

**Concluding Remarks at the end of the Session on
Knowledge and Education at Emerging Kerala**

***T.P. Sreenivasan | 2012 September 14 | Emerging Kerala-2012 - Biennial Global Connect | Kochi**

Honourable Minister for Education and Chairman of KSHEC,
Ambassador-at-large of Singapore Gopinath Pillai,
Principal Secretary Dr. Abraham,
Vice-Chancellors,
Distinguished Panelists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted today, not just because I have the last word in this session on Education at Emerging Kerala 2012, but also because I have the company of another Ambassador on the dais. Normally, in academic fora in Kerala, I feel lonely as the only diplomat turned educationist here, but today I have the company of an Ambassador-at-large of Singapore. He spoke of many similarities between Singapore and Kerala. I have discovered one more: Singapore, like Kerala, sends unemployed Ambassadors to education!

I am also happy to see such a distinguished and packed audience at this session, including some from my own "Cabinet", the Member Secretary and other members of the Kerala State Higher Education Council.

I trust that I have been given the responsibility of making some concluding remarks after the rich debate today as I lead the Government "Think Tank" on Higher Education. The Higher Education Council has the capacity, leisure and mandate to mull over new ideas and make policy recommendations to the Government. Note has been taken of the excellent suggestions made here by the speakers, who think, write and act on educational matters. I shall not summarize every speech that you have already heard, but outline what we have learnt from the erudite scholars. I am grateful to each one of them for sharing their thoughts with us.

The honorable Minister and the Principal Secretary have laid out the Government's vision, its efforts, the systematic deficiencies of education today and the expectations they have of the outcome of Emerging Kerala. They have already indicated that Higher education in Kerala is poised for exciting changes.

The speakers today were unanimous that education in Kerala has a good record and it has enabled its people to succeed nationally and internationally. At least in education, Kerala is not just emerging, it is emergent and wishes to re-emerge. Our graduates have competed with the graduates of the best universities in the world.

Many achievers in the US and elsewhere have had their basic education right here and Kerala has contributed substantially to the reputation that the people of Indian origin, including Nobel Laureates, have acquired around the world. Even internationalization of education was not alien to Kerala. Many years ago, Maharaja Sree Chithira Thirunal of Travancore had invited Albert Einstein to be the Vice-Chancellor of our University. Needless to recall, the waves of Kerala migrants have contributed to the development of some developed states.

What is needed today, as the speakers have indicated, is to upgrade our education to equip our young people for the new opportunities and challenges of the 21st century. The India of twenty years from now will be far different from what it is today and we need to have a reformed system of education to meet its needs. We need, what we may call in modern parlance, Higher Education 2.0. The contours of the new system have been identified and the honorable Minister has announced that a new higher education policy will be unveiled soon. From what we have heard today, we need to address infrastructure needs, connectivity, research, faculty, autonomy and industry linkages, among others. I am glad to say that we have already initiated action in these very areas. We have recommended measures to the Government to remove the anomalies in the choice based semester system and committees of experts are working on a new policy, a model university act, a state accreditation and assessment council, institution- industry linkages and a faculty training institution. Reform of higher education is very much a work in progress and today's discussions have given us a new impetus to proceed on these lines.

We appreciate the points made here that the industry should not merely look for graduates, but participate in planning and providing appropriate education and training to graduates, that faculty recruitment, training and deployment should receive adequate attention, that linguistic and communication skills of our graduates must improve, that curricula should be updated constantly and that education should be globalized. I am also fascinated by proposals for many innovative courses. For instance, a proposal has been made to establish a school for politicians, which will be very welcome.

We are heartened by the fact that substantial resources have been committed by the central and state governments for the reform of higher education. The best news I head at Emerging Kerala is that an IIT in Palakkad is becoming a reality. The Prime Minister himself indicated that the matter is under active consideration and the Chief Minister has announced that Kerala will get an IIT in the current Plan period. We greatly look forward to the fulfillment of Kerala's IIT dream. The indication of the Narayana Murthy Committee that the private sector would share half the cost of higher education in India is also great news.

Today's sectoral session on Knowledge and Education has shown that all of us are agreed on the need for the creation of Higher Education 2.0. The Government of Kerala has already embarked on this path and the views and suggestions made here will further embellish our efforts. I thank the participants for their contribution and assure them that their ideas would be fully considered.

Thank you.
