



Mains Practice Question

Q. Digital divide leads to inequality and disparity in society and leads to the problem of unequal access to education. Discuss **(150 Words)**

20 Sep, 2022 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief about the Digital divide.
- Discuss the Consequences of the Digital divide and the steps taken to mitigate the Digital divide.
- Conclude your answer by giving a way forward

Introduction

The digital divide is the gap that exists between individuals who have access to modern information and communication technology and those who lack access.

Digital divides exist 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 divide.

Main Body

Consequences of Digital Divide

- **The Disadvantaged Bear the Brunt:** Children belonging to the Economically Weaker Sections [EWS]/Disadvantaged Groups [DG] had to suffer the consequence of not having to fully pursue their education or worse drop out because of the lack of access to Internet and computer. They even run the danger of being drawn into child labour or worse, child trafficking.
- **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.
- **Disparity in Learning:** 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.
- **Decreased Productivity Among the Poor:** Most underdeveloped countries or the rural areas tend to produce half-baked graduates because of inadequate training due to limited research abilities as connectivity to the internet is limited besides having low cadre training equipment.

Initiatives taken to Promote Digital Education

- **PM eVIDYA:** A comprehensive initiative called PM eVIDYA was initiated as part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan in May, 2020, which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education.
- **SWAYAM PRABHA:** The SWAYAM PRABHA is a group of 34 DTH channels devoted to telecasting

high-quality educational programmes on 24X7 basis using the GSAT-15 satellite.

- **Diksha Portal:** It was launched for providing a digital platform to teachers giving them an opportunity to **learn and train themselves and connect with the teacher** community. It is built considering the **whole teacher's life cycle** - from the time student teachers enroll in Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) to after they retire as teachers.
 - It also provides access to NCERT textbooks and lessons, following the regular school curriculum.
- **PRAGYATA:** The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) released guidelines on digital education titled PRAGYATA. Under the PRAGYATA guidelines, only 30 minutes of screen time per day for interacting with parents is recommended for kindergarten, nursery and pre-school. Schools can hold live online classes for a maximum of 1.5 hours per day for Classes 1-8, and 3 hours per day for Classes 9-12.

Way Forward

- Even though schools are now reopening gradually due to the receding curve of the pandemic, the **“need to provide adequate computer-based equipment** together with access to online facilities for children is of utmost importance”.
- **Priority should be given to the less advantaged students** who do not have access to e-learning.
- A solution has to be devised at all levels of the Government, State and Centre, to ensure that adequate facilities are made available to children across social strata so that access to education is not denied to those who lack resources.

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