

# Uttar Pradesh : Who is failing the Students?

The Board of High School and Intermediate Education declared results of board examinations for classes 10 and 12 in April 2019. A total of 10.48 lakh students failed in both the classes. Another 6.52 lakh students either did not appear or partially appeared for the examination. The large number failures caused a resentment and serious discussion in the state.

The state government under BJP's Yogi Adityanath claimed that huge number of failures and dropouts occurred due to the stringent measures taken by the government to curb cheating in the examinations. The government put this version repeatedly through the media and tried to transfer the responsibility for the dismal performance of students on students themselves. It did not attempt to find the root causes for these failures.

According to the official data available, the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in UP is 88m which is much higher than the national average of 32. This figure applies both to public and private schools. The PTR in the districts that showed poor results is appallingly low. Ghazipur district has a PTR at 139. The districts of Hamirpur and Maharajgunj have a PTR of 498 and 426. All these are figures pertaining to 2016-17. After 2017 there is no recruitment of teachers in the state. Moreover, new schools were opened and many Upper Primary schools were upgraded to high schools after 2017. The present situation might have worsened.

There is a skewed distribution of teachers across schools. On the one hand,, urban centres like Lucknow, Varanasi, Allahabad and Ghaziabad have more teachers per school as compared to rural areas. On the other, in remote interiors, there are more teachers than there are school within the proximity of district headquarters and school. The lack of subject teachers pervades all schools-both public and private-across the state.

The Yogi government announced a policy in 2016 under which the under-performing teachers would be compulsorily retired at the age of 50 years. Contrary to this, the government itself announced that retired teachers would be appointed on contract basis until the new recruitments takes place.

The infrastructure is woefully lacking across the state: 36% schools have no furniture; 20% schools have no power connection; rural schools face frequent and prolonged power cuts. While the BJP government both at the center and in the state incessantly talks about Digital India, 82.2% schools have no computers with internet connection. Only 76% of schools have a library; how many of them in dilapidated condition is not known.

While these are systemic lapses, there are policy changes that affected the quality of education in the state. The government changed the academic year to match the CBSE exami-nation. As the wheat harvesting time and hot summer month falls in the academic year, the attendance of students declined to alarming level in rural areas. The state government introduced NCERT text books in place of board recognized books in 2018 for classes 10 and 12. Abrupt introduction of entirely different syllabus without sufficient preparation for students and teachers adversely affected the learning process and performance in examination.

The examination system across India assess the remem-bering capacity of the student not his worth as assimilation of knowledge. And having a school leaving certificate became a necessity for any upward movement. Under these condi-tions, cheating in the examinations became pervasive all over the country. Without addressing the root causes for poor quality of education, putting blame on the students is preposterous.

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