

# **Report of the Committee constituted by KSHEC to study the problems in filling up of teaching posts in University departments in the State.**

## **Introduction**

A Committee was appointed by the Kerala State Higher Education Council (Appendix 1) to study the problems in filling up of teaching posts in the Departments of universities across the state. The Committee prepared a Proforma (Appendix 2) to be filled in by various State universities in Kerala, and it received data (Appendix 3) from almost all universities.

## **The Context**

It is a well known fact that most of the academic Departments/Schools in our universities are constrained by acute shortage of regular faculty which poses serious hindrance to fulfilling the purpose and objectives of university departments. Academic departments of universities are not only meant to offer programmes at postgraduate levels, but are also expected to initiate and achieve cutting edge research in respective fields of knowledge. Production and dissemination of knowledge, being the primary function of universities, are gravely mired by scarcity of faculty who are meant to take the lead.

Most University Departments/Schools in the state are research departments too, besides offering postgraduate programmes. In addition to engaging regular Masters programmes, qualified faculty is also required for engaging M.Phil courses and Ph.D programmes, as per UGC norms. This dual nature of each department calls for extensive infrastructure and sufficient faculty. It is also to be particularly taken into account that every research guide in university departments has to carry out research work along with their teaching, unlike the research supervisors of the Research Institutes. In order to foster academic research, some active research oriented faculty also carry out their own research projects which is beneficial to the society and help in knowledge production. In such a situation, in order to uphold the quality of teaching and research in our universities, sufficient number of faculty is inevitable in the departments of universities. The contingent circumstances being so, a number of sanctioned posts are lying vacant in the departments forcing them to carry on regular Masters programmes with the help of guest faculty thereby jeopardizing research and innovative undertakings. Besides, many of the University Departments have poor sanctioned number of faculty positions as a result of which research output is practically nil.

Under these circumstances, the Kerala State Higher Education Council, with its motto of equity and excellence, appointed this Committee to look into the problems in filling up of teaching posts in University departments in the State and suggest measures to improve the quality of production and dissemination of knowledge in our universities.

## **Existing faculty status of Universities**

### **UNIVERSITY OF KERALA, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.**

This University, formerly known as the University of Travancore, was established in 1937, much before the formation of Kerala state. There are 42 regular departments for which the sanctioned faculty strength is 169. A total of 122 regular teaching posts are lying vacant in the University and this deficit is compensated by utilising the service of about 75 guest/contract teachers in various departments. Two departments have no sanctioned regular posts. Of the 42 departments, only 2 have one Professor (cadre grade) post each being filled at present. In other departments, either no sanctioned cadre post of Professors exist or such posts are lying vacant, while there are non-cadre posts of professors achieved through career advancement of individual teachers.

It may be specifically noted that almost all the departments of Kerala University offer PG, M.Phil and Ph.D programmes. Some of them offer more than one PG programmes and Diploma courses, besides M.Phil and Ph.D.

The University of Kerala has 8 Inter-University Centres functioning on its campus, and also 4 Chairs have been instituted under the University.

### **MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY, KOTTAYAM.**

The University was established in 1883. The 16 Schools functioning under the university are currently run with 89 regular teachers, while 36 faculty positions are lying vacant. The university could recruit 10 teachers between 2012 and 2018. The details of posts at MG university show that sanctioning of posts to various Schools/Departments has been uneven and the distribution was not as per the requirement of various disciplines.

Most of the early established Schools are running upto 4 PG courses, while the newly instituted ones a minimum of one. Almost all Schools have M.Phils and P.hD programmes in the concerned disciplines.

The University has instituted 22 Chairs under it, out of which 12 have been reported as fully non-functional and 8 have been reported as having no much activities.

### **KANNUR UNIVERSITY**

Kannur University was established in 1996. At present there are 30 regular Departments and 7 cost sharing Departments. 29 regular Departments of Kannur University offer 4-semester Masters and Ph.D programmes. Departments of English, Anthropology, Information Technology, Kannada and Physical Education offer M.Phil programmes too.

For the 30 regular departments, there is a sanctioned strength of 96 faculty members, of which 41 posts are lying vacant now. That is, only there are 55 posts in 30 departments and the average regular faculty presence is less than 2 in each department.

Two departments, namely Life Science and Physical Education, have 2 Professor posts each sanctioned, while 10 have at least one. It shows that the Kannur University, being comparatively young, lack experienced senior Professors in many departments for guiding the academic activities.

It may be observed that a sanctioned faculty strength of 96 is terribly inadequate for the university departments to function effectively and fulfill their responsibilities. What is more worrying is the fact that out of the 96 posts, 41 are lying vacant for long. The University could recruit 25 faculty members to its various Departments in the last 5 years. It is reported that the University had initiated a process to fill the current vacant posts, but had to suspend it due to orders from UGC in pursuance of a letter from MHRD.

Kannur University has submitted a proposal to the Government of Kerala for the creation of 73 additional teaching posts and is waiting for the response.

### **SREE SANKARACHARYA UNIVERSITY OF SANSKRIT(SUSS), KALADY**

SSUS, Kalady was established in 1993 and has 24 teaching Departments. There is a total number of 173 regular teachers at present, while 47 posts being vacant. The university had appointed 10 regular teachers between 2012 and 2018.

SSUS runs UG, PG and Ph.D programmes in its various centres, and has specified the requirement of additional 274 posts. A notable aspect of the university is that it depends heavily on guest lecturers. There are 241 guest lecturers working at various centres of the university at present.

### **THUNCHATH EZHUTHACHAN MALAYALAM UNIVERSITY**

Established in 2012. The University has a total number of 10 Departments with a total sanctioned posts of 40. But there are only 28 regular faculty at present, while 12 positions are lying vacant. As one of the young universities in Kerala, the faculty number of 40 is insufficient to run PG and research programmes.

### **COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Established in 1971. CUSAT has a total number of 31 teaching Departments offering PG and research degrees. Some of the departments offer more than one PG programme, while a few offer UG programmes too.

## **APJ ABDUL KALAM TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY**

Though the University has been established in 2014, Departments are not yet formulated and hence regular teaching posts also not instituted so far.

### **MAJOR OBSERVATIONS:-**

- Considering the regular faculty strength, Departments/Schools of almost all the State universities of Kerala are under -staffed. The number of regular teachers are too low to perform the academic duties of the departments successfully.
- More than half of the sanctioned teaching posts in many university departments are lying vacant for several years, and the gap existing in the teaching load is filled by hiring guest faculty. Due to the instability and poor service conditions pertinent to such posts, guest teachers usually don't stay in one place for long, and their intermittent change affect the smooth running of programmes.
- Guest faculty, since being inexperienced and even under-qualified some times as per UGC norms, are forced to confine to the teaching job alone, since being incompetent either to supervise the project work of M.Sc and M.Phil students or function as research guides for P.hD students. Most of them do not possess research degrees.
- In majority of the departments senior faculty positions like Professor either do not exist, since such posts are not being created there so far, or lie unfilled for long. In effect, several departments have no professors or may possess one or two at the most. Lack of experienced and qualified permanent teachers leads to the deterioration of academic quality. Research work is more affected in such departments, though the PG courses may run unaffected.
- Though very few departments have the UGC prescribed faculty pattern for a course, most of the departments lack such a scientifically approved faculty structure and hence have to conduct several programmes with the faculty that they had had at the time of their inception. Most of the university departments run more than one PG course, Diploma, M.Phil and Ph.D with very less faculty. Sanctioning of new courses and new departments, creation of additional teaching posts etc have only rarely happened in the last two decades in state universities. Even timely filling of the vacant posts are not taking place, and hence large number of faculty retirement from the universities every year leads to drastic faculty shortage.
- It is also pathetic that, while newer and newer areas emerge as the cutting edge of various conventional disciplines, no departments or institutes are created in government or aided sector to offer courses and research opportunities in such newly developing fields. Instead, unaided sector, which lack even basic facilities and qualified teachers

manage to get these advanced courses sanctioned to their institutions which results in indiscriminate production of graduates having no proper skill and knowledge attributed to such advanced courses.

As per Government data there are 16,600 sanctioned posts of teachers in central universities in India, out of which about 7000 are vacant. Also reports say that about 3 lakhs vacancies, to be filled by direct recruitment, exist in the Government (central and state) educational institutions. The data obtained from the State universities of Kerala also shows that only nominal numbers of vacancies have been filled in the university departments after 2012 and hence several posts are lying vacant in various university departments. The unfilling of posts for the last few years in our universities mainly owed to the confusion that prevailed in connection with a judgment of the Allahabad High court in April 2017, which was later upheld by the Supreme court in January 2019, regarding the community reservation policy in the faculty appointments of university departments and colleges in the country. In compliance to this verdict, the UGC in March 2018 had announced that while calculating the teaching posts reserved for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe candidates, the individual department should be considered as the base unit. As per the existing system, university is treated as a single unit for calculating the number of teaching positions available for reserved categories.

On this new policy of UGC, the government faced criticism from all corners, especially the backward communities and hence in March 2019, the Union cabinet approved the proposal for promulgating an ordinance, namely **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers Cadre) Ordinance, 2019 (Appendix 4)**. This resulted a roll back of the reservation system, resuming the 200 point reservation system, instead of the 13 point roster system. The Bill not only ensures the representation of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Educationally and Socially Backward classes in the direct recruitment, **but further extends its ambit to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). A reservation of 10% to the EWS in teaching posts of university departments and colleges is an important feature of the bill.**

Decision, for reservation in posts, was first taken in India in 1970s, but was implemented only in 1990. Many universities had to wait further to get their initial quota of reservation categories. As per the data obtained from the government of India in 2011, in response to a RTI, about 48.5 per cent of posts of SC and ST categories in 24 Central institutions were vacant in that year. In 2010-'11 the total backlog in SC category was 341 out of 740 (46%) required posts. In ST category, 197 of 369 (53%) posts were unfilled. The situation was further worse in teaching posts of higher grades like Reader and Professor. In 2010-'11, 84 % of Reader and 92 % of Professor positions were unfilled in SC and ST category. Even in our universities the condition is not different. When we claim ourselves as a state that follows community reservation strictly in all appointments under government institutions/organisations, it is a fact that backlogs of several un-filled SC/ST vacancies exist in many universities, owing to various reasons.

It was in 2014 the State government amended the Act of all the State universities by **the University Laws (Amendment) Act, 2014 ( Appendix 5)**, whereby the communal rotation is to be followed category-wise treating all the departments as one unit. There are several universities in the state that made their last faculty appointment before 2014, when the department-wise or subject-wise community rotation was prevailing. That means some, like Calicut university, has not so far made faculty appointments as per the ‘university-wise rotation’ procedure. Its notification in 2015 for teachers appointment has been challenged in court, pointing out lapses in the published vacancy list, reservation rostrum etc and hence had to suspend the process on the way. It is a fact that only if the vacancies are listed out in the proper manner the reservation cycle can be worked out legitimately. Hence certain directions are necessarily to be given to universities regarding the measures to be adopted while preparing the vacancy list, reservation chart etc, when the university-wise reservation process is followed. Different universities adopting different means to implement the same Government Act will leave room for the job aspirants to legally challenge the appointment process at various stages, leading to indefinite delay.

- while preparing the vacancy list for the whole university, it should be in the order of the vacancies arisen in various departments under the university.
- Listing all the vacancies existing at that point of time is very important, since a single omission will make error in the whole list and reservation rostrum, since we are dealing with a larger number of vacancies in the new system, unlike in the department-wise method. Any error, that is noticed later or approved by a court in case of a legal challenge, will lead to the abolition of the whole exercise, since all reservations in the rostrum are interdependent.
- If two or more posts of the same or different departments become vacant on the same day, such vacancies can be listed in the order of the establishment of those departments in the university.
- The listing of vacancies and preparation of community rotation cycle are to be made as separate for each category of posts viz. Professors, Associate professors and Assistant Professors, university-wise.
- The details of the post like the discipline and whether it comes under general/SC/ST/OBC/OEC/ EWS etc are to be clearly mentioned in the notification.

#### **Action to be taken**

- As part of addressing the concern on the long-term faculty shortage in Higher Education Institutions, UGC on 4<sup>th</sup> June has issued **Guidelines for Recruitment of Faculty in Universities, Colleges and other Institutions Deemed to be Universities (Appendix 6)**

outlining the selection procedure and the time frame for recruitment. Complying to this, universities have to take urgent steps to fill in all the existing vacancies.

- **According to the University Laws (Amendment) Act, 2014, “ in making appointments to the teaching and non-teaching posts, the University shall, mutatis-mutandis, observe the provisions of clauses (a), (b)and (c) of rule 14 and the provisions of rules 15, 16, 17 and 17A of the Kerala State and Subordinate Services Rules, 1958, as amended from time to time, and communal rotation shall be followed category-wise treating all the departments as one unit.”. Since this is already in compliance with the new Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers Cadre) Ordinance, 2019, which (in 3 ii) “ provides that the extent and the manner of reservation of posts shall be notified by the Central Government and for the purpose of reservation of posts a Central Educational Institution shall be regarded as one unit ”, no further modification or amendment to the Act is required in this regard. But since the new Bill has extended the reservation benefit to the Economically Weaker Sections also, it is mandatory that the 200 point reservation rostrum, which is to be followed henceforth, has to be modified reserving 10% of the vacancies to the EWS in all the faculty appointments. Where would this new category of EWS be positioned in the currently followed reservation cycle is also a matter to be considered.**
- **It is a blunt fact that backlogs of unfilled SC/ST posts exists in almost all our universities. Measures may be taken to rectify the loss that had happened to these marginalised groups in the past and also to avoid such situations in future. Proper choice is to be made on whether the reservation is to be earmarked to particular posts or applied at the time of appointment, because “earmarking of reservation to particular posts would also run contrary to the spirit and principle of reservation, since it would exclude eligible candidates, entitled to reservation, but has qualification for another post. It would also exclude the open category candidates from applying for the particular posts” as per the ruling made by the Hon. High Court of Kerala in the WP © No.9785 of 2015. But it is to be well considered whether notifying posts, without mentioning their reservation would be practical always especially when limited number of a particular category of post is to be notified.**
- Steps are to be initiated by universities to calculate the exact requirement of posts in each department and if necessary write for additional posts to maintain the faculty structure as per UGC norms. Running several programmes with minimum teachers, most being on contract, would only deteriorate the quality of education.
- Government/UGC has to initiate steps to provide the required faculty to each department, by creating new posts, if necessary.



- It is to be ensured that, at a point of time, at least 80 % of the faculty should be of regular nature, while the remaining may be guest faculty.
- Courses and programmes are to be started in emerging areas of disciplines to update the students' skill and knowledge to the global standard. Internationalisation of our education system is the need of the hour, in the era of globalisation, whether all will appreciate it or not. This will need not only the development of advanced facilities but also appointment of competent faculty in the respective fields.
- Conducive academic atmosphere, in all terms, will only help acquire the targets set in higher education.

**Enclosures:**

Appendix 1: Constitution of Committee by KSHEC.

Appendix 2: Proforma for faculty details.

Appendix 3: The data obtained from various universities on the vacancy positions

Appendix 4: Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers Cadre) Ordinance, 2019

Appendix 5: University Laws (Amendment) Act, 2014

Appendix 6: Guidelines for recruitment of faculty in Universities, Colleges and Institutions Deemed to be Universities.