

Overview

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes constitute 16.23 and 8.2 *per cent* respectively of the country's population as per the 2001 census. The literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was 55 and 47 *per cent* according to the same census against the national literacy rate of 65 *per cent*.

Educational schemes are implemented by the Union government with the objectives of enabling the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to upgrade their educational levels, increasing enrolment and retention, reducing drop out rates etc. Seven and eight schemes respectively are being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for the benefit of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These schemes cover a variety of benefits such as scholarships, construction of hostels and schools, establishment of book banks, provision of remedial and special coaching and sanction of grant-in-aid to voluntary organisations working for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Deficiencies such as poor utilisation of funds, non-availing of the benefits of schemes by different states, imbalances in the release of funds, unspent balances, delays in the release of funds and diversion of funds etc were observed across most of the schemes.

The 'Pre matric scholarship scheme for the children of those engaged in unclean occupations' and the 'Post matric scholarship scheme', suffered from deficiencies such as short coverage of eligible beneficiaries, payment of scholarships to ineligible beneficiaries, delays in payment of scholarship, excess payment of scholarships and deficiencies in the system of selection of beneficiaries. There were delays in construction of Ashram schools and the maintenance of the schools was not given enough priority by the state governments. Deficiencies in respect of the 'Book bank scheme' included short establishment of book banks, procedural irregularities in the purchase of books and delays in purchase. The 'Scheme of hostels for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe community students' suffered due to delays in construction, lack of facilities, non-utilisation of facilities etc. In respect of the 'Coaching and allied scheme for Scheduled Tribes and for weaker sections including Scheduled Castes, OBCs and Minorities' audit observed defunct PETCs, inadequate number of sessions, poor record maintenance, non-availability of basic facilities etc.

In respect of the 'Scheme for grants- in- aid to voluntary organisations working for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes', it was observed that funds given to the blacklisted NGOs were not recovered. In cases where funding for NGOs was discontinued, adequate action was not taken for taking over the assets created out of government grant or for rehabilitation of the beneficiaries. NGOs deviated from the conditions governing sanction of grants- in- aid. In respect of the 'Scheme of setting up of Educational Complexes in low literacy pockets for the development of women's literacy', funds were sanctioned for projects in districts that were not part of the identified districts.

In the case of the Scholarship schemes and the 'Book bank scheme', monitoring mechanisms were not institutionalised and in the case of the other schemes, the relevant provisions were not followed. Inspection was not conducted in a systematic manner and no independent evaluation was conducted at the Union level or in most of the states. Internal audit of the schemes was also not conducted at the Union level and also in many states.