



Funds to tackle education emergency

 [sanskritias.com/current-affairs/funds-to-tackle-education-emergency](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sanskritias.com/current-affairs/funds-to-tackle-education-emergency)



(Mains GS 2 : Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources)

Context:

The **Budget** allocation by the Central and State governments to education is always a matter of public concern and debate but after the **pandemic** it became more of concern as the country is facing an education emergency.

Public spending:

- Even before the pandemic, public spending on education in most States was below that of other middle-income countries.
- According to the Ministry of Education's Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education, most major States spent in the range of 2.5% to 3.1% of State income on education.
- According to Education Finance Watch, 2021 of the World Bank, low-income countries increased their spending from 3.2% to 3.5% of GDP between 2010-11 and 2018-19.

Trend in opposite direction:

- In the 2021-22 Budget, in the midst of the gravest education crisis, the education spending trend was in the opposite direction for the Central government and many State governments.

- The Central government's allocation for the Education Department was slashed compared to the previous year, even though the size of the overall budget increased.
- Of the major States and Delhi, eight either reduced or just about maintained their budget allocation for education departments in 2021-22 compared to 2020-21 and seven States marginally increased their allocation by 2%-5%.
- Only six States increased their allocation by more than 5%, though it remains to be seen how actual expenditures compare with budget allocation.
- Faced with an unprecedented education emergency, this is the time to substantially ramp up public spending on education and make it more effective.

Strengthened focus:

- The **education system** now needs not only an infusion of resources for multiple years, but also a strengthened focus on the needs of the poor and disadvantaged children.
- The vast majority of the 260 million children enrolled in preschool and school, especially in government schools, did not have meaningful structured learning opportunities during the 20 months of school closures.
- They have lost basic literacy and numeracy skills, and even the habit of learning and millions have disengaged from education, due to lack of contact with teachers.

Addressing the problems:

- Increased public spending alone is a necessary but not sufficient condition to address all the problems rather on what it is spent and how effectively resources are used are important.
- It is clear that additional resources are required including back-to-school campaigns and re-enrolment drives; expanded nutrition programmes to address malnutrition; reorganisation of the curriculum to help children learn language and mathematics in particular and support their socio-emotional development, especially in early grades.
- Education sector further needs additional learning materials; teacher training and ongoing support; additional education programmes and increased instructional time during vacations and weekends; additional teachers and teaching aides, where required, in part to cope with transfer of students from private schools; and collection and analysis of data.

Teachers training:

- Many State governments and the Central government have been spending public resources to use technology in education.

- This is a good time to ask how much of public resources was/is being spent on technology and how effective it was during the pandemic, when less than 20% of all students could access even pre recorded videos.
- Teachers are central to the quality of education so expenditure on technology compared with the amounts spent on teacher training, which represents just 0.15% of total estimated expenditure on elementary education, should be taken care of.

Allocating greater share:

- The disaster caused by the pandemic could be the opportunity to reverse the chronic under-funding of India's public education system.
- **UNESCO's 2030** framework for action suggests public education spending levels of between 4% and 6% of **GDP** and 15%-20% of public expenditure.
- A recent World Bank study notes that India spent 14.1 % of its budget on education, compared to 18.5% in Vietnam and 20.6% in Indonesia, countries with similar levels of GDP.
- But since India has a higher share of population under the age of 19 years than these countries, it should actually be allocating a greater share of the budget than these countries.

Opacity of data:

- The opacity of education finance data makes it difficult to compare India's public education expenditure "effort" with the UNESCO indicative benchmarks.
- For instance, according to the Economic Survey of 2020-21, the combined Central and State government spending on education was estimated to be 2.8% of GDP in 2018-19 and this figure had remained at the same level since 2014-15.
- On the other hand, data from the **Ministry of Education** indicates that public spending on education had reached 4.3% of GDP in the same year, rising from 3.8% of GDP in 2011-12.

Provide real figures:

- Education expenditure by other departments has been rising faster than that by the Education Department, at both Central and State level.
- Public expenditure on elementary education (about 1.8% of GDP) and for other levels of education are rough estimates.
- The reason is that other than the Education Ministry, education expenditures of departments are not shown by level.
- They are somewhat arbitrarily assigned to different levels of education and estimated by the Central government.

- The estimation of education expenditure by other departments of the State governments is even more crude, as they do not even provide separate expenditures on education.

Conclusion:

Funds on education should be spent on the specific measures required to address the education emergency facing the children who have been deprived of learning opportunities.