

English replaces Telugu as teaching medium in Andhra state schools

With IT and knowledge-based industries spreading their base in the state, the Andhra Pradesh government has decided that English will replace Telugu as the medium of instruction in 6,500 government-run schools in the state from the new academic year beginning this month.

At the same time the state syllabus will be replaced with the Central Board of School Education (CBSE) syllabus so that children in these schools are able to compete with their counterparts from other states, official said.

The government said the move was aimed at shoring up standards in school education and to prepare students to strengthen their base in the English medium and prepare them for national and global competition. Education department officials said this was to ensure that students from rural schools were on a par with their counterparts studying in private English medium schools.

The department Tuesday issued an order introducing English as the medium of instruction with CBSE syllabus from class VI in 6,500 select schools, covering over 250,000 students. The move is part of the World Bank-aided Strengthening and Universalisation of Quality and Access to Secondary Schools (SUCCESS) project.

Under the order, students of classes VI and VII of upper primary schools which are within two kilometre radius of high schools where English would be introduced as medium of teaching would be shifted to the nearby high schools along with teachers and other administrative staff.

The authorities have also made arrangements to train the teachers who are currently teaching Telugu medium syllabus. They would undergo training in English at reputed universities and institutes in the country.

The government's move to introduce English as medium of instruction has been welcomed by the teaching community and students. However, introduction of CBSE syllabus replacing the somewhat provincial state syllabus has drawn flak.

The Andhra Pradesh United Teachers Federation (UTF) and the Andhra Pradesh Teachers Federation (APTF) have opposed the move to introduce CBSE syllabus and want the government to continue with the state syllabus. They also fear the move would result in closure of many schools in rural areas.

The Joint Action Committee of Teachers Organisations has even launched protests against the projected merger of schools.

'While we welcome the introduction of English as the medium of instruction, the merger of schools is irrational,' said M.V. Narsinga Rao, general secretary of Democratic Teachers Federation.

Eminent legislative council member Chukka Ramaiah has also cautioned against changing the syllabus in a hurry and the possible closure of schools.

'It is not a small issue and needs a lot of planning. The closure of schools could lead to an increase in the number of dropouts,' he said.

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