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Q20

How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate your answer.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · GS I · 15 marks · World's Physical Geography

Salient features of world's physical geography.

Core demand of the question

- How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate
- Keep a 15-mark length

Revision summary

SWAYAM, DIKSHA, PM eVIDYA, and DTH added national education rails.

UDISE and NDEAR improved planning data and interoperability.

COVID proved continuity value and class bias at once.

Teachers and labs still need the physical school.

Contribution is infrastructure plus unfinished equity.

Introduction

- **Digital India did not replace the school. It added rails:** teacher platforms, open courses, TV channels, and data. COVID made those rails a substitute classroom overnight, which revealed both contribution and class divide.

Body

What was built

- **SWAYAM** and NPTEL-type MOOCs extended higher-education courses beyond the college gate.
- **DIKSHA** gave teachers energised textbooks, lesson plans, and a national professional stack aligned to NEP 2020 talk of resources, not only buildings.
- **PM eVIDYA**, **SWAYAM** Prabha DTH, and radio attempted a multi-mode reach when schools shut.
- **UDISE+ and related MIS improved the functioning of planning:** enrolment, toilets, and teachers became numbers a district could see.
- **NDEAR** (National Digital Education Architecture) aims to keep IDs, content, and assessments interoperable rather than as a jungle of apps.
- Virtual labs, NISHTHA teacher training, and language tools support science and multilingual classrooms on paper.

Contribution to functioning

- **Continuity:** some teaching survived lockdown through these pipes.
- **Teacher support:** a poorly resourced school can still pull a standard lesson, which is a functioning gain if the teacher is trained to use it.
- **Equity attempt:** DTH and radio were meant for the child without a smartphone.
- **Governance:** mid-day meal and scholarship databases, plus online admissions in some states, cut petty gatekeeping.

Limits that still shape functioning

- Device, data, and electricity poverty meant digital school was a class filter, as reverse-migrant children learned.
- Assessment integrity and laboratory skill do not live fully online.
- Teacher workload and surveillance risk if MIS becomes only a dashboard of blame.
- Content quality is uneven; a portal is not a pedagogy.

Elaborate a balanced path

- **Blend:** digital as supplement in normal times, not a permanent substitute for the neighbourhood school.
- Fund devices as public infrastructure, train teachers, and keep **PM eVIDYA** channels alive for the next shock.
- NEP's three-language and foundational literacy goals still need humans; digital should serve FLN, not distract from it.

Flow diagram

DIKSHA SWAYAM eVIDYA -> Functioning rails
UDISE NDEAR -> Governance data
Device divide -> Unequal functioning
Functioning rails -> Education system
Governance data -> Education system
Unequal functioning -> Education system

Conclusion

Digital initiatives improved the education system's reach, teacher resources, and data functioning. They also exposed a device divide. Their contribution is real as infrastructure. It is incomplete as justice until the school and the smartphone stop being alternative destinies.

Facts & figures

SWAYAM

National MOOC platform for higher and some school-plus courses.

DIKSHA

Teacher and textbook digital infrastructure used across states.

PM eVIDYA

COVID-era unified push for TV, radio, and online school access.

UDISE+

School statistics system that feeds planning and accountability.

NDEAR

Architecture to make education digital public goods interoperable.

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