Summary of Minor Research Project submitted to the UGC in Political Science

**Privatisation of Higher Education in Kerala**

**A study on Public Private Partnership in Self Financing Education Sector**

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Kerala’s educational achievements attracted global attention and even the developed countries were looking at its merits surprisingly. Educational development, which made the state first among the Indian states in literacy, health security, social development, political participation etc., was also the major factor behind all achievements summed up as ‘Kerala Model of Development’. State intervention in the higher education sector, including professional education made it accessible to all sections of the Kerala society and it led to the social development, particularly the social mobilization of backward sections. The introduction of neoliberal policies in the state led to the privatization of higher education and mushroom growth of self financing professional colleges in Kerala. It raises several problems in professional education for example, questions of quality, social equity and justice. The origin and development of self financing colleges is not a unique feature of the state, but it is a nationwide phenomenon. Privatization and liberalization of education sector resulted in the withdrawal of state from providing education to the people and the rise of private institutions.

The unbridled growth of self financing colleges not only affects the poor students, but in the long time it can pose many threats to the society as a whole. It is true that self financing education denies the right to education to the poor people. It also creates a situation in which the professional education is monopolized by the affluent sections. It resembles the time of feudalism with a subtle difference that while in the older system caste was used for discrimination of people and denial of education to the majority; it is the class factor which acts as the criteria of discrimination in the contemporary times. However, in both cases denial of the basic rights is most glaring.

Increasing number of medical and engineering colleges consequent to privatization creates several social problems also. The increasing number of doctors will lead to over hospitalization and educated unemployment. Moreover, privatization changes the moral values of the doctors, and the health sector faces deterioration in ethics and values. The decline of quality in health sector not only affects the poor people but the whole society. In the health sector, global market shows no stability in demand for medical professionals. And also some of the developed countries have already passed anti-migration laws. Moreover, the decline in quality partly due to the privatization of medical education raises doubts about the chances of competition in the free market.

*Objectives*

1. To study the impact of neoliberal policies on Higher Education in India.
2. To sketch the history of educational development in Kerala.
3. To analyse the emergence and growth of self financing education sector in the state.
4. To probe into the details of constitutional, legal and political issues involved in the self financing professional education.
5. To assess the impact of self financing professional colleges vis-à-vis Quality, Equity and Social Cost.

*Hypothesis*

1. Neoliberal policies greatly reduced the scope of positive intervention by the state while promoting profitable private investment in education in general, and higher education as well as professional education in particular.
2. Autonomy of state governments in the formulation of education policies in India

is negatively affected by the neoliberal policies followed by the central government.

1. While the growth of self financing professional colleges creates inequality based on class and increases the social cost, its positive impact on improving the quality of education is very minimal.

*Methodology*

Since the study necessitates an analysis of Court’s decisions and Governmental policies it was mainly descriptive and analytical in its methodology. Both primary materials and secondary methods were used to collect data. The study also examined the effect of court decisions on the performance of the students admitted to Self-financing medical/engineering colleges in Kerala as a case study, besides content analysis of judicial verdicts. The researcher also conducted a survey, as taking Thiruvananthapuram District a case study, to assess the impact of judicial pronouncements on higher education vis-à-vis quality, equity and social justice on self financing education institutions.

*Chapter Scheme*

The study is classified into five chapters excluding introduction. The introductory part gives a brief idea about research problem and the nature and scope of the study. It also contains the specific objectives, hypotheses, methodology, chapter scheme and limitation of the study. The first chapter deals with the background and evolution of Kerala’s higher education system in a historical perspective. The second chapter discusses the privatization of higher education related with the origin, trends and growth of self financing professional colleges in the state. It also includes the socio – political condition of Kerala. The third chapter analyses the public private partnership in self financing education and the issues relating to the privatization of higher education in general and professional education in particular. Fourth chapter analyses the issues of quality, equity and social cost involved in the self financing education and chapter fifth is the concluding chapter.

*Major Findings*

The study shows that the growth of self financing professional colleges involves many negative social impacts. The engineering education is gaining wider currency because of the growth of Information Technology. But since the market laws dictate the demand for professionals, engineering graduates also face the problems of unemployment and under employment. The market economy promotes the growth of self financing education because it will ensure cheap labour through increasing the number of job seekers. Preponderance shown to the professional education also affects other streams of higher education for example, social sciences and basic sciences. It has negative implication from the vantage point of production of knowledge.

The study also proves that while the privatization of professional education only helped to marginalize the poor students from technological knowledge, it seldom enhanced the quality of education since the criteria of admission is the capability of the students to pay higher fees and huge donation. Even though the courts have banned capitation fees cleaver managements and affluent students can violate it in clandestine ways. Elected governments also blink their eyes on many such occasions because the professional education in the state is controlled by the influential social sections of the society. Result, while the ineligible persons attain education by virtue of money power, those who have eligibility but no money are excluded and alienated from the higher/professional education.

Minority politics also assumes greater relevance in the context of Kerala where the minorities enjoy constitutional protection and greater political leverage. They have special concerns about privatization of education since they own a majority of private education institutions. Even though the left front governments took several bold initiatives to regulate the profit seeking private managements the constitutional and legal hurdles prevent them to materialize their efforts. Even though the issue is discussed as a legal, constitutional problem in the popular media and among the general public it actually involves the class dimensions of public policies and the communal politics prevailing in the state. Thus the study shows that the issue of self financing professional colleges in Kerala speaks about the politics of class in greater volume.