

The Good, Bad, and Ugly for Education Sector From Budget 2021

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All eyes were on the Budget 2021, in the wake of pandemic and the damage unleashed by it, this Union budget became all more important. The expectations were rife that the budget will come up with many big bang reforms and will give a fresh booster to almost all the ailing sectors and the Indian economy.

Amidst all the sectors, the education sector was the one which was hit badly by the onslaught of Covid-19 pandemic. Massive disruptions induced by this pandemic wreaked the havoc in this sector as well. That is why the whole education sector was looking up to the Budget 2021 for giving it a shot of normalisation.

Also, this budget was important as this was the first budget after the announcement of the new 'National Education Policy' (NEP) thus the education sector was eagerly waiting to see how NEP's proposals will be implemented.

Just to consolidate the educational sector in India, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that 15,000 schools will be qualitatively strengthened to include all the components of NEP 2020. These schools will also mentor other schools in their regions to achieve the standards envisioned by the new policy. In addition to these 100 new Sainik schools will be set up in partnership with NGOs, private schools and states.

To oversee the quality of higher education, the government left no stone unturned, the FM announced setting up a Higher Education Commission.

Apart from all these announcements, the efforts are being made to make quality education accessible in the far flung areas and thus in this direction the government announced the opening up of a new Central University in Leh.

For making the idea of equitable education for all, the government not only opened up the schools but also took the cognisance of the students belonging from the downtrodden section of the society, the budget 2021 purposed for the welfare of 4 crore Scheduled Caste students, the post-matric scholarship scheme will be revamped. Rs 35,219 crore will be spent over a span of 6 years, i.e, till 2025-26.

The intent of the government in taking forward the idea of skill India got a big boost in the current budget rolled out the National Apprenticeship Training Scheme, an initiative launched in 2016, will be amended to amplify apprenticeship opportunities for youth. Rs 3,000 crore will be spent on The Apprenticeship Act to provide post-education apprenticeship training to Engineering graduates and diploma holders.

The budget also ramped up the spending on Kendriya Vidyalayas which have risen from Rs 5,516 crore to Rs 6,800 crore. Allocation for mid-day meal schemes and Navodaya Vidyalayas have been increased by Rs 500 crore each.

But apart from all the good things announced in the budget 2021, there is a serious concern that the government has slashed the allocation to the education ministry by whooping Rs 6000 crore and it raises serious concerns as this cut came in the year when India is gearing up for the implementation of the National Education Policy. The education ministry will receive Rs 93,224.31 in 2021-22, which is Rs 6,086.89 crore less than the previous year.

The total budget addressed some key concerns and paved the way for a stronger education sector but also missed out on addressing some key issues that would have changed the face of the education sector in India.

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