

CPI(M) Appeal



**Stop Sale
Of
Education**

17th Lok Sabha 2019



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CLAIM

To raise public spending on education to 6% of GDP

REALITY

Education Spending has declined from 0.67% of GDP in 2014-15 to 0.45% in 2018-19



CPI (M) Appeal to Students

Dear students,

The upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2019 will be crucial in determining the future of India's students and youth. Five years of the BJP government led by Narendra Modi have seen all-round attacks on the people of our country. Students have been badly affected by the policies of the Modi government.

What we have seen is a massive assault by the BJP on public education in India. Schools and programmes that are crucial to primary education have been underfunded and run down. State governments led by the BJP even tried to hand over government schools to private parties. Public universities and institutions of higher learning have been under attack – student activists are witch-hunted, students from marginalised communities are victimised, and democratic norms are violated. Social justice is being scuttled by denying reservations to deprived sections. Those whose main qualification is their proximity to the sangh parivar have been appointed to head many such institutions to mount this attack. School syllabi in various States have been communalised. Shockingly, the HRD Ministry has declared in a highly authoritarian move, that even the topic of PhDs can be only for national priority issues, which needless to say will be defined by the Hindutva ideologues!

The attempt of the RSS-BJP is to destroy public education and to replace it with private education. This benefits corporates who want to make education an arena of profiteering, while denying affordable education to the vast majority of people. It also helps silence voices critical of the government and the RSS-BJP.

Promises versus Reality

- % What the BJP Promised: 6% of the GDP would be allocated for education

Reality: Between 2014-15 and 2018-19, central allocation for education declined from the already dismal 0.55% to 0.45% of GDP.

As these figures show, public education which is affordable to the vast majority remains terribly underfunded, even as the government does not hesitate in giving away lakhs of crores of rupees as tax concessions to corporates and over three lakh crores as writeoffs on bank loans taken but not returned by corporates.

Privatisation Means More Fees

What happens when the govt. refuses to support education and hands over this responsibility to private players? Fees and charges go up. This is what is happening under Modi.

According to a govt. survey, cost of primary education is 6-7 times more in private schools with their fees as high as Rs.14,000 per year on an average. For higher secondary level, private school fees is Rs.30,000 average.

For working people, educating their children beyond 10th or 12th is becoming impossible. Average medical college fees are Rs.73,000 in govt. colleges and Rs.1,49,000 in private colleges. For computer courses, govt. institutions charge Rs.30,000 while private ones take Rs.60,000. In engineering courses, govt. colleges will ask for Rs.43,000 while private colleges will demand Rs.83,000. How can the common family pay so much?

The vast majority of families and their children are condemned to lowest quality institutions often with demoralised low paid contract teachers, many without even proper infrastructure. This has led to a general decline in quality of education.

Worsening Quality of Education

A direct result of the Modi govt.'s policy of degrading the whole educational system is the shocking fact that between 2014 and 2018 learning levels of rural school students have either stagnated or marginally gone down. A recent survey discovered that half of class 5 students and a quarter of class 8 students across the country can't even read a simple class 2 level text. Similarly, the proportion of students who could do a simple arithmetic division inched up marginally among class 5 students from just over 26% in 2014 to about 28% in 2018. But among class 8 students, this share was

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stagnant at around 44%. There cannot be a more severe indictment of the Modi govt.'s policies than these survey results. In most cases it was found that private school students were performing no better than their govt. school counterparts.

School Education

Effects of Fund Cuts: Most govt. schools lack or run short of facilities like computers, toilets and even electricity connections. More than 10 lakh teachers' posts are lying vacant in government schools. Many of the teachers are employed as contract teachers with far lower pay and benefits compared to regular government school teachers – many teachers in BJP-ruled Gujarat get less than minimum wage.

In 2017, the then BJP government of Rajasthan began handing over 300 government schools to private players under a public-private partnership (PPP) model. They were forced to drop the idea after protests by teachers and common people. They also resorted to merging or shutting down government schools. In 2018, the then BJP government of Madhya Pradesh announced the shutting down of 19,000 schools in the state, as part of the proposal to “merge” schools to save costs. This disastrous policy would have forced students to travel longer distances to reach schools, making education more costly, resulting in higher dropouts. Students from remote areas, especially tribal villages, would be most affected.

Attack on Crucial Programmes: Central funding for the Mid-Day Meal scheme has seen only a total of 4.5 per cent increase since 2014-15, which amounts to a decline when inflation is taken into account. Teachers' training, a crucial need if quality education is to be imparted, has received a very limited and stagnating allocation over the past five years. Funds for the scheme for secondary education to girls have been cut by 35%. The programme for education for minority community has seen funding stagnate at just Rs.120 crore, same as in 2014-15.

The insistence on linking Aadhaar to the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme and subsidised rations have spelt havoc, as the tragic starvation death of 11-year old Santoshi Kumari of Jharkhand's Simdega district showed. Her mother Koyli Devi recounted Santoshi's death – Santoshi had asked for

rice before she fainted. The local doctor said her body was failing due to hunger. But there was no food at home and Santoshi died asking for rice. The disruptions and dropouts of students from government schools as a result of forcible Aadhaar linking to MDM scheme continued until the Supreme Court put a halt to it in September 2018.

Higher Education

Higher education has been one sector which has had to bear the most brutal assaults by the RSS-BJP.

Corporate Takeover: Allocation for higher education remained stagnant at 1.4% of the central budget during the five years of Modi rule. The Modi years saw massive cuts in the funds for the University Grants Commission (UGC). Grants to higher educational institutions were instead routed through the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), with criteria that most colleges and universities found extremely difficult to meet.

The state of higher education in India is so dire that 48% teaching posts are lying vacant in public universities. There are over 1.6 lakh lecturers' posts vacant in rural colleges. All government-run research institutions faced fund cuts during the Modi tenure, which amounted to a vicious attack on the knowledge repository of the country itself.

Instead of providing funds for building basic infrastructure, the govt. wants higher educational institutions to take loans from the Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA). Such loans would be recovered through "internal accruals" – which means through higher fees, research earnings and through industrial partnerships. The HEFA has already approved projects worth Rs 2,066.73 crore for six IITs. The proposal of the HRD Ministry to replace the UGC and AICTE with the Higher Education Empowerment Regulation Agency (HEERA) is also aimed at accelerating the process of commodification of education.

The Modi government has promoted the concept of "autonomy" for higher educational institutions, which actually means they will be free to raise fees and start self-financing courses. It has also pushed online courses with no evaluation, and several universities are trying to replace their taught

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courses with online courses.

The Government has declared certain higher educational institutions as 'Institutions of Eminence'. To smoothen the entry of corporate groups into education, these entities will be kept out of existing fee regulation guidelines (for both public and private institutions) and reservation policy (only for public institutions). The Jio Institute promoted by the Ambanis, which had not even been set up at the time of the announcement, was granted the tag of 'Institution of Eminence'.

Authoritarian Administration: In the five years of the BJP regime there were organised assaults on several public institutions of higher learning in order to bring them under RSS control and to crush the resistance movements of students and teachers against privatisation. As mentioned earlier, those close to the RSS are being appointed as heads of institutions and they in turn promote and appoint other RSS personnel in posts in the institutions.

Here are some examples:

The Ambedkar-Periyar Study Circle of IIT Madras was banned (the ban was lifted after a countrywide outcry). RSS man Gajendra Chauhan was appointed as the Chairman of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, ignoring protests by students who pointed out that Chauhan had no qualifications to grace the position. Students Union elections have been banned in Himachal Pradesh University (HPU). Dalit students in Hyderabad Central University (HCU) were witch-hunted, leading to the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula. Student activists in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi were put in jail on trumped up charges and charged with sedition. When such attacks proved powerless to silence students, more than 1000 seats were cut down in research programmes of JNU in 2017-18 alone. All democratic norms were violated in the University to bulldoze bodies such as Academic Council (which has teachers as members) and impose dictatorial decisions.

In campuses across the country, dissent is criminalised and student activists are being victimised for raising their voices against injustice. Campus democracy is mostly non-existent in India, with no students' unions

elections taking place in the most colleges and universities.

Attacks on Social Justice

While seat cuts imposed on the research programmes in various universities using the May 2016 gazette notification of the UGC affected all sections of students, those from deprived backgrounds were the worst-affected. Seat cuts along with unacceptably stringent eligibility criteria meant that constitutionally mandated reservations went unfulfilled in several universities.

There were continuous attempts to exclude weaker sections, by not allocating funds for hostels for SC/ST students, and reducing the number of fellowships. The central government is yet to transfer large arrears under the post-matric scholarship scheme (a 100% Centrally Sponsored Scheme) for meritorious students to the states. In December 2018, the Madras High Court directed the central government to allocate funds to clear arrears of Rs. 822.91 crore up to 2016-17, and to disperse the funds meant for SC/ST students under the post-matric scholarship within two months.

The latest figures of unemployment for graduates and above show that unemployment among SC/ST/OBC categories is way above the general category. The latest Supreme Court judgement suggesting department-wise filling up of SC/ST/OBC posts will further reduce opportunities for them. The Modi govt. failed to stand up for the earlier institution-wide roster system in the Court.

The number of scholars eligible for the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) for minority students has seen a huge dip after a new UGC circular made only scholars who cleared the CSIR-NET or UGC-NET eligible for the fellowship.

Assaults on Gender Justice

As much as 56% of the funds allotted to '*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*' ("Save the daughter, Teach the daughter") scheme was used for publicity through advertisements, even as many colleges and schools lack even basic facilities like separate toilets for girls.

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In JNU the time-tested mechanism for gender justice, the Gender Sensitisation Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH), was replaced by a puppet committee of the administration.

Protesting women students are being victimised even as police and goons are given a free hand to attack them, as we saw in Banaras Hindu University where women students protested against the lack of safety in the campus, with the pro-RSS Vice-Chancellor defending molesters and goons.

Communalisation and Pseudo-science

Dinanath Batra, convener of the RSS backed 'Shiksha Bachao Andolan Samiti' was asked to write textbooks first in Gujarat and later in Haryana under the BJP. He had sent the National Council for Education and Research Training (NCERT) a five-page list of recommendations on how to make school textbooks less "biased" and more "inspiring". The suggestions include, no words in English, Arabic or Urdu; the removal of a poem by Pash, a couplet by Mirza Ghalib, extracts from M F Husain's autobiography and the thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore.

Forums like Indian Science Congress which were earlier used to inculcate and nurture scientific temper are now used to propagate farcical claims by the Prime Minister himself. Modi's claim that "Karna was born using stem cell technology" and Tripura CM Biplab Deb's comment that the internet existed during the times of Mahabharata were blasted by the Nobel Laureate Venkatraman Ramakrishnan as pseudoscientific nonsense.

Left Alternative

The results of the Modi government's policies are evident in the student enrollment rates. Between 2010-11 and 2015-16, student enrollment in government schools across 20 Indian states fell by 13 million students, while private schools acquired 17.5 millions students. The enrollment of students in private universities has increased faster than the enrollment in public universities.

On the other hand, in Kerala, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government led by the CPI(M) has been massively upgrading public schools by

allocating more funds, building modern infrastructure, training teachers, implementing schemes to improve academic standards and creating teaching posts as necessary. The result has been evident in the last two years, when 2.35 lakh students shifted from private schools to public schools.

The education sector is crucial for India's advance. Under the Modi Government the commercialisation, corporatisation and communalisation of education at all levels has hugely intensified. The principles of equity and quality have been sacrificed. Students are sought to be divided on the basis of religion.

There is only one answer to save education:

Defeat the BJP and the RSS to Save India!

Strengthen the Left and the CPI(M)!

Ensure a Secular Government at the Centre!

Aggressive Communalisation of the Indian Education System

RSS functionaries are brazenly being appointed to high positions in all universities, institutions of higher education, research bodies, cultural academies etc.; in order to communalise the Indian education system.

They are seeking to change the *content of curriculum* at all levels, particularly syllabus of school text books to advance the Hindutva agenda.

(from the CPI(M) Election Manifesto,
17th Lok Sabha 2019)

Vote CPI(M)



Defeat the BJP alliance

**Increase the Strength of the
CPI(M) and the Left**

For an Alternative Secular Government

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