A STUDY ON INTERNAL GRADUATE MIGRATION FROM KERALA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Education is the long-term investment in human capital. It is the instrument through which the available resources are turned into valuable assets of the economy of a region. Kerala has always had a rich and glorious past in the education sector. It is one state in India which has achieved a high level of literacy and near universal elementary education. A well-established network of numerous universities and colleges—both arts/science and professional/technical across the length and breadth of the state gives an impressive picture about its higher education structure as well. Still it is identified that the valuable human capital moves out of the state in search of better prospects. In the earlier days, the destinations were mainly other developed countries with better infrastructural, career development and employment prospects. Internal migration from the State was largely concerned with employment rather than education then. But this trend has now changed, for today; students migrate to other States on reasons of education, leading to the problem of internal brain-drain. In this background, a need has arisen to analyse the trend of Keralite youth opting destinations outside the State to pursue their higher studies and the reasons of the same.

Keywords: Student Migration, Education, Keralites

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration literally means the movement of a group of people from one place to another for a particular purpose. The United Nations Multilingual Demographic Dictionary defines that, “Migration is a form of geographical mobility or spatial mobility between one geographical unit to another, generally involving a change in residence from the place of origin or place of departure to the place of destination or place of arrival”. Migration is an age-old phenomenon. People had always been ‘on the move’ in search of better opportunities. But this phenomenon has taken a new turn today as its patterns and causes have changed all over the world. The various kinds of migration depend on the flow and number of people often involved, the reasons for their movement, the time they spend in migration and the nature of that migration. These may be intercontinental migration, rural –urban migration, imposed migration, seasonal migration, return migration, labour migration and student migration and so on.

Among these, Student migration is the process of movement of students from one region to another for educational purposes. It has evolved to be a common phenomenon today. As Prof. S. Chandrasekhar, IGIDR puts it, “Migration is an old story. But the most important phenomenon we are seeing today is people moving for education”. It is the transfer of people and transfer of knowledge to
other states/countries. The traditional way of seeking education in Gurukulas away from home is revived in the modern era by students moving to different geographical regions in search of educational institutions of quality, which they believe help them achieve their goals of excellence. This process can be both within the country (internal migration) and outside the country (external migration). This can again be temporary or permanent. But the process causes both positive and negative impacts on the economic, social and cultural spheres of both the home and host regions concerned.

The southernmost state Kerala, lying on the Malabar Coast of India, has always given a high priority to education and learning. In a state where students constitute a great proportion of the group of out-migrants, the quantity and quality of its available human capital is a matter of concern. The study focuses on the phenomenon of graduate migration from Kerala in the subject of Economics and its applied courses to other states within the country by analyzing the reviews of migrant students over a period of 8-10 years from the following reputed institutions located across the length and breadth of the country.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To understand the current trend of graduate migration from Kerala for higher education.
- To analyze the reasons behind the present pattern of student migration from Kerala at higher levels.
- To assess the impact of graduate migration from Kerala.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was principally based on a sample survey conducted in 12 recognized institutions of higher studies in Economics, spread over the different states of India. The institutions were chosen randomly on the basis of academic excellence. The data was collected from 100 respondents from these colleges, who have chosen the particular institution within a period of 8 years via snowball sampling. Structured questionnaires were used as the basis for the collection of necessary information by contacting the respondents via e-mails. Authoritative information was also gathered through an interview with subject experts in person. The other sources of secondary data included magazines, journals, articles, and study reports of scholars, websites and other reliable sources.

4. THE EDUCATIONAL SCENARIO IN KERALA

Educational expansion in Kerala has a long history which is unique in many respects. Prior to the establishment of British rule, education was traditional and caste-determined. There was no general education. The Nampoothiris, the social aristocrats realized the power of education and they monopolized the entire resource of education as private property of their caste. Other castes were driven out from the area of education.

In the pre-colonial period, the system of vernacular education was perpetuated by local teachers called ‘Ezhuthachans’. The Christian Missionaries also enlightened education which led to the opening of girls schools and ‘school entry’ to low caste in Kerala. In the 18th and 19th Centuries, the Rajas of Travancore introduced some radical administrative reforms in the area of education which enhanced the status of English education in Kerala inspiring the lower castes to acquire education at any cost. Since then Kerala has always had a rich and glorious past in its education sector. It is one state in India which has achieved a high level of literary and near universal
education. The development experience of Kerala, popularly known as ‘Kerala Modal of Development (KMD)’ has received international attention a wing to its high achievements in social sectors with a weak commodity producing sector. Education in a sense is the backbone of Kerala’s exceptional development experience [Economic Review, 2017]. The literary rate in Kerala has seen an upward trend and is 94.00% as per 2011 population censes of that, male literary stands at 96.02% while female literary is at 91.98%. The literary rate in Kerala during 1951-2011 is depicted in table 1.

**Table 1: Literary Rate In Kerala (1951-2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PERSONS</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>47.18</td>
<td>58.35</td>
<td>36.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>55.08</td>
<td>64.89</td>
<td>45.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>69.75</td>
<td>77.13</td>
<td>62.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>78.85</td>
<td>84.56</td>
<td>73.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>89.81</td>
<td>93.62</td>
<td>86.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>90.86</td>
<td>94.24</td>
<td>87.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>93.91</td>
<td>96.02</td>
<td>91.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Kerala accorded high priority to the quantitative growth of primary educational institution and enrolment of students. The Higher Education Network in Kerala is also fairly satisfactory with 14 Universities functioning in the state and nearly 1100 colleges, arts & sciences and professional & technical. Out of the 14 universities, 4 universities, viz, Kerala, Mahatma Gandhi, Calicut and Kannur are general in nature and are offering various courses. Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, CUSAT, and Kerala Agricultural University offer specialized courses. Besides these the National University of Advanced Legal Studies (NUALS) established in 2005 and the Central University established in Kasargode is also functioning. There are 217 Arts and Science Colleges in the State comprising 156 private aided colleges and 61 Government Colleges [Economic Review, 2017]. The total enrolment of students in various Arts and Science Colleges in 2016-17 is given in table 2.

**Table 2: Enrolment of Students in Arts and Science Colleges in Kerala (2016-17)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>117874</td>
<td>77334</td>
<td>40540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Sc.</td>
<td>99017</td>
<td>73809</td>
<td>25208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCom</td>
<td>42519</td>
<td>26819</td>
<td>15700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>259410</strong></td>
<td><strong>177962</strong></td>
<td><strong>81448</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>13733</td>
<td>9307</td>
<td>4426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>16772</td>
<td>11705</td>
<td>5067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCom</td>
<td>5632</td>
<td>4009</td>
<td>1623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36137</strong></td>
<td><strong>25021</strong></td>
<td><strong>11116</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though Kerala has achieved almost universal education and has gone beyond the national average in quantitative expansion, it faces quality erosion. This is more or less an accepted fact now. The contribution of Kerala education in the area of further growth of knowledge in humanities, science and technology is very meagre. It is again seen that some Keralites, who have made significant achievements in these areas are in fact moulded outside the State. It is also noted in various studies that the quality erosion in Kerala’s education system has created the situation of unemployment among its educated youth. These factors have contributed to the process of educational migration from Kerala.

5. EDUCATIONAL MIGRATION FROM KERALA

Student migration is the movement of students from one place to another for pursuing higher education for better opportunities. But it is to be noted that the flight to campus is not always beyond the sea. The comfort of being close to home is driving several young Indians to different Indian States to pursue education (Hemali Chapia, 2014).

The Kerala migration Survey (KMS) Reports present a detailed analysis of the situation of internal student migration from Kerala. KMS Reports took special note of the student out-migration from Kerala for the first time in 2007. According to KMS 2007 report, “students constituted the second largest proportion of the out-migrants from Kerala (25.8%). Among them, 47.5% were Christians, although in general population, they constituted less than 20%. Pathanamthitta, one of the smallest districts in the state, sent out the largest number of students for studies outside the state. According to the report, interstate migration had emerged as a significant factor in bridging the gap between the demand for post-metric educational opportunities and their availabilities within Kerala. An increasing number of Kerala students are going out of the state for education. These statistics exclude the student migrants who went to foreign countries.

5.1 Characteristics of Student Out-Migrants

Out of the 213,039 student out-migrants, 78,514 (36.9%) are females and the remaining 63.1% are males. Their age distribution indicates that the largest number is in the age-group of 20-24 years (35.3% - males, 51% - females). In 2011, this group included more females than males, best by 2014, and this situation changed. The overall proportion of females was 37% and the highest proportion of females (46%) was in the age-group of 20-24 years. Only 22.5% of the migrants are females in the 25-29 years age-group.

5.2 Educational Attainment before Migration

The largest proportional of student out migrants (50%) has completed 12th standard before they moved out of the state. Next in importance are those with a first degree such as BA, BSc, BCom etc. (31.2%). Another 14.1% had completed courses like B Phases BHMS, BAMS etc. About 4.7% of the student out-migrants had completed the 10th standard.
6. FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERNAL MIGRATION OF STUDENTS FROM KERALA

The background study of the process of student migration from Kerala suggests that there are various factors responsible for internal migration of students from Kerala to these reputed institutions elsewhere in the country which are both economic and social/cultural in nature. While economic factors include those like higher wages, better employment opportunities, modernization, urbanization etc., social/cultural factors consists of better communication skills, lower student strength in classes, better faculty, teacher-student ratios etc.

7. MAJOR REASONS FOR GRADUATE MIGRATION FORM KERALA

In this study, an extensive attempt was made to evaluate the reasons behind the elite Kerala youth opting destinations outside the state to pursue their higher education, irrespective of the satisfactory higher education network established within the state. The major reasons behind such a trend is analyzed in the following table given below.

Table 3: Major Reasons For Graduate Migration From Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reputation</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical location &amp; advantages</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library and other research facilities</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Syllabus</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure of Family and Friends</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Course</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much needed exposure</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data

The Table 3 reveals that the major reason that propelled the migration of graduate students out of Kerala had been the academic reputation of the institutions elsewhere in India. 76% of the sample population chose it as their most important driving force. At the same time, 56% of them again chose the advantages of the particular geographical location like coaching facilities, developed educational infrastructure, exposure etc. as another important driving force. About 38% also opined that library and other research facilities had also forced them to migrate outside the state, while 18% opined that quality of syllabus is also another propeller. Only 2% responded that the pressure of family and friends motivate them to opt the particular course.

8. BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE GRADUATE MIGRANTS

In order to get a clearer picture about the feasibility of the phenomenon of migration the gains from the same also need to be analysed. These aspects are discussed in the following subsections.
8.1 Personal benefits from Migration

The following table reveals the benefits of migration from the perspective of the migrants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Skills</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Expansion</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulation of Life Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to Interact with other Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Gains</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data

It is seen that 79% of the respondents opined favorably regarding improvement in their speaking skills. 68% again opined that the migration was good for their career expansion. Minor proportion of the people opined about other personal gains like exposure, accumulation of life skills etc. At the same time, another 8% were of the opinion that they received no gains from migration.

8.2 Level of Cultural and Social Integration with the New Environment

The actual and social integration of the migrants with the new environment plays an active role in determining the socio-cultural impact of migration on the home and host economies. The following figure sheds light on the extent of social and cultural integration from the perspective of the migrants.

**Figure 1: Social & Cultural Integration**

Source: Primary Data
Figure 1 reveals that a large proportion of migrant students (95%) felt that they had experienced cultural and social integration with the new environment at the estimation places; while the rest 5% felt no such integration with the new environment.

9. SATISFACTION WITH THE INSTITUTION AND THE COURSE

The following figure indicates the level of satisfaction that the migrants feel towards the particular course and institution that they have chosen.

Out of the 100 migrant surveyed, a large majority was highly satisfied with the course and institution (62%) and another 30% were moderately satisfied. Only a very small proportion of the sample population was dissatisfied or moderately dissatisfied with it (3% and 5% respectively).

10. IMPACT OF STUDENT MIGRATION

The study seeks to analyse the impacts of student migration and it is found that graduate migration has affected the source-state, the host-state as well as the individual migrants both positively and negatively.

- The impacts of graduate migration on the source-state can be enumerated as below:
  - Better satisfaction levels in education, employment and wages at the destinations discourage majority of the migrants to return to their homelands, possibly leading to economic drain as well as brain drain.
  - The consumption and production patterns of the Kerala economy are adversely affected by huge drain of skilled population who are replaced by less-skilled population.
  - On the other hand, those migrants who do wish to return and seek employment in Kerala adds to the human-capital formation of the State in the form of knowledge, skills and experiences acquired from other lands.
  - There are possibilities of higher consumption levels, better standard of living and increased GSDP by the proper utilization of the return student migrants. However enough space should be created to accommodate them, for producing favourable outcome.

- Another notable point is that the Host economies are highly benefitted from migration. These can be analysed as below:
Migrant students bring-in direct economic benefits to the regional economies by supporting its local employment through spending on living expenses.

Student migrants also act as a vital source of income to the institutions where they study, cross-subsidising the research and education of domestic students, having a positive impact on public finance.

Moreover the incoming of meritorious students raises the quality of tutorship and academic discussions.

Chances of cultural and social integration is also another significant impact.

Individual benefits or the impact of Migration on the graduates themselves could also be experienced as the biggest outcome of the process.

The majority of the migrants have benefitted from access to quality education and other facilities, better speaking skills, career expansion etc. which has equipped them to attain better economic opportunities.

Migration has also provided them the opportunity to interact with other cultures, facilitating a kind of cultural integration for the migrants.

Only a very few has recorded difficulties or any bad experiences in the new environment.

11. CONCLUSION

In the modern competitive world, people especially the ignited youth as well as their parents are concerned about the significance of knowledge and better education. They are ready to cross any borders for the same. Migration to attain better education has thus become a trend, especially among the graduate students in their quest to satisfy their quench for learning. It is no secret that good education has the power to change lives. Recognizing this fact, today many young people are actually concerned about the quality of education that they receive, rather than accepting whatever that is served before them. This longing or urge is driving several young students to pursue the higher education they crave for. Anyhow higher education of quality has now become a major export commodity for any economy and a significant issue of concern especially to the Source economies who lose human capital to the Host economies in the process of migration. However the process can be used as a weapon for human resource enrichment for the source states if proper arrangements are made to pull the migrants back to their homelands.

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