

Educational Empowerment of Minorities: Schemes and Achievements

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Abstract

India is the birthplace of several religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and home for thousands of years to Jewish, Zoroastrian, Muslim, and Christian communities (Gandhi, 2018). The vast majority of citizens of all religious groups live in peaceful coexistence and are conscious of religious freedom and minority rights (US Department of State, 2009). The Ministry of Welfare of the Government of India issued a gazette notification on 23 October 1993 under the National Minorities Commission Act-1986 to the five religious communities Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and Parsi (Parsi) to be a minority, the Central Government also recognized the Jain community as a minority in 2014 (Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2014). Education is the foundation for the national development and basic human right that create nation's human resource more powerful which in turn contribute towards the development of the countries and it is believed that countries become successful when they empower their human resources. National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was set up by the Union Government of India in 1992 to protect the existence of minorities all over India and look after the minority communities of India to get benefits in education and employment opportunities. Minorities belonging to the region have established many educational centers and institutions to uplift their culture and language. Besides, they are entitled to reserve a specific quota of seats for students and teachers to their own communities. Various Government schemes provide direct aid to students and educational institutions for promoting minority communities in India.

Keywords: Minority, Schemes for Minorities, Educational Empowerment of Minorities.

India is the birthplace of several religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and home for thousands of years to Jewish, Zoroastrian, Muslim, and Christian communities

(Gandhi, 2018). The vast majority of citizens of all religious groups live in peaceful coexistence and are conscious of religious freedom and minority rights (United States Department of State, 2011).

The Ministry of Welfare of the Government of India issued a gazette notification on 23 October 1993 under the National Minorities Commission Act-1986 to the five religious communities Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and Parsi (Parsi) to be a minority, Jains have also been notified as minority community the Central Government (Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2014). As per the 2001 Census, these six religious minority communities constitute 18.80% of the country's population.⁷ According to the 2011 census, the country has a population of 1.21 billion. Hindus constitute 79.80% of the population, Muslims 14.23%, Christians 2.3%, and Sikhs 1.72%. Groups that constitute less than 1.71% (0.24 percent not stated) of the population include Buddhists, Jains, Parsis (Zoroastrians), Jews, and Bahais.

Education is the foundation of national development and basic human rights that makes the human resources of the country extremely powerful and contributes to the development of the country. That is why successful countries focus more on empowering their human resources. An entire educated population that is adequately equipped with knowledge and skills is responsible for economic development as well as a precondition for development because this class is educated and skilled which provides the most benefits of employment opportunities (Minority Education, 2013). The government has always been proactive to remove backwardness in the education of minorities. The Government of India has taken several steps for the survival and overall development of various religious communities in India. "All minorities...shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their own"- is the mandate, as per Article 30(1) of the Constitution (Minority Education, 2013).

The National Policy on Education, 1986 states the education of minorities in paragraph 4.8 of the document stating: "Some minority groups are educationally disadvantaged or backward" (National Policy on Education 1986, 1998). In the interest of equality and social justice, more attention was paid to the education of these groups. Constitutional guarantees given to these groups to establish and administer their educational institutions and decided to protect their languages and culture (National Policy on Education 1986, 1998). It was also decided that all books and school activities would be prepared objectively. According to the core curriculum, all those measures will be kept in mind which are possible to promote integration based on national goals and ideals.

The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) was established by the Central Government in 1992 under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 to secure the subsistence of minorities (National Commission for Minorities, 2018). All people belonging to minority communities in India get equal importance for education and employment. Minorities belonging to the region have established many educational centers and institutions to uplift

their culture and language. These institutions can secure a certain number of seats for teachers and students in their communities. Various schemes of the Government of India provide direct support to the development of educational institutions of different regional communities.

The National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) was launched in November 2004 for giving suggestions to the Central Government and the State Government for protecting the constitutional rights of the minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice and other allied matters (NCMEI, 2004). The Commission's powers have been enhanced by amending the National Minorities Educational Institutions (Amendment) Act, 2006 and 2010. The Commission was given three roles, which include adjudicatory function, advisory role, and land recommendatory powers. The Commission is a quasi-judicial body with powers of the civil court. The Commission has declared such institutions as minority institutions.

Major Educational Schemes for Minorities

In June 2006, the Prime Minister launched a 15 point Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme. This scheme was also announced for the welfare of minorities. Its primary objective is to provide scholarships to meritorious but economically deprived students of minority communities at the school level, to provide better opportunities for higher education, to increase higher education rates, and to increase employability (Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme, 2006).

Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme was announced in June 2006 and approved in January 2008. The main objective of the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme is to grant scholarships to meritorious students who are financially backward in pursuing higher education, to increase their rates in higher education, and create employment opportunities. This scholarship is given for studying in a government or private higher secondary school, college, or university in India, in which all those residential institutions of the government and qualified and selected private institutions have been incorporated objectively and notified by the State Government or Union Territory Administration. Under this, technical and vocational courses related to XI and XII level polytechnic and other courses of industrial training institutes and industrial training centers affiliated with the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) will be included. Courses of less than one year and certificate courses are not included (Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme, 2006).

Merit Cum Means Based Scholarship Scheme's objective is to provide financial assistance to the poor and meritorious students belonging to minority communities to enable them to pursue professional and technical courses. Under this scheme, students getting admissions in reputed listed institutes are reimbursed for full course fees. (Merit-cum-Means Scholarship Scheme, 2008)

Padho Pardesh Scheme of Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the welfare of minorities was announced in June 2006 and effective from 2013-14. It is for the formulation and implementation of scholarship schemes for meritorious students from minority communities. Providing educational loans on subsidy interest for overseas studies to increase the educational advancement and employability of economically weaker meritorious students (Padho Pardesh, 2017).

The Naya Savera scheme was launched in July 2007 to provide free coaching to students from the relatively disadvantaged sections or minority communities, strengthening their position, and helping them. Also, develop their skills and abilities to make them employable so that they can get jobs in various sectors like government, industry, service, and business sectors. In this scheme, such training is provided that the students can adapt to the prevailing dynamic market. Also be able to acquire skills for employment opportunities at the local level and international level as per market requirements (Naya Savera, 2017).

The Ministry of Minority Affairs finances the Maulana Azad National Fellowship through the UGC. Minority students who are studying higher studies such as regular and full-time M.Phil / Ph.D. for degrees in science, humanities, social sciences, engineering, and technology, receive a Maulana Azad National Fellowship and as per the directives of the Government of India, 3% fellowship is reserved for physically challenged minority students. The ultimate objective of this scheme is to provide an integrated five-year fellowship to such students, who are pursuing higher education in Indian universities, institutes, or colleges like M.Phil. and Ph.D. (Maulana Azad National Fellowship, 2020).

An exclusive scheme Nai Udaan was launched during the 11th Five Year Plan period to provide pre-examination coaching for competitive examinations in government and private institutions for candidates from minority communities. The main objective of the scheme is to fund the passing of prelims examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), and State Public Service Commissions (SPSCs) by minority students to enable them to be eligible for their appointment to the civil services in the Union and State Government (Nai Udan, 2019).

Nai Roshni Yojana was launched in 2012-13 to develop the leadership potential of minority women. After the experience of the work done in the first year of the scheme, it was felt that it needed some improvement to digest it till the target group, which was done by the Standing Finance Committee in March 2013. As per their recommendations, the scheme has been revised as follows for continuation during the 12th Five Year Plan. The main objective of bringing this scheme was to create empowerment and confidence in minority women as well as women of other communities in the same area, by providing knowledge, equipment, and technology to interact with government systems, banks, and other institutions.

Achievement of Minorities Educational Schemes

The Ministry of Minority Affairs is always striving for the social, economic, and educational development and progress of the 6 identified minorities, for which it keeps making various schemes from time to time. Various scholarship schemes have also been introduced for educational upliftment under which there are so many plans for different age groups according to particular criteria. The government determines the budget every year for various scholarship schemes, whose achievement can be measured based on sanctioned funds and their expenses.

During 2019-20, about 64.27 lakh scholarships were awarded for Pre-Matric, Post-Matric, and Merit-Cum-Means Scholarship to minorities from all over India but it was less than 1.04% of scholarships was given during 2018-19 (Scholarship Schemes, 2020).

Table 1. Actual expenditure of the Pre-Matric, Pro-Matric & Merit-cum-Means Scholarship Scheme

Scholarship Schemes		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Pre-Matric	Total Candidates (in Lakh)	53.11	56.92	55.66
	Female %	53.14%	53.54%	52.36%
	Expenditure (Rs. in Crore)	1078.42	1264.29	1423.89
Post-Matric	Total Candidates (in Lakh)	6.98	6.84	7.43
	Female %	56.48%	56.83%	55.80%
	Expenditure (Rs. in Crore)	413.84	423.18	482.3
Merit-cum-Means	Total Candidates (in Lakh)	1.195	1.178	1.180
	Female %	37.41%	38.52%	41.53%
	Expenditure (Rs. in Crore)	324.86	315.93	311.99

In these schemes, 30% of the scholarships are earmarked for girls. However, Figure 1 showing that the number of coverage of girls was more than 0.54% during 2019-20 in comparison with 2018-19. Rs. 2218.18 crores were released for various scholarship schemes during 2019-20 against Rs. 2003.40 crore during 2018-19 and i.e., 10.72% more funds were released by the government for the educational empowerment of the minorities (Scholarship Schemes, 2020).

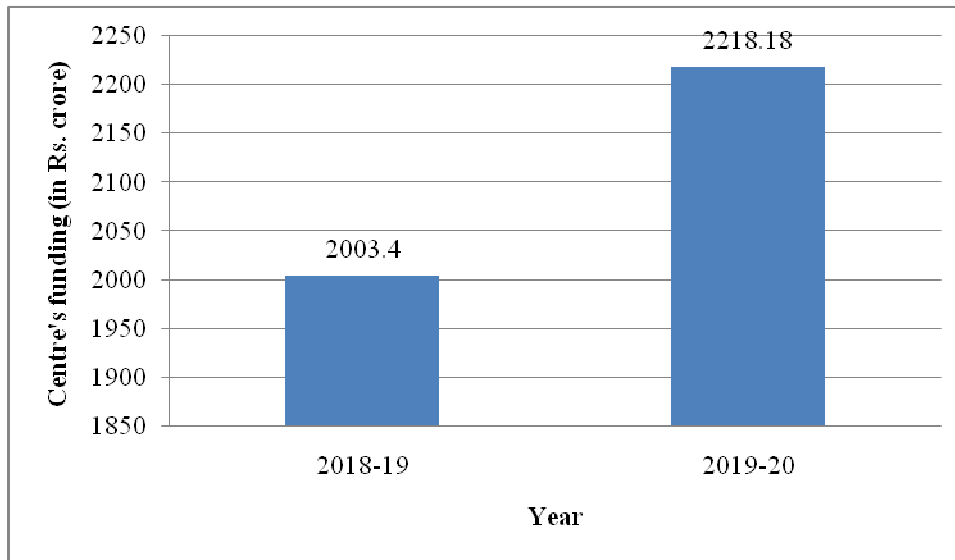


Figure 1. Expenditure incurred under the Pre-Matric, Pro-Matric & Merit-cum-Means Scholarship Scheme

Under the Naya Savera Scheme, minority candidates were sponsored for free coaching in selected coaching institutions for the preparation of competitive examinations for professional courses and government jobs. Since 2017-18, the trend of the release of funds and the number of candidates sponsored is in Table 2 and presented in graphs (Figure 2), which indicates a substantial decrease in the last three years (Naya Savera, 2020).

Table 2. Funds Released and Achievement under Naya Savera Scheme

Financial Year	Achievement (Number of candidates sponsored)	Funds Released (Rs. in Crore)
2017-18	11862	45.59
2018-19	10097	44.47
2019-20	1782	13.97

It can be understood from the analysis of Figure 2 that the fund allocation in the minority's Naya Savera Scheme has decreased by 2.46% in 2018-19 and 68.59% in 2019-20. It can also be said that the reduction in fund allocation is due to the low number of registered candidates in a particular scheme. Again the number of registered candidates has decreased by 82.35% in 2019-20 as compared to 2018-19. (Naya Savera, 2020).

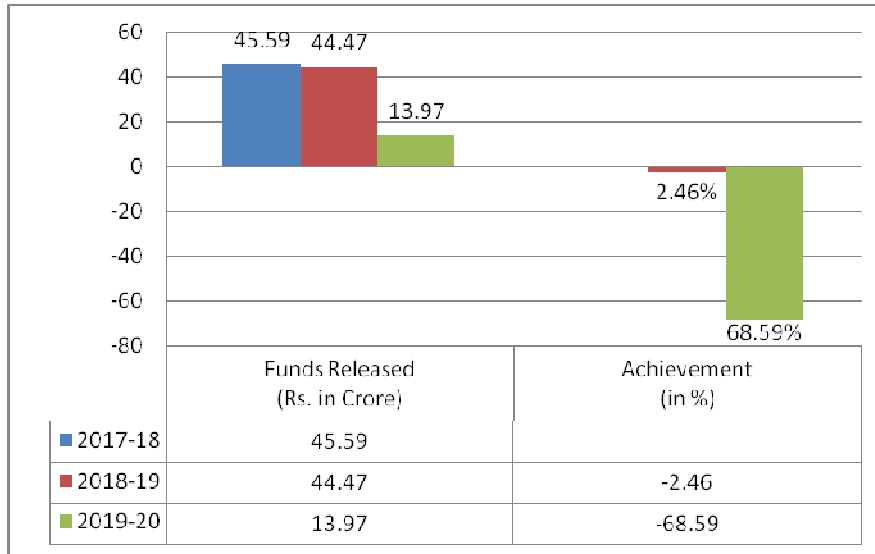


Figure 2.Naya Savera- Funds Released and Decreased between Last Three Years

Nai Udaan scheme assists in the preparation of the main examination of those minority students who have passed the preliminary examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission, Staff Selection Commission, State Public Service Commissions, etc. The details of candidates sponsored and achievements since the inception of the scheme are presented in tables and graphs (Nai Udaan, 2020).

Table 3.Funds Released and Achievement in Nai Udaan

Financial Year	Achievement (No. of Beneficiaries)	Funds released (Rs. in Lakhs)
2016-17	858	400
2017-18	1427	621
2018-19	859	800

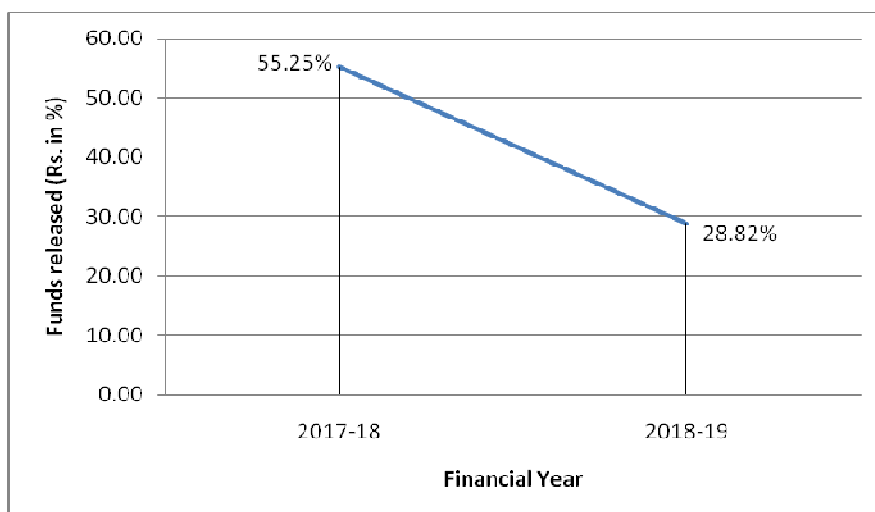


Figure 3.Nai Udaan-Funds Released in Percent

Table 3 clarifies that the fund allocation of 621 Lakhs in the Nai Udaan Scheme has increased by 55.25% (Figure 3) in 2017-18 as compared to the year 2016-17 but fund allocation of 800 Lakhs has also increased by 28.82% (Figure 3) in 2018-19 as compared to 2017-18. Figure 4 indicates that the percentage of achievement has increased by 66.32% in 2017-18 as compared to 2016-17 but it decreased by 39.80% in 2018-19 as compared to 2017-18 (Nai Udaan, 2020).

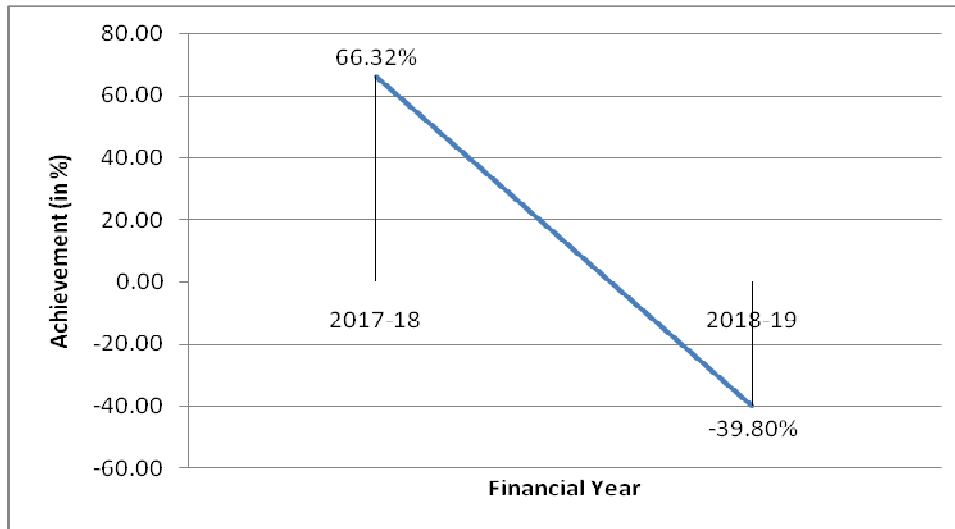


Figure 4. Nai Udaan-Achievement in Percent

Padho Pardesh Scheme was also operationalized in 2014-15 which provides interest subsidy to minority students who avail loans from banks for overseas studies at Masters, M.Phil, and Ph.D. Level. 35% of the slots are earmarked for girl students (Padho Pardesh, 2017)

Table 4. Funds Released and Achievement of Padho Pardesh

S. No.	Year	Amount Disbursed (Rs. in Crore)	% Change Over Previous Year	No. of Students Selected for Financial Assistance	Remark
1	2014-15	3.5	-	573	
2	2015-16	4.15	18.57	815	Including Renewals
3	2016-17	4	-3.61	727	Including Renewals
4	2017-18	17	325	1136	Including Renewals
5	2018-19	45	164.71	8787	Including Renewals

SOURCE: Institute of Objective Studies (2020) & Reports (2020)

Table 4 indicates that the fund allocation of 17 Crore in the Padho Pardesh Scheme has increased with a big jump by 325% (Figure 5) in 2017-18 as compared to 2016-17 but the fund allocation of 45 Crore has also increased by 164.71% (Figure 5) in 2018-19 as compared to 2017-18.

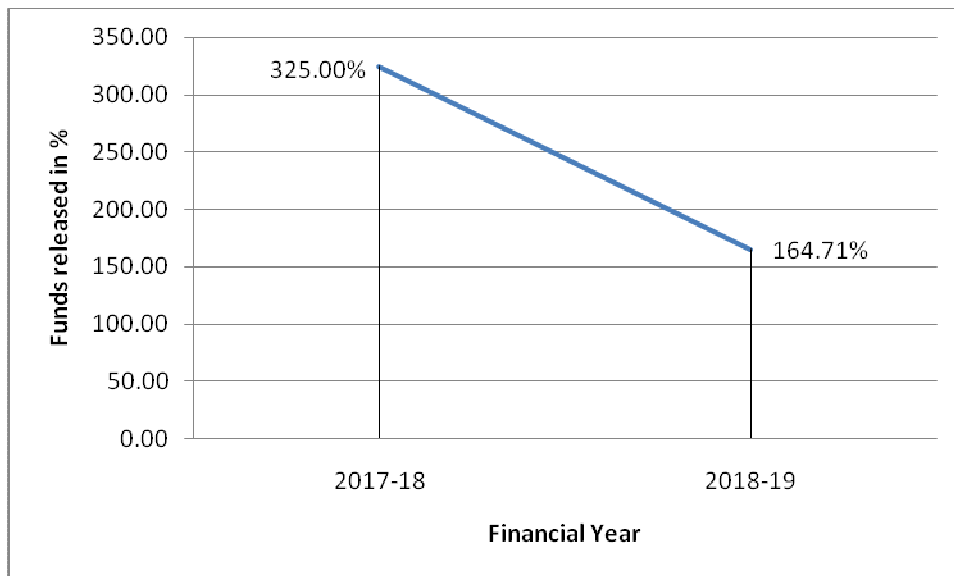


Figure 5. Padho Pardesh- Funds Released in Percent

Figure 6 indicates that the percentage of selected students has increased by 56.26% in 2017-18 as compared to 2016-17 but it has increased with a big jump by 673.50% in 2018-19 as compared to 2017-18 (Institute of Objective Studies, 2020; Reports, 2020).

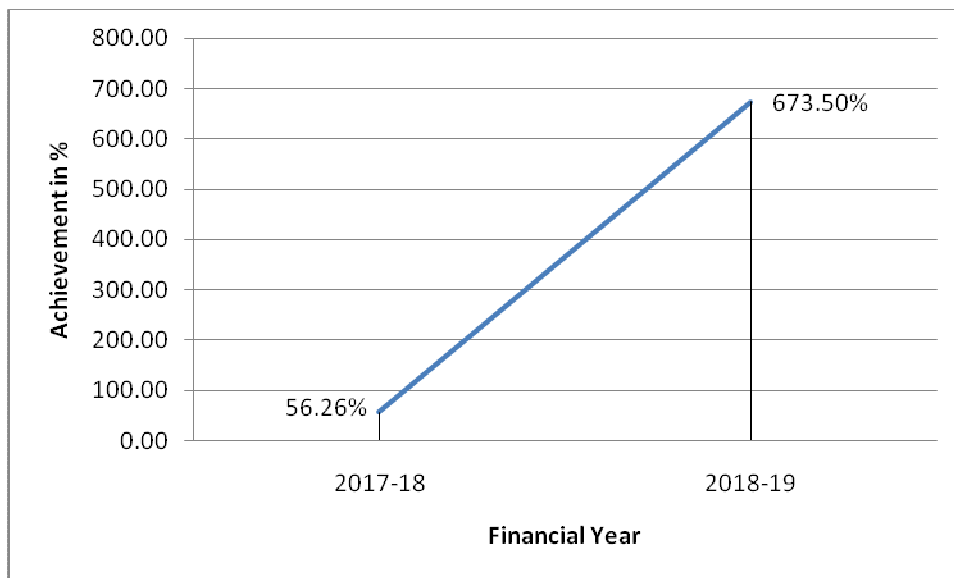


Figure 6. Padho Pardesh- Achievement in Percent

The scheme was launched in 2009. Fellowships are awarded to students from minority communities to do M.Phil. and Ph.D. The University Grants Commission (UGC) acts as a nodal agency to run the scheme. This ministry provides funds to the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) for the augmentation of its corpus fund. At present, the total corpus fund of MAEF is Rs.1249.00 crore. The MAEF earns interest by investing in the corpus fund, which is its only source of income. This interest amount is utilized for the implementation of schemes by MAEF. 30% of the fellowships earmarked for girl students (Maulana Azad National Fellowship, 2020).

Table 5. Funds Released and Fellowship Awarded under MAEF

Financial Year	Fund Released to UGC (Rs. in Crore)	No. of Fellowship Awarded
2015-16	055.52	756
2016-17	119.92	756
2017-18	124.84	756
2018-19	031.00	1000

SOURCE: Institute of Objective Studies (2020)

Table 5 specifies that Table 5 shows that from 2015-16 to 2017-18, 756 (Figure 7) fellowship awards were given every year as well as fund allocation also increased, but in 2018-19, 1000 (Figure 7) fellowship awards were given but the allocated fund is only 31 crores (Institute of Objective Studies, 2020).

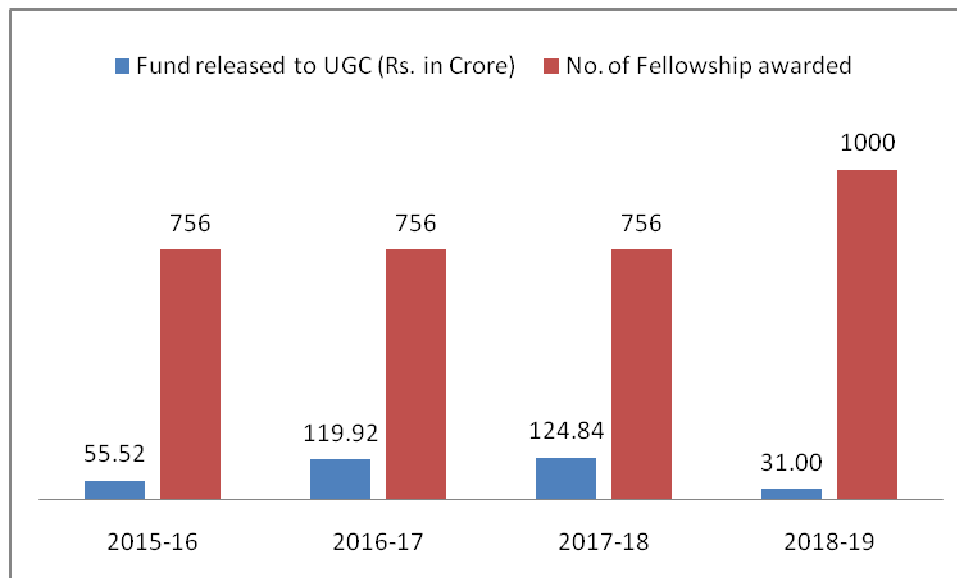


Figure 7. Funds Released and Fellowship Awarded under MAEF

The government of India has been working to empower and strengthen the minority communities and launched several schemes to provide them better facilities for their education and somewhat achieved the target to facilitate minorities to all possible means. But

there is a need to create awareness amongst people about all the government schemes and facilities so that they can easily access them and get benefitted.

Suggestions

The government of India has been working to empower and strengthen the minority communities and launched several schemes to provide them better facilities for their education and somewhat achieved the target to facilitate minorities to all possible means.

1. The government ensures proper functioning of scholarship schemes and allocation of scholarship to eligible candidates only.
2. Timely feedback should be taken from the minority communities as well as concerned authorities involved in these schemes.
3. There is a need to create awareness amongst people about all the government schemes and facilities so that they can easily access them and get benefitted.
4. Survey and action research should be conducted to find out the success rate of these schemes.
5. There should be proper advertisement through local, regional, and national channels and print and other non-print media for outreaching to the mass.
6. There should be easy and less complicated procedures for applying to scholarship schemes.

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