



MILES TO GO

Armed with a mandate to provide education for all, a slew of measures are being taken by the government to increase competitiveness and aid the growth of the education sector. But a lot remains to be desired at the point of origin that will create a roadmap for the sector at large. Elets News Network (ENN) looks at some of the key issues plaguing the education sector and how the present policies are looking to change the course of the system



Indian education sector is touted as a sunrise sector for investments owing to the immense potential it offers to investors. A sound education system in a growing economy can further strengthen the intellectual capital of the country. However, at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi talks about imparting skill education, bringing digital knowledge to the doorsteps of education through institutes, there exist a number of roadblocks that are making the mission of education for all a pipe dream.

One of the stumbling blocks has been Right to Education (RTE) Act that is forcing a whopping number of schools to close down pan India. RTE has made it more difficult for children to access education while it was supposed to create more education opportunities for them. The reason for the closure of schools is their non-compliance with RTE Infrastructure norms mentioned in section 18-19.

Prashant Narang, Advocate, iJustice – a public interest initiative of Centre for Civil Society, informs, “As per the RTE section 18-19, if the private schools are not complying with infrastructure norms then there would be penalty of Rs 25,000 per day up to Rs 1 lakh. The section doesn’t say that schools will be shut down but the penalty is so high that the schools will shut down and the new schools cannot come unless the section complies with the RTE norms.”

Also the schools have to comply not only with the RTE norms but with the State Act, which are unreasonable, shares Narang. As per the data of closure of schools in Punjab and Haryana available at NISA (National Independent School Alliance) out of the total 9,301 private schools 10 per cent are unauthorised private schools in Punjab and out of them more than 1100 schools have been closed, with threat of closure looming large on others. With an average of 200 students per school, the number of students impacted across the 1,170 schools can be estimated at 2.3L. Thus, at an average of 200 students per school, the total no. of students who’ve been displaced can be estimated at 4.8 lakhs in the 9 states.

The RTE act 2,009, one of the noble first steps to universalise education in India for the betterment of the society and the upliftment of the EWS is itself violating right to education to children while putting forth the miniscule infrastructure norms mentioned in section 18-19. With an approach where government is talking about giving quality education to children, the RTE norms described in section 18-19 is violating the right to education for children who are going to neighbourhood school for education.

Infrastructure apathy

Apart from the RTE roadblock, another key focus area has been the creation and up gradation of school infrastructure. Upgradation of over 80,000 secondary schools, and 75,000 junior, middle and senior secondary level is the need of the hour.

It is worth mentioning that FM this year marginally reduced the overall allocation towards education but increased the higher education budget by 22 per cent. The government indicated a shift of focus from school to higher education, Modi government proposed to set up IT based student financial aid authority to administer and monitor scholarship as well as educational loan schemes through the *Pradhan Mantri Vidya Lakshmi Karyakram*.

Comparative analysis of Budget

BUDGET 2014-15	BUDGET 2015-16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Total budget allocated - Rs. 70,500 crore ■ School education - Rs. 51,828 crore ■ Higher education - Rs. 16,900 crore ■ Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya New Teachers Training Programme - Rs. 500 crore ■ 5 IIMs in HP, Punjab, Bihar, Odisha and Rajasthan ■ 5 more IITs in Jammu, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala ■ 4 AIIMS like institutions in AP, West Bengal, Vidarbha and Poorvanchal ■ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) - Rs. 28,635 crore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Total budget allocated - Rs. 69,074.76 crore ■ School education - Rs. 42,219.5 crore ■ Higher education - Rs. 26,855.26 crore ■ Upgradation of 80,000 schools and senior secondary schools ■ IIMs in Jammu and Kashmir, and Andhra Pradesh, Indian Institute of Mines (IMS) situated in Dhanbad will be upgraded to IIT. ■ New IIT in Karnataka ■ AIIMS like institutions in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar and Assam

Skilling India

Since the time when Modi government came in power, they laid emphasis on educating the youths and skilling them to make them job ready. To further facilitate the skill roadmap, Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, recently

launched Human Resource and Skill Requirement reports, across 24 sectors in India which will serve as the baseline for all Skill Development initiatives being planned across the country.

According to the findings of the report, the human resource requirement across these 24 sectors is nearly

109.73 million. Rudy says, "The idea behind the Skill Gap Studies is to understand the sectors in which we are likely to face the biggest gaps. It is imperative for us to plan the skilling of future workforce of India on the basis of these reports. Ultimately what we all are striving to achieve is to make India the Skill Capital of the world, as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

Sunil Arora, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) says, "There is a changing paradigm in skill training towards demand-driven training to ensure employability and placement of the youth. While the reports give an insight on the quantitative side of human resource requirement in each of the sectors, the research has also led to useful qualitative findings in terms of highlighting key job roles in the sector, existing skill gaps in the sectors, key interventions required to map supply and demand, etc. These will help us create a strategy to bind together the islands of excellence that we already have in the country."

Roadmap ahead

Where the government is shifting its focus on higher education, skill India, 'Make in India', it is also important to throw light on the K-12 education system and put it in the better framework.

School education to everyone should be the top focus for any government's priority list and the government's move to break barriers between formal education and skill development is the first step towards growth.

On seeing the government's effort in skilling the youths and introducing New Education Policy, Anupam Jagg, Principal, DPS, Moradabad shares, "The constant hit and trial experimentation which was hampering the entire education system has come to a halt partially. This has provided the breathing space to the educationists to concentrate on the core studies rather than utilising their time and effort in finding the viability of the changes or trying to implement them in the right spirit."



As per the media records and the findings of the members of NISA the number of schools closed pan India are:

SCHOOLS CLOSED PAN INDIA	
State	Total number
Andhra Pradesh	400
Delhi	300
Tamil Nadu	400
Karnataka	200
UP	350
Bihar	500
Odisha	150
J&K	100
Uttrakhand	50

Source: NISA and Media Reports

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS TO GET THREAT OF CLOSURE	
State	Total number
Andhra Pradesh	800
Delhi	750
Jharkhand	278
Karnataka	8
Maharashtra	1404
Tamil Nadu	1000
UP	288
Odisha	400
Uttrakhand	2000
Himachal	500
Bihar	100
Assam	70
J&K	40

Source: NISA and Media Reports

Not only this, the government through its concerted efforts in improving quality of education has proposed to set up a fully IT based Student Financial Aid Authority to administer and monitor scholarship as well Education Loan schemes through Pradhan Mantri Vidya Lakshmi Karyakram.

“Ensuring quality and dedicated faculties and result oriented management are keys to improve quality in teaching education. We are working to accom-



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: NISA

Some of the key gaps in the higher education sector:

KEY GAPS	FACTORS
Low Employability of Graduates	Outdated curricula, shortage of quality faculty, high student-teacher ratio, lack of institutional and industrial linkages, lack of autonomy to introduce new and innovative courses
Low Impact research output	Low government and corporate spending, insufficient doctoral students, missing research focus and culture in most institutions, lack of international research collaborations
Limited Focus on Entrepreneurship	Few institutes offer programmes in entrepreneurship and have active incubation/entrepreneurship cells
Complex Regulatory Requirements	Poor institutional governance standards, lack of professional management

Source: FICCI report on Higher Education

plish the same,” says Dr. C. S. Kumar, Secretary cum Commissioner, Department of Technical Education, Government of Odisha.

Scope of improvement

However, there still has the scope of im-

provement in education as there seems to be no major breakthrough in the education sector in terms of upliftment in the condition of the students, teachers and working community connected to the education sector. The sector should be made service oriented. ■