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## **Progress of Primary Education in West Bengal and Kerala: A Comparative Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

*The present study has been conducted to compare the progress of primary education in West Bengal and Kerala. The data were collected from DISE: Flash Statistics. The data were analyzed critically with logical approach considering various factors that influenced the primary education system. The findings of the study revealed that the access and infrastructure of primary education system in West Bengal was more developed than in Kerala since 2005. The composite educational development index was dropped from the year 2008 to 2014 in Kerala and in this respect, West Bengal was better than Kerala. This suggested that the status of primary education was rapidly developed from the year 2008 to 2014 than that of Kerala.*

***Key Words: Primary education, West Bengal, Kerala, Educational Development Index.***

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**Introduction:** Primary education or elementary education is crucial for any nation to form greater mankind. It is the foundation on which the progress of every citizen and the nation as a whole built on. Elementary education is a critical input in human resource development and is essential for the country's economic growth. Any person in modern society requires knowledge and skill to participate in various social processes in the public domain and being associated with gainful economic activities. In recent past, India has made a huge progress in terms of increasing primary education enrolment, retention, regular attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately two thirds of the population. At the same time, the quality of elementary education in India has also been a major concern. Article 45 of the Constitution stipulates that the 'State shall endeavor to provide, within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.'

In most countries, it is compulsory for children to receive primary education although it is permissible for parents to provide it. The major goals of primary education are achieving basic literacy and numeracy among all pupils, as well as establishing foundations in science, mathematics, geography, history and other social sciences. The United Nations Millennium Development Goal is to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015, by which time they aim to ensure that all children everywhere regardless of race or gender, will be able to complete primary schooling. In order to achieve the goal by 2015, the United Nations estimates that all children at the official entry age for primary school would have had to be attending classes by 2009. This would depend on the duration of the primary level as well as how well the school schools retain students until the end of the cycle. Also, not only is it important for children to be enrolled but countries will need to ensure that there are a sufficient amount of teachers and classrooms to meet the demand.

West Bengal is one of the 29 states in India with an area of 88752 Sq.Km. and with a population of 8,02,21,171 according to 2001 Census. The Government of West Bengal established a registered society named 'Paschim Bangla Rajya Prathamik Siksha Unnayan Sansita' on 2nd February 1995 as an autonomous and independent body for implementation of the West Bengal Elementary Education

Project and to function as a societal mission for bringing about a fundamental change in the basic education system. West Bengal has a very much cultural tradition from a long year. This state was on top of the country in respect to education, culture. Many great persons were born in this state.

On the other hand, in Kerala, there have been strong education movements in the state since the pre-independence days and the government has consistently spent a much larger proportion of its budget on education since independence. Kerala has the highest proportion of private primary schools and it also subsidizes the highest proportion of students in private schools. Both of these facts give the citizens of Kerala wider effective choice in selecting primary schools for their children. Many of these private schools are run by various religious groups in the state and they are generally more likely to be successful in exerting pressure on parents to send their children to school. Since religious education, formal or informal, is part of schoolwork, parents are also more likely to have their children go to school. Moreover, Kerala uses its public funds to encourage competition among schools. Most parents chose to send their children to the nearest school. By subsidizing transportation costs, Kerala helps parents send their children to the school they consider the best, irrespective of the distance. This in turn increases competition among schools. Provision of direct scholarships to students in Kerala also leads to the same result. With the scholarship money, students can go to any school of their choice.

Parth J Shah (1998) stated that it was surprising that in a thoroughly Marxist state like Kerala, 60 percent of the rural primary schools are private, as compared to only 11 percent in West Bengal. The proportion of private primary schools in Kerala is the highest in the country. Indian Institute of Management Calcutta ( 2011) stated in an interim report ‘Restructuring of School Education System in West Bengal’ that in the state of West Bengal the total number of government schools providing primary education is 51016 (Provisional DISE 2010-11), out of which 50604 are pure primary schools. It also showed that children going into formal elementary education system would reduce over time both in absolute numbers and in percentage.

Kerala and West Bengal are chosen for the analysis in order to ease any doubt about state government’s ideological commitment to the improvement of people’s education.

**Objectives:**

The objectives of the study were –

1. To assess the progress of the primary education of Kerala.
2. To assess the progress of the primary education of West Bengal.
3. To compare the progress of primary education between Kerala and West Bengal.

**Methodology:** The study adopted analytical survey method since it aims to compare the primary education of Kerala and West Bengal. The data were collected from DISE: Flash Statistics.

The data were analyzed critically with logical approach considering various factors that influenced the primary education system.

**Result and Discussion:**

Table-1: Number of recognized institutions (Elementary): All Managements

State	Number of recognized institutions (Elementary)								
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
West Bengal	59223	67265	70010	70771	88556	90187	92066	94572	94958
Kerala	11381	12183	12426	12352	12425	12924	15534	16287	17023

Source: *DISE : Flash Statistics*

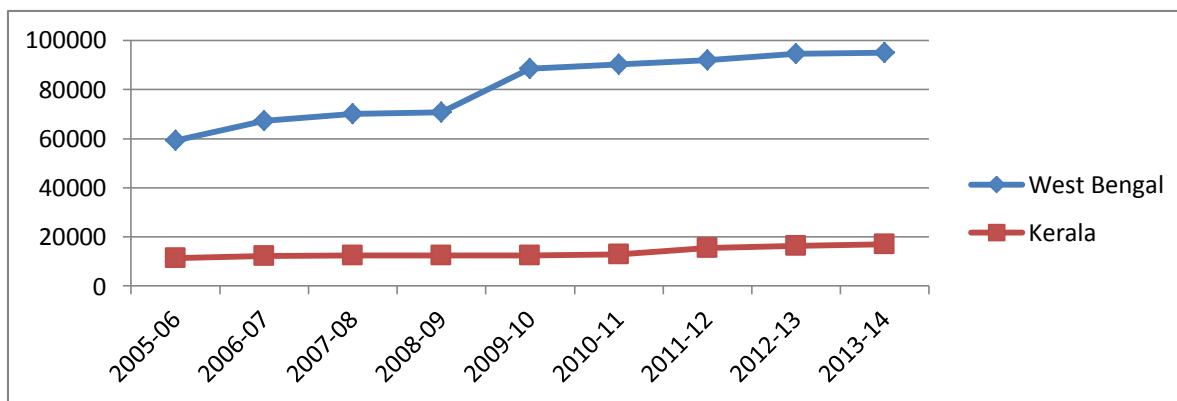


Figure 1: Variation of number of recognized institutions (elementary) from 2005 to 2014.

From the above table and figure, it was clear that West Bengal has increased elementary institutions much rapidly than Kerala from 2005 to 2014. The increment is maximum from 2009 to 2010 for West Bengal.

Table 2: Average Number of Instructional Days

State	Average Number of Instructional Days in an academic year							
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
West Bengal	218	222	233	210	202	201	201	216
Kerala	183	181	181	173	183	184	198	195

Source: DISE : Flash Statistics

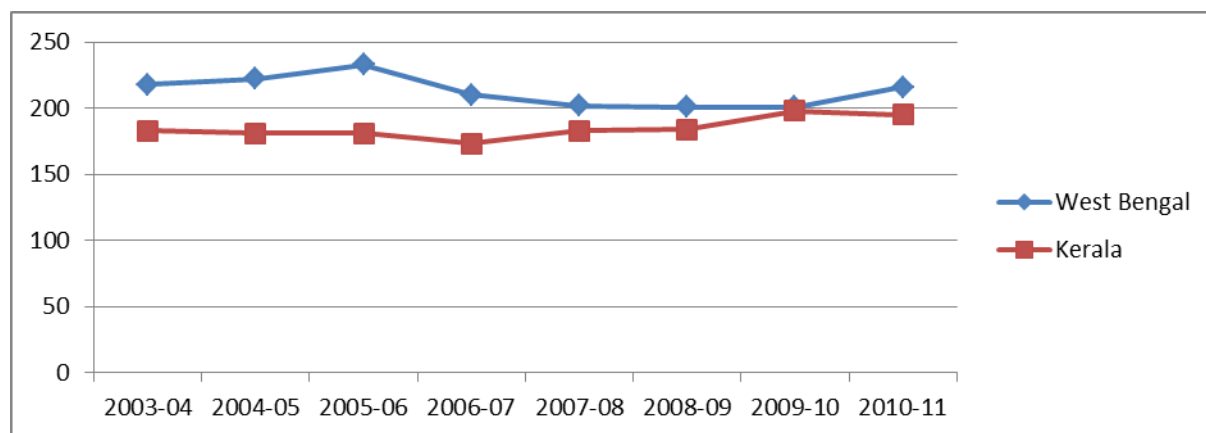


Figure 2: Variation of Average Number of Instructional Days

The average number of instructional days was changed a little both in case of West Bengal and Kerala. This change was not significant. But in West Bengal, it was decreased from 2005.

ACCESS:

Table 3: Primary Schools/Sections per thousand Child Population

State	Primary Schools/Sections per thousand Child Population (6 to 11 Years)								
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
West Bengal	6	7	7	8	10	10	10	10	10
Kerala	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	6

Source: DISE : Flash Statistics

Figure 3: Showing Primary Schools/Sections per thousand Child Population from 2005 to 2014.

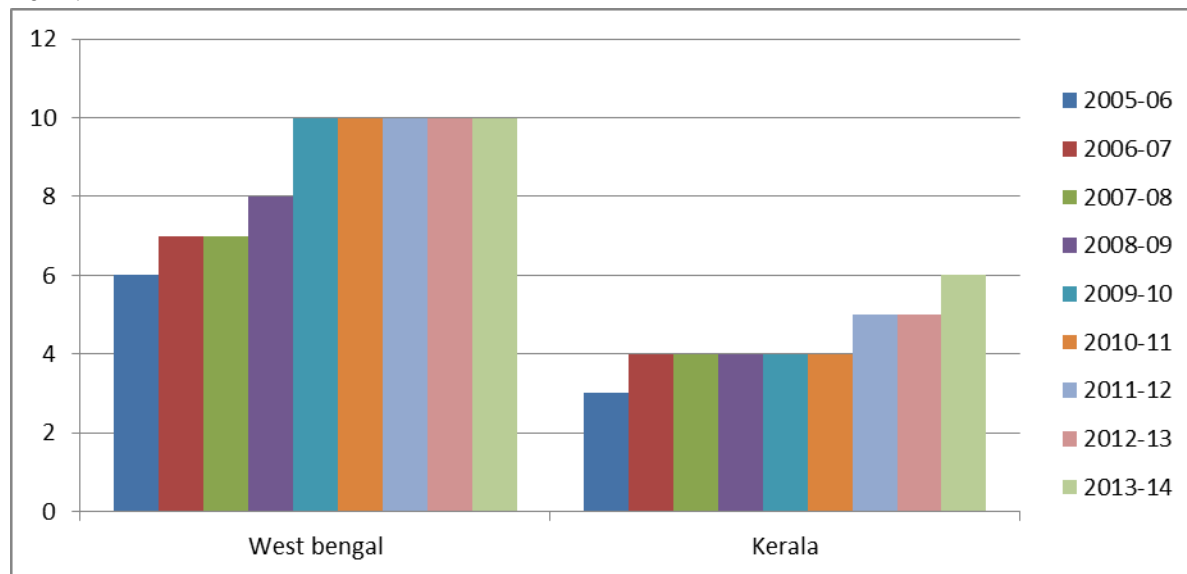


Table 3 and figure 3 depicted that the number of primary schools per thousand child population was greater in case of West Bengal than Kerala. But the number was constant for West Bengal from 2009 to 2014.

**Infrastructure:**

Table 4: Average Student-Classroom Ratio

Year \ State	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
West Bengal	61	58	55	54	51	47	42	40	41	37	32
Kerala	28	27	29	25	25	25	27	25	24	24	24

Source: DISE : Flash Statistics

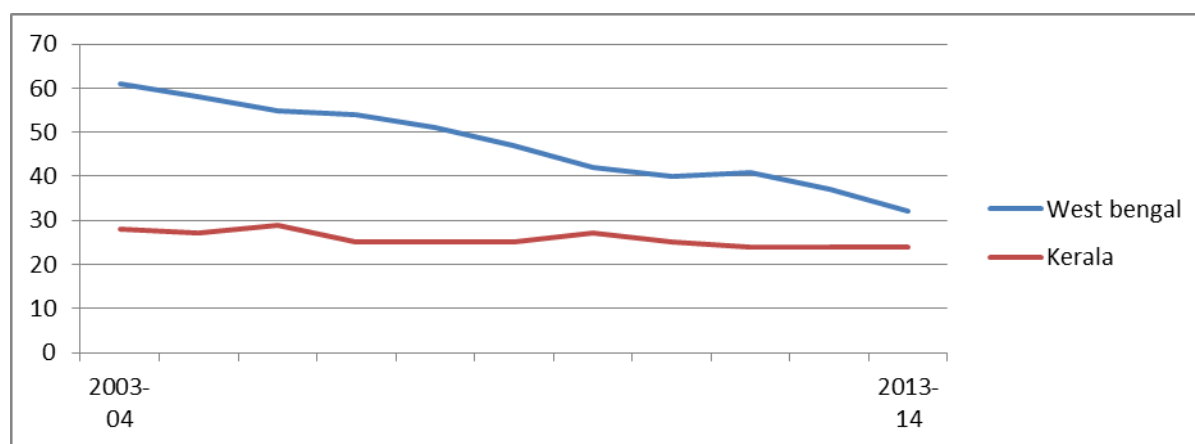


Figure 4: Showing variation of average Student-Classroom ratio.

The figure showed that average student-classroom ratio decreased gradually in West Bengal from 2013 to 2014. On the other hand, in Kerala, student-classroom ratio remained almost constant in that time interval.

Table 5: Pupil-Teacher Ratio

State	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
West Bengal	57	55	54	51	48	47
Kerala	30	28	29	27	22	25

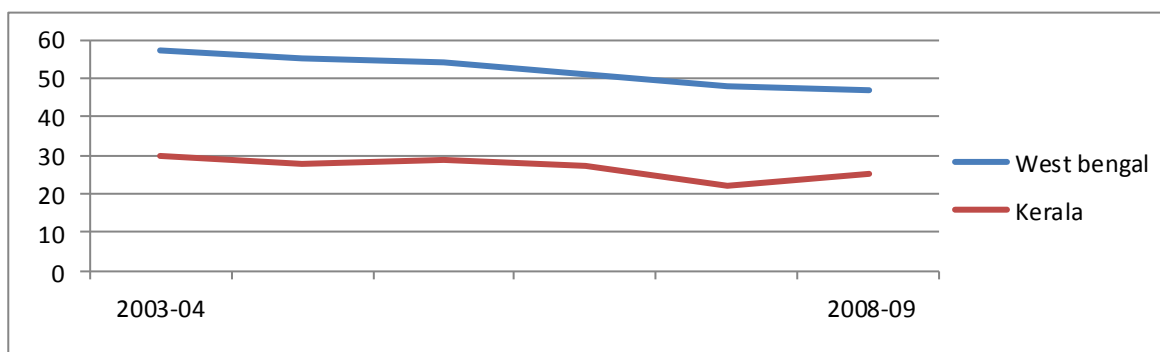


Figure 5: Showing variation of Pupil-Teacher Ratio.

The people-teacher ratio in West Bengal decreased steadily from 2003 to 2009 (57 to 47). But in Kerala, people-teacher ratio decreased a little-bit.

**Outcome: Net Enrolment Ratio**

Table 6: Net Enrolment Ratio

State	Net Enrolment Ratio (Primary level)					
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2012-13	2013-14
West Bengal	82.86	84.47	84.07	84.51	93.19	92.09
Kerala	63.90	66.63	67.96	65.28	85.95	85.78

Source: DISE : Flash Statistics

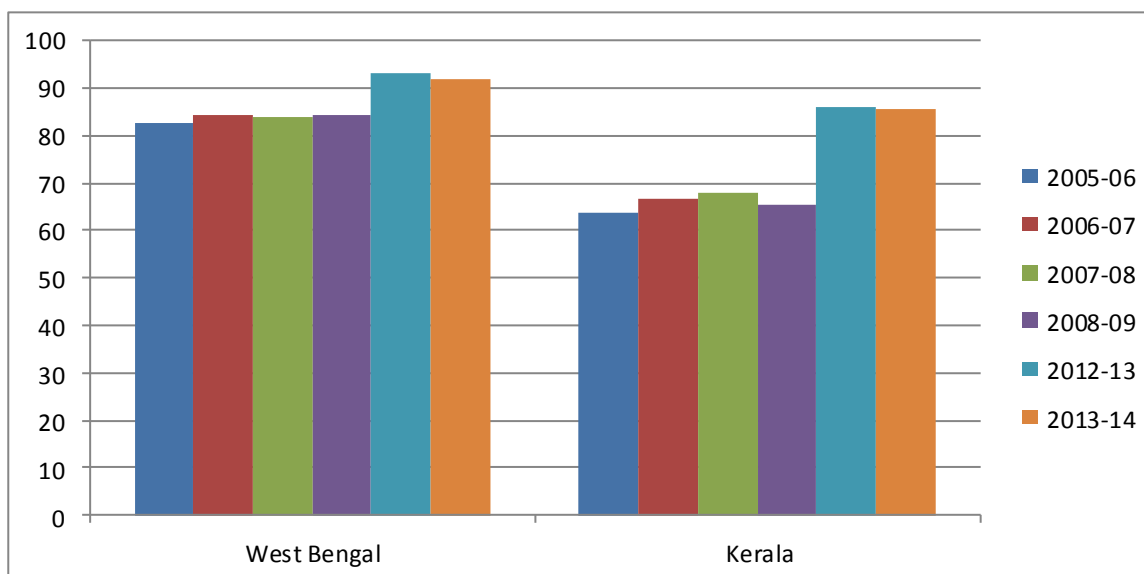


Figure 6: Variation of Net Enrolment Ratio (Primary level).

The net enrolment ratio at primary level was better in West Bengal than in Kerala for the time 2005 to 2014. But Kerala has sharply increased from the year 2009.

Drop-out Rate

Table 7: Drop-out Rate

State	Average Drop-out rate (primary)							
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
West Bengal	9.44	9.41	7.98	8.66	6.49	6.61	6.56	6.30
Kerala	1.80	-	-	-	-	0.08	-	-

Source: DISE : Flash Statistics

From the table, it was clear that the drop-out rate in West Bengal has decreased gradually from 2005. On the other hand, in Kerala the drop-out rate was negative in some years.

Composite Educational Development Index: All Schools: All Managements

Table 8: Composite EDI (Primary and Upper Primary level)

State	Composite EDI (Primary and Upper Primary level)					
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
West Bengal	0.494	0.503	0.610	0.495	0.527	0.515
Kerala	0.756	0.772	0.804	0.637	0.603	0.696

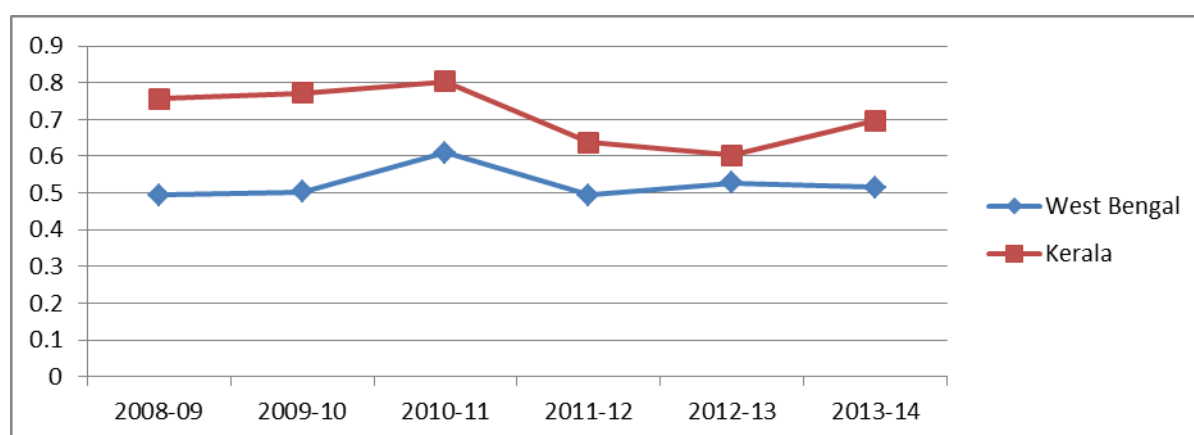


Figure 7: Showing variation of Composite EDI (Primary and Upper Primary level).

From the above table and figure, it was clear that composite EDI of primary and upper primary level was decreased from 2010 in case of Kerala. On the other hand, in West Bengal, EDI remained almost constant from 2008 to 2014.

**Conclusion:** From the above discussion, it was found that West Bengal has increased number of elementary institutions much rapidly than Kerala from 2005 to 2014. This was significant issue. The average number of instructional days was almost constant in West Bengal and in Kerala. The number of primary schools per thousand child population was greater in case of West Bengal than Kerala from 2005 to 2014. This suggested that the access of primary education in West Bengal was more developed than in Kerala. Average student-classroom ratio decreased gradually in West Bengal from 2013 to 2014. On the other hand, in Kerala, student-classroom ratio remained almost constant in that interval. On the other hand, the people-teacher ratio in West Bengal decreased steadily from 2003 to 2009 and in greater momentum than in case of Kerala. This implied that West Bengal has improved better than Kerala in case of people-teacher ratio. West Bengal has also showed improvement in case of student-classroom ratio. The net enrolment ratio at primary level was better in West Bengal than in Kerala for the time 2005 to 2014. But the drop-out rate was much better in Kerala than that of West Bengal. Kerala has improved net enrolment ratio sharply from 2009 than West Bengal.

The composite educational development index dropped from the year 2008 to 2014 in Kerala and in this respect, West Bengal was better than Kerala. This suggested that the status of primary education system was rapidly developed from the year 2008 to 2014 than that of Kerala.

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