

Teacher shortage plagues Urdu medium schools in Chittoor

Urdu medium schools all over Chittoor district are marred by unprecedented students' dropout rate and falling teaching standards during the last one decade, while parents blame officials for showing apathy and discrimination toward the minority schools.

Chittoor district has the dominant Muslim population all over the western mandals to the tune of nearly 40 per cent, with substantial presence in the urban areas. During the year 2015-16, the number of schools administered by the Education Department stood at 196, including primary, upper primary and high schools, with a total student strength of 11,753. Major complaint from the parents in this current academic year 2016-17 is that the officials are not taking any steps to improve teaching standards and to increase the students' strength.

A number of Urdu medium schools in Madanapalle division do not have even the minimum number of students, and the show is being run without teachers in many subjects. Coming to the high schools, the dropout rate is 20% annually, particularly among the girls. The Urdu medium schools in Punganur, Palamaner, Madanapalle, Valmikipuram, Piler and Tamballapalle are being run with a small number of teachers. Coming to the eastern mandals, the teaching norms are neglected in many schools, coupled with poor percentage of students.

Deputy Educational Officer, Vasudeva Naidu, told *The Hindu* that as many as 80 teacher posts are remaining vacant in Chittoor district. "This situation arose because even for filling of vacancies of Urdu teachers, we have to follow the rule of reservation for the SC/ST and BC categories. Considering this yardstick, there are no takers for the Urdu teaching profession among the non-minorities. The government has plans to fill the Urdu teachers posts through a special District Selection Committee," he said.

Fear of closure

Chittoor District Muslim Minorities Welfare Association general secretary M. Afzal Khan expressed concern that prolonged neglect of Urdu schools would soon lead to closure of many of them.

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