

Impact of Brain Drain on the Quality of Higher Education in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Brain drain has changed the very perspective towards higher education. Higher educational institutions had confined to a mere factory for producing brains for the corporate world. The dreams and ambitions of the students are modeled so as to gain a white collar job in prestigious firms in the world. The thirst for knowledge transformed to the unquenchable hunger for information which bring 'fortune' in the future. Kerala higher education learning, once rich with debates and discussions, diminished to the exam oriented classroom teaching. Students and parents are running behind marks, ranks, and campus placements with their competitive, jealous minds. Social responsibility, values and ethics disappeared from the higher education sector as the students dream an alien land to fulfill the hopes and make fortune. Humanities, arts and social science courses shrink as a result of the higher demand for (profitable) professional and science courses. The expenses of the public exchequer turned to loss as the benefits of educating the young flowed to the foreign countries. This encouraged the governments to retreat from the public education sector and give birth to the self-financing higher education institutions. The self-financing institutions concentrated on the mere employability of the students and gave importance to the needs of the corporate world. This adversely affected the quality of higher education as learning aimed at earning and the aims of research reached new manifestations.

This paper tries a theoretical analysis of the different aspects of higher education which encourage brain drain and portrays the negative and positive impacts of brain drain on the quality of higher education in Kerala.

1. Introduction

Nature blessed the land of Kerala with exotic climatic conditions and elegant flora and fauna. Rich natural resources and marvelous landscape bestowed the state with the title of 'God's Own Country'. Though born after the proclamation of Indian independence, the might and minds of the people stood firm to shatter the shackles of colonization and left monumental milestones of sacrifice with blood and toil in the history of Indian Independence Struggle. Eradication of caste system and the enjoyment of fresh breeze of freedom inspired the Kerala folk to find resources to make both ends meet. The consequences of colonization and caste atrocities failed to fulfill the unquenchable thirst of the Keralites to attain the zeniths of success and progress in life. Keralites soared to the different nooks and corners of the world to fulfill the dreams of family and society. The hurdles and challenges stood before the exploration were overpowered with the might and minds of the people. The migration of Keralites to the different parts of the world helped the host country to build their nation and Keralites relieved from the crushing poverty and hardships as the money from foreign lands flowed to the motherland. The gush of oil in the dry Arabian deserts helped to bloom the dreams and expectations in the hearts of Keralites and the oases of hopes filled their hearts. The need of Indian able brains in the western countries invited Kerala brains to mould their nations. The western world is indebted to the Kerala minds and brains as the nerves and veins of the soil is wet with the sweat of Kerala people, though they had crushed the state with the iron hands of colonization. The need to wipe out poverty and hardships from the family and society compelled the youth of the state to travel to the foreign lands sacrificing their individual hopes and dreams. Elementary education was enough to sustain in the

foreign lands as the gush of oil perplexed the Arab folk of the past and the rich human resource from the Kerala soil migrated to the Arabian soil. "Most of these migrants were unskilled and semi-skilled workers", but their will power shattered the hurdles in attaining their goal (Jain, 1998). Necessity of the family and society compelled the Kerala youth to even sacrifice elementary education.

2. Migration

The growth of science and technology brought about sea changes in the different manifestations of the world. The growth and development of Kerala society and the realization of the value of education inspired them to achieve cent percent literacy. The higher number of enrollment in the educational institutions and the quest to attain knowledge produced educated brains in the state. But employment opportunities retarded with the growing number of educated youth in the state. "Clearly, a major drawback of economic growth in Kerala today is that it is not generating enough jobs to meet the expectations of educated Keralites entering the labour market"(Jose Thomas 2016). While ever-changing governments and authorities encouraged nourishing the education sector, the confusing number of job opportunities stood before the youth as a Herculean hurdle.

Density of population and dirty politics hindered the way of establishment of new firms and factories in the Kerala soil. This compelled the educated youth to find safe and profitable havens of sustenance in the foreign world. The flow of educated brains to the foreign world resulted in the phenomenon of brain drain in the state. Though the remittance – the backbone of Kerala economy- from the foreign countries

helped to alleviate poverty and hardships of the state and brought about luxury and comforts, the loss of brains created unparalleled loss for the state. The loss of brains from Kerala affected different genres of life and it in turn resulted in the overall outlook towards higher education. The higher education sector, which created the brains for the overall development of the state failed to get the benefits from the educated youth as their toil is 'spoiled' in the foreign world. The phenomenon of brain drain is having far-reaching consequences on the higher education scenario and its impact resulted in the unproductive changes in the veins and nerves of Kerala higher education sector. The quality of higher education is deeply affected because of the phenomenon of brain drain. The impact of brain drain on the quality of higher education needs deep analysis in the modern Kerala environment as "... higher education becomes critically important for developing and sustaining a good quality primary and secondary education. It is also a critical factor necessary for economic growth and development and also for its sustenance" (Tilak 2001).

The growth of science and technology necessitated the need for highly educated young brains to run the competitive corporate world. The unskilled and traditionally skilled labour migration from the under developed country to the developing or developed country gave way to the flow of educated brains from Kerala to the foreign lands. The aim of education to grab and disseminate knowledge confined to the attainment of degrees and qualifications to meet the needs of corporate competitive world. Higher education tried to fulfill the dreams and hopes of the corporate companies and MNC's and the sector confined to a factory of producing qualified youth for fulfilling the need of the companies. The intellectuals in support of the growth of corporate world exhort the young to attain competitiveness and grab knowledge and information based on the need of the MNC's. The modern outlook towards Kerala higher education is evident in the words of T.P. Sreenivasan (Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) Vice-Chairman) reported by the Hindu Daily in the discussion on higher education.

"Stressing the importance of employability as a major purpose of education, Mr. Sreenivasan said that unless the educational institution was able to provide its students' knowledge and skills that would help them earn a living, education would fail to serve its purpose. He also said that there should be strong linkages between industries and educational institutions" (The Hindu).

This created as serious error in the outlook towards higher education. The aim of education confined to the attainment of a white collar job in reputed companies of the foreign world. The students in the higher education institutions are busy gulping the information which bring them reputation and status in the society brought about by the job in the foreign companies. The preference of students is centered on the packing of information and using it for the development of individual economic status and reputation. The process of knowledge creation from the available sources of information is marginalized in Kerala higher education institutions.

Thus, brain drain converted the 'renowned' higher education system of Kerala to a pathetic condition of collection of information for mere individual economic development. The corporate oriented higher education learning process brought about many losses to the much applauded education sector of Kerala state. While the western countries encouraged permanent migration, the Middle East welcomed the brains from the Kerala soil with open hands. The young Kerala brains in the Middle East dream of a return to the native land after earning enough for the family and community. The plan for permanent migration limit to a few as the Keralites is home sick and they dream of a life with their family and society. So the youth consider higher education as a mere gateway to attain a job in a prestigious company overseas. This creates a preference for the professional courses as the job market is focused on the professional fields. It is believed that the jobs in the professional field bring more money and reputation for the individual, family and community. This compels the student to select courses based on the trend and scope of the time. The society encourages the student to select courses based on the 'need of the hour' sacrificing the choice and interest of students. Parents are worried about the future of the student as the fault in selection of the course brings misfortune to the individual and the family. The choice and interest of the student is neglected to the brim of consideration. This creates neglect towards the language and humanities courses as they are considered to be unproductive and unprofitable. The compulsion on the student to select professional courses sacrificing the taste and choice for humanities and language subjects creates 'broiler-chicken-like' candidates for the job market. The students fail to form ambition and dreams based on the ability, skill, choice and taste for a specific field of study. The formation of ambitions and dreams help the students to plan for the fulfillment of dreams based on their skill and abilities designed upon the tastes and choices. The parents and teachers compel the students to select professional courses pointing to the seniors in the family and higher education institutions who are earning money, comforts and reputation draining their brains in the foreign countries. The aspect towards education changed as education became commoditized and viewed as an investment sector for the parents. The parent invests on the children till higher education and gain income after they are appointed in the reputed firms. This preference for professional courses affect the intellectual resource of the state as the bright students interested in humanities and social sciences waste their brains for an alien subject. These students can only collect information and disseminate for the purpose of job but cannot generate knowledge for the society. The lack of research mind and attitude affects and challenges the very essence and existence of Kerala higher education. The process of generating knowledge for the sustenance of quality higher education, growth and progress of the society diminishes with the phenomenon of brain drain. This leads to the pathetic condition of depending on the foreign sources for the proper maintenance of quality higher education. The state which pioneered in attaining cent percent literacy is depending on the foreign countries for intellectuals and think tanks for assistance and advice in the matters concerning administration and governance. The universities and colleges in the state are far behind in quality compared to the foreign universities as the

brains of the state are drained in the foreign countries helping the host countries to attain the zeniths of development and splendour.

As the qualified youth soared to the foreign countries in search of better opportunities, the expense of the public exchequer in higher education never returned to the benefits of the state's intellectual resource. The research of K.K. George and N. Ajith Kumar states (1999): "In the absence of adequate returns on the huge investments made, Kerala's educational system is slowly becoming a drag on its economy". This compelled the governments and authorities to retreat from the public higher education sector and encourage self-financing higher education institutions. The establishment of self-financing colleges encouraged the corporate oriented education system. Educationalists and think tanks in support of pro-corporate education stressed on the need for excellence and competitiveness among the students. The excellence in education is measured by the scores in mark sheets. According to Rohit Dhankar (2016) "Knowledge to gain insight into human existence, to enter the complex ethical world, to make independent judgment and to decide what is worth living and dying for has no place" in the contemporary world. The race for marks and ranks generated a competition among the students which dehumanized education system as the fellow student changed to a rival who tries to impede the growth of others. The rivalry among the students in turn affected the cooperation and knowledge sharing among the student community and blocked the dissemination of knowledge and information. The student community changed to a group of competitors striving to grab the prestigious posts in corporate companies. Competition among the students produced a negative impact on the students as they retreated to the cocoon of their own individual life dreaming of self-development and individual progress. Social responsibility and commitments towards the community and society diminished from the scenario of higher education as the students could not sacrifice personal interests to generate knowledge for the development of the society and they are concentrated on the development of the self. Lack of social responsibility and lack of love for the motherland made the student community to opt for the foreign land for their future and to make a fortune. The rejuvenation and regeneration of the intellectual resource of the state is never in the thoughts of the students in higher education sector. Economist Prabhat Patnaik reiterates "...the purpose of education was to create organic intellectuals to serve the social order" (The Hindu). The growing number of professional colleges and institution proves that the students aim at the foreign countries to make their fortune ignoring the intellectual development of the native land.

The growing number of self-financing colleges generated competition among the institutions and they needed symbols to highlight themselves in the higher education market. This resulted in the race for higher ranks and marks through all possible means neglecting the ethical modes of attaining marks. The struggle for existence among the self-financing colleges compelled them to admit students with deficiencies in academic and career excellence. This in turn affected the growing number of malpractices in the exams in higher education institutions. The managements who are struggling to

take hold of the higher education market neglects quality of the students and concentrates on the reputation of the institutions brought about by the laurels of marks and ranks. This affects the method of teaching in the self-financing colleges.

"The basic weakness of our higher education system" according to T.P. Sreenivasan (2012), "is that teaching and learning methods continue unchanged from schools to post graduate studies. Teachers are sources of all knowledge and the students imbibe knowledge. In higher education, the initiative for learning should come from the students and the teachers should be guides, evaluators and motivators".

The role or duty of teacher confines to the completion of syllabus and giving notes for the students to face examinations. The students are spoon-fed to attain maximum marks in the examination there by bringing reputation and excellence for the institution. The dependence of the students on bookish knowledge diminishes their ability to grasp knowledge from the known information and from the nature and surroundings. The convergence of higher education learning to mere academic learning – discarding the co-curricular activities which link the students to nature, society and surroundings – creates machines for the competitive world devoid of humanity and moral values. Ban on politicization of campuses in the name of violence and disturbance to academic atmosphere detached the student community from the mainstream society. Social responsibility and love for fellow beings, expected to gain from the proper involvement of campus politics, diminished to the margins as the parent community and authorities find it a nuisance to the production of 'machines' for the companies. The student community, expected to protest against the corporatization and commodification of education, lost their role in the campus as apolitical campuses established the interests of private managements who are corporate oriented in their outlook. The corporate oriented education creates institutions which weigh themselves and projects merit to the society based on the number of students got placed in the reputed companies in the different parts of the world through campus placements. The visit of MNC's and corporate companies in the institutions in search of candidates is considered to be the symbol of excellence and quality. Higher education class rooms which are meant to be the venue of debates discussions and research oriented learning change to a mere spot of information spoon-feeding to the very mouths of students to create mark scoring machines for the competitive world. The role of research paper writing, paper presentations and publication of research papers diminish from the mainstream of discussions in higher education environment. Brain drain created an analysis of higher education institutions based on the visit and placement of reputed corporate companies of the world.

The influence of corporate world in the higher education sector forced the authorities to frame the curriculum and syllabus to meet the needs of the competitive world. Employability of the students played the pivotal role in moulding a student in the modern world. The companies employ candidates aiming at the maximum utilization of the resources in an individual for the benefit of the company there by finding progress and development for the firm. So higher

education institutions generated the essential elements in the student community to be utilized (exploited) by the corporate world. This filling of the essential elements in the students provide little for the indigenous growth and development of the state. The state suffers from the lack of skilled, educated intellectuals and think tanks to enrich the overall development of the state. Colleges, universities and higher education institutions is engaged in the everlasting search of efficient teachers, lectures and research guides to redefine the real aim of education in the higher education sector.

The weaknesses in the field of research act both as a driving force for brain drain in the state and weaken the quality of higher education. Bright and efficient students migrate to foreign countries due to the lack of research facilities and infrastructure. Valuable knowledge and information flows to the foreign lands as the research field of the state fails to fulfill the thirst of the bright research minded students. The quality of research in the state diminishes because of many factors in higher education. The students and scholars wish to migrate to the foreign countries to attain a prestigious job. They are unwilling to pursue research in the native land. For them, research degrees are meant for the promotion and hike in payment. The student who imbibed information from the teachers and depended on the bookish knowledge fails to enter the fields of research as they are incapable of undergoing the process of searching again and again. Research is meant for those students who tried to grab knowledge from the different genres of life and who have an unquenchable thirst for creating and grasping knowledge. Student aiming at the prestigious jobs in famous companies are interested in by-hearting information for the mere purpose of examination. Though many companies chose their candidates based on the capabilities in soft skills and EQ the students deliberately create the essential qualities for the purpose of selection. Research becomes a

Herculean task for the students who gathered information for the purpose of examination alone.

Though the quantity of research papers and publications mount to excel many fellow states of the Indian motherland, the quality of research is under stake. The research endeavour confines to API points and credits which help the candidates to excel in their profession. Research aiming at the promotion, hike in salary and recognition helps only in the increase in quantity but not quality.

3. Conclusion

Thus, brain drain not only affected the loss of brains from the Kerala soil to toil in the alien lands, but also affected the existence of quality higher education of the state. The 'renowned' Kerala higher education sector is 'developing' in quantity as more and more students enroll in the higher education institutions and qualified inefficient youth are produced in the contemporary society. Simultaneously the quality of higher education is degrading with the competition and over stress on the employability ignoring the values and ethics in education. The condition of the state once proud of the higher education system is in the verge of decline as quality faded to the dreams of the past. Proper involvement of the governments, educationalists think tanks and intellectuals is the need of the hour to control the phenomenon of brain drain and change the attitude of the youth and society towards higher education. Otherwise the future of Kerala higher education sector will be under confusion and chaos.

Declaration

I, Mohammed Shafeer K P, hereby certify that the paper *Impact of Brain Drain on the Quality of Higher Education in Kerala* is my original work and it has not been submitted for publication in any manner

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