



Digital Education In India

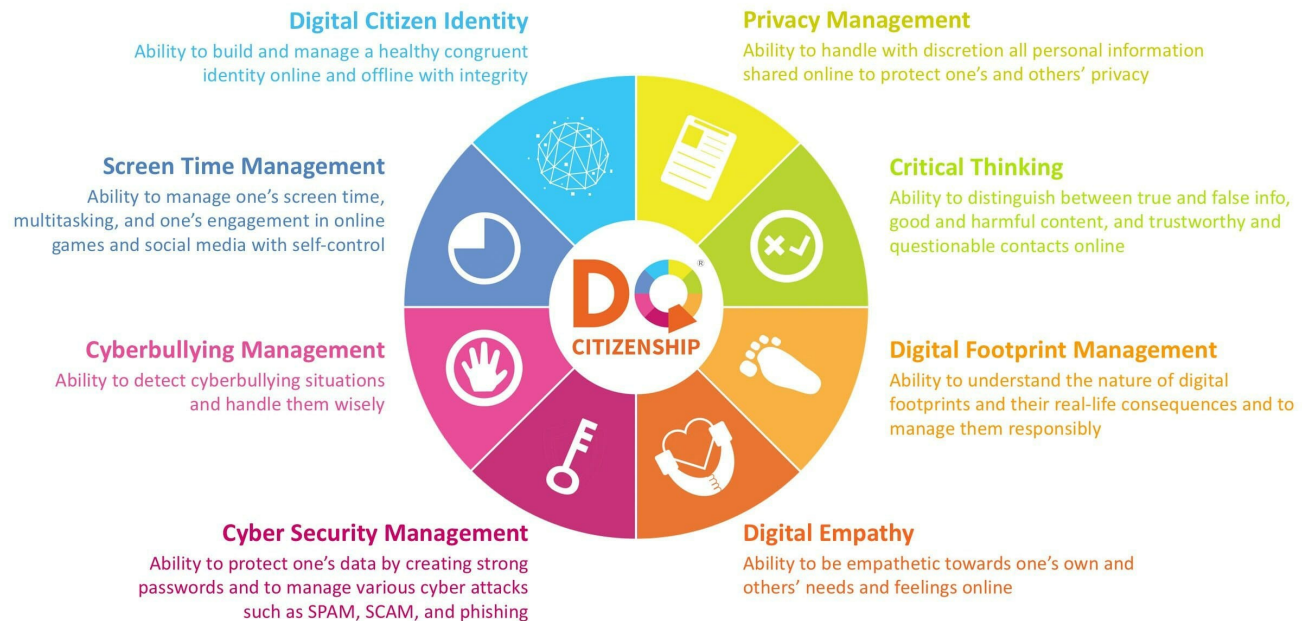
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This editorial analysis is based on the article **Digital India is not prepared for digital education** which was published in the Indian Express on 3rd of September 2020. It analyses the impact of Covid-19 on Education of the children and the issues of digital education in India.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, the education sector is in crisis at the moment. Educational institutes are closed and most probably, they will remain closed through 2020 due to an increasing number of **Covid-19** cases. This could even extend to 2021.

In this situation online education has come to the rescue of the cause of education. However there are several challenges of online education and the same needs to be fixed.

Elements of Safe Digital Education



Challenges of Digital Education

Lack of Proper Study Room

- **Census 2011** tells us that 71 per cent of households with three or more members have dwellings with two rooms or less (74 per cent in rural and 64 per cent in urban areas).

- In such a situation how will the children avail education in an undisturbed ambience remain a huge question.

Inadequate Internet Penetration

- According to National Sample Survey data for 2017-18, only 42 percent of urban and 15 percent of rural households had **internet access**, and only 34 per cent of urban and 11 per cent of rural persons had used the internet in the past 30 days.
- These data clearly suggest that 2/3rd of the children will be left out of the online education process.
- The worst affected, as always, will be the marginalised, rural and poor populations.

Slow Internet Speed

- When it comes to online education, it is mostly about communicating with teachers directly through video calls or watching online video lectures, and both require high-speed with a stable internet connection.
- In absence of adequate speed of the internet the whole idea will fail. We can see the same from the UT of Jammu and Kashmir when there are regular protests by the students as they are not able to study in absence of proper internet connection.

No Standard Policy

- **Digital education** is not about videos of lectures on blackboards by teachers on the internet.
- It is about appropriate platforms, technology, tools, interactivity, curation, content and a lot more.
- We lack a proper policy on digital education, infrastructure, content, interaction and multiple languages.

Lack of Social Cohesion

- Public educational institutions also play an exemplary role in social inclusion and relative equality.
- It is the place where people of all genders, classes, castes, and communities can meet without one group being forced to bow to others.
- This is critical learning for life which may not be supplemented by online education.

Teacher Training

- Teachers look after the mental, emotional and social health of children in schools.
- Schooling is supposed to look after the emotional, social and behavioural health of children, which is diametrically opposite to social distancing.
- Teachers are not adequately trained to inculcate these learnings through online mediums.

Issue of Parenting

- Another challenge is to keep thousands of children out of school when their parents return to their work spaces post lock down.
- Who will assume responsibility for a child's safety and learning at home remains a huge problem.

Way Forward

Bharat Network

- National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) now called **Bharat Network** aims to connect all 2,50,000 panchayats at the cost of over Rs 40,000 crore.
- Through BharatNet, the government envisages providing a minimum of 100 Mbps bandwidth at each Gram Panchayat so that online services can be accessed by everyone, especially those in rural India.
- This includes e-governance, e-learning, e-banking, e-commerce and e-health services.
- Once completed the Infrastructure will be a national asset and non-discriminatory access will be a game changer in the method of service delivery and hence it must be fast tracked.

National Knowledge Network (NKN)

- **NKN** is a multi-gigabit national research and education network, whose purpose is to provide a unified high speed network backbone for educational institutions in India.
- The NKN was established as a high bandwidth network to connect all knowledge-creating organisations comprising IITs, IIMs, universities, research labs and other e-governance institutions up to the district level.
- It was aimed at encouraging collaborative development and building a repository of knowledge in all fields.
- This network exists and is fully functional but only a few institutions take full advantage of it because of a lack of understanding, local facilities, funding and technical expertise.
- NKN is being expanded soon, which is a positive step. There is, however, an urgent need to also make it a core component of the Digital India initiative and leverage it to provide e-services at the bottom of the economic pyramid.

Increased Financing

- Governments will have to think very seriously about allocating more money in the budget for technical education in schools.
- Increasing the education budget to 6% of the GDP is a welcome move in the **New National Education Policy-2020** unveiled a few days back.

Parents and Teachers Training

- Most of the teachers and parents are not technically sound and many of them even lack the basic knowledge about technology.
- It is important that they are trained in that regard so that the fruits of their knowledge can reach the students.

Increase Accessibility

- The pandemic has taught us a lot about adjusting to changes in new and creative ways. But taking the weaker sections along is equally necessary.
- Inclusion in distance learning programs, especially for students coming from low-income groups or the presence of disability is very important.

- Government needs to provide support for digitalization to teachers as well as students by making such platforms and content available for free.
- They must be assured the required infrastructure for online learning such as smartphones, and laptops.

Conclusion

- Digital education is fun learning for all cadres and particularly effective for child learning as the innovative audio-video feature boosts the cognitive elements in a child's brain.
- The INFO-TAINMENT combination involved in digital learning makes it more practical, applicable and relatable to our life and surroundings in an interesting manner.
- Students view this as a flexible option allowing them to study as per their time and pace. Teachers too find it convenient to prepare their learning plans well aided by technology.

Teaching becomes a smoother experience with a perfect mesh of personalized packages having a blend of animations, gamification and elaborate audio-visual effects.

- So, online methods of teaching and learning deserve our highest praise but only when cast in their proper role, which is to supplement, support and amplify the techniques of face-to-face education.
- Transition from teacher-class based teaching to digital-education will need multi-pronged efforts over time.

Drishti Mains Question

“Transition from teacher-class based teaching to digital-education will need multi-pronged efforts over time”. Discuss in the light of Covid-19 crisis and its effect on the education sector in India.



[Watch Video At:](#)

<https://youtu.be/WWLkz2ZLkik>

This editorial is based on **“India does need a Fiscal Council”** which was published in The Hindu on August 25th, 2020. Now watch this on our Youtube channel.