

Replace Fee Reimbursement with Jayashankar Scholarships

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The furore over the fee reimbursement scheme hides the major issue. The question really is: ‘Is fee reimbursement the right way for Telangana?’ According to official sources, the fee reimbursement scheme in Telangana covered 14.32 lakh students in 201314 and cost Rs 2,091 crore. This works out to Rs 14,600 per student per year. For 201415 it is expected to cost the government Rs 2,500 crore.

With this amount of money, government colleges can benefit enormously and develop their facilities and teaching to higher academic levels. However, these amounts are now being cornered by profitmaking private colleges. This scheme places the responsibility of ensuring compliance with government guidelines on private colleges which receive reimbursement directly. The government of Telangana needs to investigate the genuineness of the implementation so far. If we can build bogus houses and claim reimbursement, why not record bogus students and get bogus fee reimbursement? Be that as it may, the suggestions advanced are : These scholarships are to be given to students studying at government colleges and vocational schools, and recognised private colleges and vocational schools.

As for private colleges, government recognition should entail that: (1) they comply with set academic standards (2) bring in line fees charged to below for scholarship levels (3) ensure good examination results and (4) assist in job placements. Renewal of recognition will be based on annual evaluation of results and placement of scholarship students. This policy can continue till the KGtoPG scheme of free education is introduced for the entire student population as proposed by the government.

Before this is implemented, the government should establish the basis of a sound education system with government schools and colleges. This is what is envisaged in the Right to Education Act and the Government of India stands ready and willing to help the state in achieve its objectives. The Telangana government must grab this opportunity of support and fulfill the ambitions of every Telangana parent and child. All parents are primarily keen on good and relevant education as the easiest and safest way of ensuring a better life for their children .

While agriculture and artisan livelihoods are obviously uncertain and unpredictable, employment based livelihood are preferred. Moreover, mobility becomes possible, enabling employees to move to where the jobs are available rather than viceversa. Education has been the major foundation for economic and cultural growth of any population.

No society in the world has succeeded without the improvement in the education and technical skills of its population. The capacity of industrial and service sectors to absorb employees productively exceeds by far that of agriculture and artisan sectors. But modern education and hard and soft skills are needed.

The student community and youth of Telangana and their despairing parents have backed the Telangana statehood movement to the hilt. Nearly 631 youths have committed suicide for this cause. This has placed major moral and political obligations towards the student community on the TRS party and its Telangana government, which they must fulfill.

(The author is former Dean, ASCI)

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