

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Post Matric Scholarship is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme and implemented through State Government and UT Administration. The Scheme provides financial assistance to the Scheduled Caste students studying at post matriculation or post secondary stage to enable them to complete their education. These scholarships are available for studies in India only and are awarded by the Government of the State/ Union Territory to which the applicant actually belongs i.e. permanently settled.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India engaged Centre for Market Research and Social Development to conduct the study “Outcome Based Evaluation of Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC Students”. The key objectives of this evaluation study are:

- (i) To assess outcomes of the Post Matric Scholarship scheme, i.e., how to assist the beneficiaries to pursue higher studies and get a suitable placement of livelihood.
- (ii) The spread of students between government and aided institutions on the one hand and private institutions on the other.
- (iii) Profile of courses for which scholarship amounts are claimed, i.e., the share of scholarships for professional courses vis-a-vis the share of scholarships for general stream courses, technical courses etc.
- (iv) Breakup of the students income criteria-wise to assess whether the poorest of the poor are able to access such scholarship schemes. The profile of the students evaluated would be shown three categories –
 - parental income below Rs.50,000.
 - parental income between Rs.50,000 and Rs. 1 lakh and
 - parental become between Rs. 1 lakh and 2.5 lakhs.
- (v) Mode of disbursal of scholarships, general practices followed in the State –whether tuition and scholarships are received by the institute, whether the student and institute gets and maintenance component respectively the fees or whether the entire scholarship benefit is received by the student in his account.
- (vi) How do institutions utilise funds given for the following purpose : -
 - Book bank grant.
 - Different components of non-refundable fee such as development.
 - grant, fees for library, sports, medical examination etc.

- (vii) How does the State prioritise disbursement of funds to different categories of educational institutions?
- (viii) When arrears are paid for previous years, how does the student receive arrears in case he has passed out of the school/college.
- (ix) What guidelines do the States implement to ensure that the student who pays tuition fees is refunded after reimbursement is done to the institution.
- (x) Does the State have any system for refunding the students the amount they have paid or whether the reimbursement is done to the institution alone and if so whether the institution passes on the reimbursement as regards fees and maintenance due to the students.
- (xi) Details of fee structure of the every institute visited should be provided.
- (xii) Evaluation of students identified for sampling should invariably be followed by evaluation of the institutions where they have been pursuing their studies and the District Social Welfare Office which coordinates the implementation of the scholarship scheme.
- (xiii) The study should assess the ease of accessing scholarship portal where students apply online, dissemination of information and support provided to the students for doing so by the institutions/District Welfare Officers.
- (xiv) What arrangements the States have for paying/ reimbursement of scholarship amount of institutes and students who are studying in other States, i.e., away from their State of domicile.

The study was based on the explorative, descriptive and analytical approach. Both secondary and primary research was undertaken to generate required information. Separate Interview schedules were prepared for the beneficiary students, academic institutions and implementing officials at district and State level to elicit the desired information.

The study covered five states namely Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Tripura and Odisha. From each state, the districts with higher number of students benefitted under the scheme in last three years were purposively selected for the study in consultation with the state officials. Total number of 28753 SC beneficiary students, 384 academic institutions were surveyed across the five states. Also, the officials of State Departments implementing the scheme in selected five states and District Welfare Officers of 26 selected districts were interacted to know the process of implementation of the scheme.

Major Findings

Implementation of the scheme by the states

- The post matric scholarship is implemented in states based on guidelines issued from time to time by it. All states except Tripura have their own PMS portals which regulate the application by students, verification by institutions, sanction by district welfare office and disbursement by the state SC department. In Tripura, applications are submitted by students through national scholarship portal and state conducts verifications and accords sanction offline.
- The scholarship is disbursed through direct benefit transfer to the bank account of students online except in Himachal Pradesh where the tuition fee is directly transferred to the concerned institute. In Odisha, The scholarship in respect of eligible students studying in Government Higher Secondary Schools is transferred to the schools directly.
- In Odisha, students studying outside the state are applying in common application form manually through their institutions to their domicile districts for sanction of scholarship. In Uttarakhand, the eligible students pursuing courses outside the state are entitled to scholarship on completion of study. In Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Tripura, same arrangements for reimbursement are there for all students studying within the state or other states.
- As the scholarship amount including the tuition fee is released directly to the bank accounts of concerned students except in case of Himachal Pradesh, there is no occasion of refund of tuition fee to the student. In Himachal Pradesh, the tuition fees released to the institutions are refunded to students in case they have made full payment of the same prior to release. However, there is no guideline issued by the State in this regard. In Odisha, the Government Higher Secondary Schools are not collecting the tuition fees to the extent of the scholarship amount as decided by the State Government for the category of the students.
- In case the student does not receive the sanctioned amount in a particular academic session, the same is release by the State in the subsequent year and credited to the bank account of the students by the states. In Himachal Pradesh, the same is refunded by the institutes if the tuition fees are already paid by the student and the state does not have any guideline in this regard.

- The post matric scholarship is sanctioned and released to all eligible applicants in states after verification of eligibility conditions and requisite documents. However states follow certain priorities in disbursement. In Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Uttarakhand and Tripura, first priority is given to govt. institutions. In Uttarakhand, after release of scholarship to the eligible students in govt. institutions, students of minority, semi-govt. / govt. aided and private institutions are given the scholarship. In Rajasthan, no priority is given to institutions. However, applicants are released the scholarship in priority of 17 designated categories as decided by the state.
- The study observed that very few institutes have received funds for the purpose of book bank, development, library, sports, medical, etc. The institutes which have received book bank grant have utilized the fund for their central library and purchase of books. The non-refundable fees given to the institutes for development are utilized by the institutes for the purpose of upgrading facilities in the institute, for developing infrastructure and for students' welfare. The grant/ fees given for library, sports, medical examination to the institutes are utilized for purchase of books for the library, purchase of sports equipment, TA-DA to sports participants, first aid, etc.

Particulars of the beneficiary students

- Majority of the surveyed beneficiary students (61.3%) benefitted under PMS-SC were male. The percentage of surveyed female beneficiaries is 38.7%. Compared to other states, more percentage of female beneficiaries were surveyed in Uttarakhand.
- It is observed that 47.6% come under the age group of up to 20 years, while 71.4% beneficiaries belong to the age group of 21 to 25 years, and 1% beneficiaries are in the age group of above 25 years. State wise analysis observed that majority of the beneficiary students in Odisha are up to 20 years of age, while majority of the beneficiary students in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tripura are in the age group of 21 to 25 years.
- On analysis of the courses being pursued by surveyed beneficiary students reveals that 30.5% students are studying in Group-I courses, while 23% in Group-II, 12.2% in Group-III and 34.3% in Group-IV courses.
- Majority (74.1%) of students surveyed are studying in the private institutions, while 25.9% are studying in the government institutions.

- 43.9% parents of surveyed beneficiaries are farmers, 31.3% are casual labour, 11.6% are job-employed and 12.2% are doing small business. Majority of the parents or guardians of the beneficiary students in Rajasthan are farmers, majority of the parents or guardians in Odisha and Tripura are casual labourers, and majority of the parents or guardians in Uttarakhand are small time businessman. However, highest percentage of parents or guardians in Himachal Pradesh are job-employed.
- The study observed that majority (60.3%) of the parents/guardians' income from all sources is below Rs. 50,000/- per annum, while 32.4% parents/guardians' annual income is between Rs.50,000/- and Rs. 1 lakh, and 7.3% parents/guardians' annual income is above Rs. 1 lakh to 2.5 lakhs. State wise analysis of data on parents/guardians' income shows that majority of the parents/guardians' income is below Rs. 50,000/- per annum in Rajasthan, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Tripura, while majority of the parents/guardians' income is above Rs. 50,000/- per annum in Uttarakhand.

Awareness and submission of application

- All the State Governments/UT Administrations announce the details of the scheme and invite applications by issuing an advertisement in the leading newspapers of the State and through their respective websites. It is observed that 32.5% beneficiary students came to know about the scheme from the newspaper, while 17.5% have come to know about the scheme from the internet, 24.5% have come to know from the friends, 16.3% have come to know from institute teachers, 8.3% have come to know from the institute staff, and 0.9% have come to know from the District Welfare Office.
- The study finds that most (89.7%) of the beneficiary students had submitted online application, while 10.4% had submitted the application to the institution where they study. While very few beneficiary students in Odisha and Tripura had submitted the application to the institution, more than one-tenth beneficiary students in Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh had applied for the scholarship by submitting applications to their institutes.
- Beneficiaries who submitted the application form online, 38.9% of them reported that they found difficulty in accessing the scholarship portal and application form submission. While most of the beneficiary students in Rajasthan and majority of the beneficiary students found difficulty in accessing the scholarship portal and application form submission, more than 40% beneficiary students in Himachal Pradesh found difficulty in accessing the scholarship

portal and application form submission. It was observed that beneficiary students in Odisha and Tripura did not find any difficulty in accessing the scholarship portal and application form submission. The difficulty faced by the student in submitting application, is low network availability and slow speed of the portal.

- Most (82.1%) of the beneficiary students informed that they have got information or support from institutes/ District Welfare Officers for submission of online application on scholarship portal. However, 22.7% beneficiary students in Rajasthan, 18.2% Uttarakhand, 14.1% in Odisha and 8.9% beneficiary students in Himachal Pradesh informed that they have not got any information or support from institutes/ District Welfare Officers for submission of online application on scholarship portal. The institutes display the advertisement issued by state government along with necessary guidelines, on their notice board. Some institutes also provide support of a teacher and an assistant to help the students to access scholarship portal and apply online.

Outcomes of the scheme

- 21.7% surveyed students benefitted under the scheme informed that the scholarship has helped them to a large extent to pursue higher study, while 57.5% students indicated that they have been benefitted to some extent for higher study by the scholarship amount, 18.8% students have been benefitted to slight extent, and 2% students informed that they have not been benefitted for higher study by the scholarship amount.
- Present status of beneficiary students revealed that only 0.2% beneficiaries are in job employment, while 4.4% are self-employed. Thus, the study found that 4.6% beneficiaries are job-employed or self-employed while most (95%) beneficiaries are presently student and 0.4% beneficiaries are presently unemployed. The beneficiaries who are employed, most of them were of Odisha, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. 94.9% of students who have completed their studies availing PMS, are doing higher study, while 4.1% are employed and 1% are unemployed.
- Analysis of course wise present status of beneficiary students who have completed the course reveals that 4.8% beneficiary students of Group-I courses are employed, while 3% beneficiary students of Group-II are employed, 6.8% beneficiary students in Group-III are employed, and 1.7% beneficiary students of Group-IV are employed. Further, most of the students (94.9%) are pursuing higher studies.

- While analyzing the monthly income of 1339 job-employed and self-employed beneficiaries, it was found that monthly income of 13.3% beneficiaries is below Rs. 5,000/-, it is Rs. 5,000/- to Rs. 10,000/- for 82.7% beneficiaries, and the monthly income is above Rs. 10,000/- for 4% beneficiaries. Compared to other states, the study observed that more percentage of employed beneficiaries in Uttarakhand are having a monthly income of above Rs. 10,000/-.
- 17.4% beneficiary students indicated that the scholarship has helped a large extent in getting a suitable placement of livelihood, 54.8% indicated the help as moderate, 20.9% indicated the help as slight, and 7% beneficiary students indicated that the scholarship has not helped them in getting a suitable placement of livelihood.
- On adequacy of the scholarship amount given to the students, majority (71.4%) beneficiary students viewed that the scholarship amount given under the scheme is neither adequate nor adequate, while 24% viewed that the scholarship amount is adequate, and 4.6% beneficiary students viewed that the scholarship amount under the scheme is inadequate.
- More than three-fourth (79.9%) surveyed beneficiary students viewed that the income ceiling of Rs. 2.5 lakhs per annum to receive the scholarship is justified, while about one-fifth (20.1%) students viewed the income ceiling of Rs. 2.5 lakhs is unjustified.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The “Outcome Based Evaluation of Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC Students” assessed the various aspects of the implementation and impact of the scholarship provided under the scheme and revealed that the scheme has been successful to a great extent. Even though the support under this scholarship scheme has made substantial impact on the beneficiary students in providing financial assistance for their higher study and completion of respective courses, the performance of the scheme can be improved by giving some importance to the implementation part of the scheme.

Recommendations

- 1) Transparency in the sanction of post matric scholarship is evolving with the introduction of portals, seeding of aadhaar number in the bank accounts of the beneficiary students, and release of scholarship through DBT to the accounts of the beneficiary students. To further strengthen the transparency in the system, the followings are suggested.

- a) States may conduct special audit of institutions with regard to the eligibility conditions, payment of tuition fees and maintenance allowance every year subsequent to release of the tuition fees and maintenance allowance. The audit may also cover the utilization of grant given for the purpose of book bank, fees for library, sports, medical examination etc.
 - b) Special inspection may also be conducted by the States to verify actual boarding status of beneficiary students in the hostels of the academic institutions in respect of those who avail maintenance allowance under the scheme.
- 2) The institutes admitting the beneficiary students should submit annual return to the State Government providing details of admission, pass out and drop out details including the fees received in respect of beneficiary students within one month of disbursement of the scholarship or a date to be fixed by the State Government. The said return may also be uploaded in the State Scholarship Portal as well as the official website of the institute.
 - 3) Transfer of money is done centrally at state level. In case of any problem in transfer, students face problems in follow up and they run after district level officials who cannot solve issues on spot. It is proposed that the disbursement of scholarship may be done at district level and necessary modalities may be worked out by the states.
 - 4) As most of the students are from very poor background, they do not make regular transactions in their bank account and therefore the bank account becomes periodically inactive in some cases and the money transferred online is returned and no intimation is sent to students in this regard. The students have to run from pillar to post to get their scholarship. It is proposed that advisory may be issued by the Government of India to banks to evolve a mechanism where such accounts are not made dormant due to lack of periodic transactions.
 - 5) The poorest of poor students are generally unable to access the benefit as they cannot organise the payment of tuition fees at the time of admission as the scholarship is released to them after 6 to 9 months of admission. The institutes should allow such students to take admission by opening an escrow account in banks so that the tuition fees will be paid to the institute after release of scholarship. Similar dispensation may be considered with regard to maintenance allowance, so that students can avail the institute's hostel facility.
 - 6) As the knowledge of students in English language and computer is generally very poor, workshops should be conducted at least once in a year at school and college level. The detailed procedure of application online and off line should be explained in detail by the institution authorities and doubts of students should be addressed.