Chapter - III

History of Educational Initiatives in Kerala

Educational expansion in Kerala has a long history and it is unique in many respects. Educational initiatives of both the public and the private agencies during the last two centuries not only made the state the most literate one but also placed the state well ahead in gender and spatial equity¹. How could Kerala, one of the lowest rated states in terms of per capita income attain such a position? What were the historical, sociological and institutional factors that led to the emergence of educational institutions in Kerala? What were the objectives and functions of education in its initial phase and how far it changed in the present educational scenario? An attempt is made in this chapter to examine the above questions by reviewing the government and private initiatives in education during the last two centuries in Kerala. This is being examined under two headings: educational initiatives (1) during the pre-independence and (2) the post-independence period.

Educational Initiatives During Pre-Independence Period

Education During Pre-British Period

A review of the expansion in educational facilities during pre-Independence period calls forth a brief description of the educational system during pre-British period. Prior to the establishment of British rule education was traditional and

¹ As per the census report of 2001, the literacy rate of Kerala is 90.92 per cent as against the all India figure of 54.16. The literacy rate among males is 94.20 and females 87.86. Among the various districts in Kerala, the literacy rate ranges from 95.90 to 84.31.
caste determined and there was no general education. Education was centered in royal courts, temples and families of aristocrats, artisans and peasants. But even during pre-British period, which ended in Kerala in 1793, educational facilities have been quite widespread in every region of the area (Nair 1989). However, such facilities were not equally accessible to all the sections of the people and educational opportunities in those days were determined by the pattern of distribution of ownership and control of land, the basic means of production (Logan 1931). The higher castes of Hinduism, such as the Brahmins and the Nairs were the owners of land and they had well-developed institutional arrangements for the education of their children. Although, education was the monopoly of the Brahmins, it was within the reach of all the socially privileged sections of the population (Aiya 1906). But, vast sections of the society belonging to the 'depressed classes' of the Hindu Society, did not enjoy in general any facilities for education and remained steeped in illiteracy. The education received by the agrestic slave castes consisted little else than their folk-lore and skills handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth (Nair 1989). Thus during the Pre-British period, Kerala had an indigenous system of education characterised by tradition, caste determination and religious ideas.

Educational Initiatives During Pre-independence

During British rule, Kerala consisted of three separate political entities till 1947. Travancore and Cochin in the South were princely states, while Malabar in the North was unified by the British into a single administrative district and made a part of the Madras Presidency in 1800. Travancore and Cochin

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2 Discussion in this chapter is largely based on Nair (1989), Thomas (1988), Tharakan (1984), and Salim and Nair (2002).
remained princely states under strict British guidance and control. After India became independent, as a part of the national policy to abolish princely states, Travancore and Cochin were integrated in 1949 into a single state. Later in 1956, consequent on the reorganisation of states on linguistic basis, Malabar was added onto and a few Taluks at the South extreme of the region taken away from Travancore-Cochin to form the present state of Kerala.

A historical review of the educational efforts of the government and the private agencies prior to independence and after, is attempted herewith to highlight the various policy changes and reforms that helped the educational expansion in Kerala and also to point out the major objectives of education. During the initial phase of educational expansion, education got its prominence for its intrinsic worthiness and played the role of enlightenment and empowerment. Government initiatives through the policy changes and educational reforms facilitated the process of educational expansion in Kerala. This also paved the way for social interventions in education and education became a social process. Hence we attempt to examine the role of government initiative by reviewing the policy changes and reforms and the private initiative by examining the educational activities of major educational agencies including missionaries, and community organisations. Historical review of the early educational initiatives prior to independence is confined only to Travancore since very similar activities are found in Cochin. Before examining the details of such efforts, a brief account of the social set up is fully warranted.

Social Scene of Kerala During 19th Century

As stated earlier, Kerala consisted of two princely states of Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar a district of the Madras Presidency. It was a highly
conservative, hierarchical and caste ridden society. According to Travancore census of 1854, the Hindu society consisted principally of Brahmins, Nairs and Backward communities (mainly Ezhavas) and slave castes (mainly Pulayas). Brahmins were free from all social and religious disabilities and they enjoyed absolute freedom of action (Mathew 1999). All castes below the Nairs were treated as low castes. Untouchability and even unseeability was in vogue. ' The members of the slave castes could be let on hire or transferred at the choices of the owner, offered as presents to friends or as gifts to temples and bought, sold or mortgaged in the same manner as the land on which they dwelt or as the cattle and other property of their owners' (Mateer 1870:43).

The general circumstances of the backward communities (Shanars and Ezhavas) in Travancore were most humiliating and degrading. They were not allowed to carry umbrellas, use footwear or gold ornaments or carry pots of water on the hip. Shanars were also forbidden to build houses of more than one storey in height, milk cows or even use the ordinary language of the country. Shanar women were forbidden to wear any clothing above the waist (Mateer 1870: 41).

The social scene described above posed a lot of hindrances to the educational activities of the period. What were the major policies and actions that facilitated educational expansion in such a society? What role did the government play to eliminate the barriers to education? How far the public and social initiative transformed the educational scene? A comprehensive answer requires the review of the various policies and programmes which acted as a trend-setter in the educational sector.
Early Educational Initiatives

Early educational initiatives show the interrelationship between the political decisions and educational activities. At the beginning of the 19th century the number of educational institutions in the state were quite low. Many of these institutions were facing problems. In 1817, the then Rani of Travancore received complaints of educational neglect from the villagers since they were finding it difficult to pay the schoolmasters. In response to this situation, a remarkable Royal rescript was issued in that year emphasising the role of the state in meeting the educational expenditure for the eradication of educational backwardness. The beginning of modern education in Travancore was generally traced to this issue of the royal rescript in 1817 by Queen Gouri Parvathi Bayi under the advice of the Resident Colonel Munro. This rescript directed that “the state should defray the whole cost of education of its people, in order that there might be no backwardness in the spread of enlightenment among them...” (Velu Pillai Vol. III, 1940:700). The issue of such a rescript asserting the role of the state in education and the initiative of the village people in the form of a memorandum against the neglect of education can be identified as the early educational initiatives for modern educational development in Travancore which highlighted the enlightenment role of education.³

The educational initiative in the form of a rescript led to the establishment of five schools with two teachers in each school in areas in which local efforts were not forthcoming to provide educational facilities (Nair 1989). Between 1817

³ There are studies which argued that the credit of issuing such a proclamation (Royal Rescript of 1817) should go to Colonel John Munro, the British Resident (1810-19) and not to ‘Rani’ who was then only in her early teens and grossly ignorant of state craft (Nair 1978).
and 1819 several orders were issued for starting schools in different parts of the state (Tharakan 1984).

**Initiatives for English Education**

Government policy changes which had some indirect effects on the promotion of educational activities can be traced in the first Reform Bill of 1832. It paved the way for English medium education. Abolition of the East India Company's trading powers and the removal of appointment barriers of Indians in the company encouraged the English medium education. A few English medium schools were established in 1834. The government itself started an English medium school; the Raja's Free school at Trivandrum. Establishment of a number of government schools followed subsequently can be found in the various 'nittu' (orders) issued by the government.⁴

Further initiatives towards the betterment of education may be seen in the government orders sanctioning the appointment of scholars to compile textbooks in Malayalam.⁵

Besides the direct involvement of the government in starting schools, government also encouraged private initiatives to start schools. This has resulted in the opening of missionary schools in various parts of the state. Missionaries devoted special attention to spread English education. Their educational efforts attracted mainly the backward classes and the depressed communities rather than the well-to-do and higher caste section of the Hindu

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⁴ Sanctioning the appointment of teachers and starting of public schools in Chengannur, Mavelikkara, Karthikapally, Thiruvalla and Kottarakara are found in some of the "nittu" issued by the government (Travancore Administrative Report 1864-65).

⁵ A Book Committee was established in 1867 and it was entrusted with the task of translating and compiling such books as were in common use in English schools. By 1890 they brought about 4 dozens of Malayalam titles as well as books in English and Tamil (Robin Jeffrey 1976, p.79).
population (Nair 1989). Government also encouraged the missionaries in the establishment of schools by providing government grant to their educational institutions (Tharakan 1984).  

Review of the early educational initiatives up to the first half of the 19th century indicates that although government have started some initiative through policy changes and direct action, it was limited in scope and extent. The expansion of institutionalised education, both Malayalam and English is found in the second half of the 19th century. Government intervention through educational reforms and programmes coincided with the educational activities of the missionaries, private agencies and other social reformers. The major policy changes and reforms by the government and the subsequent educational efforts by other agencies are reviewed in the following section.

Educational Efforts in the Second Half of the 19th Century

The second half of the 19th century laid strong foundations in the enlightenment and empowerment role of education leading to the massive educational activities in Travancore. During this period the direct involvement of the government in the educational sector through educational reforms and policies was conspicuous than in early periods. Educational development in Kerala entered its modern phase during this period. The political, social and economic conditions were also favourable to such a change. The major policy reforms and programmes of the government for promoting educational activities

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6 There is evidence of government grant being given to the Kottayam Seminary, a missionary school, as early as 1818. Eapen K.V. (1985) "Church Missionary Society and Education in Kerala. Kottayam."
during this period are reviewed to highlight the government initiatives in educational expansion.

**Governmental intervention in Education**

Travancore government entered significantly into the field of education during the administration of Dewan T. Madhava Rao (1862-1874). He gave shape to a fairly ambitious education policy. Government setting up a separate fund for the educational activities is noticed for the first time during his administration. Every year a sum of Rs. 20000 was appropriated towards the establishment of vernacular schools in every district on a sound basis (Aiya 1906, Jeffrey 1976). Madhava Rao also envisaged a comprehensive plan for educational development. Some of its major objectives were (1) establishment of government schools including a central vernacular school at the capital (2) a school in each Taluk of the state (3) a normal school for the training of teachers (4) encouraging private agencies to start schools through liberal grant-in-aid (5) upgrading and integrating the indigenous schools into the formal system and (6) the establishment of a Text Book committee to translate and write books of all kinds (Aiya 1906).

**Initiatives for Vernacular Education**

Another major thrust of the government policies was the expansion of vernacular education for which a Vernacular Education Department was organised with a separate Director and two Inspectors for two regions into which the state was divided. In 1866-67, government started 11 schools with 855 pupils. The number of government vernacular schools rose to 29 and the students to 2152 at the end of 1868-69 (Aiya 1906).
Grant-in-aid Scheme of 1869

One of the major policy changes made by the government in 1869 to achieve the integration of the indigenous schools into the formal system was the introduction of the grant-in-aid scheme. This was an effective measure not only to attract the private initiatives into the educational sector but also to restructure the school education in a formal way. This scheme insisted that for the provision of grant-in-aid, the course of instruction pursued, the books used and the qualifications of teachers employed in indigenous schools should be the same as in government schools (Aiya 1906, Jeffrey 1976). Within two years of introducing the grant-in-aid scheme, the number of district schools rose to 49 of which 29 were departmental and 20 aided schools. The number of pupils under instruction rose to 2455 in two years (Velu Pillai 1940).

'Proverty' (village) School Scheme of 1871

Another important educational effort initiated by Madhava Rao for the educational development was the introduction of 'proverty' (village) school scheme in 1871. According to this scheme, starting of one school in every proverty (village) was put into effect. Under it, people of the locality or village were to provide the school building upon which the government would give a grant of one 'fanam' per pupil for teaching facilities (Tharakan 1984). The government also agreed to provide one master for each school on a salary of Rs. 7 per month and one inspector for every 14 schools to supervise their proper working with a salary of Rs. 30 a month (Aiya 1906, Velu Pillai 1940). This policy of state supported vernacular education was a novel venture which made educational investment a participatory one. Such a policy encouraged the local initiative in providing schooling facilities. In 1872 itself about 141 schools were
opened as a result of this policy. Within a period of 10 years from 1873 to 1883, government vernacular schools increased from 177 to 223 and private aided ones from 20 to 440. (Report of the Education Expenditure Committee 1921).

**Book Committee in 1867**

Another major step by the government to standardise the school system was the formation of a book committee in 1867 with the charge of preparing original or translated text-books. This was to meet the growing demand for adequate text-books in the growing vernacular school system. ‘Kerala Varma Valia Koil Thampuran’, a leading poet and well-known scholar, was the chairman of the committee for a considerable number of years and the leading force behind its activities (Tharakan 1984). Establishment of the Sircar Book Depot in 1866 and the opening of branch depots in 1897 for the distribution of books issued by the Book Committee are some of the other government decisions to help the school education.

**Normal School**

A government initiative in providing teacher's training was the establishment of Normal School. It was developed into a Teacher's Training College by 1889. As early as 1868, it was reported that 36 out of the 57 “master and under-masters” in government vernacular schools had training in this institution, (Report of the vernacular Ed. Department 1868).

**Local Effort in Vernacular Education**

A major educational policy change that has encouraged the local initiatives in the advancement of vernacular education can be identified from 1881. Instead of multiplying the government schools, preference was given to
local effort in mobilising resources for the spread of more schools. Hence the public not only contributed men and materials for the provision of schooling but also participated in such efforts without any caste/community differences. This has resulted in the spread of education at a faster rate and under this scheme the number of aided schools rose from 437 with 21574 pupils to 1375 with 57314 pupils within a period of 12 years from 1881 (Aiya 1906).

**Education Rules and Grant-in-Aid Code of 1894**

Government initiatives in rectifying the defects of the existing educational system are found in the educational reforms and grant-in-aid code of 1894. Educational reforms in the form of new grant-in-aid code evolved the criteria for the aid as well as the amounts of grants to schools of various classes. The code provided for maintenance grants and special grants for buildings, furniture and public libraries for schools (Aiya 1906). Some of the other features of this scheme were (a) classification of schools (b) prescription of curricula of studies in English and vernacular for aided or recognised schools and (c) rules regarding organisation and management of schools, qualification of teachers, buildings etc.

In addition to these reforms, all English and vernacular schools for purposes of administration and inspection were placed under three inspectors each having a separate range (Aiya 1906). The dual control of education under the directors of vernacular and English education was also abolished and the whole system of education was brought under one single authority.⁷

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⁷ Since the introduction of Grant-in-aid code of 1894, educational sector in Kerala witnessed unprecedented educational activities. Within a period of one year from 1894, the total number of institutions increased from 2815 to 3334 and enrolment from 131180 to 156417. There was at least one government primary school in every village at the turn of the 20th century (Aiya, 1906).
Female Education

Government intervention in the field of female education begins only from 1860s. It was a neglected area except for a few boarding schools run by the Missionaries during 1819-22. Missionary efforts made an impact on the attitude of the society towards female education. They tried to influence public opinion by exhorting people to send their girls to schools. Government initiative towards female education is found in the words of Dewan Madhava Rao. “very little, if anything, has been done for female education. This subject calls for prompt attention as such education must be among other advantages the foundation of important social reforms” (Travancore Administrative Report, 1862/63:44). Government started its first school for girls at Karamana in Trivandrum in 1859. Vernacular schools separately for girls were organised in 1867. Separate schools for girls removed the reservation on the part of the parents to send their daughters to mixed schools.

Some of the other policy reforms that have spread female education were found during the period 1894 to 1900. Government abolished the fees for girls in all grades of schools leading to the popularity of girls' schools. The opening of a number of vernacular girls schools every year and the raising of the Girls High School at Trivandrum to a second grade college were the other steps in this direction.

Education of the Low Castes

Government initiatives in providing educational facilities to the backward and depressed castes began from 1865. The idea of educating these communities drew the attention of the then Dewan Madhava Rao when he

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8 The first girl's school of the modern type in the state was started by Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Fenn, both wives of missionaries in Kottayam in 1818 (Eira Dalton, 1963).
recognised the fact that these low castes were educated by missionaries mainly for proselytization. So he mooted the idea of a school for Shanars and other low castes in southern Travancore. But it failed since the move was vetoed by the then Resident and Madras Government. Though it was repeatedly proclaimed that all classes, without distinction of caste or creed have access to public institutions, in reality government schools were not accessible to students from backward communities (Thomas 1988).\(^9\) It was in 1895, the government for the first time in the state took a determined effort by giving grants to schools for backward communities (Aiya 1906). In the grant-in-aid code of 1894-95, funds were provided for the first time for grants to school for backward classes including special grants. The native Christian missionaries attracted by the liberal grant-in-aid opened large number of such special schools.

Further, government itself came forward to open schools intended exclusively for backward communities. In 1895/96 alone, it started 15 schools for them and in the next year opened 15 more schools (Aiya 1906).\(^{10}\) Government also recruited teachers from backward communities and imparted training to them. The encouragement given by the government was extended further in 1896-97 when it instituted 185 scholarships for pupils from such communities to appear for the Vernacular Elementary School Examination. Such pupils were given exemption from payment of examination fees also. These steps were taken to meet the paucity of teachers in schools for backward communities since the forward communities were reluctant to take up the

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\(^9\) Backward community students were not admitted in government schools despite Royal Proclamations that 'all classes, without distinction of caste or creed, may have access to public institutions'. This responsibility was taken up by the European missionaries and they admitted the low castes in their schools. (Joseph A Thomas 1988).

\(^{10}\) In 1895/96 alone, government started 15 schools for them and in the next year opened 15 more schools (Aiya 1906).
assignment. Within a decade after the introduction of special schools for teaching of students belonging to the backward communities, the number of such schools increased to 480 and the enrolment in them to 43580 pupils including those enrolled in schools open to all communities (Nair 1989). The concern for the educational upliftment of backward communities which began from the closing decades of the 19th century still continues to be one of the major distinguishing features of Kerala's educational policy.

Socio-Economic Compulsions in Educational Expansion

The latter half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century witnessed unprecedented growth of educational institutions in Kerala. Government interventions in the educational sector through its direct and indirect involvement helped the growth of literacy. The various policy reforms and programmes of the government not only formalised the school education, but also encouraged the private initiative in providing schooling facilities. Any analysis of such interventions both public and private, demands a brief review of the socio-economic factors that generated educational demand in Kerala.

Educational policies followed in Travancore were greatly influenced by British Indian policies. The 1813 Charter Act and Munro's educational policies, Wood's Educational Despatch of 1854 and T. Madhava Rao's educational reforms show the similarities and impacts of such policies on educational reforms in Kerala (Tharakan 1984). Policy changes leading to the reorganisation of administration and education were accompanied by fundamental structural changes in socio-economic relations. Fundamental structural changes in tenurial relations, agricultural practices, trade, industry etc. transformed the agrarian economy of Kerala. The 'Pandaravaka Pattam Proclamation of 1865' conferred ownership
right to sirca tenants facilitating the development of a land market. Farming, particularly of garden crops came to be organised on capitalist lines. European planters opened large areas of forest land for plantation of coffee and tea. The period also witnessed the starting of several trading and manufacturing companies by European coastal firms, in cotton and tiles and of agro-processing industries particularly of tea and coir. Local trade also developed as a consequence of such changes. In order to facilitate the movement of goods new public roads were constructed and waterways cleaned, under a newly formed Department of Public works. Such changes in the structure, organisation and functioning of the economy not only facilitated the supply of educational facilities, but also increased the demand for education.

Another major component of the government policy for educational development was the linking of educational qualification with appointments to government jobs. By 1891, it was claimed that educational qualifications based on University and Service Examinations "have been prescribed by government for almost all appointments in the state above the grade of peons" (Tharakan 1984). With the introduction of educational qualifications for selection to government jobs, there occurred a widespread demand for education and education became an instrument for job competition. This along with the commitment of the successive Dewans of Travancore to the spread of modern education resulted in the opening of many schools leading to the rise in literacy.

The decline of the traditional landed classes of Namboodhiris and Nairs in positions of power and privileges due to changes in the institutional and political set up created an environment of equal rights for all the different social groups. Social reform movements started by the enlightened sections of the
forward and backward communities brought about radical changes in their respective communities facilitating the educational process. Christians and Ezhavas who were outside the pale of government service changed their strategies when individual merit and educational qualifications were made the criteria for selection to government service. This has led to the communal or social interventions in educational expansion. Similarly other communities including the lower castes organised themselves under various social banners demanding equal opportunities and facilities for education. Such communal pressures for educational expansion facilitated the government and social initiative in education leading to the opening of a large number of schools.¹¹

Educational Efforts in the First Half of the 20th Century

During the first half of the 20th century education played its instrumental role not only in enlightening and empowering the different sections of the people to fight for their civil and economic rights but also in contributing the social, economical and political well-being of the state. Acknowledging education as a public merit good, government as well as social organisations took keen interest in the establishment of schools. Favourable socio-economic factors also led to the increasing participation of various communities in education. The role of government during the period was mainly that of consolidation. Hence in this section we examine the major governmental interventions through policy

¹¹ The 'Malayali Memorial' submitted to the Maharaja in 1891 demanded more representation to Nairs, Christians and Ezhavas over non-Malayali Brahmins. 'Ezhava Memorial' submitted to Maharaja of Travancore in 1896 by Ezhavas highlighted the social, civil and economic rights denied to this community. They demanded equal entry rights in government schools with other communities and also sought permission to start their own schools. This memorial resulted in the social and economic mobility of the Ezhava community.
changes and reforms in education that facilitated and consolidated the educational system.

One of the important policy reforms introduced during this period was the abolition of English schools at the lower primary stage and the introduction of Malayalam as the medium of instruction in primary school with classes I to IV. In 1904, government declared that free universal primary education would be the direct responsibility of the state. In the initial years due to the paucity of resources, this scheme was confined only to the backward communities and later in 1908 it was extended to all the communities (Aiya 1906). Restrictions on admissions of pupils on the basis of caste were removed in 1911 and this has reduced the discrimination for admissions to educational institutions. Establishment of special schools for different castes and communities, opening of rural schools, night schools for adult education etc. were some of the government measures initiated during this period to promote literacy.

**Education Code 1910**

Introduction of the Education Code in 1910 was a comprehensive measure in the classification, management, accommodation and equipment of schools. It defined the positions of each school in the system of public instruction and improved the efficiency of the managements and teachers. It prescribed the qualifications of teachers and regulated school term fees, textbooks and dealt with the rules regarding the recognition and grant in-aid to schools.Govt. also appointed a Director of Public Instruction for the first time for the co-ordination of the educational activities in the state (Velu Pillai 1940).
Fee Concessions, Grants and Meals

Some of the important policy decisions that encouraged the education of backward and depressed community students were found in the form of fee concessions, lump-sum grants, mid-day meals, books, cloths etc. In 1907 a special exemption was given to Mohammedan pupils from paying fees in upper primary classes. In 1923 depressed community pupils were granted remission of full fees in both vernacular and English schools and backward community pupils half-fee concessions. An encouragement to female education was found in 1925 when full fee concession was granted to girl students belonging to communities enjoying half-fee concession. A scheme of providing mid-day meals was introduced by the local people in various districts completely on a voluntary basis to needy children in primary classes as early as 1920 (Nair 1989).

Lump-sum grant was another incentive initiated in 1936 to depressed community students of class III and IV. They were given lump-sum grants of 14 Chackrams (Rs.0.50) each (Thomas 1988).

Free and Compulsory Education

Educational Reforms committee of 1933 and the Education Reorganisation committee of 1945 investigated the educational problems of the state and suggested measures to rectify them. As per their recommendations, primary education was declared free and compulsory in the state in 1955. The service conditions and salary scales of private primary school teachers were brought on a par with those of departmental school teachers (Nair 1983). On the whole, educational reforms and policies initiated by the government during the first half of the 20th century formalised and consolidated the educational system. Such
steps resulted in raising the total enrolment in schools to 11 lakhs in 1947. (Report on the Administration of Travancore 1946-47).

Educational Efforts in the Post-Independence Period

The educational growth in Kerala during the post-independence period is quite impressive not only in terms of the growth of literacy, enrolment, institutions, teachers and expenditure but also in terms of the development and diversification of the higher stages of the education system (Nair 1989). In this section, the major educational policies and programmes of government since independence are reviewed.

Private Secondary School (PSS) Scheme

One of the significant developments that took place in the field of secondary school education in the state during the early 1950's was the introduction of the Private Secondary School (PSS) Scheme. This scheme introduced in 1950 aimed at improving the service conditions of teachers in schools under private management. Due to some opposition from the private management, the scheme was revised and it came into effect in December 1951. This scheme laid rules regarding the collection of fees and its distribution for the maintenance of private schools and also the share of a teacher, management and the government towards the provident fund of a teacher. Within a couple of years, the entire private secondary schools came under P.S.S scheme.

Abolition of Fees

Abolition of fees from primary level to high school level was another major policy initiative that promoted the growth of education in Kerala. The
abolition of fees in form I and II in 1954-55 and form III in 1955-56 rendered both primary and middle school education free. The abolition of fees in the high school classes started in 1960-61 and by 1969-70, the entire school education in Kerala was made totally free.

Kerala Education Rules

A major policy reform of the educational system in Kerala was the introduction of the Kerala Education Rules in 1959. This was mainly to put an end to the growth of corruption in the appointment of teachers, admission of students and management of schools in the private sector. It was intended to implement nationally accepted reforms in school administration and management.

Kerala Education Rules of 1959 is the outcome of the Kerala education bill of 1957. The major provisions included in the bill are, (a) the government may regulate the primary and other stages of education in government and private schools (b) the government shall pay the salary of all teachers and non-teaching staff in aided schools direct or through the headmaster of the school (c) all fees collected should be deposited with the government (d) government may pay grants to the management for maintenance and purchase of land, building, equipment etc. (e) the managers of private schools shall be deemed to have been appointed by the Act and they have to appoint teachers from the list of candidates prepared by the State Public Service Commission (f) the conditions of service of aided school teachers shall be the same as those of teachers in government schools (g) the government may take over the management of private schools or withdraw recognition on reasons of mismanagement, on payment of rent or compensation and (h) the government may appoint local educational authorities to satisfy local needs and constitute a State Education
Advisory Board to advise the government. Although these provisions visualised a corrupt free educational system for the state, government finally yielded to the pressures of school management and amended certain sections of the Education Bill particularly those relating to the appointment of teachers in aided schools and their service conditions (Salim & Nair 2002).

Educational Efforts to Reduce Regional Disparities

At the time of the formation of the Kerala state in 1956, wide disparities existed in the levels of educational development between the Travancore-Cochin and the Malabar regions. Government have shown special interests in the development of Malabar which was backward educationally and economically. Conscious attempts made by the government by sanctioning new schools, upgrading the existing schools, allotting more funds etc during successive five year plans helped to narrow down the educational disparities between the regions. The preferential treatment meted out to the region by successive governments of Kerala enabled Malabar to register higher rates of growth of enrolment to bridge the gap between the two regions.

Special Education Efforts for Backward Communities

Successive governments in Kerala all through the years have shown special concern for the educational backwardness of the depressed and backward communities. The policy of spreading education among them, continued through several concessions like free supply of clothes, slates and books, exemption from payment of all kinds of fees etc. Special efforts were made to get the pupils

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12 By 1979/80, enrolment ratios in the Malabar region had come close to those of Travancore – Cochin (Salim & Nair 2002).
of these sections admitted in schools. Rates of stipends and lump-sum grants were enhanced several times. The Backward Community Department conducted a large number of night schools, tribal schools and libraries for the depressed communities. As a consequence, literacy level among them improved considerably; correspondingly inter-community differences have narrowed (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste/ year</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1931</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malayali Brahmins</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulayas</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 1931, quoted from Thomas, 1988

Special Efforts to Increase Female Literacy

Since 1956, special efforts have been made to increase the enrolment of females belonging to educationally backward communities. To attract the girl students, special scholarships have been provided to Muslim, Nadar, SC and ST girls. In 1971, 35 posts of Primary Education Extension Officers were created in seven backward districts to implement the scheme of removal of backwardness including education of girls. This helped to prevent the drop-outs and improved the attendance of girls. Govt. allotted more resources especially in educationally

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13 In 1911-12, the restriction on admission of 'Pulaya' boys and girls in government schools was removed. Government sanctioned the opening of rural schools especially for the lower castes and there existed 228 special schools in 1921. These schools were converted into either night schools or general schools, after the removal of caste barriers to admission in private and government schools. Government also withdrew the grant-in-aid to those institutions which denied admission on the basis of caste (Nair 1989).
backward pockets to carry out intensive activities for the education of girls belonging to socially backward communities. Through these measures, government was able to reduce the gender disparity in literacy rates (Table 3.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>58.35</td>
<td>36.43</td>
<td>47.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>64.89</td>
<td>45.56</td>
<td>55.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>77.13</td>
<td>62.53</td>
<td>69.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>84.56</td>
<td>73.36</td>
<td>78.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>93.62</td>
<td>86.17</td>
<td>89.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>94.20</td>
<td>87.86</td>
<td>90.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001

Other Measures

a. School feeding programme

As noted earlier, government has been encouraging the educational activities with the introduction of a noon-meal programme as early as the 1940s. This was continued and extended after the formation of the present state of Kerala. With the assistance from the Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), government continued the noon-meal programme at schools and it covered 72-73 per cent of the LP school children (UN, 1977). From 1984, a feeding programme with Kanji (rice gruel) and pulses was introduced in government and aided LP Schools. Now with the active support of

14 Mid-day meal programme to needy children was started in 1920 on a voluntary basis. However, it was taken up by the Government in Travancore in 1941 and in Cochin by 1943. In 1941, government organized the 'Vanchi Poor Fund' to provide noon-meal to poor children in number of schools (Nair 1989, Salim and Nair 2002).
the Parent – Teachers Association, the noon-meal programme is still going on with great success. In many backward and tribal areas, the noon-meal programme has proved to be a real inducement for the children to come to school every working day (Salim & Nair 2002).

b. Whole promotion system

During the 1960s when the drop-out rate from the school system particularly from its lower stages was very high, government devised the whole promotion policy in 1972-73. Initially, it was introduced in standard I and II and then later extended to other standards. Owing to this policy drop out rates significantly came down since 1972-73. In higher classes, the maximum proportion which may be detained in each class was fixed as ten percent of the total strength. Although this policy reduced the drop-out rates, it was highly criticised on the ground that this has led to the deterioration in the quality of school education in the state.

c) Travel concessions

Travel concessions in Road and Water transport vehicles were introduced as early as the 1950s to facilitate the easy travel of students to schools. This has reduced the burden of the parents on the household expenditure on education. At present, students in schools are allowed to travel by paying only 25 percent of the actual fare. The scheme has enabled thousands of poor students from far off places to reach their schools at affordable expenses.

Educational Expansion Since 1990s

Since the introduction of the new economic policy in 1991, economic activities have undergone significant changes in India. In tune with the

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15 As per whole promotion policy, all the students in a class are promoted to the next higher class disregarding the marks they secure in the annual examination. This was adopted to prevent the drop-out rates owing to detention.
liberalised, privatised, globalised policies of the government, both on a national and state level, the educational sector in Kerala is also witnessing some new trends. So far the government has played the dual role of an investor and facilitator in public and private investment in education. Government efforts for educational expansion in Kerala for the last two centuries have transformed the education sector completely. Now Kerala enjoys the unique distinction of attaining universal elementary education in India and stands out as the most literate state. Table 3.3 shows the growth of literacy over the years.

Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>16.10</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>24.02</td>
<td>29.45</td>
<td>36.03</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>65.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>11.14</td>
<td>13.31</td>
<td>19.02</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>40.47</td>
<td>56.85</td>
<td>60.42</td>
<td>70.42</td>
<td>89.81</td>
<td>90.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = Not Available
Source: Census of India, Relevant Years

Recently, governments both at the centre and the state favour more private initiative in education and they have shown the tendency of gradual withdrawal from the education sector. The state government has been reducing its expenditure on education. The share of education in total expenditure has been brought down from 27.45 per cent in 1990-91 to 22.47 per cent in 2001-02 (George 1999). The number of government and aided schools has also registered a decline, but the number of private schools in the unaided sector has gone up. Table 3.4 gives the distribution of schools in Kerala according to the types of Management.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>High schools</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>UP Schools</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>LP Schools</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>Unaided</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>Unaided</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>Unaided</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>Unaided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the schools in the aided and government sectors are becoming uneconomic due to want of students, fee paid unaided institutions are being opened at every nook and corner of the state. This new trend can be explained by presenting the enrolment of students. Table 3.5 & 3.6 show the changing trends in the enrolment strength of students for different types of managements both by number and percentage.

**Table 3.5**

*Distribution of Enrolment According to the Type of Management of Schools in Kerala*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Govt.</th>
<th>Aided</th>
<th>Unaided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>2294066</td>
<td>3444760</td>
<td>142890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>2296572</td>
<td>3468394</td>
<td>155392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>2260894</td>
<td>3446121</td>
<td>161721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>2212004</td>
<td>3420870</td>
<td>174933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>2159575</td>
<td>3377513</td>
<td>180257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>2093098</td>
<td>3324458</td>
<td>192210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>2026265</td>
<td>3283575</td>
<td>206689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>1965796</td>
<td>3231639</td>
<td>222847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>1925368</td>
<td>3166175</td>
<td>235128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>1868685</td>
<td>3138803</td>
<td>241559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Public Instruction, Thiruvanathapuram
Table 3.6

Percentage Distribution of Enrolment by Type of Management of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>High schools</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>Unaided</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>Unaided</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>Aided</td>
<td>Unaided</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of enrolment, the government schools and private aided schools experience a declining trend, while the unaided schools, a rising one. A hike in the number of schools and the enrolment in the unaided sector show the new trend of commercialisation in the educational system of Kerala. The conceptual change of education from a social good to a private merit good; changed role of educational agents from the one doing a divine work to that of profit motivated entrepreneurs seems to dominate the present educational scene.

Private Educational Initiatives

Educational expansion and the corresponding literacy rate in Kerala for the last one and a half centuries are attributed mainly to the contribution made by the private sector. The educational initiatives started on a massive scale with the missionary activities in Kerala are at present controlled and managed by private educational agencies. These agencies have grown in size and strength and function as a corporate sector, fully backed by the respective communities. Various community organisations viewed education as an instrument capable of integrating the whole community and very often they have succeeded in protecting their vested interests with the backing of the respective community. Educational activities of the various private educational agencies on a caste/community basis over the years prevent even the government from making any radical reforms to reduce the unhealthy practices in the educational sector. In this section, an attempt is made to review the educational activities of the major private educational agencies in Kerala over the years.
Missionary Initiatives in Kerala

Educational expansion in Kerala during the 19th century is mainly attributed to the missionary activities. Missionaries are acknowledged as the pioneers of English education in the state. Their major educational efforts and programmes not only emphasized the role of education as an instrument of enlightenment and empowerment but also showed how they were instrumental in influencing other agencies including government and other communities in establishing schools.

The history of educational efforts during the 19th century highlighted the contribution made by the Christian missionaries in Kerala. The earliest of European Christian missionaries to come for proselytization work in Kerala were the Roman Catholics (Tharakan 1984). They worked mainly among the lower castes, particularly the fishermen communities of the coast. Their major concern was providing religious education for prospective priests and their educational efforts were limited to the opening of a few seminaries and some schools for the fishermen communities (Ferroli 1951).

The major contributions to mass literacy were made by Protestant missionaries. Since their religion was very much based on the Gospels, the spread of their religion required at least the basic faculties of reading and writing. Hence the Protestants considered educational activities a pre-requisite for their religious work. Rev. Ringletaube, the first Protestant missionary to evangelise in Travancore, started a school in the village of Mylady in 1806 (Jacob 1957).

The missionary agencies that operated in Travancore since the beginning of the 19th century were the London Missionary Society (L.M.S) in the South and
Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) in the central and northern areas. In Malabar, it was the Basal Evangelical Mission which took control of the educational efforts in the early 19th century. Although there was a heavy accent on religious subjects in missionary schools, their syllabus did not neglect secular subjects altogether (Tharakan 1984). They also chose Malayalam or Tamil as the medium of instruction in these schools. Missionaries started both English and vernacular schools all over Kerala from 1806.

Education of the lower castes—both Ezhavas and Shanars as well as slave castes was an exclusive preserve of the missionary schools till the government came into the field by the end of 19th century (Tharakan 1984). As early as 1839 the missionaries are reported to have prepared a plan for the emancipation and education of the children of slaves in Cochin and Travancore. (Hunt 1930). They not only started separate schools for lower caste children but also admitted them in regular schools. These schools were open to all castes during a period when the government neglected the development of education for the lower castes. In the schools, children of different castes were put together under one roof, which was itself a matter amounting almost to a social revolution in those days (John 1981).

Another area in which missionaries were active was that of female education. They started girl schools to surmount the reservation on the part of the parents to send their daughters to mixed schools. To promote female education, a pamphlet entitled “On the advantages of female education” was

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Two of the earliest missionary schools for lower caste children were in Alleppy, started by Rev. Nortons in 1835, and in Kottayam, started by Henry Bakers Sr. In the south, Rev. Mead started a school for Pulayas and also gave monetary initiatives in the form of addition to the salaries of teachers bringing lower caste children to schools (Eapen 1985).
printed and distributed free by the missionaries. There were 15 girls' schools and 361 girl students in Southern region alone by 1837 (Jesudas 1975). The missionaries were the first to appoint female teachers for inspiring the parents to send their girls to schools, a measure which took into account the reality of the situation.

Technical training was also an area which was initiated by the missionaries. Trade schools were started with the aim of raising up a class of Christian artisans for construction of mission building. Subjects taught in these schools included printing, book-binding, tanning and currying of leather etc. (Tharakan 1984).

Thus it was found that missionary activities were in the areas of lower caste education, female education and technical training, areas neglected by traditional system and not yet taken up by the government. However, the government supported all their activities with aids in cash and kind like thousands of acres of land, timber and other building materials and labourers (Velu Pillai 1940). Local public also donated liberally. Missionaries also used all the influences at their command over their laity to raise monthly subscriptions from the households both in cash and kind (Thomas 1988).

The contribution made by the missionaries to the cause of education during the 19th century was significant not purely in terms of the numbers that they turned out, but in terms of awareness that their efforts instilled in the minds of the depressed classes about their social rights and the minds of the higher castes in society about the danger to their social power inherent in giving a free hand to the missionaries in the field of education. The missionary activities had also an effect on
the government's educational policy (Tharakan 1984). Government feared that the missionary activities might lead to large conversion. Kings and high caste Hindus were very suspicious about the missionary activities in the field of education. Hence the government started a large number of government and other private schools with a view to countering the growing influences of the missionaries and to attract large section of the people who had kept away from Missionary schools (Nair 1989).

Thus it is seen that missionary activities both directly and indirectly made significant contributions in the field of education. They have initiated modern education in many parts of the state in the first half of the 19th century. Their involvement in the vernacular education made considerable contributions to the spread of mass literacy.

Educational Initiatives of the Indigenous Christians

Besides the Protestant Missions, the indigenous Christians also made significant contributions to educational development of Kerala from 19th century. Among them it was the non-Catholic Syrians who entered the field of education first in association with CMS. By the turn of the century, non-Catholic Syrians had around 270 schools to their credit (Salim & Nair 2002). The split between the Syrian Church and the CMS during 1835-40 led to the founding of the Mar Thoma Church a little later and the persistent rivalry between the two groups got most intensively reflected in a competition to start more schools (Jeffrey 1976).

Educational efforts of Catholic Syrians in establishing schools started only from 1880 onwards. Until then the Catholic hierarchy was suspicious that any move by their Catholics to co-operate with their non-Catholic counterparts
would adversely affect the Catholic Church and hence vetoed any attempt at educational or economic co-operation (Salim & Nair 2002). For a long-time, Catholics were not encouraged to learn English, a language which was not taught in the Catholic educational system on the score that it was the language of the Protestant civil authorities and so involved the chance of access to a profane culture damaging to the Catholic faith (Houtart and Lemencinier 1976). But things changed fast when the European hierarchy became aware of the necessity of providing modern education for their Catholic followers (Jeffrey 1976). Besides, the emergence of two nationalist Syrian Catholic priests, Fr. Immanuel Nidhiry and Fr. Kuriakose Chavara, changed the educational thinking of the Catholic completely and they became the champions of English education among them. They established English schools themselves and exhorted other Catholic priests to start parish schools to impart modern education. Fr. Nidhiry is said to have told Catholic Syrians that "any day an English school will be a more prized asset than the gold crosses which would be stolen" (Tharakan 1984: 49-50).

Mass resource mobilisation drives of the Catholics was one of the reasons for the rapid establishment of schools by them. Each housewife of the parishes was instructed to save one handful of rice per day and to hand over the saving to local church once in a month. The value of such savings was roughly equal to five percent of the consumption expenditure of the families making the subscription. This process was known as "5 percent extrication" (Perumaly 1971). By the end of the 19th century, the Catholic Church overtook all others in the total number of schools with the support of the whole community. They also utilised the generous attitude of the government in the provision of materials for

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17 It was reported that the number of Catholic schools increased by 23 per cent from 1471 to 1809 over a period of 13 years from 1959 to 1972 (Salim & Nair 2002).
school building as well as the policy reform of grant-in-aid to open the maximum number of schools. Govt. also favoured the private educational efforts with a view to meeting the requirements of educated personnel for administrative reorganisation and modernisation. Besides, it was decided that in the financial interest of the state, the government should encourage private efforts in education even by relaxing the conditions for opening of schools and for grants-in-aid.

Catholics consolidated their position in education during the 20th century and played a leading role in all the educational activities. Their educational efforts were more successful compared to other communities in Kerala because they had a well-knit organisational set up with parishes as the base and the metropolitans at the apex of the hierarchy. The church always provided them with unity, aid, and advice and leadership in educational and other matters. All the Catholic schools were founded by the clergy, who led the community and enjoyed a monopoly of such initiatives (Houtart and Lemencinier 1976). The international connections of the Church enabled them to receive aid from abroad which was vital for the provision of schooling facilities.

The Catholics and their church further consolidated their position since, 1971. During 1972-84, the number of their schools and colleges increased from 1809 to 1969. While the Orthodox, Marthoma and CSI Christians who constituted 25.07 lakh people managed 701 schools and colleges, the Catholics who came to 40.12 lakh managed about thrice the number (Salim & Nair 2002). Thus we observe that the Catholics who entered the field of education very late dominated the field. Organisational set up of the church, common leadership, mass resource mobilisation with public support, international aid, continuous vigil
for the protection of minority rights, etc were some of the favourable factors for the large scale educational efforts of the Catholic Church.

Community Initiative in Education

The inter-communal rivalry for educational and employment opportunities resulted in competition among communities for starting educational institutions in the 20th century. In this competitive race, the Christian communities wanted to retain their hold over education intact while the others wanted to grasp privilege which had till then eluded them. In this section, we examine the educational efforts of the prominent communities other than Christians.

SNDP and Ezhava Movement

Educational efforts of the various communities originated from caste-based movements. Ezhavas, an under-privileged community socially and economically for long years, considered education as an instrument for social and economic mobility. Through their leaders and organisations they fought for their educational rights from the second half of the 19th century. The Ezhava social reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th century was one of the most important caste-based, social reform movements of the modern period in India (Ramachandran 1995). Ezhavas were a backward caste traditionally occupied in the tapping and sale of toddy and processing of coir products (Jeffrey 1976). Increase in the value of liquor trade and the growing demand for coconut products benefited some sections, while a few others gained from the changes in the tenurial relations. Backed with such prosperity more of them started seeking education mainly in mission schools. As a result the percentage of Ezhava male literate increased from 3.15 per cent in 1875 to 13.71 per cent in
1901 (Aiya 1906). By the end of 19th century, Ezhavas were claiming a social status corresponding to the economic development they had achieved. It was these two factors, economic prosperity and educational development which laid the base for the social reform movement initiated under the leadership of Sree Narayana Guru (Tharakan 1984). With the organisation of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) in 1903 Ezhavas themselves started establishing educational institutions all over the state. (Houtart and Lemencinier 1976, Rajendran 1974). Narayana Guru propagated the need for education among the Ezhavas to redeem the community from the social situation of extreme discrimination. He founded a school at Aruvippuram and another at Varkala in which the medium of instruction was English. He provided moral authority to the leaders of his community such as Dr. P. Palpu, Kumaran Asan and T.K. Madhavan to press for changes in social order and educational reforms. The leaders of SNDP waged relentless fight in the legislature and outside for admission of their children to all types of schools and for permission for opening schools and colleges. Kumaran Asan, a great poet and social reformer was in the forefront for demanding equal social and educational rights of the Ezhavas. Owing to the continuous agitation of the early leaders of the SNDP, some of the government schools which had remained closed to Ezhava children were thrown open to them, scholarships were instituted for Ezhava children, admission was given to them in government hostels and fee concession extended to them too. These efforts had such an electrifying effect that the literacy rate of the Ezhava community doubled from 10.1 per cent to 21.3 per cent between 1911 to 1931 (see table 3.1).
Institution of an ‘Education Fund’ in 1905 to pay the tuition fee of Ezhava school children was another educational effort of the S.N.D.P. This scheme became successful during 1945-46 under the leadership of R.Sankar. SNDP collected Rs. 111,000/ within a single day from SNDP members and it is a daring example of community support for the development of educational activities (Kumaran 1987). They instituted two more education funds namely Primary, Secondary Education Fund in 1946 and General Education Fund in 1947.

Apart from motivating the community to educate its children and giving them financial assistance, SNDP also started schools and colleges of its own. They undertook a mass resource mobilisation drive under the leadership of R. Sankar and introduced some novel methods of fund collection. The method of ‘Ulpanna pirivu’ (Produce subscription) was successfully carried out to raise resources for the construction of schools and colleges. In 1952, a Sree Narayana Trust was formed to carry on the administration of the educational institutions more effectively.

In the educational initiative of the Ezhava community, education served as an instrument for social and economic mobility. It also helped the communal integration within the community and strengthened their fights against the government to attain their social and economic rights. In the present educational scenario, they have emerged as a strong corporate educational agency and manage a number of educational institutions both in the aided and unaided sector.

SJPS and the Pulayas

The prevalence of untouchability and unapproachability for centuries prevented members of the lower castes from acquiring education. Even when
institutionalised education began, *Pulayas* and other low castes were practically denied admission in all government schools. But the relentless fights of the *Ezhavas* under SNDP for their educational rights inspired *Pulayas* and other low castes to enter into the field. Aiyan Kali (1863-1941) the great *Pulaya* leader, found that education was the only way of salvation for his community. In 1907 he founded the *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sabha* (SJPS) (Society for the Protection of the Poor People) with the objective of salvaging his community from such social degradation (Salim & Nair 2002). The first school of the depressed community was started by Aiyan Kali in 1905 in his own village at Venganooor in Trivandrum. All through his life he fought relentlessly for the educational rights of *Pulayas*. He faced severe confrontations with the high caste Hindus whenever he tried to get children of his castes admitted in government schools (Chentharassery, 1970). Many incidents of fights with high caste Hindus and *Pulayas* have taken place in the matter of school admission in government schools.¹⁸

Aiyan Kali during his tenure as a member of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly of Travancore from 1912 to 1930, fought relentlessly for the educational rights of *Pulayas*. He requested the government to throw open all the government schools in the state for their community and demanded scholarships and fee concessions. Owing to the efforts of Aiyan Kali and Kumaran Asan and their organisations in the Assembly and outside, the government threw open all its schools to all castes in 1912. Fee concessions, stipends, scholarships, boarding grants etc were granted subsequently by the government to encourage the

¹⁸ Salim and Nair (2002) give a detailed account of the various atrocities faced by the *Pulaya* community for getting admissions in government schools and their fights under the leadership of Aiyan Kali, in getting their educational rights.
education of low castes. When the high castes continued their struggles against
the entry of pulaya children in government schools, Aiyankali requested the
government to permit them to start their own schools to educate their children
without depending on the high castes¹⁹ (Salim & Nair 2002). Besides the
government itself started schools for the low castes.

In spite of the efforts of Aiyan Kali and SJPS and the concessions and
encouragement from the government, pulayas and other low castes remained
backward in education. The literacy rate of pulayas increased from 0.9 percent
in 1911 to 2.7 per cent in 1921. Hence Aiyan Kali wanted to make education
compulsory to the depressed classes and the government issued orders making
primary education compulsory to them. Full fee concession and noon-meals
were also sanctioned for the children of this community. All their efforts finally
succeeded in increasing the number of pulaya students from 15100 in 1935/36
to 29400 in 1947/48 (Salim & Nair 2002).

In short, the selfless efforts of leaders like Aiyan Kali broke the traditional
bonds of lower castes and revolutionised the ideas of education. Consequently
all the schools in the state were thrown open to them and they began to excel in
their studies. Attainment of education awakened in them a sense of self-esteem
and opened before them the path of mobility, economic and social.

**Nair Service Society and its Educational Efforts**

Educational efforts of the Nairs on a large scale and in an organised
manner can be traced from the early 20th century with the formation of Nair

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¹⁹ In 1914, government gave permission to start a Malayalam primary school with only two
classes under SJPS.
Service Society in 1914. The Nairs of Kerala were a privileged community till the middle of the 19th century. They held a place of dominance which appeared both comfortable and secure. Amounting to 20 per cent of the population they held much of the land and 60 per cent of the 14700 jobs in the government services in Travancore in 1872 (Jeffrey 1976). But this community fell into a state of distress from the mid 19th century. Their importance in government decreased when British overlordship came (Balakrishnan & Leela Devi 1982). The increased interferences of British Residents in the administration of the state had reduced the importance of Nairs in government service. Many powerful Nair ‘taravads’ were going down to a state of disorder and anarchy due to internal strife and factions (Balakrishnan and Leela Devi 1982). Their hold on land was also loosening and it was passed on to prospering Syrian Christians and even low castes.

To redeem the Nair community from its “downfall” and to promote the welfare of the community, a “Malayali Sabha” was started in 1884. This organisation encouraged female education and also reformed the irrational customs of the Nairs. By early 1887, the Sabha was said to have 900 members, 25 schools, 14 branches and a trading company which was earning Rs. 5000 a year (Jeffrey, 1976). When the Malayali Sabha had virtually died in 1895, the number of schools under it came down to 2 (Jeffrey, 1976). Although there were attempts to replace the ‘Sabha’ by forming other organisations, it all failed. Finally an organised attempt to redeem the Nairs from this state of decline found success under the Nair Service Society (NSS) in 1914. It was formed with a

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20 A detailed account on the decline of Nair community from the mid 19th century is presented by Robin Jeffrey in ‘The Decline of Nayar Dominance, Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908 (Jeffrey 1976).
view to promoting social, educational and cultural advancement of the Nair community. Its founder leader, Mannathu Padmanabhan, popularly known as Mannam, was shrewd enough to see the importance of education to his community and hence started a lifelong campaign to start educational institutions. (Salim & Nair 2002). Thus the educational efforts of the Nair community in starting schools and colleges on a massive scale started with the activities of NSS.

Nair Service Society under the leadership of Mannam since 1914 started mobilising resources for establishing educational institutions all over Kerala and they introduced various novel methods of fund collections like "Kettuthengu" (the practice of setting apart the usufructs of a coconut tree for the NSS from each Nair house), the practice of "Pidiyar" (a fistful of rice set apart for NSS from daily consumption), Begging or 'Bhikshadanam', Vishu collection, Janma Nakshatra collection or birthday collection, 'Ulpannapirivu' or share of products etc. Within ten years of its inception in 1914, NSS was able to acquire about 101 acres of land 7.5 acres of paddy fields and school buildings and equipment worth Rs. 2 lakhs (Balakrishnan and Leeladevi 1982, Nair 1993). Now NSS has become a powerful community organisation in Kerala concentrating its activities mainly in education and health. Like other community organisations in Kerala, NSS also became a powerful pressure group in the field of education since 1940s and the society succeeded in getting its due share in education, whenever the govt, sanctioned new schools and colleges. Now NSS has become a giant corporation in the educational sector of Kerala and it has 65 high schools, 20 UP schools and 12 LP schools under aided category and 15 English medium schools in the unaided category. Besides they also own and manage 31 higher secondary schools and 25 colleges (NSS report 2001).
Educational Initiatives of MES and Muslims

Kerala Muslims were a late-comer in the educational field compared to the educational efforts of other communities. The traditional opposition to secular education by the Muslim community blocked their progress, retarded the community economically and created a public image and private mentality of backwardness (Miller 1976). Seeing the deterioration of Muslims in the field of education their leaders exhorted the community to send their children to schools and initiated measures to start private schools. The first Muslim school was started in 1911 in Crangannore under the initiative of Seethi Muhammed Sahib (Ali 1990). Through his efforts, fee concession and stipends were granted to Muslim students and Arabic teachers appointed in schools of Cochin. He also fought for the development of special schools for Muslims to protect the traditional Muslim interests and remove their fears regarding modern education (Miller 1976).

Another Muslim leader who was instrumental in starting a school for Muslims at Alleppey was Vakkam Abdul Khadar Maulavi. On his request to the government, special fee concessions were granted to Muslim children and full salary grants were allowed to Muslim elementary schools.

The foundation of the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham in 1922 was the first organised effort of the Kerala Muslims for the realisation of their educational activities (Salim & Nair 2002). Another association named Mohammedan Education Association founded in 1918 started a middle school with a collection of Rs. 30000 from the public (Salim & Nair 2002). ‘Lajnathul Mohammadeeya’, JDT Islam Sabha, Tirurangadi Muslim Orphanage were the other Muslim Associations which have started schools for the education of the Muslim community.
In spite of such efforts, the level of educational status of the community remained low. As a result of the intense dissatisfaction within the community, on the poor progress of its education, the Muslim Education Society (MES) was formed in 1964 by a group of young well-educated Muslims under the dynamic leadership of Dr. P.K. Abdul Gafoor. MES started its activities with a scholarship scheme to assist the poor students in education and now they have diversified its activities by starting schools and colleges. The activities of MES and other agencies also inspired many individuals to start private educational institutions. Educational efforts of the Muslim community under its leader C.H. Mohammed Koya brought about spectacular progress in the number of schools and colleges in the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{21} Institutions under Muslim management increased from 472 in 1962 to 1301 in 1993/94 (Salim and Nair, 2002).

Communalisation, Politicisation and Commercialisation in Education

A brief review on the history of educational initiatives have shown that educational expansion in Kerala originated due to the unprecedented support of the private agencies in the educational sector. Private educational agencies, organised under different caste/community basis were mainly instrumental in mobilising men and materials for the provision of schooling facilities. Economists like Amartya Sen and others have hailed the public participation and community involvement for the remarkable progress in the educational facilities and literacy in Kerala. But such a set-up has also played havoc in the educational sector in

\textsuperscript{21} Mohammed Koya was the educational minister of Kerala for a number of years and he also served as the Deputy Chief-Minister. He was instrumental for the establishment of a number of educational institutions under MES as well as under individual ownership. In the aided sector they have 95 high schools under individual ownership and 67 high schools under corporate management in 1999. Corresponding figures for UP are 253 and 34 and for LP it is 796 and 74. (Educational Statistics collected from Directorate of Public Instruction, Thiruvananthapuram).
the form of communalisation and politicisation of education. In this section an attempt is made to review some of the major incidents in the education sector which threatened even the survival of the existing governments, when the latter attempted to formalise the educational system with policy changes and reforms.

Although one can identify a number of cases in which the governments have yielded to the organised pressure of private managements, only three major incidents are reviewed here to highlight the power of these agencies in safeguarding their vested interests by rallying their respective communities behind them. Even at the beginning of the 19th century, the private agencies had a larger share of educational institutions in the educational sector of Kerala. For majority of the private managements, education was a successful instrument for safeguarding their vested interests. Educational history showed that whenever there was an attempt on the part of the government to bring in educational reforms to control and regulate the private educational enterprise in order to bring order and uniformity in the educational system, it culminated in the withdrawal of such reforms due to severe opposition from the private managements. The power of educational managements in the socio-political and economic set up of the state is so strong that even-though the governments defray the entire cost of education, they remain helpless in controlling the powers of managements.

The first attempt from the part of the government to interfere in the management of private schools occurred in 1946. Government as per the

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22 In 1914, 552 out of the 715 recognised schools in Cochin and 2000 schools in Travancore were under the private management. This trend continued over the years and it is found that even now about 60 to 70 percent of schools were under the private managements which belonged to the different caste/communities (Mathew 1987).
recommendations of the Travancore Education Reorganisation Committee of 1945, decided to make primary education free and compulsory. For this government decided to nationalise the primary education to bring it under direct and full state control. The private managements, most of which were in the hands of Christian hierarchy, felt threatened by the intentions of the Travancore Government. The Government's attempt to bring about a legislation was vehemently resisted by the Christians in general and the Catholic Church in particular (Mathew 1987). The Catholic bishop of Changanacherry, Mar James Kalacherry issued a pastoral letter attacking the government decisions in strong terms. He declared that if the "primary rights of the individual are affected to the slightest extent, as a result of the socialistic policy of the government, nature will grow angry with the government, rouse up all the forces under the sun and wipe out from the face of the earth the unjust authors of nationalisation". (Pastoral letter of Mar James Kalacherry, No.123) The government headed by the then Dewan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, threatened the bishop with dire consequences if he did not withdraw the letter. The letter was not withdrawn and the government was forced to make peace with the Catholic Church by exempting schools controlled by the church from nationalisation. What prevented the Dewan to go back from the earlier decision was the communal consolidation of the Catholic Church.

Governments in Kerala, right from 1947 were receiving complaints from the teachers about the oppressive and unjust measures of the private managements. They demanded the intervention of the government in favour of the harassed teachers under private management. In 1950, the newly formed Travancore–Cochin state government introduced the Private Secondary School
Scheme (PSS) under the initiative of the then Education Minister, Panampalli Govinda Menon. The scheme reviewed the conditions of teachers under private management and recommended certain measures. It included the appointment and service conditions of teachers and payment of salaries; a method of managing the school fees, reservation in the appointment of teachers to disadvantaged communities etc. The powerful church hierarchy, especially the Catholic Church resisted and attacked this move as an attempt to infringe upon their minority rights (Salim & Nai 2002). This attempt of the government also failed and the powerful managements especially the Catholics succeeded in keeping the government undecided about the PSS scheme between 1951 and 1953 (Mathew 1987).

Another major government attempt to implement nationally accepted reforms in school administration and management is found in the Kerala Education Bill of 1957. The objects of the bill were "to provide for the better organisation of general education" and more specifically, to provide for a check on the payment of salaries and security of service of teachers and on the administration of the institutions. The major provisions in the bill ensured the organisation of general education on a sound and more equitable basis. It also envisaged that teachers in private schools were properly paid and recruited on the basis of their qualifications, enjoyed security of tenure and that the educational institutions in the state were administered without undue interference from the managers.

The Education bill although passed in the state assembly after a heated debate, was sent to the President for his approval. Meanwhile, the Catholic hierarchy, the main opponents of the bill put up a strong fight by misrepresenting
the intended purpose of the bill as a communist onslaught on a minority community. They led a series of agitations and appealed to the Centre not to accord Presidential assent to the bill. Finally the bill was referred to the Supreme Court and it held that clauses 14 and 15 of the bill were unconstitutional. The bill was revised in the light of the opinion of Supreme Court and obtained the President’s assent in 1959.

During the agitation, the whole of Kerala was getting divided along support and opposition to the bill. The Catholic Church succeeded in getting the support of the Nair community and its leader Mannath Padmanabhan opposing the bill, declared a ‘war of liberation’ against the Communist government. Finally the unprecedented opposition against the Education bill and its continuance in the form of a ‘liberation war’ lead to the dismissal of the Government in 1959.

In all the three major cases referred above, one finds that any attempt to reorganise the educational system calls-forth strong opposition from the private managements. What accounts for such a resistance from the management and what prevents the government from taking a strong decision? A closer examination of problem reveals that the present educational system in Kerala is intertwined with the socio-political set up of the state. In the educational system, private managements are very powerful both on a communal and organisational basis. Although most of the educational institutions have been built up with public contributions, managements enjoy unlimited freedom in the appointment of

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23 Nair Service Society welcomed the provisions of the bill at the initial stage. But they joined the agitation after one year. It is said that Nairs supported the agitation because they were the worst affected community, when the same government introduced the Agrarian Relations Bill curtailing the influence enjoyed by the landlords – predominantly Nairs – and ensure security to the tenants (Mathew 1987).
teaching and non-teaching staff. Since the government is paying the salaries of
the staff, many of the managements find it as a profitable enterprise with which
they can collect money in the form of donations for every appointment of the staff
in their institutions. Although this practice is well-known, governments do not
want to interfere for fear of mounting pressure from communal forces. Private
managements have succeeded in giving a communal colour to the various
agitations on the pretext that governments are curtailing the minority rights. The
socio-economic and political set up of the state is very conducive in supporting the
vested interests of the powerful caste/community educational agencies. Education
has become a strong instrument of power in the hands of private managements and
the successive governments in Kerala do not want to destabilise this power
equation for fear of loosing power.24 With the large net-work of schools and
colleges, private managements have a very strong hold over their respective
communities. During election time they play this card very successfully to elect
the party of their choice.

The role of the private managements is central to the education system
of Kerala. But the continuous pressure tactics played by the powerful community/
caste educational agencies are preventing the government from initiating any
meaningful changes in the educational sector. Communalisation, politicisation
and commercialisation of the educational system have already affected the
quality of education in the state. Although it is well placed in terms of literacy, Kerala
ranks below 17 other states in respect of the levels of learning achieved by school
students according to a study conducted by National Council for Educational

24 Since the governments wants to please the minorities, they have even allotted the education
portfolio to the parties representing the minorities. For the last 25 years, this portfolio is
handled by minority political parties.
Research and Training (NCERT) in 1998. One can identify in the educational system of Kerala, the historical role played by the private agencies for the widespread diffusion of education and also the inability of the government in taking corrective steps against the private agencies. Thus the governments in Kerala are found caught up in the whirlpool of ‘communalisation of politics and commercialisation of education’ (Mathew 1987).

Conclusion

The history of educational initiatives in Kerala reviewed in this chapter briefly account for the revolutionary changes in the educational expansion of Kerala. It explains how a caste ridden, illiterate and hierarchical society was transformed into a highly literate society conscious of their rights and obligations. It emphasises the role played by the past rulers in the educational development through their policy changes and educational reforms. Such changes not only formalised the education system but also encouraged the private efforts in education. The unprecedented educational expansion especially during the 20th century shows the interrelationship between the political decisions and educational activities. The power of education as an instrument of enlightenment and empowerment was cleverly utilised by the social reformers of the state paving way for opening a large number of schools all over the state. Kerala witnessed a high level of rivalry among the various communities and castes during this period for getting their share in the distribution of educational institutions. With the active co-operation of the public, irrespective of caste/creed differences, the educational efforts of these agencies succeeded in raising adequate resources for the expansion of schooling facilities in Kerala. This was one of the unique features of Kerala’s educational development found lacking in
other states. Kerala overcame the inadequacy of government funding in the educational sector with such public action. In short, Kerala's remarkable record in the field of literacy and schooling facilities was the outcome of a joint initiative by the government and society for the last two centuries.

After reviewing the educational initiative on a macro level, it would be proper to have a grass-root level understanding of educational initiatives: the challenges and ethos of the times, the response and emergence of local leadership and efforts in resource -- men and materials -- mobilisation. These are aspects of public action and form the subject matter of chapter IV.