

GLOBAL EDUCATION MEET 2016

THEME PAPER

Preface

I am pleased to transmit to the participants of the Global Education Summit 2016 a Theme Paper, prepared by a Committee of eminent academics, chaired by Dr. Murali Sivaramakrishnan, Professor, Department of English of the Pondicherry University. A list of the members of the Committee is annexed. I place on record my sincere appreciation for the work of the Committee, in which I participated throughout.

The Theme Paper is the outcome of extensive discussions and exchanges among the members of the Committee, bearing in mind the major objectives of the Meet, such as enhancement of international cooperation and fashioning of an Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones. The paper seeks to provide to the Meet an outline of the relevant issues, their background and the possible direction that the discussion might take. But it is neither comprehensive nor restrictive and the Meet is free to add to or subtract from it. The idea is to facilitate a vibrant and productive discussion.

We expect to encapsulate the discussions at the Meet in a ‘Kovalam Declaration on Making Kerala a Hub for International Education.’ The recommendations on policy and practice will be submitted to the Government of Kerala, the Kerala State Higher education Council, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the University Grants Commission and other stakeholders.

I hope that the participants will have an enjoyable stay in Kerala and fruitful discussions at the Meet.

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Educational systems need necessarily reflect the pace and quality of transformation taking place in other walks of life so as to evolve in tandem with the times. The state of Kerala, having pioneered and initiated several models of development over the years, has naturally come to recognize its new role in reforming and adopting nascent models in the field of Higher Education. Radical changes have to be effected in the modes and methods of teaching, learning and evaluation in order to accommodate the compelling requirements of an emergent world, and reforms in higher education are urgently required in the following areas:

- **Infrastructure**
- **Training of teachers**
- **Technology-based teaching and learning**
- **Autonomy**

- **Research**
- **Skills development**
- **Internationalization**

Higher Education in Kerala

Education in all levels has been in high demand in Kerala even from early days, and the state has always been committed to providing fair and equal opportunity for everyone. It is noteworthy that a significant portion of the Government's revenue is set apart for education. However, development and modernization of higher education in Kerala has not, till date, attained the desired objectives in full measure. This is certainly an area that calls for immediate attention and reform.

Even with its 100% literacy rate and higher GER, Kerala is still struggling to offer its young people diversified range of courses that the global and national economy of the day requires. In spite of their high demand in the state, future-oriented courses with high employment opportunities are still a few, what with most colleges choosing to offer only conventional courses in a conventional manner. This is evident too from the fact that a large number of students prefer to go to private universities and private colleges in neighbouring states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, even while a sizable number of seats, including those in technical and paramedical courses, lie vacant in private and Government

colleges in Kerala. This paradoxical situation arises because over-indulgent parents are even ready to bear any additional cost and dare other risk factors while admitting their wards in some far off, little known colleges (many of which do not have even the required accreditation, qualified faculty or proper facilities). Consequently, thousands of students move out of the state annually in search of innovative higher educational opportunities elsewhere.

Besides this, a large number of students from the state flock to universities abroad, in the US, UK, Australia, China, Russia, and other countries: most of them register for the new and emerging courses of study, especially in Science and Technology, Medicine, Commerce and Management. This massive migration of students to other states and abroad definitely causes a huge drain on state capital. What surfaces is the fact that the existing higher education system fails to satisfy the needs of students. This situation demands urgent attention and remedy.

Transnational Higher Education: Education and Global Trade

With the increasing importance of service sector in the world economy, the member countries of WTO in 1996 signed a General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which covered services of international trade at par with merchandise trade. This agreement in general covers all the services (presently 19) including education services. Although the linking of an ethical process like education to global market and trade may be considered inappropriate, the issue highlighted by this agreement is worth exploring. For in its recommendations, the WTO Committee observes:

There is a need to encourage private participation with adequate social control through appropriate incentives in higher education with a view to enhancing access by increasing capacity, supplementing government funding and making higher education closer to the job market. This would also facilitate healthy stimulation through competition. For this purpose, an enabling environment and a coherent policy framework ensuring transparency, accountability and effective quality assurance mechanism should be worked out.

Education may not be compatible with trade; neither might it be appropriate to equate the process with competition and market values, but in the light of a changing world, where job markets proffer substantial profit and consequent creature comforts accruing through the same, it would certainly be in the scheme of things that a fast internationalizing scenario caters to the student community

in an appropriate and befitting mode and method, enhancing their access by combining private participation alongside. It might be apt at this point to draw attention to the fact that there is now in India's foreign economic policy a greater emphasis on enhancing earnings from services, particularly in the broadening areas of tourism, entertainment media, healthcare and education, and also in harnessing the private sector in the pursuit of the country's economic interests abroad.

While most states have offered significant amount of autonomy to their educational institutions to enter into coalition with whomsoever they may deem fit at their institutional level (although several issues surface around recognition at the national level), many higher education institutions in India have expressed interest in collaborating with specific countries, including the UK, US, Canada, and Australia. So then, while international collaboration in higher education is still in its nascent stages in India with apparently no clear international strategy in place yet, the increasing focus on quality, research and student or faculty exchange, supplemented with government initiatives and state encouragement does offer significant opportunities for collaborative efforts.

A Brief Look at the Current Scenario

It might not be out of place to point out that the people of Kerala are second to none when it comes to intelligence, enterprise and hard work. There is little cause to doubt the intellectual capability and commitment of the student community in the state. That Kerala society accords great importance to higher education is also a well-known fact. The literacy movement found a significant space in the state. In primary and secondary education, the state marched quickly ahead of many regions, not only in India, but in most parts of the world. But in the arena of higher education, particularly with regard to its quality, global standards, innovation, responsiveness, academic brilliance, creation of new knowledge, research orientation, research publications in journals of international repute, interface with industry, interface with general society and the like, there is certainly a hold up. In terms of global rankings none of the state's institutions figure anywhere in the list of the top two hundred.

While it is a generally accepted fact that there is no dearth in the enthusiasm and enterprise of the student force in the state, it is equally true that the current educational machinery and university systems fail to cater to their needs, as stated. Many educationists point out that traditional approaches and applications to placate this demand may neither be sufficient nor suitable at this juncture. What is interesting is that the country has perceived a dramatic shift towards private provisions across the entire education spectrum, including higher education, and the private sector is already playing a significant role in the development of education in India - and its influence and presence will over the years increase substantially. The private sector, which currently accounts for a

significant percentage of all enrolment, continues to grow rapidly, providing space for most of the professional courses, particularly in engineering and management. Many more providers are waiting for legislation, which would allow them to enter the global market. The private sector, no doubt, is expected to play a significant role in the future expansion of higher education in India, and it would be worthwhile at this stage to explore the possibilities of harnessing this force to transform the current educational scenario.

However, there are increasing signs of a growing caution on the part of educators and intellectuals toward the state resorting to private enterprise – a reserve that may be informed in part by a growing body of research cautioning that “expanding for the sake of expansion” carries a high risk of failure. It also underscores a growing awareness of the innumerable challenges associated with international campuses, which have opened out to investors and private interests which need to be drastically addressed. Notable among these challenges are issues of financial viability and quality assurance. Some other factors include easier facilitation of credit transfer systems, movement between the higher education and vocational-skill streams, and of course equipping of teachers with specific skills. Initiatives have already been taken to address these issues.

International Collaboration

Recognising the compelling pressures of globalization and consequent transformation of the educational system in a befitting international manner, it is worth drawing attention to some modes and methods of such international collaboration.

A list of possible collaborative programmes could include the following:

1. International Dual Degree Programme

Any aspiring student can opt for pursuing a degree course in tandem with an international partner university. This would provide an opportunity for a student to obtain additional degree or diploma along with a similar degree from the parent university.

2. International Integrated Dual Degree Programme

This programme offers the student options for pursuing degree or part of the degree in the parent university and the remaining portion of the degree and the postgraduate programme in an international partner university. This would be an opportunity for a student to obtain additional undergraduate and postgraduate degrees along with the degree of the parent university and vice-versa.

3. International Twining Programme:

A student can opt for studying part of the course or semester of the degree in an international partner university to complete the course of study.

4. Study Abroad Programme

Under this programme, a student can pursue certain period/ semester of their course, especially for the projects/ internships etc in an international partner university.

5. International Student Exchange Programme

Through this programme, a student can pursue the required number of credits of the course of their choice, especially for specific or regional speciality subjects/ specialisation etc in an international partner university and the credits accrued can be used for completing the course.

6. Summer/ Winter Schools

The students are exposed to eminent Professors from the internationally reputed partner university.

7. Joint Research Collaboration

Joint Research Activities with international partner universities proffer unlimited possibilities. Quite a lot of research funds are also available locally as well as from abroad through research funding agencies for such programmes and the like.

8. Faculty Exchange/ Visiting Scholars/ Sabbatical Professorships

Faculty exchange is usually the most effective way toward developing a diverse set of knowledge reserves in a challenging intellectual environment. This is possible either by sending our faculty to international partner university or bringing their faculty to our Institutions. Fulbright Scholarships, Sabbatical leave for faculty and the like are some such programmes that aid the student and faculty alike.

9. ICT Enabled Joint Teaching

With ICT support, different models of integrated teaching for the benefit of both students and teachers of different universities worldwide can be developed.

10. Joint Conferences/ Seminars/ Workshops/ Training Programmes

Effective knowledge creation and dissimilation, capacity building and exchange of ideas could be made possible through jointly organised conferences/ seminars/ workshops/ training programmes and similar such activities with international academic partnerships.

The prospect of acquiring a degree from a foreign University would certainly motivate possible academic promoters in India, because it would naturally ensure promising future international placements, scholarship assistance and the like for those enterprising students. Further, a significant reduction in the fee structure in comparison with similar institutions abroad, plus the delectable opportunities for acquiring international experience by spending a semester in the partnering institution, and an overall professional development would be encouraging factors. The dramatic expansion in numbers of students seeking higher education abroad these days, and a significant rise in the number of partnerships with foreign institutions, are all, as we know, due to political and societal changes in the domestic and national front. However, these current internationalization activities proffer their benefits only to a small percentage of the relevant age group, which could lead toward eventual social disparity and therefore, government intervention is certainly called for.

Now, in order to promote cultural understanding through education, the government of India has been offering many fellowships to international scholars specialising in Indian studies in the fields of humanities, culture and social sciences through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). Kerala is also one of the destinations for these scholars. The ICCR has established 108 Chairs of Indian Studies in various foreign universities. However, the remarkable growth of transnational education providers in the Indian higher education scene has been a more recent phenomenon.

The emergence of the new global environment has dramatically reshaped the country's higher education system which has created tremendous opportunities for internationalisation, especially transnational or cross-border education. The dramatic expansion in the number of students going abroad and a significant rise in the number of partnerships with foreign institutions is an example of this growth as we have noted. Apart from this, the inward mobility of international

students to Indian institutions has also been increasing in recent years with the majority of the foreign students coming to India from Asian and African countries and even a trickle from developed nations. (See Appendix)

Agenda of GEM 2016

GEM is visualized as a platform to debate and discuss the modalities of this imminent transformation in our higher education system. Discussions could centre around the following points:

- 1.Modalities of Partnerships with International Universities—MOU, Twinning and such similar activities**
- 2.Setting up of International Academic Centres in line with National and State Educational Policies**
- 3.Establishing International Higher Academic Zones with global standards and state of the art facilities in the metropolitan cities in the state.**
- 4.Creating an Academic City with adequate built up space and state of the art facilities to be provided by the state government for furthering higher education**

International Higher Academic Zones –IHAZs

One of the means to accomplishing the essential goal of internationalization is through the creation of specific International Higher Academic Zones (IHAZs) with suitable and sizable private participation. This could be achieved through extending invitations to institutions which have already established meritorious associations with renowned International Universities, proffering quality education to students of all nations in state of the art campuses.

International Higher Academic Zones (IHAZs), in a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) mode, are generally expected to proffer futuristic, technology-assisted and world-class higher education catering to the educational demands of the next generation of Indian and foreign students. IHAZs are also expected to adopt innovative academic approaches and globally accepted bench marks in order to make them sought after destinations for higher education.

In the Budget Speech for 2015-16, the Government of Kerala has already announced a scheme to take steps to project Kerala as a preferred international destination for education in India. International Higher Academic Zones are

proposed to be opened in various parts of the State with sizeable private sector participation.

The IHAZs will be created for which the State Government is to offer facilities and incentives at par with those offered in the Special Export Processing Zones set up in the State. This will include Water Supply, Power, Roads, an exemption from Registration fees and other taxes, which would be subject to the condition that 25% of the total fee collected in the Zone will be set apart for a Scholarship Fund for students in the public educational institutions who qualify for admission to the institutions in the Academic Zones. It is also desired that each IHAZ will have area of not less than 20 acres and will host academic courses from reputed international Universities.

Academic City

The Government intends to create an Academic City in one of the metropolitan cities with a vast area and state of the art facilities where educational institutions could establish centres of excellence with national and international collaboration in the self-financing mode.

Objectives of the International Higher Academic Zones/ Academic City

The International Higher Academic Zones/Academic City shall have facilities for study, training and research in multiple disciplines. These shall also promote employable and career-oriented, high-quality academic programmes and shall strive -

- to impart quality education offering the scope for inter-disciplinary and intra-disciplinary study on par with the standards and parameters of education offered on international level through various graduate, postgraduate, research, diploma and certificate programmes;**
- to contribute to the progression of higher learning with its various disciplines and specializations while offering courses that are of the finest quality;**
- to invent and execute educational strategies which are pertinent to the present needs and long-term requirements of the society and receptive to the predictable alterations and developments of the future scenario;**
- to establish modern and innovative research & development centers to facilitate the utilization and widespread awareness of contemporary technology for the overall benefit of the society and multi-sector development of the state;**

- **to collaborate and establish collaborations with reputed universities, research institutions and laboratories, libraries, and other research and development centers world-wide for promoting joint academic, research and extension activities for mutual benefit and interest;**
- **to conduct joint and collaborative research programmes and activities with approved Government-aided research institutions like DST, CSIR, ICAR, DBT, and DIT;**
- **to provide best available sports, cultural, literary and academic support programmes and activities for the aspiring students;**
- **to create a full-fledged developed community in and around educational and research environment;**
- **to continue to maintain the existing courses of the colleges while introducing new and innovative courses, research and programmes in various academic disciplines and inter-disciplinary areas in a phased manner as per needs, aspirations and requirements of the State.**

Revenue Projections

Sources of income other than the Sponsoring Agency's contributions, donations & other sponsorships would be limited to the fee generated for the purposes of tuition, admission, registration, hostel, co-curricular activities, consultancy and service charges from the students. External funding and income from R & D would also be other sources of revenue. A Sustainable Revenue Model for the operation of IHAZs and Academic City would be developed based on consultative discussions with all those involved.

Financial Viability of International Higher Academic Zones/ Academic City

Education, it is recognized, is not a commercial activity and hence the IHAZs / Academic City should not operate purely on a commercial basis. However, taking into consideration the costs involved in such huge establishments and the still larger recurring costs likely to crop up over the first 10 years of inception, it could happen that the IHAZs/ Academic City may soon find it difficult to attract sufficient number of students to completely offset those recurring expenses and

interests on capital. There is also the implied fact that only through the maintenance of fine quality can educational institutions attract and retain large number of students, which could also help to maintain its fiscal needs, but it follows necessarily too that higher quality can be attained only by accruing massive investments.

Now, for the potential investor in IHAZs/Academic City, the major motivating factor would be the visible commitment to the cause of quality in higher education and the aura of prestige that the investing institution will acquire in the process. The investor would need to bestow money constantly and perhaps reap very little profit out of the process, because the income generated would be ploughed back in. The dividend to the sponsor might accumulate principally as prestige, reputation and societal influence. It will also go a long way in fulfilling their corporate or institutional social responsibility (CSR). It is a point worth highlighting that several such agencies have already shown interest and submitted formal proposals through the required expression of interest called for.

The government of India has initiated several measures to tackle the challenges to the system by setting up various measures to improve the employability of Indian graduates and to position India prominently on the global higher education landscape through initiatives in skills-development, digitization, and research. It is quite encouraging that while preparing a new policy for education nearing completion this year, several new flagship initiatives, specifically related to potential international collaboration, have recently been launched—renowned international universities have been invited to offer postgraduate courses in the disciplines of Social Sciences, Basic Sciences, Engineering and Energy, and Sustainable Development.

Advantages of International Higher Academic Zones/Academic City

IHAZs / Academic City can attempt to create a higher education system that ranks among the world's leading education systems and which will enable Kerala to compete in the global academic standards and economy. Such Zones/ City -

- will usher in considerable amount of private funds for the advancement of higher education, reducing the state's burden;
- will have to rely on excellence and quality to ensure survival and therefore will be continually responsive to emerging trends;
- can instill an entrepreneurial mindset in higher education system and create a system that produces qualified personnel with a drive to create jobs, rather than mere job seekers searching for a livelihood;
- will address a system that is at present less-focused, by placing emphasis on integrating the established traditional academic pathways and the much-needed technological skills, career as well as professional training;

- can focus on outcomes over inputs and to actively pursue technologies and innovations that address students' needs and enable greater personalization of the learning experience;
- will enable transition from the current, highly-centralized governance system to a new model, based on academic autonomy within the regulatory framework which prevents wanton abuse and wastage;
- will promote the flow of students from other parts of the world-- particularly from West Asia, South Asia and East Africa-- by diversifying and raising the quality of the programmes offered.

Academic City Authority

An Academic City Authority is proposed to be constituted with a mandate to regulate and monitor the functioning of both the IHAZs and Academic City, with focus on quality higher education. The proposed Academic City Authority (ACA) will comprise representatives of Department of Higher Education, KSHEC, Universities, National Institutes, MHRD, MEA and Academicians of National/International eminence. The ACA's role would also include -

- **the issue of regulations/guidelines for the setting up and the functioning of the IHAZs;**
- **the granting of permission to promoters for establishing IHAZs;**
- **to oversee the setting up of IHAZs and their operations as per the approved regulations;**
- **to ensure total quality of systems and processes in the IHAZs;**
- **to renew permissions to IHAZs based on quality/academic audit reports.**

It shall be mandatory for the IHAZs/Academic City to comply with the Regulations made by the UGC, and the Academic City Authority (ACA) shall have powers to monitor the maintenance of standards of degrees and other programmes offered by the institutions, and for forestalling possible commercialization of education. It is mandatory and necessary that the IHAZs and Academic City are well regulated and effectively monitored by the Academic City Authority.

Conclusion

The major thrust areas of the XII Plan regarding Higher Education in India highlight inclusion and excellence. It has also become necessary to increase the GER of students in order to accelerate the development prospects on a larger scale. Sole dependency on the current state-run educational institutions may not yield suitable results. Further, the state is seriously handicapped when it comes to the matter of huge financial resources required as investment to improving the quality of higher education, which has been pointed out earlier. Hence, private agencies have a definitive role to play in this regard provided their support systems are harnessed suitably.

Now, several well-established educational agencies in Kerala have the required strength, capacity and capability like experienced management, involvement of committed professionals, long-standing experience in imparting technical and professional education, strong international brand names, and teams of qualified and dedicated staff who are willing to support them, and hence they may be encouraged to develop International Higher Academic Zones/ Academic City in the State. Such institutions should be earmarked and suitably induced to evolve into landmark institutions in the country competing and ranking with the best in the world.

Of course, the establishment of IHAZs / Academic City will not be an excuse for the State to withdraw from the field of higher education altogether. On the other hand, the State Government actually needs to step up its investment in its universities and other higher academic institutions, so as to ensure that it continues to attract the best teachers and students.

At this juncture, it is worth underscoring the fact that when importance is given to fields of higher education like engineering and technology, medical sciences, nano sciences and the like, equal significance needs to be imparted to furthering studies in fundamental sciences alongside humanizing fields of social sciences and the humanities. The pursuit of arts and culture studies should find a significant space in the curricula. Communication skills, alongside other such augmenting life-skills, should be extended a central space in the curriculum. Continued involvement of the state would ensure equilibrium and excellence in all such areas and measures.

There is some rising concern that private investments in the field of higher education would mean just two things: a dilution of human values in education and the rise of inordinate profit-based activities and involvements. Education, it needs to be noted, can certainly be seen as an investment— an investment of a different order, in terms of values for the future of humanity - but when it is merely commoditized and marketed it tends to lose its very essence. Commodity

is of course something to be consumed as such and it does not allow for dialogue or discourse. It could happen that the major justification for education—knowledge generated through interaction of teacher and student in a given system—might be completely laid aside in view of the capital invested and profit generated. The academic body envisaged as providing directions to these innovations would ensure that such lapses do not occur.

On a similar note, the very concepts of IHAZs / Academic City as they are now visualized are self-supportive and income generating. This might imply large levy of fees from the students to meet operational and functional costs. And having thus far been used to a subsidized fee structure in governmental and aided institutions, many students may not prefer to do courses in the IHAZ/ Academic City on account of their relatively higher fee. However, a Sustainable Revenue Model needs to be developed - based on consultations with all those involved in the process - including the higher-education scholarship funds to be generated from the student fee as mentioned earlier which could ensure a more inclusive and student-friendly approach.

Many critics of privatization of education in India have pointed out that commoditization of education may lead to excessive emphasis on mere skill, a vocational and corporate-oriented education, at the severe cost of neglecting the basic sciences, humanities and the vast pool of traditional knowledge, thereby creating an imbalance among various streams of learning. This is certainly a very important point: primarily because when we rally for private enterprise in education in the lines of Dubai Academic city or such similar structures, we might stand to lose sight of the long history of education and its systems in our part of the world. Therefore, any effort to modify our higher education through the combined efforts of any outside agency needs necessarily to take an integrated approach, linking past, present and future systems of education, self-reflexively recognizing its mode and methodology. The Government of Kerala is quite aware of this issue and due attention would be extended to this.

Yet another concern would be for providing access to the marginalised sections. An inclusive policy will be adopted so as to mete out the benefits to economically deprived segments, women, transgenders and other vulnerable sections of society.

In the end, when it comes to educational innovations, it is important to distinguish between those who seek to establish a fine balance between quality and profitability—in terms of a philanthropic measure and those that are there just for the finances involved. Here, as elsewhere, the statutory bodies through the ACA - will ensure quality and accountability through periodical monitoring of the institutions. After all, education is an investment for the future—a great investment ensuring societal harmony and the survival of humanity.

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