

The Kerala State Higher Education Council Advisory Body Meeting

Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the Advisory Body of the 3rd Council was held at the State Guest House, Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram on 17/11/2018. The Hon. Chief Minister and Visitor of KSHEC Shri. Pinarayi Vijayan presided in the meeting.

The meeting began at 11.00 A.M.

The following members were present:

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------|
| 1. Shri. Pinarayi Vijayan, Hon. Chief Minister of Kerala | : | Visitor |
| 2. Dr. K.T. Jaleel, Hon. Minister for Higher Education | : | Chairman |
| 3. Prof. Rajan Gurukkal P. M. | : | Vice Chairman |
| 4. Dr. A. Sampath, Member of Parliament | : | Member |
| 5. Shri. Muhammed Muhasin P, Member of Legislative Assembly | : | Member |
| 6. Sr. R. Rajesh, Member of Legislative Assembly | : | Member |
| 7. Shri. K. V. Sumesh, District Panchayath President | : | Member |
| 8. Shri. K. P. Jayarajan, Chairman, Nileshwar Municipal Corporation | : | Member |
| 9. Shri. Sivaraman, President, Block Panchayath | : | Member |
| 10. Shri. P. Rejith, President, Grama Panchayth | : | Member |
| 11. Dr. Usha Titus I.A.S., Principal Secretary, Higher Education | : | Member |
| 12. Prof. Prabhat Patnaik, An Eminent Social Scientist (JNU) | : | Member |
| 13. Dr. K. Satchidanandan, An Eminent person from the field of Arts & Literature | : | Member |
| 14. Prof. E.D. Jemmis, An Eminent Scientist | : | Member |
| 15. Dr. C. Bhaskaran, An Eminent Agriculturist | : | Member |
| 16. Dr. Rajan Varughese, | : | Member Secretary |

Apart from the above members of the Advisory Body, the following members of the Executive Body also participated as Special Invitees

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Dr. Fathimathu Zuhara, Educationalist | : | Member , Executive Body, KSHEC |
| 2. Dr. J. Rajan, Educationalist | : | Member , Executive Body, KSHEC |
| 3. Dr. R.K. Suresh Kumar, Educationalist | : | Member , Executive Body, KSHEC |

Prof. Rajan Gurukkal, Vice Chairman, KSHEC welcomed the Visitor, the Chairman and other members to the 1st meeting of the Advisory Body of the third Council.

Dr. K.T. Jaleel Hon. Minister for Higher Education and Chairman:

In the Introductory speech, the Hon'ble Minister for Higher Education, Govt. of Kerala Dr. K.T. Jaleel, said that the development of higher education in Kerala is not commensurate with the development of primary and secondary level of education in the state. The reports submitted by the Higher Education Council on Open University, Autonomous Colleges and on the equivalency/recognition of the academic programmes are under the active consideration of the Government. The Government considers that equivalency/recognition, of academic programmes of the different HEIs is an issue which needs to be resolved with utmost priority.

He also said that the Council has to take up the challenge of ensuring the quality of the vast number of the self-financing colleges including professional colleges in the State. For this the establishment of a State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC) to be developed on the lines of the NAAC is necessary. He also pointed out that the lack of training to newly recruited faculty in colleges is a major drawback which could be remedied to a great extent by establishing a Faculty Training Centre in the Council for the entire state. These two initiatives under the Council would go a long way in improving the quality of higher education in the State. The unfilled teaching post in higher education institutions in the state, among other things stand in the way of accreditation of these institutions at a creditable level. Large number of Government and aided colleges received RUSA funding as the Government has taken a decision to include aided colleges also to the second phase of RUSA funding. He opined that in order to improve the current state of affairs in higher education, in the state drastic changes are required to be adopted.

Shri. Pinarayi Vijayan, Hon. Chief Minister of Kerala and Visitor

The Hon. Chief Minister of Kerala & visitor KSHEC, Shri. Pinarayi Vijayan in the presidential address appreciated the commendable work done by KSHEC in the realm of higher education in the state. He said that the Kerala State Higher Education Council has emerged as a model for other State higher education councils in the country. In Kerala expenditure on Higher education is considered as an investment based on the principles of equity, access and excellence. The state government has been earmarking nearly 6% of its State Domestic Product (SDP) for education which is higher than the national average. He cautioned that the present problems of higher education in the state need to be identified and focus should be on courses and research activities appropriate to furthering the developmental needs of the state. For this the research facilities in the colleges and universities should be strengthened and their research output should be disseminated through journal publications preferably in the online mode. The distribution of human resources and infrastructure is uneven across the Higher Education Institutions in the state. Even those institutions with better infrastructure and other facilities are in a stagnant state and have not borne fruitful research. KSHEC needs to identify measures to improve the quality of HEIs and their rankings and the institutions should be able impart skills to students to compete at the international level. The Council also needs to look into how beneficial the higher education scholarship has been for the students belonging to different sections. The benefits of a State Assessment and Accreditation Centre (SAAC) viz a viz National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) should be studied.

He also pointed out that the Council should at this point of time provide academic inputs for Rebuilding Kerala. The compulsory Social Service Scheme at the degree level introduced by the University of Calicut should be adopted by all the universities in the State.

The academic interests of the students and researchers should be given due priority and the apathy of the authorities of the HEIs in the conduct of examinations, timely declaration of results, issuance of certificates and the recognition of degrees acquired from other HEIs needs to be examined seriously. In light of these situations, a framework needs to be developed so that the interests of the academic community are protected. The research activities of students should get primacy in the universities.

Speaking of the equivalency of the academic programmes , he said it was very important that the degrees conferred by the universities in the state/country be reciprocally recognized and a framework be developed in this regard.

The concept of outcome based education though adopted globally is yet to be adopted by the universities in the State. The universities should take note of such changes and adopt them accordingly in their courses and the Universities should publish such outcomes to benefits of students. Each university should publish the Graduate Attributes-skills and knowledge a student could attain after completing a programme of study in the university.

The Chief Minister also lauded the Erudite -Scholar- in -residence programme which has enabled the creation of academic networks with eminent scholars around the world and that this programme was being supplemented by the concept of “Brain Gain” which brings our scholars from all over the world for a particular period to interact with the academic community in the state. He also informed that steps are being taken by the Government for the establishment of an Open University in the State.

In the discussion that followed based on the note circulated the following observations were made by the members and special invitees.

Dr. A. Sampath M P pointed out that most of the HEIs did not have an atmosphere conducive to research and that it is necessary that the findings of the research be made available to the public in Malayalam.

Prof. Prabhat Patnaik commented that it was the failure of the education system which has resulted in the growth of Hindutva in the country and it is important to instill the constitutional values or principles of secularism and gender equality in students by making these as part of the curriculum. He also expressed concern about the widening gap that has developed between the intellectuals and the common man. He argued for the need for inclusive higher education in the country instead of the current trend of corporatization and commoditization of knowledge.

Prof. Satchidanandan endorsed Prof. Patnaik's views on the secular principles and inclusive higher education. He said that he was saddened by the trivialization of the renaissance movement of Kerala by concealing the role played by the subaltern sections of society and the prevalence of hegemony. He also said that much is to be desired in the methodology of teaching, upgradation of libraries, updation of the knowledge of teachers and workshops need to be held in these areas to bring about transformation in the higher education sector. He also emphasized that the college/departments should try to disseminate knowledge/research output through journals published at least biannually. Community exchanges, developing interdisciplinary exchanges/curriculum, scientific temper; collaboration with reputed publishing houses would go a long way in bringing social transformation. He argued for the use of new media in the current point of time. He also emphasized the need for the involvement of local community in the dissemination of knowledge through the conduct of open day by higher education institutions. He said that a basic course on the evolution of our constitution and the basic values enshrined in it , along with a brief history of Kerala's development with special emphasis on the Renaissance with its subaltern thrust may be designed and taught to all entrants to higher education.

Dr. E.D. Jemmis commented that Kerala lags behind in basic sciences and research compared to other states in India despite our admirable early lead in total literacy and needs to focus on the same. He said that 70% of the scientific output in the country is accounted by people originating from the state of West Bengal. Teachers and researchers from Bengal regularly attend Science Congress in the country with their entire family including children. This he argued instills scientific temper and a culture among the Bengali students from the very beginning of their educational activities. Instead of publishing departmental Journals we should aim at international level publications from universities and research institutions in the state.

Shri. K.V. Sumesh Pointed out that in the present scheme of things, there is no role for local bodies in higher education. He argued for greater co-operation and close linkage between higher education institutions and local bodies in the state.

Shri. Muhammed Muhasin MLA expressed the opinion that SAAC should not be considered as a shortcut for accreditation, but rather be a step to achieving higher standards in higher education. The interdisciplinary nature of courses should not be a burden to students and new courses need to be introduced especially in social sciences and short term courses, workshops and online courses also are to be encouraged and credits earned from these courses should also be counted. Scholarships should be given to students in time. He also emphasized the need for collaborative research with industries, academic exchange programmes with foreign universities, new courses in social science, including gender studies, lifelong learning and online courses.

Shri. R. Rajesh MLA argued that teachers of unaided sector should also be brought under the purview of faculty training programme as this is important for improving the quality of higher education. The quality of research/ thesis should be ensured. Socially oriented research should be encouraged by the universities and step should be taken to start new courses in colleges.

Shri. K.P. Jayarajan He pointed out that the steps taken by the Council for resolving issues related to equivalency of degrees are commendable. He also expressed the view that students should have a role in the decision making process. Online verification of degrees should be introduced and that the basic regulations put forward by the different professional councils in the country be taken into account while formulating syllabi of various programmes by the universities. This can lessen the problems related to recognition/ equivalency of courses.

Dr. C. Bhaskaran expressed the view that advisory body meeting could be made more productive by garnering inputs from experts and that online consultations would lead to better results. Proliferation of discipline based universities should be avoided and a consensus needs to be developed across universities. (See the note given by Dr. C. Bhaskaran – attached)

Shri. S. Sivaraman He noted that none of the universities in Kerala are able to make to the top slot in the university rankings. The quality of teachers in self financing institutions needs to be improved. He also pointed out that there is need for encouraging linkages with rural communities; and students should be imparted with skills like swimming.

Shri. P.R. Rejith also expressed the view that the quality of teachers needs to be improved and that our higher education system has now been reduced to the level of a job oriented activity.

Dr. Fatimath Zuhara expressed dismay at the decline in the quality of aided colleges which are given autonomous status. Serious attention has to be given with regard to the functioning of autonomous colleges to ensure the standards of these institutions. SAAC should be considered as a stepping stone to NAAC accreditation.

Dr. Usha Titus IAS The views of Prof. Patnaik and Prof. Satchidanandan were endorsed by Dr. Usha Titus IAS especially those related to research and publication in the universities.

The **Chairman** clarified that the government would look into the possibilities of the introduction of the constitutional values of secularism and gender equality into the curriculum and also the introduction of new courses in social sciences.

The Vice Chairman in his concluding remarks pointed out the need for introducing changes in the structure and content of curriculum and resolution of issues related to equivalency and recognition of degrees, introduction of Outcome Based Education (OBE) and declaration of graduate attributes by universities. He highlighted the need for reform of university laws which stifle the development of universities and creation of centers of excellence in research. He also pointed out the difficulties faced by students even from reputed national institutes with regard to the recognition and equivalency of their degrees. He thank the Government for issuing orders related to equivalency and recognition and hope that the orders related to SLAC may be issued later. He also thanked the Hon. Chief Minister, Minister for Higher Education and all the members of the Advisory Body.

The Hon. Chief Minister Shri. Pinarayi Vijayan released the *Hand Book of Equivalency for University Academic Programmes/ degrees* published by the Kerala State Higher Education Council.

The meeting came to an end at 12.30 p.m.

Thiruvananthapuram
10-12-2018

Dr. Rajan Varughese
Member Secretary

The minutes were confirmed through circulation. The confirmation may be ratified.

Member Secretary

Dr. K. T. Jaleel
Hon Minister for Higher Education &
Chairman, KSHEC

Dear Sir,

In continuation of the Meeting of the Advisory Body of the Higher Education Council on 17-11-2018, and as I promised therein, I am suggesting the following recommendations:

1. The initiatives of the HEC enumerated in the Advisory Note are praise-worthy and hence have to be assiduously followed up in the future also.
2. To facilitate the fuller use of the expertise of the learned members of the Advisory Body, their views on the various issues in the Higher Education sector can be mutually exchanged through webinars in advance and Policy Delphi method can be used to build consensus before the meetings to ensure the efficiency in the deliberations of these meetings.
2. The problem of credential inflation and the consequent academic dilution in the Higher Education Sector has to be summarily addressed.
3. Internationalisation of Higher Education has to be enabled to benefit the marginalised sections of the society also.
4. Focus on life skills development has to be emphasised in Higher Education in Kerala.
5. Social and disruptive innovations have to be nurtured to make the Higher Education Sector vibrant in Kerala.
6. Convertibility of discipline-specific knowledge into career preparedness skills has to be assured.
7. More thrust to be given to producing globally competent work force in Kerala.
8. Steps have to be taken to attain global ranking by Higher Educational Institutions in Kerala through incentivisation mechanisms.
9. The problem of low output research in International publications can be resolved through mentoring.
10. Employability of students can be augmented through Incubation Centres.
11. Institution-Industry linkage can be facilitated for reciprocal benefit.
12. Institutional Benchmarking pointers have to be evolved for the Higher Educational Institutions in Kerala.
13. CSR funds, Endowments, KIDFBI projects etc can be sourced to improve the financial viability of institutions of higher learning and research.
14. Teachers in the Higher Education Sector have to be exposed to latest tools in Pedagogy.
15. Internships in Development Departments of the State to teachers will help in ground truthing which will enable problem-oriented research and teaching particularly in the professional educational institutions.
16. Innovative and inbuilt mechanisms for syllabus/curriculum revision through timely stakeholder consultations have to be institutionalised.
17. Economics of religion and Politics of religion have to be inbuilt in the curriculum of all educational courses.
18. Thrust on basic science research can help developing insights into interdisciplinarity which is essential for the growth of Institutions of Higher Learning and Research.
19. Indiscriminate proliferation of Universities has to be discouraged.
20. Though the Kerala Agricultural University, the Kerala Veterinary & Animal Sciences University and the Kerala University of Fisheries & Oceanic Sciences have emerged as independent Universities through the enactment of Act and Statutes, an institutional mechanism for their functional convergence has to be prescribed to serve the interests of farmers and their predominant Integrated Farming Systems in Kerala.

Regards,

Dr.C.Bhaskaran