

THE ASIAN AGE, BOMBAY, 28 JUL 2003

## Uniform plan shoddy: Survey

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Bangalore, July 27: The scheme to distribute free uniforms in government schools has failed to act as an incentive for students due to its shoddy implementation. According to a study commissioned by the education department and conducted by the Institute of Social and Economic Change, the main drawback of this scheme is the insufficient quantity of cloth supplied which in most

cases is of sub-standard quality.

The distribution of free uniforms was introduced in 1985 as a component of the Vidya Vikas Yojana (VY), and was aimed at increasing

attendance levels in

government schools along with schemes like the mid-day meal programme. Over 71 lakh children are being covered under the free uniform scheme at present

### SPOTLIGHT

The 170-page ISEC study notes that the implementation of the schemes has drawn flak from girl students. While girls in class three and four are being supplied with 1.10 metres of blouse material

students of class eight.

nine and ten are being supplied with 0.85 metres, 0.90 metres and 0.95 metres respectively.

"One fails to understand the logic behind supplying less

quantity of cloth to girls as they reach higher classes. More interestingly, there is a steady increase in the quantity supplied for boys' half pants and shirts from class one to seven," the survey says.

The study further reveals that with regard to skirts for high school girls the quantity of the cloth supplied is insufficient for stitching long skirts. "Girls from rural areas prefer to wear full or knee

length size skirts and as such find the quantity insufficient," the report says.

The study also shows that class 8, 9 and 10 girls are supplied with the same lining material which is being given as an inner body lining material, to stitch skirts. Such lining material commonly comes in a thinner transparent variety as the one generally worn inside as undergarment covers. "The material shrinks and also thins out. Girls feel embarrassed to wear such a skirt as it challenges their dignity and modesty," the survey says.

Parents are also not happy with the white colour of the uniforms as the dirt becomes conspicuous too soon and requires frequent washing.

The study concludes that the free uniform scheme has failed to curtail absenteeism, the objective for which it was launched. However the report does not dwell on the impact of other schemes which had been launched with the objective of reducing absenteeism in schools as its mandate was to evaluate the free uniform scheme alone.

The sample study was conducted in eight districts, two under each of the four educational sub-divisions. A multi-stage stratified sampling design was employed to conduct the study. The stratification was based on geographical regions, educational development in terms of literacy attainments, the extent of beneficiary coverage and social status in terms of sex and caste background of the beneficiaries.