

Education & Aspiring India: RSTV – Big Picture

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Context:

- In the [Union Budget 2020](#), the budget earmarked Rs 99,300 crore for the education sector in 2020-21 and about Rs 3,000 crore for skill development.
 - In the previous Union Budget (2019), the government's allocation for the sector was Rs 94,800 crore.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has suggested a speedy implementation of the new education policy, besides several other measures that will bring a paradigm shift in the educational systems and aid in the creation of employment in India and abroad.
- The Centre will soon announce a new education policy.

Provisions governing Education in the Indian Constitution:

- According to Article 21-A, of the Indian Constitution, Education is a fundamental right.
 - Article 21-A provides that “**the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years, in such manner as the state may by law determine.**”
 - The Right To Education Act ([RTE](#)) is the consequential legislation.

What should we expect from the new education policy?

- The FM has informed that about 150 higher educational institutions will start apprenticeship embedded degree/diploma courses by March 2021 and will start a programme whereby urban local bodies across the country would provide internship opportunities to fresh engineers for a period up to one year.
- To create infrastructure in the education sector, steps would be taken to enable sourcing External Commercial Borrowings (ECB) and FDI so as to be able to deliver higher quality education.
- Institutions that are ranked within the top 100 in the National Institutional Ranking framework will start a degree level full-fledged online education program for students of deprived sections of the society.
- There are provisions for setting up of medical colleges with district-level hospitals supported by extended viable funding by the government. This is a measure aimed at bringing a revolution in the field of medical science education.
- Another big bang reform the government has introduced in the budget is of conducting an online Common Entrance Test (CET) for all the non-gazetted posts through an independent body National Recruitment Body which will be set up very soon.
- The Finance Minister has also intimated a proposal to introduce an IND-SAT exam under the 'Study in India' programme for the Asian and African countries to bench-mark foreign candidates who receive scholarships for studying in Indian higher education centres.
- This is a measure to place emphasis on India as a preferred destination for higher education.

Focus on skill development in the new education policy:

- The lack of skill development can cause a demographic disaster, thus a focus on skill development is of utmost importance.
- The new education policy focuses on skill development recognizing that India is currently producing a large number of graduates with no skill for employability. There is a huge gap between education

and knowledge and skill among graduates.

- The education sector is dominated by degrees and not skills.
- A special bridge course with an aim to bring equivalence and improve the skill-sets of teachers, nurses, paramedical staff and caregivers would be designed by the ministries of health and skill development and entrepreneurship in conjunction with professional bodies.
- The allocation of Rs 3000 crore for Skill development in the Union Budget 2020-21 might not augur well for the future of the education sector, especially, for the students of technical education.

Online coaching: a revolutionary measure or a wonted measure?

- Online coaching could prove to be a measure that could either make a large difference or create more chaos.
- The risk associated with online coaching is that the students would not be taking it up seriously and thus would obtain a degree for namesake without having acquired any skills either.
- This could be perceived as selling degrees with no face value.
- Online coaching would eliminate the aspect of peer-learning and discussions which promote an in-depth knowledge of the subject and offer multiple perspectives.
- It would also make it difficult for students to develop a healthy competitive attitude. Other minor oppositions to the idea include technological constraints and lack of access in the remote areas.
- However, if the program is implemented properly, there stands a chance that this could be a successful measure. One would have to wait for the results of the schemes proposed.

Issues and challenges in the education sector:

The needs of higher education and school education haven't been met. Only about 12% of the schools are RTE compliant.

- **Quality of education:** The Right to Education has not guaranteed Quality education to the poor due to loopholes in the system and lack of regular monitoring
 - This creates a bias between the students who can afford to pay for private schools and those who attend government schools.
 - Government schools have become synonymous with poor quality education.
- **Teachers:** The shortage of teachers is also a problem.
 - The teachers are often absent in the government institutes or engaged in non-educational activities.
 - The teacher training institutes are mostly private institutes that impart a subpar quality of teacher training.
- **School Infrastructure:** Most of the schools lack basic facilities such as separate bathrooms for girls and boys, playgrounds, and some schools even lack an adequate number of classrooms.
- **Lack of emphasis on skills:** There is a huge gap between industrialists and academicians and this affects the soft skill development in the students. Most of the graduates lack the necessary skills required by employers.
- **Commercialization of education:** The education sector has been commercialized, which has resulted in the students not getting access to an equal and quality education. The students who attend private schools get access to a better quality of education and facilities than the students who attend government schools.

Way forward:

- **Quality Teacher Education:** The teacher training institutes should be taken under government control or regulated to ensure that they provide good quality education and training to the teachers.
- **All the schools should be made RTE compliant.** Effective implementation of the RTE Act should be ensured.

- The age extension under the RTE Act from 6-14 years to 3-18 years must be made.
- **Quality of Education:** the quality of higher education should be improved.
 - Peer learning should be encouraged in schools.
 - The educational boards such as UGC and AICTE have to be reformed.
 - Vocational education has to be brought to the mainstream.
 - Attendance of teachers and their involvement in non-academic activities during school time must be checked regularly.
 - Life skills should be linked with secondary education.
- **Focus on skill development:** a lot of emphasis has to be placed on skill development in order to ensure that graduate students can be employed.
 - Work-Based learning should be promoted.
- **Online courses:** The courses offered as online courses have to be highly selective.
- **School Infrastructure reforms:** Multiple public schools should be brought together to form a school complex. The government should also ensure that the basic facilities such as playgrounds, an adequate number of classrooms, separate washrooms, fans, etc. are present in the schools.

Conclusion:

The new educational policy has set forth ambitious goals for the government. If implemented properly, it could bring about a major revolution in the Indian education system. However, the government needs to focus on the current issues and challenges present in the educational sector.