



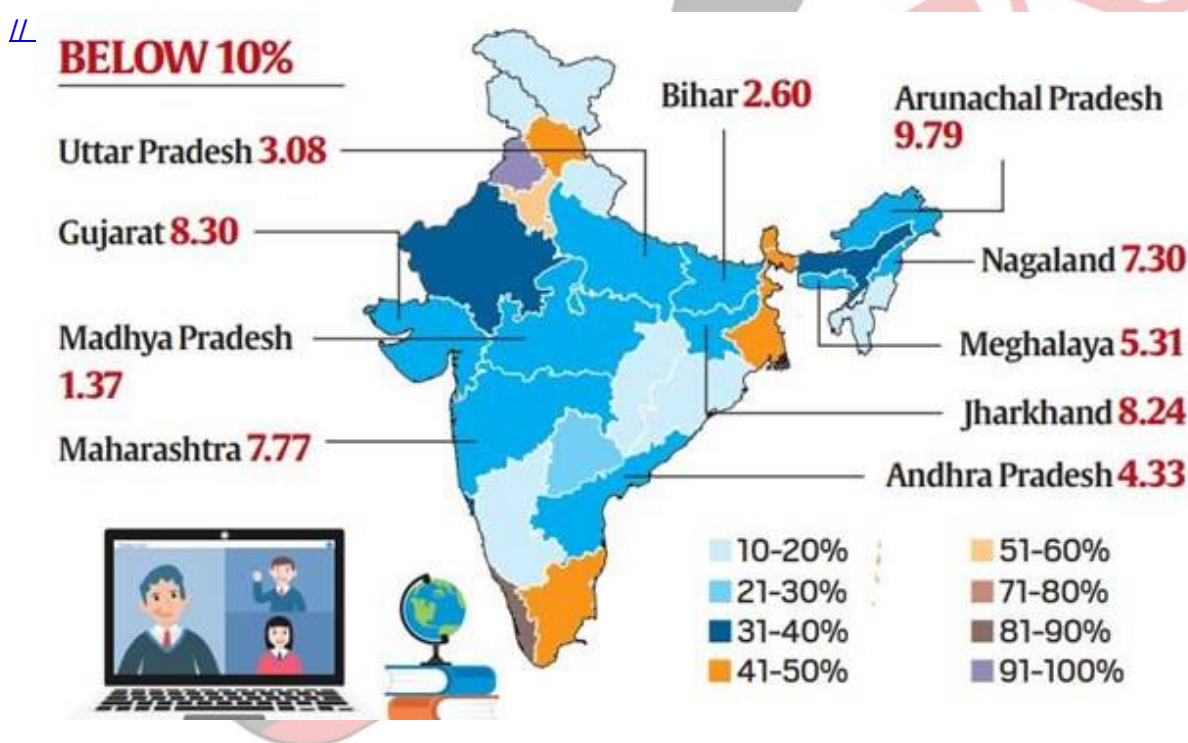
Digital Gap in Education

For Prelims: Digital Gap, Information and Communication Technology, Right to Education, Article 21A

For Mains: Digital gap in Education, Its Impact and Way Forward

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Education informed Lok Sabha that less **than 10% of schools are equipped** with **Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools or Digital Tools**, in at least 10 states of India.



What are the ICT Tools?

- ICT tools for teaching and learning cover **everything from digital infrastructures such as printers, computers, laptops, tablets, etc., to software tools** such as Google Meet, Google Spreadsheets, etc.
- It refers to all communication technologies that are the tools to access, retrieve, store, transmit and modify information digitally.
- ICTs are also **used to refer to the convergence of media technology** such as audio-visual and telephone networks with computer networks, by means of a unified system of cabling (including signal distribution and management) or link system.

- However, there is no universally accepted definition of ICTs considering that the concepts, methods, and tools involved in ICTs are steadily evolving on an almost daily basis.

What is a Digital Gap?

- **About:**
 - It is a **gap between demographics and regions** having access to modern information and communications technology (ICT) and **those not having access**.
 - It exists between **developed and developing countries, urban and rural populations, young and educated versus older and less-educated** individuals, and men and women.
 - In India the **urban-rural divide is the single biggest factor** in the Digital Gap.
- **Status:**
 - A study in 2021 by the Azim Premji Foundation showed that almost **60 % of school children in India cannot access online learning opportunities**.
 - A study by Oxfam India found that even among students of urban private schools, **half of the parents reported issues with Internet signal and speed**. A third struggled with the cost of mobile data.
- **Impact:**
 - **Causes Dropouts and Child Labour:**
 - Children belonging to the Disadvantaged Groups may suffer the **consequence of not having to fully pursue their education** or worse still drop out because of the **lack of access to ICT**.
 - They even run the danger of being drawn into **child labour or worse**, child trafficking.
 - **Deprivation of Quality Education:**
 - It will deprive **people of higher/quality education and skill training that could help them contribute** to the economy and become leaders on a global level.
 - **Unfair Competitive Edge:**
 - The poor **will remain void of crucial information** presented online concerning academia, and thus they will always lag, and this may be summed up by poor performance.
 - Hence superior students who can access the internet have **an unfair competitive edge** over their less privileged counterparts.
 - **Learning Disparity:**
 - The people in lower socio-economic classes are disadvantaged and have **to undergo long hours of cumbersome studies** in meeting the objectives of the course.
 - While the **rich can easily access schooling materials online** and work on their programs in a flash.

What are the Constitutional Provisions for Right to Education?

- Originally Part IV of Indian Constitution, Article 45 and Article 39 (f) of **DPSP (Directive Principles of State Policy)**, had a provision for state funded as well as equitable and accessible education.
- The 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002, provided Right to Education as a fundamental right in Part-III of the Constitution.
 - It inserted **Article 21A** which made Right to Education a fundamental right for children between 6-14 years.
 - It provided for a follow-up legislation **Right to Education Act 2009**.

What are the Related Initiatives?

- **National Education Policy, 2020.**
- **Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA).**
- **PM eVidya.**

- [Swayam Prabha TV Channel](#)
- [SWAYAM portal](#)
- [National Educational Alliance for Technology \(NEAT 3.0\)](#)

Way Forward

- Governments can become powerful instruments in bridging the digital divide by ensuring **affordable, easy-to-use technologies**. The high cost of internet connectivity, the price of technological devices, electricity tariffs, and taxes are major contributors to the digital Gap for both teachers and students.
- Teachers and students **need to be fully trained on how to effectively use what the internet and modern technologies** have to offer. The less students can use these tools, the **more the digital divide widens**.
- Educational online content creators **should aim to make information available in as many languages as possible**. When the users are confident that they can see content in their native or local languages, **they are more inclined to use similar tools that provide personalised benefits**.
- There is a **special need to reduce the gender digital divide**. Barriers and constraints in accessing the internet **impede women's and girls' full involvement in the social and economic progress** of their communities and countries.

[Source: IE](#)

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