

Budget 2019: Education sector gets ₹94,854 crore, research gets leg up

POLICY A National Research Foundation to fund and promote research is also on the cards to promote scholarship

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NEW DELHI: The union budget Friday allocated ₹94,853.64 crore for education sector in 2019-20, an increase of nearly ₹10,000 crore of what 2018-19 budget estimates had pegged for the sector.

While in 2018 budget estimate had pegged ₹85,010 crore, the revised budget had curtailed this number to ₹83,625.86 crore, the budget documents showed Friday.

Of the total ₹94,853.64 crore education budget, ₹56,536.63 crore has been pegged for the school sector and rest ₹38,317.01 crore has been allocated to the higher education.

In the school sector the bulk of the allocation (₹36,322 crore) will be allotted to Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, a new scheme that amalgamates several school schemes including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The mid-day meal program has been allocated ₹11,000 crore or ₹500 crore more than what 2018-19 budget estimates had pegged.

While teachers training has been a constant hype and debate



■ Total allocation for research has increased

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point among academics, the budget allocates the teachers training and adult education only ₹125 crore, a significant climb down from ₹871 crore allocated in 2018-19 budget estimate.

In the higher education space, the interest subsidy and contribution to education guarantee fund has been cut from ₹2,150 crore in 2018-19 to ₹1,900 crore in 2019-20. Similarly, the much hyped PM fellowship scheme fund has been reduced from ₹75 crore in 2018-19 to ₹50 crore this fiscal.

However, the total allocation

for research and innovation has been bumped up from ₹350 crore last fiscal to ₹609 crore in the current fiscal. In fact, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday proposed to establish a National Research Foundation to fund and promote research, a proposal was first proposed in the draft new education policy already in public domain.

"We propose to establish a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund, coordinate and promote research in the country. NRF will assimilate the research grants being given by various

ministries independent of each other," the finance minister said in her Budget 2019 speech.

"NRF will ensure that the overall research eco-system in the country is strengthened with focus on identified thrust areas relevant to our national priorities and towards basic science without duplication of effort and expenditure. We would work out a very progressive and research oriented structure for NRF. The funds available with all Ministries will be integrated in NRF. This would be adequately supplemented with additional funds," she added.

The draft new education policy prepared by a team of nine experts headed by space scientist K. Kasturirangan and made public on 31 May has said, "We have addressed this critical lacuna in this Policy by introducing, for the very first time a new National Research Foundation (NRF) that will focus on funding research within the education system, primarily at colleges and universities."

"The focus on research and innovation and the setting up of a NRF with access to research

funds from all government departments will help fund and promote research in the country. The FM also talked about bringing in legislation for setting up the Higher Education Commission of India and that's a step in the right direction," said Yajulu Medury, Director, Mahindra Ecole Centrale, a higher education institution promoted by the Mahindra Group.

In the higher education sector, the budget 2019 has reduced allocation to both the education regulators – the University Grants Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education. However, the allocation to central universities in total has been increased by nearly ₹400 crore to ₹6,843 crore. The IITs has been allocated ₹6,410 crore this year as against ₹6,326 crore budget allocation in 2018-19.

The Indian Institute of Management, which has been given autonomy last fiscal, saw a significant drop in fund flow. The Budget 2019-20 has pegged ₹445.5 crore for all the IIMs, much lower than the ₹1,036 crore allocated in 2018-19 budget estimate.