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Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides
Rig Veda

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Budget for Education: A Factsheet

Protiva Kundu



The time has come to make a move towards a long term, substantive commitment for public provisioning of education in the country

LIKE MOST other countries, education has been assigned a high priority in the development policy objectives in India.

Despite the intention, however, the expansion of education has been remarkably slow in India as compared to some of the other Asian Countries. As per UNDP's data brought out in 2012, India records a meager 4.4 mean years of schooling (i.e. mean years of schooling of the working population or those over 15 years old), which is much less than that of Sri Lanka (9.3) and China (7.5) and also behind those of Pakistan(4.9) and Bangladesh (4.8). After sixty-six years of independence, the country is yet to achieve the goal of universal elementary education. The sharp drop-off in enrolment at the middle school level and the decreasing transition rate from elementary to higher secondary suggests that the gains at the elementary level have not yet impacted the school education sector as a whole. The quality of education too continues to raise a number of concerns.

Provisioning of education- both for its coverage as well as quality - requires significant amount of financial resources. Given the crucial importance that education plays in the development of a society and the country's economy, public

provisioning of education has been recognized as an effective strategy towards this sector in many countries. This article outlines some of the key issues with regard to public resources or budgetary resources provided for education sector in India.

Government Spending on Education in India

The pattern of Union and State Government expenditure on a particular sector reflects the priority for the sector in public policies. In this regard, the recommendations of the Education Commission (1966), popularly known as the Kothari Commission, on the issue of government financing of education are considered as important benchmarks. The commission estimated the financial requirements of the educational system in India up to 1985-86, and recommended that "if education is to develop adequately, ...the proportion of GNP allocated to education will rise ... to 6.0 per cent in 1985-86" (p 893). Of the several recommendations made by the Kothari Commission, this 6 per cent of GNP is one that was accepted and resolved by the Government of India in the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968. However, it can be argued now that the Commission's estimate was made long ago and based on somewhat austere estimates of growth in enrolments, per student

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expenditure and other parameters. Nevertheless, it assumes importance mainly as the benchmark has remained unaccomplished so far (Tilak, 2007).

In the last one and a half decades, India's total public expenditure on education as percentage of GDP was the highest (3.8 percent) in 2000-01; but this level could not be sustained in the following years and it came down to 3.0 percent by the year 2004-05 (see Figure 1). The present level of total public spending on education in the country (taking the spending by not just Education Departments at the Centre and in the States but also the other Departments that spend on educational services) works out to 3.5 percent of the GDP (2010-11). But, even this proportion falls much short of the 6 percent of GDP recommended

in 1966 by the Kothari Commission and reiterated in 2006 by the CAGE (Central Advisory Board of education) committee.

If we look at the shares of spending on education by the Centre and the States separately, we find that Centre's share has been showing an increasing trend over the years and moving up from 0.5 percent of GDP in 2000-01 to 0.9 percent of GDP in 2009-10 (Revised Estimates), while State's share has declined from 3.3 percent of GDP in 2000-01 to 2.7 percent of GDP in 2010-11. However, the Centre bears only one fourth of the total government spending on education, whereas the rest three-fourth of the spending comes from the State Governments.

In the last ten years, i.e. during 2004-05 to 2013-14, the Government's spending on Education as a proportion of total Union Budget has increased by 2.2 percentage points. The Government's budget for education accounts for 4.8 percent of the total Union Budget for 2013-14, rising from the level of 2.6 percent of the total Union Budget for 2004-05.

However, as mentioned earlier, the Centre's budgetary spending on education accounts for a smaller share and that from the States accounts for a much larger share in the country's total budgetary spending on education. Hence, the Government needs to take a larger responsibility towards provisioning of financial resources for education.

It is a matter of common knowledge that primary education acts as a resource for secondary education, which in turn acts as a resource for higher education. Thus, all the three sectors create the final demand for and output of education for the country as a whole. Table 1 shows the composition of the total budgetary spending on education by the Centre and State Governments-through its budgetary provision for the three broad education sub-sectors, viz. elementary, secondary and higher education. A brief look at the overall composition reveals that the inter-sector allocations have been stagnant over the last few years. In fact, the Government's expenditure in elementary education as a proportion of GDP is declining overtime.

Five Year Plan-wise allocations also reflect a similar picture as portrayed in year to year budgetary allocations (see Table 2). From the very First Plan, priorities have been given to elementary education as the larger share of Plan allocation was targeted towards this sector. However, the pattern of inter-sectoral allocation in education also indicates a declining share in other sectors. Only from the Tenth Plan onwards an increase in the allocation share is observed for technical and higher education.

Figure 1: India's total Public Expenditure on Education as proportion of GDP (percent)

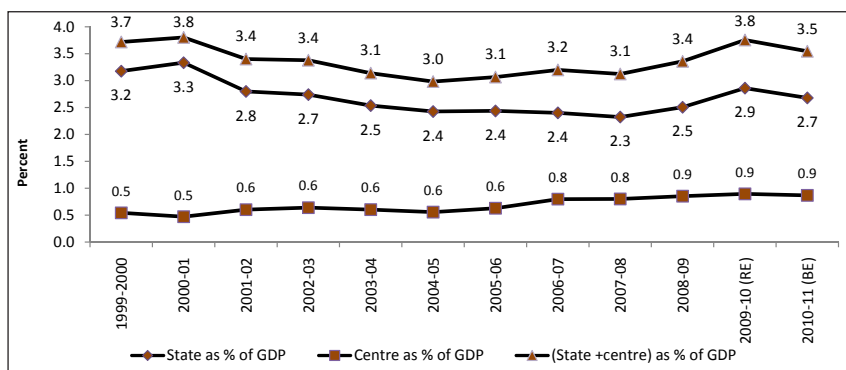
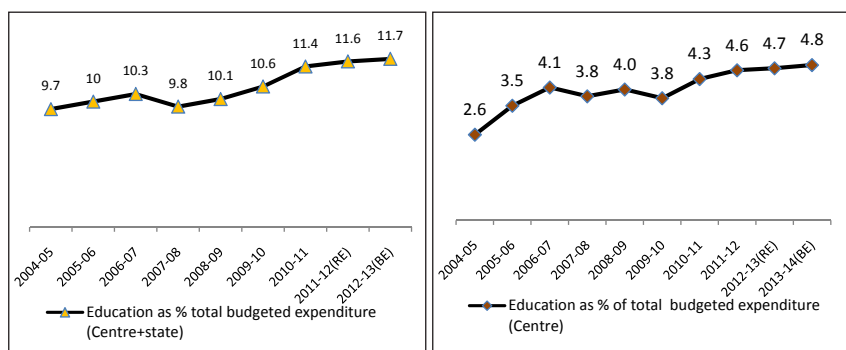


Figure 1: India's total Public Expenditure on Education as proportion of GDP (percent)

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India (2012); GDP figures (market price at current prices) are from Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy, 2011-12, RBI.

Note: RE - Revised Estimates; BE- Budgeted Estimates.

Figure 2: Trends in Total Budgetary Spending on Education (in percent)



Source: Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (2013) and Economic Survey, Govt. of India.

Table 1: Sector-wise Trend in Public Expenditure on Education as a proportion of GDP

(Figures in percent)

Sector	2007-08			2008-09			2009-10 (RE)			2010-11 (BE)		
	State	Centre	Total	State	Centre	Total	State	Centre	Total	State	Centre	Total
Elementary Education	1.03	0.36	1.39	1.07	0.35	1.43	1.22	0.33	1.55	1.13	0.33	1.46
Secondary Education	0.67	0.05	0.72	0.75	0.07	0.81	0.88	0.09	0.97	0.83	0.09	0.92
University & Higher Education	0.49	0.28	0.76	0.53	0.29	0.82	0.58	0.31	0.89	0.55	0.28	0.83
Adult Education	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02
Technical Education	0.13	0.10	0.24	0.16	0.14	0.30	0.18	0.16	0.33	0.17	0.14	0.31
Total Education	2.32	0.80	3.12	2.51	0.85	3.36	2.86	0.90	3.76	2.68	0.87	3.55

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India (2012).

Note: RE – Revised Estimates, BE – Budget Estimates.

Table 2: Composition of Total Allocation for Education in Different Five Year Plans

(Figures in percent)

Plan	Elementary	Secondary	Adult	University	Technical	Others	Total
First Plan	57.6	5.5	0.0	7.8	14.2	15.0	100
Second Plan	34.8	18.7	0.0	17.6	17.9	11.0	100
Third Plan	34.1	17.5	0.0	14.8	21.2	12.4	100
Fourth Plan	50.1	0.0	1.7	25.2	10.5	12.5	100
Fifth Plan	51.7	0.0	2.1	27.9	9.4	8.9	100
Sixth Plan	32.1	20.4	5.9	21.4	10.4	9.8	100
Seventh Plan	37.3	24.0	6.2	15.7	14.2	2.6	100
Eighth Plan	47.7	24.0	5.2	9.6	10.1	3.4	100
Ninth Plan	57.1	21.3	1.7	8.7	8.1	3.0	100
Tenth Plan	65.6	9.9	2.8	9.5	10.7	1.5	100
Eleventh Plan	46.5	19.8	2.2	15.5	11.1	4.9	100

Source: CBGA (2011 b), Planning Commission (2008) and Planning Commission (2002).

RTE Act: A landmark development in elementary education

Until the late 1970s, school education had been on the *state* list. However, in 1976, education was transferred to the *concurrent* list through a constitutional amendment, the objective being to promote meaningful educational partnerships between the Centre and State Governments. National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986 was an important landmark with its emphasis on universal enrolment in elementary education. The 93rd Amendment Bill

passed in December 2002 guarantees free and compulsory Elementary Education as a fundamental right to all children in the age group of 6-14 years; more recently, universal elementary education has been reinforced with the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, which recognised elementary education as a fundamental right.

Over the last one and a half decades, the Union Government in India has initiated a number of programmes to achieve the goal of universalisation of elementary education; among them,

the most prominent has been *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)*, a centrally sponsored scheme for achieving universal elementary education in a mission mode. With the enactment of RTE Act 2009, which came into effect from April 1, 2010, SSA is being considered as the main vehicle through which the Union and State Governments are carrying out their measures for implementing the provisions of this legislation across the country. The successful enforcement of RTE Act requires adequate financial resources for elementary education.

Table 3: Outlay Recommended in 12th Plan and Union Government's Budgetary Allocations for Education

Plan budget for	Total Plan Outlay for 5 years (i.e. 2012-13 to 2016-17) recommended in the 12 th Plan (Rs. in Crore)	Union Budget Allocation	
		2012-13 RE (Rs. in Crore)	2013-14 BE (Rs. in Crore)
SarvaShikshaAbhiyan	1,92,726	23,645	27,258
Mid-Day Meal	90,155	11,500	13,215
Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan	27,466	2,923	3,747
Dept. of School Education and Literacy	3,43,028	45,542	52,701
State Universities and Colleges, including <i>Rashtriya Uchcha Shiksha Abhiyan</i> #	25,000	114.7	3,008.9
Dept. of Higher Education	1,10,700	21,277	26,750

For our analysis, we have included the following schemes/programmes under this head:

Assistance to State Governments for Degree Colleges, Improvement in Salary Scale of University & College Teachers, National Mission on Teachers and Teaching, Incentivising States for Expansion Inclusion and Excellence, and Rashtriya Uchcha Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

Source: Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (2013)

It has, therefore, been expected that the Union Budget would provide for the financial requirements of universalizing elementary education adequately.

In this context, it would be worthwhile to analyse some of the issues specific to financing of SSA and utilization of those resources. Over the last decade, there has been visible progress in terms of improving the number of schools, quantitative indicators of school infrastructure, and number of teachers, primarily through SSA. The District Information System for Education (DISE) records that in 2011-12, there were more than

1.5 million schools and 94 percent of these schools have drinking water facility, 72 percent of schools have separate girls' toilets facility, and 47 percent schools in the country have electricity connection.

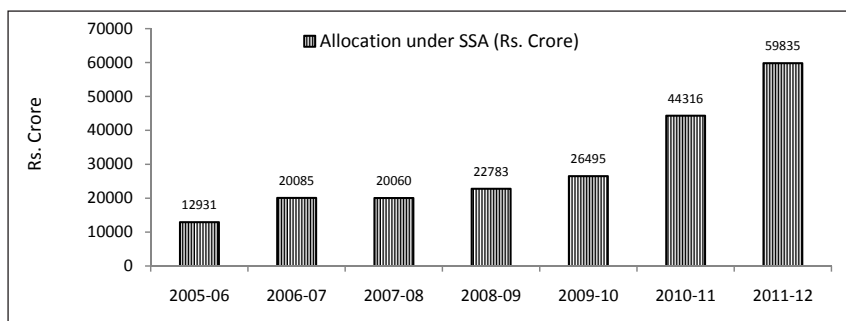
If we look at the figures for budgetary allocation for SSA by Centre and State Governments, a sharp jump is observed during 2005-06 to 2011-12. In the year of inception of 11th Five Year Plan (in 2007-08), total budget for SSA was Rs.20,060 Crore and it has been increased to Rs.59,835 Crore in 2011-12. This indicates a three-fold increase in allocation within a five-year period (See Figure 3).

However, the problems in utilization of funds allocated for SSA and other schemes in education has been a matter of serious concern. As reported by MHRD, nearly 25 percent of the funds allocated by the Union and State Governments for SSA remain unutilized (though, it seems, there is a marginal improvement in fund utilization as about 32 percent of SSA funds were unutilized in 2005-06).

If we look at the details of the expenditure in SSA by heads or activities, we find that a major part of the funds are used for Teacher Salaries and Infrastructure, and, at State level, there is wide variation in the spending pattern, especially in financing salaries. There seems to be little money available for spending on Teacher Training, Teaching Learning Material, or administrative activities like Monitoring. In spite of this high salary component within the expenditures in SSA, however, the pupil-teacher ratio at the primary and upper primary level is way below the RTE norm, which is among the major causes for poor quality of education. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), in 2011-12, more than 23 percent of rural children used to go for private tuition; and, the percentage of children enrolled in

Figure 3: Total Allocation of Funds for SSA by Union and State Governments

(Figures in Rs. Crore)



Source: Compiled from *Financial Management portal*, SSA website, MHRD, Govt. of India (link: http://ssa.nic.in/page_portletlinks?foldername=financial-management),

Note: NPEGEL and KGBV allocation are not included in the figure.

Box 1: Factors constraining utilization of funds in schemes like SSA and MDM

Deficiencies in Decentralized Planning: In most of the schemes, the planning process is not decentralized. Shortage of staff to carry out planning activities, lack of training and capacity building of staff and community leaders, low community involvement are some of the causes of poor planning.

Bottlenecks in Budgetary Processes: Delay in fund flow, faulty book keeping, top down approach in decision making, very low and unrealistic unit cost, weak supervision and monitoring are several constraints in existing budgetary processes under SSA.

Systemic weakness: This is very common and particular to state government apparatus. A shortage of trained, regular staff for various important roles like management, finance/accounts and frontline service provision has weakened the capacity of the government apparatus to implement Plan schemes.

Source: *Budgeting for Change*, 2011, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability and UNICEF India, New Delhi

government schools in standard V who were unable to read Std. II level text has increased from 49.3 percent (in 2010) to 58.3 percent (in 2012).

Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA)'s research on 'Budgeting for Change' series of studies, carried out with support from UNICEF India, identifies three major bottlenecks (see box) in the budgetary processes, which need to be addressed in order to enable the States for more effective utilization of budget outlays for education.

Concluding Remarks

This discussion points out - (a) the shortage of budgetary spending on education as compared to the required level and (b) the problems of utilization of the funds arising from procedural and institutional bottlenecks, deficiencies in decentralized planning and systemic weaknesses -as the main obstacles towards public provisioning of education in the country. The time has come to make a move towards a long term, substantive

commitment for public provisioning of education in the country. The first step to achieve any improvement in education would be to increase fund allocations and improve the quality of spending in this sector. Much greater focus on decentralized planning, smoothening of fund flow and fund utilization process, and strengthening the government apparatus responsible for this sector can help significantly in filling the gaps between allocation, spending and needs of education sector in India.

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