for the development of laboratories, libraries, and infrastructure in government higher secondary schools. Most of the government schools do not have enough building to accommodate the students. The condition of labs and libraries, in most of the higher secondary schools, is very poor and it is necessary to strengthen the library and lab to enhance the standard of students. The outlay provide for lab equipments for physics, chemistry, botany and zoology and for setting up of lab for rare subjects like geography, home science, electronics, and geology and for the purchase of library books. The amount is also used for, improving drinking water and toilet facilities in most required government higher secondary schools (Government of Kerala, 2011).

VI.(E) Quality through Faculty Development

Faculty Improvement Programme (FIP), in higher secondary schools, was initiated to impart training to higher secondary school teachers, with a view to improve and update their pedagogical and evaluation skill in 2007, with an outlay of Rs. 200 lakhs. Each year, for the last three years from 2009-10 to 2011-12, Rs. 3 crores have been allotted for FIP and it has been fully utilized according to the Higher Secondary Directorate sources. Under the DPEP and the SSA, teachers get in-service training periodically. But, the teachers in higher secondary level do not have much opportunity for in-service training. Therefore, the government has taken steps to coordinate SCERT and the DIETs in the state, in order to extend training to the teachers of higher secondary schools. The teachers are given training in the application of the new learner centered pedagogy and are given refresher courses in their respective subjects and also in the use of new



technology like ICT based teaching or smart teaching (Government of Kerala, 2011). In the current year, 2012-13, the training programme is envisaged to include both training in management concepts as well as training in technology. The recent scheme of grading, the introduction of continuous internal evaluation of students, together with the introduction of the learner centered, and activity oriented curriculum intends to usher a qualitative up gradation of the academic performance of students. All these pioneering endeavors are catalytic factors in the up gradation of the quality of education in Kerala.

VII. Conclusion

Continuously improving quality of education, based on, vision and revisited mission, to attain and cope-up with changing standards of education world around, are inevitable. The study has found that there has been an increase in the number of schools from the year 1990, and in the provision of adequate faculty. The government also has been quite enthusiastic in bringing about far reaching changes in the administration, faculty training and education, provision of infrastructural facilities and excellent evaluation methods for improved efficiency and effectiveness. However, further studies should be conducted in order to assess the extent of effectiveness of these quality initiatives and how these have been perceived by the public or stake holders of education in Kerala. Quality up gradation in education could be reaped only by efficient implementation of the periodically updated, quality initiatives through the process of effective team work. This would enable the higher secondary school education in Kerala to reap exponential benefits in the long run and it could reach the heights of national and international standards.

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