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## **The State of Education in Mewat District, Haryana (India) An Analytical Study**

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### **Abstract:**

Mewat district as a part of well-developed state Haryana has remained lag behind from rest of the Haryana on all aspects of development such as education, health, water and governance. The district lacks basic infrastructure leading to its backwardness. In terms of literacy rate the district stands at the last place. Education is an essential instrument for overall development and growth of an individual. Despite the education being enshrined in the Constitution as a fundamental right, the district has remained backward in terms of education also. The educational infrastructure in the district is the major problem causing parents not to send their children to schools. The study aims to explore the critical state of education in the district and to recommend to the government to take better initiatives to improve educational status in the district.

**Keywords: Education, Holistic Development, Basic Infrastructure.**

### **Introduction**

Mewat has been carved out from Gurgaon as 20<sup>th</sup> district of Haryana state in 2004. The district now comprised 431 villages within five blocks named- Nuh, Nagina, Taoru, Punhana and Firozpur Jhirka. The inhabitants of Mewat are called Meos-Muslims. The district has remained underdeveloped due to its location in semi-arid regions with subsistence agriculture and unique socio-cultural population. Local governance and education also continues to be issues as well. The district has not been provided with basic facilities that could lead to its better socio-economic development. It has been ignored by the policy makers since its creation and before. The educational infrastructure is also not good in the district, as it is clear from its low literacy rate. The condition of schools is grim as they are not provided with basic facilities such as drinking water, toilets and sanitation. The government, however, has taken several initiatives to improve the conditions of schools by implementing several schemes and policies.

### **The Study Area**

Mewat as a District came into existence in April 2004 prior to which it was under the administration of Gurgaon. The District is located in extreme South and has not been provided with basic infrastructure that could lead to its better socio-economic development. The inhabitants of Mewat are known as 'Meos' Muslims. The District, which was carved out of Gurgaon, has negligible population of other religious communities like Sikhs, Jains, and

Christians etc. The District comprises Nuh, Nagina, Firozpur Jhirka, Taoru and Punhana Blocks consisting 431 villages (Census 2011). Mewat district has been long ignored by policy makers who work on poverty issues and empowerment as it is located within the state of Haryana, a well-developed state. Mewat however has remained underdeveloped due to its location in the semi-arid regions with subsistence agriculture and unique socio-cultural populations containing the Meo-Muslims. The Mewat Development Agency (MDA, 2002) which is a nodal agency of the Haryana government reports that agriculture and livestock are the main occupation of the people of Mewat district. The Mewat region is mainly agrarian in nature and has limited scope for diversifying their livelihoods and are dependent on traditional varieties and primitive technologies for agriculture due to lack of awareness. Education and local governance continue to be issues as well. Water, the main source of their livelihoods is saline and fresh water is available only in 60 villages out of around 431 total villages in Mewat. This has been fast reducing as well due to constant depletion of ground water as well as destruction of Aravalli range. This study is an exploratory attempt to understand the state of education in Mewat region of Haryana.

### **Research Mythology**

The research methodology has focussed to understand the state of education in Mewat District. The major objectives of the study are:

- ❖ To assess the constitution and functioning of school level VEC (Village education committee)
- ❖ To assess the teachers' attendance, teachers qualification, pupil-teacher ratio
- ❖ To assess the school Infrastructure- with reference to class rooms, toilets, availability of drinking water, boundary wall and play area
- ❖ To assess Incentives schemes with reference to mid-day meal, uniforms, text books, and scholarship

### **Sampling**

The study covers all 5 blocks of Mewat District. 5% of villages in each block covering schools, health centres and other formal and informal institutions in each village were chosen. The sampling methodology used is given below. Total number of villages in Mewat = 431. The team selected 4 villages from each blocks of Nuh, Taoru, Firozpur Jhirka, Punhana and Nagina. For selecting these 20 villages a further stratification was used, a directly proportional sample of highly populated vs. low populated with a focus on caste parameter. The data used for the study includes both the primary data and secondary data. The primary data was collected through questionnaire, schedule, table and personal interview of respondents etc. The secondary data was made available through books, journals, and reports of the government.

The research directly links the main findings of the study based on the objectives and also provides recommendations for future development initiatives. These recommendations are to pave way for immediate action by the policy makers.

## **Education**

Education is a vital instrument for the holistic development and growth of an individual. Education is essential for an individual not only for being trained on a skill but to develop personality specific traits which are conducive for effective living. The education system in India has undergone drastic change since independence (Singh, 1999). In addition to socio-political and cultural dimensions, education has an economic dimension wherein it helps to create human capital which pushes economic development in the country (Upadhyay, 2007). In a developing country like India, focus on education is centred at the primary level. Therefore, enrolment rates are declining at a very large scale at the secondary and post-secondary level. Vocational education in India has been remained an area of negligence due to slow economic growth in the country during the past 5 decades (Singh, 1999). The education system in the country lacks the employability aspect which results in disinterest among a large chunk of rural population for whom education is an option to be considered in case of sufficiency of resources.

A high degree of gender gap is seen during children's enrolment in schools. The girls are to be kept away from school in case when resources are insufficient. Multiple factors play a role in keeping the girl child away from school in rural India. The important one is the monetary factor; others include factors such as a younger sibling which requires attention and cultural norm of females being confined to their homes and early marriage etc. (Doraisamy, 2001). Difficulties in accessing educational facilities or lack of proper educational facilities in the vicinity are other reasons which largely operate in the rural India. Therefore, girls are unable to receive an environment which is conducive for their overall development. They are largely dependent on others in the family for taking important decisions of their lives (Bruce, 2003).

### **Mewat: State of Education**

The state of education in Mewat is miserable. In terms of literacy rate the district stands at the last place. The average literacy rate of Mewat is 54.1 per cent in 2011 whereas it was 43.3 per cent during 2001 census. The literacy rate amongst Male population which was 61 per cent during 2001 has increased to 69.9 per cent and in urban area it is 80.1 per cent. There is a marginal increment has been seen in the literacy rate amongst female population. During 2001 it was 23.7 per cent and it reached 36.6 per cent during 2011. The statistics show an increased demand for education but the poor quality education standards coupled with absence of adequate infrastructure in the schools daunt their spirits.

The administration has been negligent towards the educational needs of children, particularly in the villages in Mewat. Condition of schools is grim which questions its existence in a country where education forms one of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. In almost all the schools, basic infrastructural facilities are either absent or not working properly. Drinking water facility is usually not available. Children especially, girls are usually not provided with toilet facilities. There are several schools in the region without adequate staff. Teachers, if available, usually remain absent from the schools. The mid-day

meal scheme is also not functioning properly in many schools. Either there is no cooking space or the meal pattern is not followed properly in many schools. The pupil-teacher ratio is very high ranging from 50:1 to 80:1. This leads to further disinterest among teachers to introduce creativity and interest in the curriculum activities. Due to this dismal state of education, people of the region have become so cynical that they have accepted this administrative apathy and do not raise their voice against this.

### **Condition of Education in Mewat: Perceptions at the Block Level**

The Block Education Officer (BEO) is responsible for overseeing the functioning of the education machinery in the villages under the block. Allocation of government schemes and policies and infrastructural transformations carried out in the schools are through the approval of the Block Education Officer.

#### **Educational Infrastructure**

The block education officers of all the blocks found the status of education and infrastructural conditions of the schools ranging from average to very good. While, in Nagina and Taoru it is good, in Jhirka it is very good. Status of education and infrastructural condition was found to be only average in Nuh and Punhana. The reason for rating the infrastructural condition was attributed to government investment in all the five blocks.

A further investigation shows that all the block education officers felt that the schools under the block required undergoing renovation of the building, toilet construction, and having a drinking water facility. The BEOs from Taoru, Nuh and Jhirka also felt the need for provision of furniture in the schools. It was only in Nagina that the need for construction of new classrooms was also highlighted.

Similarly, officers from all the blocks raised concern for making available drinking water in the schools. Concerns regarding toilets and sanitation were raised by officers from all blocks except Nagina. The BEOs from Jhirka and Punhana also raised concerns concerning school building and provisions of benches and boards.

The teacher-pupil ratio was found to be satisfactory in Jhirka. Officers from Nagina and Punhana were not at all satisfied with the teacher- pupil ratio. The block officer in Taoru seemed to be satisfied with the teacher- pupil ratio to some extent.

Sufficiency of schools in respective blocks was explored. Block education officers from all blocks except Punhana felt that the number of schools was enough to cater to the needs of the population. The officers from the Punhana block highlighted the insufficiency of schools in their block.

#### **The Role of Village Education Committee**

The village education committee plays an important role in bridging the gap between the community and the school. It helps in increasing enrolment in the schools. It informs the community; especially the parents of the various government schemes and policies within the

field of education which they can make use of and provide a better future to their children. The role of village education committee was investigated in all the blocks. The study reveals that in Nuh and Jhirka, the role of Village Education Committee is very encouraging. The role of the Committee was found to be encouraging. The role of the Committee was not found to be effective in the blocks of Punhana and Nagina. There it was found to be average.

### **Schemes in Education**

The schemes and policies being implemented by the government in the villages were explored. The study indicates that the government schemes and initiatives are present in all the villages. No specific scheme was mentioned in Nuh, while in other blocks, certain schemes were named. For instance, in Taoru, the officer mentioned the presence of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The mid-day meal and other schemes are being implemented in Nagina and Punhana blocks. Further investigation regarding allocation of benefits indicates that it is only in Nagina and Jhirka that the benefits of the schemes are being met out equally. In Taoru and Punhana, the analysis highlighted the presence of discrimination in access. The reasons for the same were highlighted to be ignorance among people. The officers are satisfied with the implementation of schemes except Punhana. The successful schemes mentioned by the officers included SSA, mid-day meal and free uniforms and text books. The officers are not satisfied with regard to equality in terms of benefit from the schemes. The officers from Punhana and Taoru mentioned inequality in allocation of benefits of the schemes.

### **Condition of Education: Perceptions of Important Functionaries**

The important functionaries engaged in the education process are the teachers, parents and students. Investigating the perceptions of all these three functionaries become important to acquaint oneself with the effectiveness of the education process as well as to understand the dynamics of relationship between the three.

### **Teachers' Viewpoints**

One school from each group of the 20 villages was surveyed. Out of each school, one teacher was interviewed. The average age of the teachers who were interviewed was 38 years. There were only 4 of the 20 teachers who were post graduates, 5 who were graduates. 60% teachers who were interviewed were 12th pass. Majority of the teachers (80%) had more than 8 years of teaching experience and all of them admitted to go the school every day.

### **Educational Infrastructure**

Viewpoints of teachers regarding the infrastructural condition of schools were investigated. 55% teachers were satisfied with the number of schools in their villages. They realised that the number of schools were enough to cater to the needs of the population. 25% teachers feel that the number of schools was not sufficient.

Investigation was also made to explore the teachers' satisfaction levels regarding the infrastructural condition of their respective schools. Only 30% teachers seemed to be satisfied with the condition of their respective schools. 35% were dissatisfied and an equal percent age

was only satisfied to an extent. Teachers who were not satisfied at all or who were satisfied only to an extent mentioned reasons such as lack of drinking water and toilet facility in the schools.

### **Role of Village Education Committee**

Teacher's viewpoints were obtained regarding the role of village education committee. Analysis of the responses obtained indicates that 75% teachers declared that the village education committees in their respective villages have been able to play a role which has helped accrue some benefits to the people.

### **Schemes in Education**

Teacher's perceptions regarding the initiatives and schemes of government in the schools were explored. The teacher's satisfaction level regarding the implementation of government schemes and policies was measured. Analysis indicates that 85% teachers were completely satisfied with the implementation of schemes in the schools and 90% were sure that the service delivery with respect to these schemes is being done efficiently. They were sure that there is no discrimination with regard to the disbursement of benefits under any government schemes.

### **Student's Perceptions**

Presence of students is indispensable to complete the cycle of education process. Viewpoints of students on similar lines were explored so as to understand the impact of various factors such as infrastructural condition, teaching styles etc. on their image of school and education as a whole. Four children were interviewed from one school in every village belonging to different castes. Majority of the children interviewed fall in the age group of 11-15 years. Gender composition of the respondents indicates that 62% respondents were males and the rest were females.

### **Educational Infrastructure**

Viewpoints of children regarding the infrastructure of the school were investigated. Respondents were asked about the type of school they attend. 100% respondents declared to attend a government school. There were certain students among these who also mentioned to attend a Madrasah paralleled. Schools were located within five kilometres area. Thus, the distance of the school did not surface to be a de motivating factor for children to go to school. 97% walk down to the school and the rest 3% are the only ones who take a school bus.

Children's willingness to go to school was explored. The study indicates that all the children were willing to go to school. Several reasons were given by children that motivated them to go to school. All the students mentioned willingness to study as one of the main reasons for going to school. Another is good and friendly teachers that motivated them to attend the school. Playing opportunities and meeting with friends were additional reasons.

Student's opinion was sought about the adequacy of facilities in their schools. The analysis displays that 76% students were satisfied with the facilities provided in the school. The students were asked to outline the facilities which they believe to be lacking in their respective schools. 38% students mentioned toilets and drinking water facility in the school to be lacking. This problem was highlighted by all the people interviewed including the officer, teachers, parents and the villagers. Other infrastructural facilities lacking in the schools included play area, building or class room and bench

Availability of teachers was investigated through the students being interviewed. All the students interviewed declared that the teachers were present in the school. Further investigation indicates that 75% children admit that the teachers are always available. The rest 25% declare that the teachers are sometimes available. Students were also asked regarding the approachability of teachers. Analysis indicates that 66% children were not scared of approaching their teachers. The rest were scared due to reasons such as scolding and beating by the teachers. Presence of discrimination by the teachers was also investigated. Discrimination by the teachers was reported only in 2 villages, one from Nuh and other from Jhirka. However, on being asked whether they reported the discrimination instance to any one, they denied.

### **Schemes in Education**

Awareness of children regarding government schemes and policies being implemented in the school was explored. Majority of children seemed to be aware of the schemes and policies. The study shows that majority of students were primarily aware of mid-day meal program and the provisions of free textbooks. Other schemes which children were aware of included provision of free uniforms, scholarships for girls and special schemes. Further investigation regarding the initiatives which benefited children indicates that most of the children were equally benefited by mid-day meal program and provision of free textbooks. Only 14% children were benefited by scholarships.

### **Parents Viewpoints**

Parent's views were sought regarding the educational infrastructure and other aspects in the education process. The age of the majority of the parents belonged to the category ranging from 31 to 50 years. In terms of the gender composition of the respondent group, 50% were males and 50% were females.

### **Educational Infrastructure**

Parents were asked about the types of school which their children attend. Children of all the parents who were interviewed were attending government school and some were also going to madrasahs for religious education. The distance of the school for all the children was less than 5 kilometres. The reasons for sending children to school were explored. The study shows that 57% parents send their children to school for educational enhancement. 27% claim to send their children to school for establishing one's position in the society. Other reasons include the government initiatives and the role of the village education committee. In

6 villages out of the 20 surveyed, not all the children were going to school. Further probing revealed that boys were preferred over girls in these cases. The poor financial condition prevented them from sending all children to the schools.

The parent- teacher meetings form an essential component of the school curriculum. They are largely conducted to establish coordination with the parents. The meetings aim is to keep the parents informed of the progress of their respective children as well as update them of the activities in the school. The parents were asked whether or not the parent teacher meetings are being conducted in the schools. The analysis reveals that 51% parents admitted that parent-teacher meetings are conducted in the schools. 44% mentioned that parent-teacher meetings are not conducted in the schools which their children attend. Most of the parents asked that parent-teacher meetings are conducted on a monthly basis. Parents were also asked whether they benefit from the parent-teacher meetings or not. Analysis indicates that 89% of the parents felt that they were benefited from the parent-teacher meetings.

Infrastructural facilities of the school are found to affect the willingness of parents to send their children to school. Lack of drinking water and toilet facility de motivates them to enrol their children in school. Thus, parents were asked to rate the school infrastructure. 69% parents said that the school infrastructure was satisfactory and only 16% considered it to be good. This indicates that majority of the parents were not too happy and satisfied with the conditions of the school which their children go. On being asked whether they were willing to continue with their children's education, it was found that majority of the parents were willing to continue (95%). The two primary reasons highlighted for the willingness to continue education of their children were aspiring for a better future and for pursuance of higher education. The rest 5% parents who were not willing to continue their children's education attributed it to the inability to afford education of their children.

### **Role of Village Education Committee**

The parents were asked whether they are aware of any such committee in their village. Analysis of the responses obtained indicates that 65% parents were not aware of these committees.

### **Schemes and Initiatives in Education**

Parents were asked whether they have knowledge of the government schemes and initiatives. The study shows that 98% parents were aware of the government schemes and policies. The parents told that the provision of free text books and the mid-day meal scheme are the most popular schemes with 90% and 84% parents mentioning it respectively. A small percentage of parents were also aware of provision of free uniforms and scholarships. Teachers and children themselves seemed be the major sources of conveying information regarding the schemes to the parents. Children of all the parents seemed to have benefited from one or the other scheme except in 2 instances where parents highlighted the fact that the schemed did not reach them and thus, their children could not take benefit of those.

### **Condition of Education: Perceptions of People**

Perceptions of the people regarding the status of education in the respective blocks were investigated. Understanding the perceptions of the villagers was also beneficial in obtaining the actual condition of the schools under each block.

### **Educational Infrastructure**

In terms of the infrastructure 20 villages were surveyed. Out of 20 villages 18 had schools. There was no school in Siyanika from Taoru and Beriabas in Jhirka. Though, a school structure is present in both the villages, the condition is dilapidated and not suited for habitation. Thus, children of these two villages go to the schools in the nearby villages. Exploration of the condition of the infrastructural facilities in the schools reveals that only 45% of the total schools surveyed had proper facilities. The worst condition was in Punhana where none of the schools were in proper condition. Scarcity of drinking water and toilet facilities were primary two problems highlighted by the villagers in all the blocks.

With respect to availability of teachers 20 villages were surveyed. Out of 20 villages only 9 have adequate number of teachers. In Firozpur Jhirka teachers are not adequate for the number of children enrolled in the schools. Even in case of Punhana, teachers are either not presents or female teachers are absent preventing the villagers from sending their girl children to school. The problem of teachers not coming on time was also reported by villagers from Nagina.

### **The Role of Village Education Committee**

The role of village education committee was explored. The study reveals that the village education committee was absent in almost all the villages surveyed. While in Jhirka and Punhana, none of the villages had a village education committee, in case of Nuh, Nagina and Taoru village education committees were present in 50% of the villages. A further investigation indicates that village education committees are largely redundant mechanisms in the villages as their level of functioning is zero even in villages where it is mentioned to be present. The villagers are usually unaware of the composition and they are not doing any work so as to link the school and the community. There are no initiatives being undertaken by the village education committees.

### **Schemes in Education**

The schemes being implemented by the government in the schools were explored. In 45% of the villages surveyed, either there are no government schemes being implemented or the villagers are unaware of the same. Exploration of the schemes being implemented in the rest 55% of the villages indicates that mid-day meal, free text books and uniforms and scholarships are the major schemes which are being implemented across all blocks. The transparency in the implementation of schemes and programmes is a major factor and is almost absent in all villages. There is complete lack of transparency in the implementation of schemes in Taoru and Punhana block. In both, Nagina and Nuh, transparency in implementation is only found in 4 of the 8 villages. The situation is also grim in Jhirka where transparency is only mentioned to be present in 1 of the 4 villages surveyed. Contrasting facts

are explored regarding the benefits of the schemes. The condition is worse in Punhana where benefits from such schemes are only being received by children in Nasirpuri. In rest of the 3 villages, the benefits are not reaching the target population. In Nuh, Nagina and Jhirka, children from Scheduled Castes and BPL families are given more preference. Incidence of embezzlement of the material obtained under these schemes is only reported in one village named Tarakpur from Nuh where the teachers sell everything and nothing is given to the children.

### **Key Findings**

The study aims at exploring the state of education in Mewat District. Education is the essential instrument of achieving holistic development of an individual. To understand the educational status in the district, viewpoints from the Block Education Officers, teachers, parents, students and people were investigated. Themes were based on the aspects related to education such as infrastructural conditions of schools, the role of village education committee and the policies and programmes of the government etc.

Comparisons across the key respondent groups indicate a consistency of responses. The infrastructural conditions are not found as appropriate as are required for the standard conduction of educational activities. Basic facilities like provision of potable water and toilets were lacking as told by all respondent groups. These were important problems which affected the enrolment of children in schools. As the teachers are concerned, the parents found them to be competent and sensitive towards children. A similar response was given by students. However, the villagers felt that the teachers were apathetic and largely disinterested in teaching. Financial condition was found to be the most important reason responsible for low enrolment rate and high dropout rate among children. Gender divide was also found to be visible in terms of preference wherein boys were given advantage over girls to go to school. The village education committee was largely found to be a defunct body. The villagers, parents and students were hardly aware of it. Thus, the village education committee found not to be performing any role in establishing linkages between community and schools. There are several policies and schemes as being implemented by the government in the schools. However, contrasting views were reported as villagers were not aware of the schemes and initiatives. But this was not the case with the parents and students. They were largely found to be aware of the schemes and policies of the government implemented in the schools and benefited from them.

An analysis of the study shows that the conditions of education in the region are satisfactory to some extent. However, these findings and the conditions explained are the representative of the primary education; so do not align them to the literacy rate of the district. Government investment is sufficient in the district. However, the machinery is not transparent. There is disparity in the viewpoints of the beneficiaries indicating lack of effective monitoring mechanism to look after the material resources as policies and initiatives of the government and human resources like teachers. There is need to improve infrastructure so that the parents and children themselves can be motivated to enrol to schools. Monitoring mechanism is also

required to ensure accountability of the village education committee and other related bodies. Otherwise, these would continue to redundant bodies.

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