

Summary Report

Impact Assessment of “National Overseas Scholarship for SC Students”



Government of India
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Department of Social Justice & Empowerment



Centre for Market Research & Social Development
39, Ground Floor, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi-110065
Tel: 011-46578478, 41621978, Email: officemail.cmsd@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Central Sector Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship facilitates the low-income students belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Denotified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, Landless Agricultural Labourers and Traditional Artisans category to obtain higher education viz., Master degree or Ph. D courses by studying abroad thereby improving their Economic and Social status. 30% of the awards for each year are earmarked for women candidates. In order to be eligible for scholarship, at least 60% of marks or equivalent grade in the qualifying examination is required. In case of Ph. D courses, the qualifying exam is Masters Degree and for Masters Degree courses, the qualifying examination is Bachelors' Degree. Candidates having unconditional offer of admission to top 500 ranked foreign Institutes/Universities as per the latest available QS World University Ranking only will be selected for grant of scholarship during the first round of selection. The age of candidate should not be more than 35 (Thirty Five) years, as on first day of April of the selection year. Total family income from all sources shall not exceed Rs. 8.00 lakh per annum in the preceding financial year. Under the NOS scheme, the funds are not directly disbursed to the students. The funds are allocated to Indian Missions abroad who makes payments of tuition fees/maintenance allowance/other allowances to the University/students.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India engaged Centre for Market Research and Social Development to conduct impact assessment of “National Overseas Scholarship for SC students”. The key objectives of this impact assessment study are:

- 1) To make an assessment of the extent up to which the scheme has been successful in delivering the desired benefits to SC students.
- 2) To analyze efficacy and effectiveness of the scheme from the perspective of successful completion of courses by beneficiaries of the scheme within time and gainful utilization of acquired professional and other expertise by way of employment or entrepreneurships.
- 3) To assess the socio-economic background of the beneficiaries.
- 4) To evaluate effectiveness of the scheme towards obtaining higher education in abroad or in India by the selected candidates.
- 5) To ascertain role of the scheme in changing social status of the family after completion of the course by the awardee.
- 6) To make comparison of the scheme with the similar schemes implemented by the State Governments/other Central Government Departments.

- 7) To ascertain the number of students admitted in each discipline (e.g. Engineering/ Medicine/ Dentistry, Law, Management and other specialized streams) under the scheme during the reference period.
- 8) To obtain feedback from admitted students about quality education being provided by the identified institutions.
- 9) To examine the problems, challenges and constraints in implementation of scheme and suggesting policy measures for effective implementation of the scheme.
- 10) To examine the overall impact the scheme has had on SC students and the reasons for varied rate of success across different states/UTs.
- 11) To examine about the grievance redressal mechanism at the Institute level.
- 12) To conduct the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT analysis) of the scheme;
- 13) Recommendations/suggestions from beneficiaries for necessary restructuring to be carried in the scheme to achieve desired results and need for its continuation.
- 14) How increased awareness among the targeted people/families living in remote areas of States has prompted the prospective beneficiaries to avail the benefits of various welfare schemes meant for them?
- 15) Improvement in application procedure, selection process and disbursement of Scholarships/subsidies to eligible Students in the reference period of 2014-15 to 2018-19.
- 16) Constraints in obtaining scholarships/subsidies under the scheme in the reference period 2014-15 to 2018-19 from the perspective of beneficiaries and reasons thereof.
- 17) Impact assessment if the name of any particular scheme of Central/State Government has discouraged them from applying under current scheme.
- 18) Examining the effectiveness of the scheme in bridging the educational gap and promoting- social inclusion among disadvantaged communities.
- 19) Assessing the impact of the scheme on gender equality in education, particularly in terms of increased enrolment and retention rates for girls.
- 20) Analysing the role of the scheme in promoting skill development and vocational training among beneficiaries.
- 21) Analysing the long-term outcomes of the scheme, such as improved employability, higher income levels, and enhanced quality of life for the beneficiaries.
- 22) To assess the robustness of procedures for selection of students for various courses and fixation of fee.

- 23) Any other improvements or additions to the scheme that can make it more effective and meet its objective in the present scenario.
- 24) Key findings based on the data collected from the field on the objectives of the study.
- 25) Shortcomings identified in the design of the existing scheme if any; and
- 26) Recommendations/ suggestions for necessary restructuring to be carried in the scheme to achieve desired results and need for its continuation.

The study was based on the explorative, descriptive and analytical approach to study. Both secondary and primary research was undertaken to generate required information. Both secondary data and primary data were used for this purpose. Interview schedule was prepared for the beneficiary students to elicit the desired information.

The reference period of the study was 2014-15 to 2018-19. The primary data was collected from 40 beneficiary students benefitted under the scheme during the reference period. The data collection for the study was conducted during April and May 2024.

Major Findings

Financial and physical achievements under the scheme

- 1) The data on expenditure incurred under National Overseas Scholarship for SC students during the reference period of five years (from 2014-15 to 2018-19) shows that the expenditure under the scheme has been increased significantly in 2015-16 and 2016-17, and then decreased significantly in 2017-18 and 2018-19. The highest expenditure under the scheme was incurred in 2016-17 with an expenditure of Rs. 14.02 crore, and the lowest expenditure was incurred in 2017-18 with an expenditure of Rs. 4.59 crore.
- 2) While the expenditure was Rs. 8.78 crore in 2014-15, it was Rs. 13.45 crore in 2015-16, Rs. 14.02 crore in 2016-17, Rs. 4.59 crore in 2017-18, and Rs. 5.97 crore in 2018-19.
- 3) A total number of 195 SC students were awarded National Overseas Scholarship during 2014-15 to 2018-19. While 20 students were benefitted in 2014-15, 20 benefitted in 2015-16, 46 in 2016-17, 64 in 2017-18, and 45 in 2018-19. The highest number of 64 students were benefitted in 2017-18, while the lowest number of 20 students were benefitted under the scheme each in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Socio-economic background of the students

- 4) The secondary data of 148 beneficiary students collected from the Ministry illustrates that male beneficiaries were 66.9% of the total beneficiaries, while 33.1% were female beneficiaries. Out of 40 surveyed beneficiary students, 72.5% were male and 27.5% were female students.
- 5) The scheme guideline says that 30% of the awards for each year shall be earmarked for women candidates. However, in case, adequate women candidates are not available as per the stipulations of the scheme, then the unutilized slots will be utilized by selecting suitable male candidates. Though the 27.5% female beneficiary students responded to the data collection, 33.1% female students have been benefitted under the scheme during the reference period of 2014-15 to 2018-19. This shows that gender equality has been achieved under the scheme.
- 6) As per the scheme guidelines, the age of the applicant under the scheme should not be more than 35 years, as on first day of April for selection year. Analyzing the present age of the beneficiary students, it is seen that the present age of the beneficiaries is between 27 years to 38 years, which shows that no beneficiary was above 35 years of age at the time of their selection for the scholarship.
- 7) The base locality of the majority (77.5%) of the surveyed beneficiaries is found to be urban, and the locality of 22.5% beneficiaries is rural. This shows that the reach of the scheme to the rural areas of the country is not so significant as very less rural students go abroad for higher studies compared to the urban students.
- 8) Analysis of occupation of the parents/guardians of the surveyed beneficiary students illustrates that 17.5% are farmers, 32.5% are casual labour, 25% are in government service, 5% are in private service, 15% are in business and 5% are traditional artisan.
- 9) The study observed that 10% parents/guardians' income is up to Rs. 2.5 lakh per annum, while 42.5% parents/guardians' annual income is above Rs. 2.5 lakh to Rs. 5 lakh, and 47.5% parents/guardians' annual income is above Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 8 lakh.
- 10) On analysis of the disciplines or courses being pursued by surveyed beneficiary students during the period of scholarship reveals that the beneficiary students have undertaken courses in Architecture and Urban Design, Music Production, Computer Science, Construction Management, Business Management, Public Health and Health Management, Construction Science and Management, Internet of Things, Business Analysis and Strategic Management, Wireless and Microwave Communication, etc.
- 11) On analysis of the level of courses being pursued by surveyed beneficiary students during the period of scholarship reveals that 67.5% were doing masters level courses and 32.5% were doing Ph. D. level courses.

- 12) Since the reference period of the study was from 2014-15 to 2018-19, the study intended to know the highest educational qualification of the beneficiary students. On analysis it was found that the highest qualification of 50% students is masters and of 50% students is doctorate.
- 13) The study observed that beneficiary students of NOS have studied in USA, Australia, European countries and in Japan. Highest number of beneficiary students have studied in USA, followed by Australia, UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Japan.
- 14) The study observed that the beneficiary students of NOS were studying in renowned universities across the globe, like AIX-Marseille University, Cardiff University, Clemson University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Marist College, San Diego University, The University of Manchester, The University of York, Tokushima University, Umea University, University of Adelaide, University of Glasgow, University of New South Wales, University of Stuttgart, University of Technology in Sydney, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Victoria University, etc.

Awareness about the Scheme

- 15) When the beneficiary students were asked about their source of awareness of the scheme, 20% beneficiary students reported that they have come to know about the scheme from the newspaper, while 37.5% have come to know about the scheme from the internet, 37.5% have come to know from the friends, and 5% have come to know from their family member.
- 16) Most (85%) of the beneficiary students reported that the increased awareness about the scheme had prompted them to avail the national overseas scholarship.
- 17) 15% surveyed students reported that they are aware of any similar central or state government scheme which has discouraged the SC students from applying for national overseas scholarship for SC students. They reported that Maharashtra Government Scholarship for SC-ST candidates for abroad studies (only for Maharashtra students) is one scheme which discouraged the SC students from applying for national overseas scholarship for SC students.

Implementation of the scheme

- 18) The surveyed beneficiary students were asked in which year they were selected for the national overseas scholarship. It was found 10% students were selected in 2014-15, 15%

students in 2015-16, 22.5% students in 2016-17, 17.5% students in 2017-18, and 35% were selected in 2018-19.

- 19) It was observed that 40% of the beneficiary SC students faced difficulty in getting the scholarship. The difficulty faced by the students is mainly for the long processing time and delay in getting the scholarship.
- 20) Delay in processing of documents for lengthy administration work, university verification procedure, getting sureties for bonds, solvency certificate, medical certificate were the major difficulties faced by the students. Other difficulties faced by the beneficiary students in getting the scholarship were: (1) There was a lack of end-to-end communication throughout the process. (2) State level offices take significantly longer to process. Moreover, many state government officials are unaware of the scheme, leading to repeated inquiries and delay in processing the files.
- 21) The study observed that online grievance portal for the scholarship was quite ineffective during the reference period. However, the grievance redressal mechanism at embassies and universities were found to be effective. The grievance redressal mechanism as reported by the beneficiary students were: (1) The embassy was very swift with their action along with the university and scholarship division. The embassy was good in terms of communication and disbursed the scholarship amount timely; (2) The university handled everything, from contacting the embassy to ensuring the tuition fees were paid on time.
- 22) During the interaction with the beneficiary students, the students were asked about the quality of education provided by the institutes on certain parameters like education facilities and infrastructure in the institutes, quality of faculties, teaching & learning pattern, curriculum implementation and assessment, and management & discipline in the institutes. The study observed that the quality of education at the universities/institutes from where the beneficiary students have studied during the period of getting the NOS is very good. 87.5% students informed that that the universities/institutes provided them very good quality education, while 12.5% rated the quality of education as good.

Outcomes of the scheme

- 23) Since the study reference period is 2014-15 to 2018-19, it was found that all those students benefitted under national overseas scholarship scheme have completed the course for which the scholarship was provided.

- 24) Present status of beneficiary students reveals that only 70% beneficiary students are in job employment, while 15% are self-employed. Thus, the study found that 85% beneficiaries are either job-employed or self-employed. Also, 10% beneficiaries are presently student and 5% beneficiaries are presently unemployed.
- 25) Out of 28 beneficiary students who are presently job employed, it was further found that 7.1% are employed in government sector, while most (92.9%) are job employed in private sector.
- 26) While analyzing the monthly income of 34 job-employed and self-employed beneficiaries, it was found that monthly income of 50% beneficiaries is up to Rs. 50,000/- , it is above Rs. 50,000/- to Rs. 1 lakh for 11.8% beneficiaries, it is above Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakh for 14.7% beneficiaries, and the monthly income is above Rs. 2 lakh for 23.5% beneficiaries.
- 27) 77.5% beneficiary students indicated that the scholarship has helped them to a large extent in successful completion of course in time, while 17.5% indicated the help as moderate, and 5% indicated the scholarship had them helped them slightly in successful completion of course in time.
- 28) 87.5% beneficiary students indicated that the scholarship had helped them to a large extent to obtain higher education, while 12.5% indicated it had helped them to some extent to obtain higher education.
- 29) 72.5% beneficiary students said that the scholarship has helped to a large extent for changing social status of their families after completion of the course, 5% said the help as moderate, 17.5% said the help as slight, and 5% beneficiary students said that the scholarship has not helped them for changing social status of their families after completion of the course.
- 30) 82.5% beneficiary students said that the scholarship has helped to a large extent for their skill development and vocational training, while 10% said the help was moderate, and 7.5% said the help was slight for their skill development and vocational training.
- 31) 72.5% beneficiary students informed that the scholarship has helped them to a large extent in improving their employability, while 12.5% informed the help as moderate, and 15% informed the help was slight in improving their employability.
- 32) 67.5% beneficiary students said that the scholarship has helped them to a large extent for their employment or entrepreneurship, while 22.5% said the help as moderate, 5% said the help as slight, and 5% beneficiary students said that the scholarship has not helped them for their employment or entrepreneurship.

- 33) 72.5% beneficiary students said that the scholarship has helped them to a large extent for their enhanced quality of life, while 5% said the help as moderate, and 22.5% said the scholarship had helped slightly for their enhanced quality of life.
- 34) 72.5% beneficiary students informed that the national overseas scholarship scheme for SC students is very effective in bridging the educational gap and promoting social inclusion among SC communities, while 22.5% informed that the scheme is somewhat effective and 5% informed that the scheme is slight effective in bridging the educational gap and promoting social inclusion.
- 35) 72.5% beneficiary students feel that the national overseas scholarship scheme for SC students has been successful to a large extent in delivering the desired benefits to SC students, while 22.5% feel that the scheme is somewhat successful and 5% feel that the scheme is slight successful in delivering the desired benefits to SC students.
- 36) Most (90%) students viewed that the overall impact of the scheme on SC students is excellent or good. While 62.5% students viewed that the impact of the scheme on SC students is excellent, 27.5% viewed it as good. This shows that the scheme plays an important role in making higher education affordable in good foreign universities for the students belonging to SC communities.
- 37) The study observed that highest number of students benefitted under the scheme were from Maharashtra. Lack of awareness about the scheme in other states than Maharashtra is the major reason for varied success of the scheme across the states.

Suggestions

Suggestions for changes in policy for effective implementation of the scheme

- 1) For enhanced outreach and awareness about the scheme, collaboration with local community organizations, schools and colleges, as well as the use of digital platforms are required to disseminate information about the application process and the benefits of the scheme. Promoting awareness among students about the scholarship could emphasize the advantages of international education, enabling them to expand their horizons, foster independence, achieve significant milestones, and make a positive impact on the society.
- 2) Application process should be simplified by online application and tracking, and providing updates on time. Minimum documentation, minimum contact with officials will give better result of the scheme.
- 3) Pursuing this scholarship and completing education in world class university was tough journey for many students. So, Ministry should increase manpower at NOS cell for faster approval of the application, proper communication with the students and improved monitoring of the scheme implementation.
- 4) Ministry may give advisory to national institutes as well as central universities to allow doctoral candidates benefitted under the scheme to teach and conduct research in their institutes/universities as the students who completed their doctoral degrees abroad could share their knowledge, findings and learnings with the students of India. The students who could compete to get higher degree from reputed foreign universities can of course change the research culture in India. If these institutes/universities provide option to the students especially those who completed their research abroad (doctoral or master by research) to serve national level institutions will help the country in research preventing brain drain.
- 5) Ministry should make a provision of getting mandatory feedback of the students in the portal after completion of their course, but before their return to India. On the basis of the feedbacks of the students, time to time policy level changes could be done for the better implementation and impact of the scheme.

Suggestions for necessary restructuring in the scheme that can make it more effective and meet its objectives in the present-day context

- 6) The current living expenses should be revised considering the inflation and hike in expenses globally as it is hard to survive for the students with the maintenance allowance provided under the scheme. This leads the students to work part-time shifting their focus from studies to "earn some more" for survival.

Suggestions for other improvements or additions to the scheme that can make it more effective and meet its objective in the present scenario

- 7) As per the scheme guidelines, the annual income ceiling of the family of the applicant is Rs. 8 lakh. However, it is suggested to give priority to the poor and needy applicants under the scheme whose annual family income is below Rs. 4 lakh, and has no other way to get funding for abroad education.
- 8) There are times when the student has to conduct his/her research in India, although it is part of his/her PhD research component, the Ministry reduces the allowances to a significant amount. This reduces productivity as research requires a constant inflow of money. When the student is abroad, he/she has all required consumables, equipments and support from the university, so it is easy to manage it with a lesser amount of money. However, if the research component requires working in India for some time, it requires paid resources, travelling and other expenses such as stationery, internet, access to various softwares, etc. Thus, it is suggested to the Ministry to pay the student a considerable amount for his/her research in India. This could be streamlined by asking the student to produce a letter from his/her institute/university mentioning what sort of resources the student need while conducting the research in India.