

Excerpts of the Interim Union Budget 2019 on Edustems

- As promised in 2014, the school assessment programme has been initiated. India has also decided to participate from next year in the much-acclaimed programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is a test for secondary school students from across 80 countries and its outcome is considered the gold standard for evaluating the education system of a country. It assesses students in science, mathematics, reading and collaborative problem solving, and considers the collective performance of students from countries to rank them. The last time India participated in PISA a decade ago, it was placed second from the bottom in a league of 74 countries and regions. On March 28, the government approved an Integrated Scheme for School Education-Samagra Shiksha-extending Central support across all levels of school education from pre-school to Class 12 from 2018 to 2020.
- As promised in 2017, the government has finalized learning outcomes for each class in Languages (Hindi, English and Urdu), Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Science and Social Science up to the Elementary stage have been finalized. National Survey of more than 20 lakh children has been conducted to assess the status on the ground.
- In 2014, the government announced the "Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya New Teachers Training Programme" to infuse new training tools and motivate teachers. It was officially launched on December 25, 2015. The Union Ministry of Human Resource and Development has also launched Diksha Portal for providing a digital platform to the teacher to make their lifestyle more digital. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has introduced a four-year integrated professional B.Ed course on the lines of universities abroad. An Integrated Teacher Education programme has been conceptualised with an in-built specialisation for elementary, secondary, art education and physical education streams, coupled with a disciplinary core (B.A./B.Sc.).
- In 2014, the government announced that it would set up virtual classrooms. The SWAYAM online courses have emerged as a successful massive open online course (MOOC). A Committee has been set up, by the Department of Higher Education, to work out the modalities to support "Operation Digital Board" in all schools and to provide quality education by effective use of technology and telecom services.
- In the last four years, seven IITs, seven IIMs, fourteen IIITs, 15 AIIMS, one NIT, and four NIDs have been set up or are in the process of being set up. But most of them are yet to be functional and suffer from serious shortage of faculty. However, allocations to the IITs have increased by more than 60 per cent since the budget 2014 allocation of Rs 3,896 crore. The allocations for the Indian Institutes of Management have increased four folds-from Rs 275 crore in 2014 to Rs 1036 crore in 2018. The allocations for the National Institute of Technology grew by 90 per cent

between 2014 and 2017, compared to just 23 per cent between 2010 and 2013. Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Indian Institute of Science and Education and Research (IISER) have also received a higher allocation in last five years but it's not a significant rise. In budget 2014, the allocation stood at Rs 1,067 crore and now in the current budget of 2018, the allocation has reached Rs 1,144 crore, marking a rise of only about 7 per cent.

- The government has often talked about qualitative improvement of institutes of higher education. Last year, the HRD ministry came up with a plan for graded autonomy based on the performance of these institutes. In 2018, the University Grants Commission granted autonomy to 60 higher educational institutions, which maintained high academic standards.
- In 2016, the government set up HEFA, as a non banking financial company with Canara Bank as its partner-Rs 250 crore from government and Rs 50 crore from Canara bank-for the purpose of mobilizing money through market borrowing and releasing them to government institutions as interest free loans.
- The government last year announced granted Institutes of Eminence status to six universities, which resulted in a controversy for inclusion of Jio University which has not been set up yet.
- In 2015, the government promised a student financial aid authority to administer and monitor all scholarship and educational loan schemes. On August 15, 2015, the Vidya Lakshmi Portal was launched as a gateway to banks for education loan and also with links to National e-Scholarship Portal. It also has the facility of tracking the process right from the time a student applies for a loan to the sanction or disapproval of the loan.
- As promised the Government launched the "Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF)" Scheme to identify 1,000 best B.Tech students each year from premier institutions and provide them facilities to do Ph.D in IITs and IISc, with a handsome fellowship. The scope of this scheme was later expanded to students from all universities. In the first batch, 119 fellows were admitted, out of 1,887 applications received.
- To step up investments in research and related infrastructure in premier educational institutions, including health institutions, the government had proposed to launch "Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) initiative by 2022. In July 2018, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the proposal for expanding the scope of Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) by enhancing its capital base to Rs 10,000 crore and tasking it to mobilise Rs 1,00,000 crore for RISE. HEFA has since given funds to more than 10 educational institutions to work on improving infrastructure.

- In 2016, the government proposed to set up 62 new Navodaya Vidyalayas. The progress report has not been made public yet but in January, Union Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar on Monday announced an increase of 5000 seats in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV) for the Academic Year 2019-20.
- The Union Cabinet, on October 27, 2016, approved the setting up of the National Academic Depository (NAD)-a digital depository for School Leaving Certificates, College Degrees, Academic Awards and Mark sheets to be set-up.
- As proposed the government set up National Testing Agency (NTA) as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organisation to conduct all entrance examinations for higher education institutions.
- In 2014, the government promised toilets and drinking water in all the girls' school. Around 22.8 per cent rural school surveyed have unusable toilets, finds the 13th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Rural 2018. However, the overall progress by all the states in toilet infrastructure development was impressive, especially Kerala, Punjab and Sikkim, which headed the list with 100 per cent toilet coverage in rural schools.
- In 2017, the government announced that 62 new Navodaya Vidyalayas would be opened. There has been little progress on that though Union Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar in January announced an increase of 5,000 seats in Navodaya Vidyalayas for the Academic Year 2019-20.
- In 2018, the government proposed setting up of an Ekalavya Model Residential School by 2022 at every block with more than 50 per cent ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons. At par with Navodaya Vidyalayas, these schools will have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development. No tangible progress so far.
- The National Rail and Transportation Institute (NRTI), deemed university in Vadodara, has been set up with 103 students from 20 states joining as the first batch. It is India's first railway university and only third such in the whole world after Russia and China.
- Two agriculture universities have been set up in Jhansi and Imphal. Two horticulture universities have been set up in Haryana) and Telangana.

- The National Sports University has been set up in Manipur.
- However, the proposal to set up two new full-fledged Schools of Planning and Architecture, and 18 more SPAs to be attached to the IITs and NITs as autonomous Schools has remained on paper till now.
- In 2014, the government announced that Jai Prakash Narayan National Centre for Excellence in Humanities would be set up in Madhya Pradesh. It's yet to happen.
- The National Centre for Excellence in Animation, Gaming and Special Effects to be set up in Mumbai has not come up yet though Maharashtra government has already allocated 20 acres for the project.