



Government Initiatives in Education Sectors: A Review

Dr. Amit Kumar Jaiswal

Associate Professor, B.Ed. Department, Govt PG College, Kotdwar- 246149

Uttarakhand, E-mail Address- jaiswalamit1318@gmail.com

Abstract

Education is very important for economic, political, and social transformation. In the twenty-first century, a population that is well-educated and equipped with relevant skills, attitudes, and knowledge is needed for the overall development of society. Education plays a key role in creating a just and equitable society. The Education sectors of India have faced with multi – dimensional challenges. In the year 1950 the challenge before the government was to increase the number of students. We have to constantly redefine and redesign our teaching-learning. To achieve the true universalisation of education, the government has started numerous projects and programs. The government has brought about various schemes that ensure equitable education for all. The main aim of these schemes is to improve access to good education by expanding good schools, to promote equity and to improve the basic quality of education. In this research Paper few schemes shall be discussed so that we can have the fair ideas about the same.

Key Words: Government Initiative, Educational Policy, SWAYAM, SWAYAMPRAKASHA

Introduction:

India is well-progressing towards digital education, backed by rising adoption of digitisation by universities and colleges, increasing internet penetration and soaring demand from students. As per RedSeer Consulting, the online education market (higher education and lifelong learning market) in India is forecast to reach ~US\$ 5 billion by 2025, driven by the government's focus on designing online education programmes, strengthening digital infrastructure across the country and catering to the rising demand for up skilling among students.

Digital education has been significantly driven by the government's focus on strengthening digital infrastructure in the country, including providing internet connectivity in the remote areas. According to IAMAI-Kantar Cube report, active internet users in India are estimated to reach 900 million by 2025, up 45% over 622 million active internet users in 2020. Also, internet penetration in the country is expected to reach >55% by 2025. The Indian government also launched the 'Digital India' initiative in July 2015, to strengthen online infrastructure and expand internet accessibility among citizens (for example, connecting rural areas to high-speed internet networks). As part of 'Digital India' initiative, the government also started e-Education initiative to provide online education in remote and urban areas using smart phones, apps and internet services.

Further, amid the pandemic, the Indian government has taken several initiatives (e.g., PM eVIDYA programme, DIKSHA, etc.) to make it at par with some global online education best practices and relaxed regulations for universities and colleges to offer extended online and distance learning opportunities to students. About Samagra Shiksha The Union Budget, 2018-19, has proposed to treat school education

holistically without segmentation from pre-nursery to Class 12. Samagra Shiksha – an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12 has been, therefore, prepared with the broader goal of improving school effectiveness measured in terms of equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning outcomes.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

MHRD has launched a Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) platform popularly known as SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active learning for Young Aspiring Minds) on July 9, 2017. The portal is offering various online courses for school education and higher education. NCERT is developing course modules for Massive Open and Online Course (MOOCs) for school education system in 12 subject areas (accountancy, business studies, biology, chemistry, economic, history, geography, mathematics, physics, political science, psychology and sociology) for classes 9-12. Twelve and twenty one courses have been completed in the first cycle and second cycle until November 30, 2018 on SWAYAM platform (<https://swayam.gov.in/>) respectively. Nearly 22,000 students and 30,000 students were registered in the first cycle and second cycle respectively.

Interactive content for students

A single point repository of e resources called e- PATHSHALA containing NCERT textbooks and various other learning resources has been developed for showcasing and disseminating all educational resources including textbooks, audio, video, periodicals, and a variety of other print and non-print materials.

Education channels

A programme for utilization of satellite communication technologies for transmission of educational e-contents through 32 National Channels i.e. SWAYAM PRABHA DTH-TV has been launched. Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET)-NCERT is the national coordinator for one DTH TV channel i.e., Kishore Manch (#31) and has started feeding a 24x7 educational TV channel by July 9, 2018. Besides, NIOS is running five channels for teachers, for secondary and senior secondary levels and for sign language.

SPQEM

SPQEM seeks to bring about qualitative improvement in Madrasas to enable Muslim children attain standards of the national education system in formal education subjects. The salient features of SPQEM scheme are:

- I. To strengthen capacities in Madrasas for teaching of the formal curriculum subjects like Science, Mathematics, Language, Social Studies etc. through enhanced payment of teacher honorarium.
- II. Training of such teachers every two years in new pedagogical practices.
- III. Providing Science labs, Computer labs with annual maintenance costs in the secondary and higher secondary stage madrasas.
- IV. Provision of Science/Mathematics kits in primary/upper primary level madrasas.
- V. Strengthening of libraries/book banks and providing teaching learning materials at all levels of madrasas.

The unique feature of this modified scheme is that it encourages linkage of Madrasas with National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS), as accredited centres for providing formal education, which will enable children studying in such Madrasas to get certification for class 5, 8, 10 and 12.

Saakshar Bharat

Saakshar Bharat Programme goes beyond '3' R's (i.e. Reading, Writing & Arithmetic); for it also seeks to create awareness of social disparities and a person's deprivation on the means for its amelioration and general wellbeing. This programme was formulated in 2009 with the objective of achieving 80% literacy level at national level, by focusing on adult women literacy seeking – to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points. It has four broader objectives, namely imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates; acquiring equivalency to formal educational system; imparting relevant skill development programme; and promote a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education. The principal target of the programme is to impart functional literacy to 70 million non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond. This Includes coverage of 14 million Scheduled Castes (SCs), 8 million Scheduled Tribes (STs), 12 million minorities & 36 million others.

The overall coverage of women is aimed at 60 million. 410 districts belonging to 27 States/UTs of the country were identified to be covered under Saakshar Bharat. Eligibility criteria for coverage under Saakshar Bharat – A district, including a new district carved out of an erstwhile district that had adult female literacy rate of 50 per cent or below, as per 2001 census, were considered eligible for coverage under the Saakshar Bharat programme.

In addition, all left-wing extremism-affected districts, irrespective of their literacy rate, were also eligible for coverage under the programme. There were 365 districts in the country that had adult female literacy rate of 50 per cent or below. Home Ministry had declared 35 districts as left-wing extremism affected districts. However, 30 left wing extremism affected districts also had adult female literacy of 50 per cent or below. Initially 370 having the adult female literacy of 50% or below as per 2001 census that qualified for coverage under the programme.

Since 2001, several eligible districts have been bifurcated or trifurcated. This has raised the total number of eligible districts including 35 which are left wing extremism affected districts

National Achievement Survey (NAS)

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) conducts periodic national surveys of learning achievement of children in classes 3, 5, 8 and 10. Four rounds of National Achievement Survey (NAS) have been conducted so far for class 5 and three rounds for classes 3 and 8. These reveal improvement in learning achievement levels of pupils, in identified subjects from first round to fourth round. Further, a National Achievement Survey based on learning outcomes was conducted for classes 3, 5 and 8 on November 13, 2017 with a sample frame upto district level to enable states/UTs to identify gaps in learning outcomes at district level and design strategies to address those gaps. Similarly, NAS for Class 10 was conducted on February 5, 2018. NAS Reports show students' learning levels against the expected learning outcomes of a particular grade and are used to provide feedback to the districts for further improvement.

International exposure

Government of India has decided to participate in the programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) to be conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2021.

PISA is a competency based assessment which unlike content based assessment, measures the extent to which students have acquired key competencies that are essential for full participation in modern societies.

Learnings from participation in PISA help to introduce competency based examination reforms in the school system and help move away from rote learning. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and NCERT are a part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.

National Digital Educational Architecture (NDEAR)

In the Union Budget 2021-22, the Indian government established the National Digital Educational Architecture (NDEAR) to strengthen digital infrastructure and support activities related to education planning. The NDEAR aims to offer distinct education ecosystem architecture for advancement of digital infrastructure in the country and guarantee autonomy of stakeholders, especially states and UTs.

PM eVIDYA Programme

The government introduced the PM eVIDYA programme in May 2020 to make e-learning more accessible for Indian students and teachers and promote & strengthen digital education in India. The programme aims to converge all activities related to online/digital education and is expected to benefit ~25 crore school students.

The programme will also encompass designing unique e-content for hearing and visually impaired students and offering radio/podcasts and QR-coded digital textbooks to school students (Classes 1 to 12) on the DIKSHA portal.

Under this, top 100 universities were permitted to begin online courses, provide better learning prospects to 3.7 crore higher education students and enhance e-learning by relaxing regulatory framework for distance/open/online education.

DIKSHA

In September 2017, the government introduced DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), a national portal for school education, to offer school curriculum-based engaging learning materials to students, teachers, and parents. The portal supports >18 Indian languages and has been implemented by 35 states/UTs. DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) is a national portal for school education. DIKSHA portal – National Teachers Platform (NTP) was developed on the basis of the core principles of open access, open architecture, open licensing diversity and autonomy outlined in the ‘National Teacher Platform (Strategy and Approach)’ paper released by the Ministry of Human Resources Development in May 2017.



DIKSHA portal – NTP was launched by the Hon’ble Vice President of India on 5 September 2017, and it has been adopted by 35 states/UT’s across CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) and NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) by crores of learners and teachers.

DIKSHA Portal – NTP is an initiative of the NCERT, Ministry of Education. It is a state-of-the-art platform built using Application Program Interfaces (APIs) and Open Standards to host Open Educational Resources (OER). It provides tools for Teachers in Schools, Student Teachers in Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) and Teacher Educators in TEIs. It is a unique initiative that leverages the existing flexible and highly scalable digital infrastructures while keeping the teachers at the centre. It is built keeping in mind the whole teacher’s life cycle, i.e. from the time student teachers enrol in TEIs till after they retire as teachers.

It aims to equip all the teachers across the nation with advanced digital technology. It will accelerate, enable and amplify solutions in the field of teacher education. It will aid teachers to train and learn through the assessment and learning resources available on the portal. It will also help teachers create in-class resources, profile, training content, news and announcement, assessment aids, and connect with the teacher community.

SWAYAM

In 2017, the government launched Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) to offer an integrated platform for online courses at affordable costs to all citizens, especially the underprivileged section in the country. The portal hosts Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to offer quality education on various subjects for students (from Class 9-12 to Under Graduates and Post Graduates). Under this programme, Professors of centrally funded institutions like IITs, IIMs, Centrally universities will offer online courses to citizens of our country. All courses will be made available free of cost for learning. In case the learner requires a Verified Certificate, a small fee will be applicable.

In first phase, IIT Bombay, IIT Chennai, IIT Kanpur, IIT Guwahati, University of Delhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru University, IGNOU, IIM Bangalore, IIM Calcutta, Banaras Hindu University, alone as well as with the help of faculty from foreign universities will be offering courses in areas of engineering education, social science, energy, management, basic sciences. At least one crore students are expected to benefit in 2 to 3 years through this initiative. SWAYAM will be launched in 2014.

SWAYAM PRABHA

In 2017, SWAYAM PRABHA, a group of 34 DTH (Direct-to-Home) channels dedicated to broadcasting educational programmes 24x7, was introduced. Every day, there will be new content for at least (4) hours which would be repeated 5 more times in a day, allowing the students to choose the time of their convenience. The channels are uplinked from BISAG-N, Gandhinagar. The contents are provided by NPTEL, IITs, UGC, CEC, IGNOU. The INFLIBNET Centre maintains the web portal.

The DTH Channels shall cover the following:

- I. d2hHigher Education: Curriculum-based course contents at post-graduate and under-graduate level covering diverse disciplines such as arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture, etc. All courses would be

certification-ready in their detailed offering through SWAYAM, the platform being developed for offering MOOCs courses.

- II. dthSchool education (9-12 levels): modules for teacher's training as well as teaching and learning aids for children of India to help them understand the subjects better and also help them in preparing for competitive examinations for admissions to professional degree programmes.
- III. dthCurriculum-based courses that can meet the needs of life-long learners of Indian citizens in India and abroad.
- IV. dthAssist students (class 11th & 12th) prepare for competitive exams.

ePathshala Portal

In 2015, the government launched the ePathshala portal to build a resource store for educational videos, audios, flipbooks, etc. Resources on the portal are available in Indian languages such as Hindi, English and Urdu and can be accessed via smartphones, laptops, desktops and tablets.

NISHTHA

In FY21, the National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) - Phase II was launched at the secondary level to tailor modules for online education. As per the Union Budget 2021-22, ~5.6 million teachers will be trained under the NISHTHA training programme in FY22.

OLabs

To offer students lab learning experience via the internet, the government introduced OLabs in November 2014 for those who do not have access to physical labs.

Virtual Labs

The Government of India introduced a pilot virtual lab in 2009 and the main one in 2010 to enable undergraduate and post-graduate students (pursuing science and engineering courses) remotely access the labs and enhance their study experience.

The virtual labs offer students a Learning Management System and various study aides such as video lectures, web resources, self-evaluation and animated demonstrations. Along with these, other digital initiatives taken by the government include Shiksha Vani for widespread use of radio, the Central Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) podcast, sign language content on the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) website/YouTube and Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) for accessing special e-content for hearing and visually impaired learners, and Free Open-source Software for Education (FOSSEE).

e-ShodhSindhu

Based on the recommendation of an Expert Committee, the Ministry of HRD (now renamed as Ministry of Education) has formed e-ShodhSindhu merging three consortia initiatives, namely UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, NLIST and INDEST-AICTE Consortium. The e-ShodhSindhu will continue to provide current as well as archival access to more than 10,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and a number of bibliographic, citation and factual databases in different disciplines from a large number of publishers and aggregators to its member institutions including centrally-funded technical institutions, universities and colleges that are covered under 12(B) and 2(f) Sections of the UGC Act.

Aims and Objectives of e-ShodhSindhu

The main objective of the e-ShodhSindhu: Consortia for Higher Education E-Resources is to provide access to qualitative electronic resources including full-text, bibliographic and factual databases to academic institutions at a lower rates of subscription. The major aims and objectives of the e-Shodh Sindhu are as follows:

- I. Setting-up e-ShodhSindhu: Consortia for Higher Education E-Resources by augmenting and strengthening activities and services offered by three MHRD-funded Consortia;
- II. Develop a formidable collection of e-journals, e-journal archives and e-books on perpetual access basis;
- III. Monitor and promote usage of e-resources in member universities, colleges and technical institutions in India through awareness and training programmes;
- IV. Provide access to subscription-based scholarly information (e-books and e-journals) to all educational institutions;
- V. Provide access to scholarly content available in open access through subject portals and subject gateways;
- VI. Bridge digital divide and move towards an information-rich society;
- VII. Provide access to selected e-resources to additional institutions including open universities and MHRD-funded institutions that are not covered under existing consortia;
- VIII. Take-up additional activities and services that require collaborative platform and are not being performed by existing Consortia; and
- IX. Moving towards developing a National Electronic Library with electronic journals and electronic books as its major building blocks.

National Academic Depository (NAD)

The vision of National Academic Depository (NAD) is born out of an initiative to provide an online store house of all academic awards. National Academic Depository (NAD) is a 24X7 online store house of all academic awards viz. certificates, diplomas, degrees, mark-sheets etc. duly digitised and lodged by academic institutions / boards / eligibility assessment bodies. NAD not only ensures easy access to and retrieval of an academic award but also validates and guarantees its authenticity and safe storage.

National Digital Library of India (NDLI)

National Digital Library of India (NDLI) is a virtual repository of learning resources which is not just a repository with search/browse facilities but provides a host of services for the learner community. It



is sponsored and mentored by Ministry of Education, Government of India, through its National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT). Filtered and federated searching is employed to facilitate focused searching so that learners can find the right resource with least effort and in minimum time. NDLI provides user group-specific services such as Examination Preparatory for School and College students and job aspirants. Services for Researchers and general learners are also provided. NDLI is designed to hold content of any language and provides interface support for 10 most widely used Indian languages. It is built to provide support for all academic levels including researchers and life-long learners, all disciplines, all popular forms of access devices and differently-abled learners. It is designed to enable people to learn and prepare from best practices from all over the world and to facilitate researchers to perform inter-linked exploration from multiple sources. It is developed, operated and maintained from Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur.

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