INTRODUCTION

Education is the most crucial input for empowering people especially youth with skills and knowledge and giving them access to productive employment in future. Education improves an individual's quality of life. The Central and State Government play an important role in financing the education by providing scholarships to the eligible students. Government of India (Central Government) operates scholarship schemes for students belonging to economically weaker sections among Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Minority Communities (Minority) with the objective of increasing enrolment, arresting dropout rate during education and helping students in completing their education. Pre-Matric and Post-Matric scholarship schemes for SC, ST and Minority students are administered by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) respectively and are implemented in the States/ UTs by respective State Government and Union Territory (UT) Administration. In addition to Central Government funded schemes, Government of Kerala (GoK) also operates scholarship schemes for students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minority Communities.

The SCs, STs and Minorities constitute 55.52[1] *per cent* of the population of the State. Of the different Central and State schemes implemented for the promotion of education among SC, ST and Minority students, the category-wise list of 11 schemes considered for evaluation in the Performance Audit are shown in **Table 1.1.**

Table 1.1: List of Central and State scholarship schemes

SC	ST	Minorities[2]
i. Pre-Matric scholarship scheme (State and Central)	i. Pre-Matric scholarship scheme (State and Central)	i. Pre-Matric scholarship scheme (Central)
ii. Post-Matric scholarship scheme (State and Central)	ii. Post-Matric scholarship scheme (State and Central)	ii. Post-Matric scholarship scheme (State and Central)

Details of these scholarship schemes such as income limit, various components provided by Central Government and GoK etc. are shown in **Appendix 1.1**.

Audit obtained the data pertaining to SC, ST and Minority students who studied in Higher Education Sector[3] from All India Survey of Higher Education conducted by Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Central Government, data on SC, ST and Minority students who studied in Higher

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1   SC-9.1 *per cent*, ST-1.45 *per cent*, Muslim-26.56 *per cent*, Christian-18.38 *per cent*, Sikh-0.01 *per cent*, Buddhist-0.01 *per cent*, Jain-0.01 *per cent*
2   No State scheme was implemented by GoK for Pre-Matric Minority students.
3   SC, ST and Minority students securing admission through Management quota are not eligible for Post-Matric scholarship.

Secondary schools[4] (XI and XII) (State syllabus) and data on SC, ST and Minority students who studied in Pre-Matric Classes (I to X) from Director of General Education[5], General Education Department, GoK to depict the enrolment of SC, ST and Minority students in the State as shown in **Tables 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4**.

Table 1.2: Estimated enrolment of SCs, STs and Minority Community students in Higher Education Sector

Community	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
SC	67764	69411	72272	96596
ST	10089	10727	11237	14414
Minority	266345	276154	284004	285815
Others	738719	739550	770340	967711
Total	**1082917**	**1095842**	**1137853**	**1364536**

Table 1.3: Enrolment of SCs, STs and Minority Community students in Higher Secondary Schools (State syllabus)

Community	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
SC	40571	39675	38890	37921
ST	5551	5952	5898	6181
Minority	185306	192483	191434	183333
Others	148692	149069	146638	140870
Total	**380120**	**387179**	**382860**	**368305**

Table 1.4: Enrolment of SCs, STs and Minority Community students in Pre-Matric stage (CBSE/ State/ ICSE syllabus)

Community	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
SC	416717	414328	409542	412840
ST	79607	78559	76044	76176
Minority	2474687	2497279	2519653	2601957
Others	1753769	1764608	1738185	1623723
Total	**4724780**	**4754774**	**4743424**	**4714696**

1.1. Organisational setup

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA), Central Government provides assistance to the State Government for implementation of SC, ST and Minority scholarship schemes respectively. At the State level, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Department was headed by the Additional Chief Secretary and Minority Welfare Department by the Principal Secretary. The Directors of Scheduled Castes Development, Scheduled Tribes Development and Minority Welfare look after the matters relating to SCs, STs and Minorities respectively. Director of General Education (DGE) was the authority at the State level for processing the Central Pre-Matric

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[4] Data did not include details of students studying in other Education Boards such as CBSE and ICSE
[5] Data did not include details of the annual family income of the student

Minority scholarship applications and Director of Collegiate Education (DCE) was the State level authority for processing Central and State Post-Matric Minority scholarship applications. The organograms of each Department are shown in **Appendix 1.2**.

1.2. Audit approach

All India Performance Audit on 'Pre and Post-Matric Scholarship Schemes for Students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minority Communities' in respect of Central schemes for inclusion in the Audit Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) was conducted during April to July 2022. Based on the importance of the topic, it was decided to conduct a Performance Audit on Pre and Post-Matric scholarship schemes for SCs, STs and Minorities in respect of Central schemes and State schemes and include in the Reports of respective States.

1.3. Audit objectives

The Performance Audit was conducted to assess whether;

- the schemes were planned and implemented efficiently and effectively to cover all the eligible and to exclude ineligible beneficiaries.

- the overall financial management was prudent and the schemes implemented in a timely manner.

- effective control mechanism existed for monitoring the schemes.

1.4. Audit criteria

The Audit observations included in the Report were benchmarked against the criteria derived from:

- Prescribed Guidelines/ orders/ circulars/ instructions issued by the Central Ministries/ State Departments/ Directorates concerned.
- Prescribed norms of funding of each scheme.
- Prescribed norms for implementation of the schemes.
- PFMS/ DBT related orders/ instructions.

1.5. Audit scope, methodology and sampling

The Performance Audit covered the period 2017-18 to 2021-22 and was conducted from July 2022 to December 2022. It assessed the efficacy of implementation of various Central and State scholarship schemes implemented by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Department and Minority Welfare Department. Fourteen districts were arranged in alphabetical

order and four[6] districts were selected randomly using IDEA software. In each selected district, six institutions/ schools/ colleges each for SC, ST and Minority for Pre-Matric and Post-Matric scholarship schemes respectively were selected using Probability Proportional to Size without Replacement (PPSWOR). Accordingly, 144 institutions/ schools/ colleges were selected for test-check. Audit methodology also included beneficiary survey of 1200[7] students from the 144 selected educational institutions to assess whether the beneficiaries of various scholarship schemes actually derived the intended benefits and whether it helped them in completing their education. Relevant records in Government Secretariat, Directorate of Scheduled Caste Development Department (SCDD), Directorate of Scheduled Tribes Development Department (STDD), Directorate of Minority Welfare, Sub Offices and 144 educational institutions were scrutinised during the course of Audit. The list of test-checked institutions in the four selected districts is given in **Appendix 1.3**. Audit conducted analysis of e-grantz[8] data (State Government portal in respect of Pre/ Post-Matric scholarship for SC/ ST) obtained from Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (C-DIT), Electronic Benefit Transfer (ebt) data[9] from State NIC (Pre-Matric scholarship for SC (Central scheme) for Classes IX and X), dcescholarship (State Government portal for Post-Matric scholarship for Minorities) from State National Informatics Centre (NIC) and National Scholarship Portal (NSP) data in respect of Pre/ Post-Matric scholarships for Minorities (Central scheme). Audit also obtained "Sampoorna Software" data from Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE)[10] and HSCAP data[11] from Information and Communication Technology of Kerala (ICTAK). The portals meant for processing various scholarships covered in Audit are given in **Appendix 1.4**.

An Entry Conference was held on 14 September 2022 with the Principal Secretary to Government, Minority Welfare Department, Special Secretary to Government, SCST Development Department, Directors of SC Development, ST Development and Minority Welfare (Directorates), Additional Director, DGE and Special officer for scholarships, Collegiate Education during which the Audit objectives, scope, criteria, methodology of Audit including selection of samples were discussed and agreed upon. On conclusion of Audit, Exit Conferences were held with the Principal Secretary, General Education Department on 16 May 2023 and with the Special Secretary SCST Development

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6   Kollam, Ernakulam, Kozhikode and Wayanad
7   SC Pre-Matric (241), SC Post-Matric (200), ST Pre-Matric (154), ST Post-Matric (169), Pre-Matric Minority (219) and Post-Matric Minority (217)
8   The e-grantz data was obtained from C-DIT in June 2022, updation thereafter (eg. payment done) is not taken for data analysis. E-grantz was an online centralised system for disbursement of various educational assistance schemes for SC, ST and Other Backward Classes (OBC).
9   Electronic Benefit Transfer (ebt) software was obtained from NIC and contained data pertaining to Pre-Matric scholarship for SC students (Central scheme).
10 Sampoorna software contains information of all students (name, class, academic year, caste etc) studying in Classes I to X in Government/ Aided/ recognised unaided schools (state syllabus) of Kerala. The custodian of Sampoorna software was Director of General Education.
11 HSCAP (Higher Secondary Centralised Allotment Process) contains information of all students (name, class, academic year, caste etc) studying in Classes XI and XII in Government/ Aided schools (State syllabus) of Kerala. The custodian of HSCAP is the Director of Higher Secondary Education.

Department and Director of Collegiate Education on 24 May 2023. The replies furnished by Government of Kerala have been suitably incorporated.

1.6.   Acknowledgement

Audit acknowledges the cooperation and assistance extended by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Minority Welfare Department, Higher Education Department and General Education Department, Government of Kerala and all the test-checked institutions in the conduct of the Performance Audit.