

Online Education

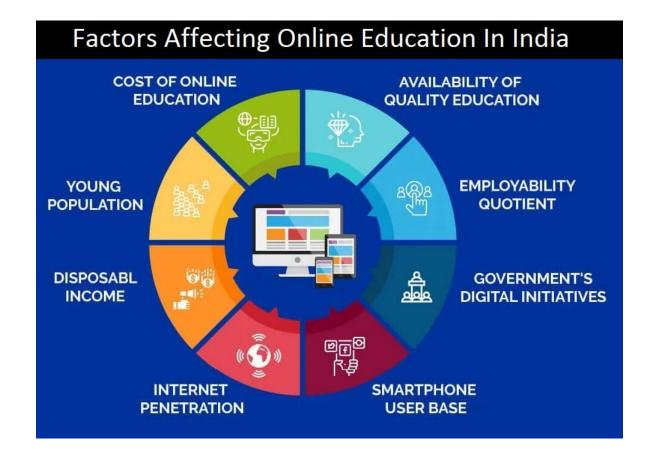
Why in News

Recently, the Central government has proposed long-term measures to address social inequities in **online education**, as highlighted by the **Covid-19** pandemic.

- The measures include plans to **distribute laptops or tablets** to 40% of all college and university students over the next five years and to **equip all government schools with Information and Communication Technology** (ICT).
- Earlier in April 2020, the Centre had announced to <u>start the 2020-21 academic year virtually</u>.

Key Points

- Facilitation of Online Education:
 - Providing Laptops and Tablets:
 - Providing these **devices to 4.06 crore students** (40% of the projected student population) **by 2026,** at a total cost of Rs. 60,900 crore.
 - The Centre and States will share the cost in a 60:40 ratio.
 - Installing ICT Facilities:
 - The **Ministry of Human Resource Development** proposes to spend Rs. 2,306 crore on **developing and translating digital course content and resources** over the next five years.
 - Different e-learning techniques will be used like YouTube, Google Classroom, <u>SWAYAM Prabha portal</u>, <u>direct-to-home</u> (DTH), etc.
- Sanitisation and Quarantine Measures before School Reopenings:
 - The measures would include ensuring basic <u>water</u>, <u>sanitation and hygiene (WASH)</u>
 <u>facilities</u>, safe drinking water, availability of sanitiser, disinfectant, cleaning material and equipment for temperature checking.
- Financial Support:
 - Under the composite grant for schools, ranging between Rs. 25,000 for small schools with less than 100 students and Rs. 1 lakh for schools with over a thousand students for awareness and community mobilisation to sensitise parents, students and local leaders about pandemics, social distancing and other preventive measures.
 - **Rs. 1,000 per teacher to encourage** them to function as first-level counsellors, disseminate basic information about Covid-19 and provide digital/online/mobile education.
 - **Rs. 1 lakh per school for sanitisation and quarantine measures** in preparation for the safe reopening of schools.
 - A proposed **budget of Rs. 55,840 crore to equip government schools** above the upper primary level, with ICT facilities.



Challenges

Social Inequity:

 e-Learning is a privilege for the students from middle and upper class but it has proved to be a nuisance for students from the lower middle class and people living <u>below the</u> <u>poverty line</u> (BPL).

Marketing of Education:

 Corporate houses, technology firms and educational institutions will be working closely to achieve the goals of e-learning which may aggravate the commercialisation of education and exclude the self-dependent tutors and students from economically weak backgrounds.

Technological Constraints:

- Poor students, who do not have access to e-resources (computers, laptops, internet connectivity), will not be able to attend classes from home.
- Teachers too might have technical constraints and if teachers are equipped but the same might not be the case for the institutions.

Lack of Practical Learning:

- Most of the subjects like beauty culture, fashion design and tailoring, office management, travel and tourism, web design etc need practical learning so it is difficult to teach them from a distance.
- **Traditional classroom organisations** like schools and colleges, as social space (whereby a student not just learns the academic knowledge but many social skills also), **are indispensable.**

Way Forward

 The government should start making access to technology universal in the public education system. Private players can make e-resources accessible and available to students under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

- The **definition of the** <u>right to education</u> **needs to expand and promote online education** so that it addresses the importance of connectivity and access to knowledge and information.
- Traditional classroom organisations should give way to online education.
- Further, there is a need for **deep reflection on curriculum and to ensure scientific literacy** within it as the society still struggles against superstitions and hardly fights misinformation actively.

Source: TH

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