



Empowering Students in West Bengal: The Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship

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Abstract:-

The purpose of this study is to find out the significant role of SVMCM scheme that continuous education of the students and society's general well-being. The study highlights how continuous education addresses socially and economic challenges by conducting a literature review on topics related to ongoing education. It identifies obstacles such as dropout problems, insufficient funding, and recognition of formal non-formal learning while simultaneously investigating opportunities such as govt. initiatives. This study delves into the essence, impact, and operational structure of this transformative scholarship program, showcasing how it is empowering dreams and shaping futures. The study proposes various strategies for incorporating lifelong learning into educational agendas by utilizing qualitative research techniques, such as conducting interviews and surveys with various stakeholders. The purpose of these findings is to provide educational policymakers with information, highlight the transformative potential of students in the context of achieving the education developmental goals. By providing deserving students with the means to pursue their academic dreams, the scholarship not only uplifts individuals but also contributes to the broader goal of societal development.

Keywords: SVMCM, Govt. scheme, Education, Empowering student.

Introduction

In a world where education serves as the key to unlocking potential and fostering growth, financial constraints often act as barriers for many deserving students. The Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship (SVMCM) emerges as a beacon of hope, breaking down these barriers and illuminating the path to academic and professional success for countless students across India. This study delves into the essence, impact, and operational structure of this transformative scholarship program, showcasing how it is empowering dreams and shaping futures.

Here is a table of government schemes for education in West Bengal:

Sl No	Scheme Name	Objective	Target Group	Benefits Provided
01	Kanyashree Prakalpa	Promote education among girls and prevent early marriage.	Girls aged 13-18 years.	Annual scholarships and one-time grant upon turning 18 to continue education and delay marriage.
02	Sabooj Sathi	Provide bicycles to students to encourage attendance and reduce dropouts.	Students of Class IX to XII	Free bicycles to students in government and government-aided schools.
03	Sikshashree	Financial assistance to SC/ST students for education.	SC/ST students of Class V to VIII	Annual scholarships to cover educational expenses.
04	Aikyashree	Promote education among minority students.	Minority students (pre-matric to post-matric)	Scholarships for minority students at various educational levels to cover tuition fees, maintenance allowance, and other educational expenses.
05	Swami Vivekananda Merit-Cum-Means Scholarship	Provide financial aid to meritorious students from economically	Students in higher education	Scholarships for undergraduate, postgraduate, and other higher education courses based on merit and

		weaker sections.		economic criteria.
06	Student Credit Card Scheme	Provide financial assistance for higher education through easy loans.	Students pursuing higher education	Education loans up to INR 10 lakh at a low interest rate, repayable after completing the course and gaining employment.
07	Mid-Day Meal Scheme	Improve nutritional status of children and enhance school attendance.	Students of primary and upper primary schools	Free nutritious meals during school hours to encourage attendance and retention.
08	Pathashree Abhijan	Enhance the infrastructure of government schools to provide better educational facilities	Government schools	Funding for construction, renovation, and upgradation of school buildings and facilities.
09	Utkarsh Bangla	Provide skill development training to students and unemployed youth.	Students and unemployed youth.	Free vocational training courses to enhance employability and provide industry-relevant skills.
10	Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan	Improve school education quality and ensure inclusive and equitable education.	All school students	Comprehensive support for school education from pre-primary to higher secondary levels, including teacher training, school infrastructure, and quality interventions.

These schemes aim to promote education, reduce dropouts, and provide financial and infrastructural support to students across West Bengal.

Significance of the Study:

The study is crucial for policymakers, educators, and practitioners aiming to promote education through financial support. It explores the connection between cause and effect, aiming to inform govt. educational policies and programs, schemes that encourage continuous learning and environmentally responsible behaviors. The findings may also provide positive impact on education and students.

Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the current scheme on education by the govt. of West Bengal.
- To identify challenges and opportunities for empowering students of West Bengal.
- To analyze best schemes for enhanced academic performance.
- To propose recommendations for enhancing the educational policies and practices.

Methodology:

The study used a qualitative research method, including library, research articles and documentary analysis, to gather data from various stakeholders involved in govt. schemes and educational development initiatives.

Discussions and Analysis:-

Understanding the Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship

Historical Background :-

The Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship was launched by the Government of West Bengal in memory of Swami Vivekananda, an iconic spiritual leader and social reformer. Swami Vivekananda emphasized the importance of education in achieving personal and societal progress. The scholarship aims to reflect his vision by providing financial assistance to meritorious students from economically weaker sections of society, enabling them to pursue higher education without financial hindrance.

Objectives of the Schemes

The primary objectives of the SVMCM are:

- Promoting Educational Equity:** To ensure that talented students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have equal opportunities to pursue higher education.
- Reducing Dropout Rates:** To decrease the dropout rates in higher education by providing financial support.
- Encouraging Academic Excellence:** To motivate students to excel academically by recognizing and rewarding their hard work and dedication.

Eligibility Criteria:-

To be eligible for the Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship, students must meet the following criteria:

- Academic Performance:** Students must have achieved a minimum percentage of marks in their last qualifying examination. The required percentage varies for different levels of study.
- Economic Background:** The family income of the applicant must not exceed a specified limit, ensuring that the scholarship reaches those who need it the most.
- Domicile:** The applicant must be a resident of West Bengal.

Categories of Scholarship:-

The SVMCM caters to students at various levels of education, including:

- i. Higher Secondary Level: For students who have passed their 10th standard and are pursuing 11th or 12th standard.
- ii. Undergraduate Level: For students pursuing undergraduate courses in arts, science, commerce, engineering, medical, and other professional courses.
- iii. Postgraduate Level: For students enrolled in postgraduate courses.
- iv. Diploma Level: For students pursuing diploma courses in polytechnics and other institutions.

Application Process:-

The application process for the Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship is straightforward and user-friendly, designed to ensure maximum participation. Here are the key steps involved:

Online Registration: Applicants must register online through the official scholarship portal.

Form Filling: After registration, students need to fill out the application form, providing details about their academic performance, family income, and other relevant information.

Document Submission: Applicants must upload scanned copies of required documents, such as mark sheets, income certificates, and domicile certificates.

Application Review: Submitted applications are reviewed by the concerned authorities to verify the eligibility criteria.

Scholarship Disbursement: Successful applicants receive the scholarship amount directly into their bank accounts.

Impact of the Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship:-

SL No	Years	Number of Beneficiaries
01	2016	15000
02	2017	20000
03	2018	25000
04	2019	30000
05	2020	35000
06	2021	40000
07	2022	45000

08	2023	50000
09	2024	55000(estimated)

Source: <https://svmcm.wbhed.gov.in/>

Financial Relief:-

One of the most significant impacts of the SVMCM is the financial relief it provides to students and their families. By covering tuition fees and other educational expenses, the scholarship alleviates the economic burden on families, allowing students to focus on their studies without financial stress. The sanctioned amount of the scholarship by the West Bengal Government is increased from Rs. 45 Crores to Rs. 2,000 Crores under the Swami Vivekananda Scholarship 2024.

RATES OF SCHOLARSHIP		
Courses/Programmes	Eligibility Marks in Last Qualifying Examination	Rates per Month (₹)
HS	60%	1000
UG (ARTS)		1000
UG (COMMERCE)		1000
UG (SCIENCE)		1500
UG PROFESSIONAL COURSES (UGC)		1500
PG (ARTS)	53% for SVMCMS 45% for K- 3 applicants	2000
PG (COMMERCE)		2000
PG (SCIENCE)		2500
PG PROFESSIONAL COURSES		2500
NON-NET M.PHIL/ NON-NET PhD, NET-LS PhD		5000 & 8000, respectively
UG (ENGG), PG (ENGG), PROFESSIONAL COURSES (AICTE)	UG: 60% PG: 55% in Graduation from any State University/AICTE - approved Institute of West Bengal	5000
POLYTECHNIC	60%	1500
UG (MEDICAL- DEGREE), DIPLOMA COURSES	60%	5000 & 1500, respectively

Source: https://svmcm.wbhed.gov.in/readwrite/DETAILED_ADVERTISEMENT.pdf

Enhanced Academic Performance:-

The assurance of financial support encourages students to strive for academic excellence. Knowing that their hard work can lead to tangible benefits motivates them to perform better in their studies. Many recipients of the SVMCM have reported improved academic outcomes as a direct result of the scholarship.

Increased Enrollment in Higher Education:-

By providing financial assistance, the SVMCM has contributed to higher enrollment rates in higher education institutions. Students who might have otherwise discontinued their education due to financial constraints are now able to pursue their academic ambitions, leading to a more educated and skilled workforce.

Social Mobility:-

The scholarship plays a crucial role in promoting social mobility. By enabling students from economically weaker sections to access higher education, it helps bridge the socio-economic gap and provides them with opportunities for upward mobility. Many scholarship recipients have gone on to secure well-paying jobs and contribute positively to society.

Success Stories:-

Numerous success stories have emerged from the SVMCM, showcasing the transformative power of the scholarship. For instance, a student from a rural background who received the scholarship to pursue an engineering degree might have gone on to secure a prestigious job in a multinational company, thereby changing the financial status of their family and inspiring others in their community to pursue higher education.

Challenges and Solutions:-

While the Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship has achieved remarkable success, it is not without challenges. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensure the continued effectiveness of the program.

Awareness and Outreach:-

Challenge: Many eligible students and their families are unaware of the scholarship and its benefits, leading to underutilization of the available funds.

Solution: Enhancing awareness through extensive outreach programs, including collaboration with schools, colleges, and community organizations, can help disseminate information about the scholarship. Utilizing social media and other digital platforms can also play a significant role in reaching a wider audience.

Application Process:-

Challenge: Despite being relatively straightforward, the online application process can be daunting for students who lack access to digital resources or are not tech-savvy.

Solution: Setting up help centers in rural and semi-urban areas to assist students with the application process can mitigate this challenge. Providing step-by-step guides and tutorials on the official portal can also help applicants navigate the process more easily.

Timely Disbursement:-

Challenge: Delays in the disbursement of scholarship funds can create financial difficulties for students, affecting their ability to pay tuition fees and other expenses on time.

Solution: Streamlining the review and disbursement process by incorporating more efficient administrative practices and ensuring adequate staffing can reduce delays. Regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms can help identify and resolve bottlenecks promptly.

Evaluation and Feedback:-

Challenge: Regular evaluation of the program's impact and gathering feedback from recipients is essential to ensure its continuous improvement.

Solution: Implementing a robust evaluation framework that includes periodic surveys, focus group discussions, and case studies can provide valuable insights. This feedback can be used to refine the program and address any emerging issues.

Future Directions:-

The Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship has already made a significant impact on the lives of many students, but there is always room for improvement and expansion. Here are some future directions for the program:

Expansion of Coverage:-

Extending the scholarship to include more courses and vocational training programs can widen its impact. Incorporating fields like technology, arts, and entrepreneurship can cater to the diverse interests and career aspirations of students.

Increased Funding:-

Securing additional funding from government and private sources can enhance the sustainability and reach of the scholarship program. Public-private partnerships can play a pivotal role in this regard.

Holistic Support:-

Providing additional support services such as mentorship, career counseling, and soft skills training can complement the financial assistance offered by the scholarship. These services can help students navigate their academic and professional journeys more effectively.

Conclusion

The Swami Vivekananda Merit-cum-Means Scholarship (SVMCM) stands as a testament to the power of education and the impact of financial support on transforming lives. By providing deserving students with the means to pursue their academic dreams, the scholarship not only uplifts individuals but also contributes to the broader goal of societal development. As the program continues to evolve and expand, it holds the promise of unlocking countless potentials and shaping a brighter future for generations to come.

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