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Free Coaching and Allied Scheme: An Analytical Study on Upliftment of Minority Communities in India

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ABSTRACT:

Education is not a privilege but a responsibility that society owes to itself. In a diverse nation like India, the upliftment of minority communities is crucial for ensuring inclusive growth. The *Free Coaching and Allied Scheme*, initiated by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, aims at providing structured coaching for professional courses, competitive examinations, private sector employment and remedial learning for students belonging to minority groups. This paper critically analyses the objectives, implementation, eligibility criteria and monitoring mechanisms of the Scheme. While the Scheme has significant strengths—such as targeted financial aid, reservation for women candidates, focus on professional competitiveness and a science-specific component—it also suffers from challenges like ambiguities in student selection, state-level bureaucratic delays, lack of awareness and limited outreach in highly minority-concentrated regions like Jammu and Kashmir. The paper concludes by offering suggestions to improve transparency, accessibility and efficiency of the Scheme, ensuring that its benefits reach the intended beneficiaries and contribute meaningfully to their educational and professional empowerment.

KEYWORDS: Free Coaching and Allied Scheme, Minority Communities, Education Policy, Social Justice, Competitive Examinations, Remedial Coaching, India.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Education is more than a luxury; it is a responsibility that society owes to itself." Robin Cook
According to the Vice President of India, Mr. Hamid Ansari, the advancement and mainstreaming of backward segments of the minority communities is not a question of charity or welfare. Still, it is an imperative for India to emerge as a model-developed nation-state. The current idea behind legislation for uplifting minorities is to fully mainstream them in social, political and economic spheres. Amongst the various schemes adopted by the Government, 'The Free Coaching and Allied Scheme' is one such effort that aims to empower literacy amongst the minority communities. "The scheme aims to empower minority groups by supporting economically disadvantaged students among them through coaching institutions in increasing their skills and talents, making them employable in industries, services and commercial sectors other than the government sector." Moreover, it has built-in resilience to adjust to market dynamics constantly, ensuring that target populations are not deprived of the professional understanding required by changing/emerging market requirements and job prospects at the local and international levels.



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For a few years, separate initiatives for coaching kids from scheduled castes, minority communities and backward classes have been developed. However, with effect from September 2001, several different programs were merged into a one "Scheme of Coaching and Allied Assistance for Weaker Sections, including Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes and Minorities. In addition, following the Ministry of Minority Affairs establishment, a new plan is known as the Free Coaching and Allied Scheme for candidates from minority communities was developed in response to rising employment patterns in the period of economic reforms, liberalization and globalization".

According to Shri Vincent H. Pala, Minister of State for Minority Affairs, by providing special coaching for qualifying examinations to gain admission into technical and professional courses, as well as competitive examinations to be eligible for Central/State Government Services, jobs in the private sector and remedial assistance, the Free Coaching and Allied Scheme for candidates from minority communities aims at helping students and candidates from minority communities to achieve their educational and career goals. In addition, this plan provides financial assistance to all public and private institutions participating in coaching and training activities, including universities and autonomous organizations and universities, colleges and institutions in the commercial sector.

2. FACETS OF THE SCHEME

2.1 Target Area

The Scheme's primary goal is to help students from minority populations by providing them with specialized training in the following four areas:

i. Qualifying Examinations for Admissions

This involves preparing students for entrance tests and exams in technical/professional courses such as engineering, law, medicine, management, computer technology and language and aptitude assessments for admission to foreign institutions such as IELTS, TOEFL, etc.

ii. Competitive Examinations

Coaching is also aimed to be provided for recruitment to posts under the Central and State governments, including police/security forces, public sector undertakings, Railways, banks, insurance companies and autonomous bodies.

iii. Coaching/training for Jobs in the Private Sector

This includes coaching and training for jobs "in airlines, shipping, fisheries, information technology (I.T.), business process outsourcing (B.P.O.) and other I.T. enabled services, hospitality, tours and travels, maritime, food processing, retail, sales and marketing, biotechnology and other job oriented courses based on the current employment trends."



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iv. Remedial Coaching

The Scheme also aims to provide remedial coaching for technical and professional courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels to improve academic knowledge and enable the student to catch up with the rest of the class and complete the course successfully. The Institute is to be imparted where the student is admitted to pursue a technical/professional practice at the graduate or postgraduate level.

2.2 Implementation of The Scheme:

All establishments in the **Government Sector**, including universities and autonomous entities, that participate in coaching/training activities are eligible for financial assistance under this Scheme. "Universities/colleges active in coaching/training activities, including deemed Universities, are included in the **Private Sector**, as are Institutes engaged in coaching activities/job oriented coaching/training for placement in private sectors."

The institutes must advertise in the local newspaper requesting applications from qualified students/candidates from minority populations. Within three months, the names of students chosen for coaching/training and characteristics such as address, community, gender and yearly income are sent directly to the Ministry. It is also required that the institute post daily progress reports, pertinent images and other information about coaching classes on the Ministry's website/portal.

The Scheme is scheduled to be evaluated by "an independent agency to assess its impact after the end of the XII Five Year Plan" 5, i.e., 2016-17.

2.1.1 Eligibility Criteria for Receiving Financial Assistance

Institutes are eligible for financial aid provided they have the needed number of competent faculty members on their payroll or a part-time basis and the essential infrastructure such as buildings, a library and the necessary equipment. In addition, the institutes should have expertise delivering coaching/training in the applicable Course/Program, with a **minimum success rate of 15%** in terms of training institute; **50% placement**, including self-employment, if they have been conducting coaching in the previous year/s.

2.1.2 Procedure for Selection of Institutes

The Ministry of Minority Affairs publicizes the Scheme's information and welcomes coaching/training institutes submissions. Currently, the Institutes chosen for 2013-14 are appointed for the remaining four years of the XIIth Five Year Plan, i.e., till 2016-17.

While Institutes in the Government Sector can send proposals directly to the Ministry of Minority Affairs in the prescribed proforma, Organizations in the Private Sector, including Non-Governmental Organizations (N.G.O.s), must submit their proposals through the State Government/U.T. Administration concerned. "The State Governments/U.T. Administrations inspect the projects and transmit the proposals to the Ministry of Minority Affairs with specific



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suggestions (as per the set timeline). The Scheme suggestions are then reviewed by the Ministry and presented to the Selection Committee."

The inspection of the institutes is undertaken by an official not lower than the level of deputy director of the department concerned. It is sent by the secretary of the state government/U.T. administration's department dealing with minority welfare. The report is based on a performance that can be seen on the Ministry's official website. The State Government's recommendations, together with the inspection report, are subsequently sent to the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

2.1.3 Eligibility Criteria for Students

Students from Minority Communities notified by "Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992, i.e., Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis, are eligible for this Scholarship Scheme (Zoroastrians)".

Candidates under this system must have obtained the appropriate percentage of marks in the qualifying examination to be admitted to the desired courses/recruitment examinations. Only candidates from Minority Communities have a total family income from all sources that do not exceed Rs. 3 lakh per year are eligible. The benefits of coaching/training under the plan are available to a particular student only once, regardless of the number of opportunities they may have in a single Competitive Examination. As a result, the coaching/training institution must get an Affidavit from the student stating that they have not previously benefited from this Scheme.

Students/candidates covered by the program are required to attend all classes. Thirty percent of the numbers sanctioned for coaching/training must be reserved for female students/candidates. It can only be transferred to boy pupils if no eligible lady students/candidates match the Institute's criteria for coaching/training. The student's name that the Coaching/Training Institute has chosen for a specific Coaching/Training Programme is shown on the Coaching/Training Institute's website. The student can also contact the Coaching/Training Institute where they applied for the Coaching/Training course to learn more about their selection.

3. FUNDING:

The Scheme provides 100 percent financial support to chosen coaching/training institutes in the form of stipends offered by the Ministry for the applicants' upkeep. This is accomplished in two equal payments. The first installment is issued once the Institute has provided the Ministry of Minority Affairs with a list of selected students/candidates to be coached/trained and has put the list on the Institute's website. The Second Installment is only issued upon completion of the coaching/training course, submission of a list of students/candidates trained/coached and their results/outcomes or placement status in the specified Performa. After examining the organization by the Central Government/State Government/U.T. Administration or any other agency authorised by the Ministry, the Government of India reserves the right to grant money in the following years.



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The compensation amount is provided to the candidates every month, either directly into their bank accounts or through check. Furthermore, the Institute must provide a document stating that it has paid the sanctioned amount of stipend to the students in question. The Institute shall keep a separate account for the monies issued by the Ministry and make it available to the Ministry of Minority Affairs for examination as needed. The institutes are required to use the funding solely for the objectives mentioned. The grantee institution must submit a commitment that if it violates this requirement, it will reimburse the cash received plus 18 percent punitive interest and take any other action considered appropriate by the Government.

Following the end of the coaching/training program, the Institute must immediately submit the usage certificate and audited accounting, certified by a Chartered Accountant, to the Ministry of Minority Affairs, together with the documentation listed below:

- a. Income and expenditure account/balance sheet for the fiscal year, comprising the Institute's receipt and payment account for monies received during the fiscal year.
- b. A certificate stating that the institution has not received a grant for the same purpose from any other Ministry/Department of India, State/U.T. Government, or any other Government/Non-Government organization.

The chosen Institute should be prepared to deploy its resources to ensure the seamless operation of the authorized program. They will be responsible for ensuring that neither the coaching/training program nor the payment of stipends to registered applicants suffers from delays in the distribution of money.

2.2 Monitoring

The Institute shall provide the Ministry of Minority Affairs and the State Government/U.T. administration a periodic status report on the coaching/training classes as specified in the sanction order. It must also provide information to the Ministry of Minority Affairs and the State Government/U.T. administration on jobs secured by applicants coached/trained by them in the government sector and placements achieved via their efforts in the private sector. In addition, officers from the Central Government, State Governments and U.T. Administration will inspect the grantee institute.

2.2.1 New Component of the Scheme for the training of Science Students

During 2013-2014, a new component of the Scheme was launched on a trial basis for approximately 1000 students or more, with about 100 students or more admitted per Centre in ten states and U.T.s, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, former Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Delhi. The institutes under this Component are expected to provide separate hostel housing for boys and girls and provide regular XIth and XIIth Science classes (i.e., Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics). The pupils for the same are recommended to be picked based on merit by the designated Schools/Colleges/Institutes from



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students belonging to the notified minority communities, beginning with the highest percentage of marks or C.G.P.A. After completing the course, students selected under this Component must be willing to take admission tests for an Engineering Degree/Medical Degree. In any event, the students shall not be chosen with less than 76 percent of the available marks or equivalent grade, regardless of the total number of students.

The Institute would give up to Rs. 1,00,000/- (Rs. one lakh only) per year in financial support for a selected student under this Component. The Scheme requires the Outcome/Success Rate to be at least 30% in the event of a student allocation of up to 100 students and 40% in the case of a student allocation of up to 200 students under the New Component. Suppose the specified Success Rate is not met. In that case, the final installment owed to the Institute will be decreased proportionally to the percentage of shortfall in the outcome/success rate as a penalty.

4. A CRITIQUE OF THE SCHEME

In the current budget, Rs. 45 Crores have been allocated for the Free Coaching and Allied Scheme. It can be very well inferred from the spirit of the Government in promoting the Scheme and the various provisions and guidelines devised by it that sufficient thought has been given to almost every aspect.

- Care has been taken to select only those students who have excelled academically and have a general interest and determination in pursuing a career.
- A financial limit has been imposed on the family income of the students/candidates to ensure that people who are actually in need of monetary aid can avail the benefit of this Scheme.
- An effort has been made to reserve seats for female candidates to help promote better opportunities amongst women in minority communities.
- The Scheme has been very well structured. Target areas have been very well recognized for better implementation of the Scheme. Not only training for entrance exams and competitions is provided, but remedial coaching has also been made a part of the Scheme. This will help improve the students' current performance from minority communities and achieve the utmost despite their circumstances.
- The prerequisites of institutions that seek to benefit under the Scheme have been very well spelled out to ensure proper infrastructure and facilities for the candidates.
- There is a strict check on the institutions availing the benefit under this Scheme. A careful mechanism has been devised under this Scheme to ensure that the guidelines laid down by it are followed. Daily updating of status, setting up of minimum success rate and frequent checks and reports on the institutions all aim to make the Scheme beneficial and help fulfill its true aim and purpose, for which it was formulated.



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- The new Component of the Scheme that aims to train Science students is an incredible innovation. Although it is in a testing phase, one can infer from the emphasis laid on the pre-training and the Scheme's provisions that it has been thought through thoroughly.
- Candidates are given the benefit of this Scheme only once, thus, ensuring opportunities for other students.

However, various negative aspects emerge from a detailed study of the Scheme.

The Scheme suffers from ambiguity relating to the selection process of the students and candidates who benefit from it. Therefore, the only point emphasized by the guidelines relates to the marks obtained by the candidate. However, since the selection process is done through the Institute or N.G.O. that has been selected under the Scheme rather than the State or Central Government, there is a chance of favoritism and partiality creeping into the selection process.

The selection procedure of the Institute for the implementation of the Scheme has been made the forte of the State Government, although the Scheme is an innovation of the Centre. The institutes are required to apply to the State Government, which then, after inspection, sends the performa of such institutes to the Ministry. This process is cumbersome and increases the chances of the State Government favoring certain institutes and N.G.O.s or the other.

Despite being a significant innovative step towards the upliftment and mainstreaming, some states have failed to reap the benefits of this substantial Scheme meant for students belonging to minority communities in the country. For instance, in Jammu and Kashmir, the most minority-populated state in India, only 1380 students have been estimated to have benefited from the Scheme. Moreover, since 2007, only a few institutes in the state have applied for assistance despite the Centre pumping millions of rupees annually to implement the project. This problem has been attributed to the inefficiency of authorities to generate awareness, which is a significant drawback of this innovative Scheme.

The awareness aspect has been left to the whims of the N.G.O. or the Institute taking the benefit of the Scheme. No other authority has been devised to keep a check on the same. Thus, there is the probability of the beneficial aspects of the Scheme being commercialized and the whole affair being turned into a business.

Very few institutes take the benefit of the Scheme. In certain states, there is a lack of institutes that fulfill the prerequisites of the guidelines spelled out by the Scheme and, thus, there are no centers for the Scheme to be implemented in certain areas.

5. SUGGESTIONS:

The suggestions this paper aims at can be summarized as follows:

- Detailed guidelines that must be followed by the institutes while selecting the students under this Scheme must be specifically formulated by the Ministry.



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- If the Institute rejects a student, they must explain the reason behind it and be told how they can apply for the Scheme to benefit from it.
- A method must be devised by which the interested institutes can apply to the Ministry directly to benefit from this Scheme. The Ministry can then direct the concerned State Department to carry out the necessary checks and inspections.
- Awareness must be spread, especially amongst the students, regarding the objectives and guidelines of the Scheme, so that the communities can benefit from it.

6. CONCLUSION:

The *Free Coaching and Allied Scheme* is a well-conceived policy initiative designed to enhance the educational and professional prospects of students belonging to minority communities in India. By providing specialized training for entrance examinations, competitive recruitment, private sector jobs and remedial learning, the Scheme reflects the government's commitment to mainstreaming marginalized groups into national development. The incorporation of financial aid, a reservation clause for women and innovative components like science coaching underscore its holistic vision. However, the Scheme's impact has been diluted by structural shortcomings—lack of awareness among target groups, bureaucratic bottlenecks in the selection of institutes, potential favoritism in student selection and uneven state-level implementation. The negligible participation of states like Jammu and Kashmir highlights the need for proactive outreach and stricter monitoring. To address these challenges, clear student selection guidelines, direct application opportunities to the Ministry, transparent reporting by institutes and wider publicity campaigns should be introduced. By strengthening accountability and accessibility, the Scheme can achieve its true aim—bridging educational inequalities and empowering minority communities with opportunities for self-reliance and dignity

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