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Education Budget 2015: Allocate more to assessments and learning outcomes, than inputs to education

Centre for Civil Society's recommendations for the Union Budget, in the education sector:

1. Allocate INR 3,000 crore for assessment of learning outcomes, and schools ratings of *all schools* under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Last year, 30 crores were allocated for assessment, but a greater proportion of the budget must be set aside, in order to successfully shift the focus of our education system from enrolment, which is now at over 95%, to learning outcomes, which as indicated by ASER reports, are below par. Independent studies on school learning outcomes and ratings indicate that the cost of surveying one school is approximately INR 20,000. There are 1,448,712 schools in India. A conservative estimate suggests that it would cost INR 3,000 crore to conduct assessment of every school. This is only 1.5% of the total government spending on elementary education in India.
2. The government must encourage private participation in education. Currently, educational institutions are set up as 'not-for-profit'. An incentive for private players would be to allow a certain percentage of return on investment to go to the edupreneur rather than mandating all funds be reinvested. This will allow us to shift slowly toward a for-profit model in education which will increase the attractiveness of the sector, and increase choice and competition, and eventually, quality of education.
3. The government should allocate funds for the creation of an institution that uses private and public funds to support private schools for the poor. This will help achieve their goal of universalisation of education and enhance parental choice. The institution can function simultaneously as a rating agency for these schools to ensure that quality of education and learning outcomes is maintained. This will be less costly, and more financially viable, than the government setting up their own schools across the country.
4. The budget should make provisions for increased per-teacher allocation for spending on teaching and learning materials. This provision was in the budget last year—but the amount was INR 500 per teacher. We recommend that 5% of the school's budget be allocated for spending on teaching and learning materials, by school principal and teachers, in consultation with the School Management Committee. This will increase scope of teacher autonomy and subsequently, improve quality of education being imparted.
5. Funds should be allocated to provide secondary school vouchers to government school graduates, rather than the government investing in setting up institutions for secondary education. Since there are unused seats in existing private and government institutions, vouchers are an effective way of matching demand with supply, and increasing choice for students. Students, particularly those belonging to marginalised communities, who complete Class VIII will then have access to both public and private educational institutions.



It is important to focus on how we spend, rather than on how much we spend. The government, in setting its education budget for this year, should focus on effective utilisation of funds currently available to them, directing them toward better learning outcomes, rather than focusing on infrastructure and inputs to education.

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