



PARLIAMENT OF INDIA
RAJYA SABHA

DEPARTMENT-RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION, WOMEN, CHILDREN, YOUTH AND SPORTS

THREE HUNDRED AND TWENTY EIGHTH REPORT

**Plans for Bridging the Learning Gap caused due to School
Lockdown as well as Review of online and offline Instructions
and Examinations and Plans for re-opening of Schools**

(Presented to the Rajya Sabha on 6th August, 2021)
(Laid on the Table of Lok Sabha on 6th August, 2021)



Rajya Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi
August, 2021/ Sravana, 1943 (Saka)

Hindi version of this publication is also available

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COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE
(Constituted w.e.f. 13th September, 2020)

1. **Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabudde** - **Chairman**

RAJYA SABHA

2. Ms. Arpita Ghosh
3. Shri. Bhubaneswar Kalita
4. Shri Vishambhar Prasad Nishad
5. Dr. Sasmit Patra
6. ** Vacant
7. Shri Gopal Narayan Singh
8. Shri Akhilesh Prasad Singh
9. Dr. M. Thambidurai
10. Shri G.K. Vasani

LOK SABHA

11. Shri Rajendra Agrawal
12. Shri D. M Kathir Anand
13. Dr. Dhal Singh Bisen
14. Shri Santokh Singh Chaudhary
15. Shri Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu
16. * Shri Rajveer Singh (Raju Bhaiya)
17. Shri Sangamlal Kadedin Gupta
18. Shri Sadashiv Kisan Lokhande
19. Dr. Jaisiddeshwar Shivacharya Mahaswamiji
20. Shri Asit Kumar Mal
21. Shri Anubhav Mohanty
22. Shri Balak Nath
23. Shri Chandeshwar Prasad
24. Shri T. N. Prathapan
25. Shri Ratansinh Magansinh Rathod
26. Shri Jagannath Sarkar
27. Shri Vishnu Dutt Sharma
28. Dr. Arvind Kumar Sharma
29. Shri Dharambir Singh
30. Shri S. Venkatesan
31. Shri Ashok Kumar Yadav

* Nominated w.e.f. 30.12.2020.

** Vacant w.e.f. 7.7.2021

SECRETARIAT

Dr. Shikha Darbari, Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor

Shri K. Sudhakaran , Director

Ms. Chitra G., Deputy Secretary

Smt. Oindrila Roy, Deputy Secretary

Shri Arun Bakshi, Under Secretary

Shri K. Sudhir Kumar, Deputy Director

Shri Mohit Misra, Committee Officer

Smt. Suman Khurana, Committee Officer

PREFACE

I, the Chairman of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, having been authorized by the Committee to present this Three Hundred and Twenty Eighth Report of the Committee on the Subject "Plans for Bridging the Learning Gap caused due to School Lockdown as well as Review of online and offline Instructions and Examinations and Plans for re-opening of Schools".

2. The Committee held meeting with the Department of School Education and Literacy and Department of Higher Education on 10th August, 2020. The Committee held a meeting with the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education along with the representatives of the State Governments of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar-Pradesh, and UT of Jammu and Kashmir on 12th January, 2021. The Committee also heard the views of representatives of BISAG-N, Prasar Bharati, along with the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education on 21st June, 2021. The Committee in its meeting held on 2nd July, 2021 had discussion with State Governments of Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh along with representatives of Department of School Education and Literacy, ISRO and BISAG-N. Thereafter, the Committee heard the views of UNICEF INDIA in its meeting held on 23rd July, 2021.

3. While drafting the Report the Committee relied on the following documents along with the oral submissions made before the Committee:

- (i) Background note and replies to the questionnaire submitted by the Department of School Education and Literacy and Department of Higher Education;
- (ii) Background note and documents submitted by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Prasar Bharati, ISRO, and BISAG-N;
- (iii) Documents furnished by the State Governments of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and UT of Jammu and Kashmir; and
- (iv) Documents furnished by UNICEF, INDIA.

4. The Committee wishes to place on record its gratitude to the representatives of the Ministries/Departments for furnishing necessary information/documents and rendering valuable assistance to the Committee in its deliberations. The Committee also wishes to express its gratitude to all the distinguished persons who appeared before the Committee and placed their valuable views on the Subject and furnished written notes and information in connection with the examination of the Subject. The Committee especially acknowledged the contributions made by the Officials/individuals concerned despite the prevailing pandemic situation arisen due to COVID-19 and following all due protocols during the meeting.

5. For the facility of reference and convenience, the observations and recommendations of the Committee have been presented in bold letters in the body of the Report.

6. The Committee considered the Draft Report and adopted the same in its meeting held on the 5th August, 2021.

<p>NEW DELHI <i>5th August, 2021</i> <i>Sravana, 1943 (Saka)</i></p>	<p><i>Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabudde</i> <i>Chairman</i> <i>Department-related</i> <i>Parliamentary</i> <i>Standing Committee on Education,</i> <i>Women, Children, Youth and Sports</i></p>
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REPORT

1. Emerging pandemics and natural calamities throw a challenge to humanity and emphasizes the need for Governments, societies, organisations and individuals to be better prepared and equipped to deal with such situations. The outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus, better known as COVID-19, was reported towards the fag end of the year 2019 in a few places, but with its rapid spread across several countries of the world within a short span, the World Health Organisation (WHO), under the International Health Regulations, declared this outbreak as a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” (PHEIC) on 30th January, 2020. Subsequently, WHO declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11th March, 2020. The pandemic has forced the world to grasp a new normal, with restrictive measures like self isolation, wearing of facial masks, social/physical distancing, lockdown, case detection, contact tracing, quarantine of exposed persons, containment zones where large number of persons were infected etc. being put in place across the world to contain the spread of this highly infectious virus. The Government of India along with the State Governments also adopted inter-sectoral proactive, pre-emptive and graded response/policies and priorities by adopting various strategies including the above-mentioned steps as well as national and state-wise lockdown and contingent plans during various lockdown and unlock phases to combat and contain the spread of COVID-19. The pandemic has thus affected all spheres of our normal activities and set new normal/standards in the way we live, work, study and play. The education sector was drastically affected by this sudden onslaught of the pandemic and had to make swift adjustments to adapt to the situation.

2. In the year 2020, COVID-19 pandemic affected educational systems world-wide leading to closure of schools, colleges and Universities. Indian education system also saw the largest disruption in history affecting nearly 32 Crore students population enrolled in various schools/colleges and Universities. The sudden closure left very little time for the system to prepare a strategy and transition to distance learning. The crisis exacerbated pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth and adults. It also posed challenges for schools/colleges/Universities to shift to digital mode of teaching with technological tools due to interruption of face to face (one-on-one) conventional teaching mode. Neither the teachers nor the students got enough time to prepare themselves for the new online education system, which had to be adopted hastily in this unique situation to continue the stream of education unabated. Despite of a few initial teething problems, the Ministry of Education and other organizations in the field rose to the occasion and took various steps/measures to broaden the outreach of online/digital education and remote learning and

ensure its accessibility to all students in all strata of society. Still, this method is in the initial evolving phase in the country.

3. Prioritising education recovery is crucial to avoid generational catastrophe. Children learning has suffered immensely and because education sector also provides help, nutrition and psychological services, the overall welfare of the children has declined substantially. Accordingly, with a view to assess the preparedness of the education sector during the pandemic, the ground realities and to assess whether any learning loss has been caused due to school lockdown and discontinuation of physical (face to face) classes as well as to suggest a way forward to be better equipped and prepared to deal with such situations in future, the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports decided to examine in detail the Subject **“Plans to Bridge the Learning Gap caused due to School Lockdown as well as Review of Online and Offline instructions and examinations and plans for re-opening of Schools.”**

4. Preparedness of Schools, Higher and Technical Education Sectors during COVID-19 Pandemic

4.1 The Committee initially reviewed the impact of the pandemic on the entire education system in the country including preparedness and initiatives taken to ensure continued education in all fields. In this respect during the course of its deliberations on the subject, the Committee heard the views of the Secretary, Department of Higher Education; Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy; representatives of the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). In order to assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic at the ground level and the response of the States/UTs to the situation, the Committee also heard the representatives of the Departments of Education of the States of Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh along with the representative of the Department of Education of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

4.2 The Secretary, Department of Higher Education during his oral evidence before the Committee on 10th August, 2020 on the subject briefed the Committee about the problems faced by the entire higher/technical education system in the country and the remedial steps taken by the Department and other bodies to overcome those problems. These problems included making course contents available in digital form, digital divide, psychological impact on the students, issue of maximum courses in higher/technical education being in English, issue of conducting examinations, challenges being faced by the teachers/faculties in conducting online classes, research and faculty

training/development etc. The Secretary apprised that before the pandemic, UGC was making available 20 per cent course content in digital form, which has been enhanced to 40 per cent during the pandemic. He submitted that digital divide, *i.e.*, students not having internet facilities, electronic devices such as smartphones, desktop computers or laptops was a big problem besides mental stress and psychological problems of the students. Among the remedial steps, he cited the launch of *Yukti* and *Manodarpan* helplines. To address the digital divide, course contents were made available on TV through *Swayam Prabha* channels. It was stated that 34 educational channels were broadcasting the contents for the benefit of the students. IITs on their part have digitized 21 engineering courses. Another problem encountered by the department was related to the language/medium of instruction. In higher and technical education, there were 1619 courses in total and most of them were in English. An effort was made to make them multi-lingual. It was informed that process to make available subjects of Social Sciences and History in eight Indian languages has been started through Broadcasting Engineering Consultants of India Ltd. (BECIL). Concerning examinations, the Secretary, submitted that assessment and physical examination were two different things. The emerging viewpoint was that assessment of the students through assignment paper or online open book examination must be done before awarding them the final degree. The Secretary apprised the Committee that other countries were either postponing examinations or conducting them online. UGC was also in favour of conducting examinations. He mentioned that faculty were being encouraged to teach in online mode and an elaborate research and faculty development exercise has been undertaken.

4.3 The Chairman, AICTE briefed the Committee on the issue of training to faculty. During lockdown, AICTE conducted 85 virtual programmes using the platforms of Microsoft, Webex, Zoom and Google. Eighteen thousand faculty were trained in emerging technologies. AICTE also conducted 22 programmes on universal human values. It also initiated online process to conduct inspections and testing for giving approval to colleges.

4.4 The Chairman, UGC informed the Committee that two Inter-University Centres of UGC, *i.e.*, Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC) and Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) worked pro-actively to link all the Universities and colleges to the digital content platform. It was informed that for higher education, 86 e-courses were made available by UGC at Post-Graduate level and 204 e-courses at the Under-Graduate level. Further, the initiatives taken by UGC for all Universities included SWAYAM online courses UG/PG/NOOCs, e-PG Pathshala, e-content courseware in Under-Graduate subjects and *Shodhganga*. UGC also issued advisories to colleges and universities to form panels for continuous interaction with the students. Besides

this, a toll free helpline *Manodarpan* was launched as a psychological support system for all students, teachers and families and to address queries of students.

4.5 The Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy in her deposition before the Committee on 10th August, 2020 submitted that the total closure of educational institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic has affected roughly 24 Crore school children, out of which 12 Crore children are from Classes 1 to 5 and 6 Crore each from Classes 6 to 8 and 9 to 12. This caused huge instructional loss and jolted the routine lives of students. The last minute postponement of examinations coupled with the news appearing in newspapers and media about the pandemic has affected the mental and physical wellbeing of the children. Among the remedial steps, the Secretary cited structuring of *DIKSHA* platform for uploading content and bringing the States on board, launching of *Manodarpan* web-page with content for students, parents and teachers, National Toll-Free helpline(8448440632) with a Working Group of Experts from the fields of education, mental health and psychology to monitor and support mental health issues of students through online counseling services, launch of a national tele-counseling center in NCERT, uploading of videos, podcasts and continuation of Mid-day meal scheme during this period. For online classes, teacher capacity building programmes, like NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers' Holistic Development) were undertaken by the Department with the involvement of CBSE and NCERT to impart ICT-content-pedagogy integration, related teaching-learning strategies including remote assessment of learning outcomes of children, development of e-content, handling hardware, software etc. For e-education, the Secretary, apprised that NCERT textbooks had been energized with the incorporation of QR code in every chapter containing audio/video contents which students can access through barcode reader or by downloading DIKSHA App. A comprehensive initiative called PM e-VIDYA was also launched unifying all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education. Their other initiatives included one class one channel, extensive use of radio, community radio and CBSE Podcast *Shiksha Vani*. The Department also issued several guidelines, *i.e., Pragyata* for digital online education, guidelines for admission of children of migrant labourers and guidelines on cyber security, cyber bullying and mental health etc. to cite a few. The Committee was apprised that the process for providing content for visually-impaired and hearing impaired children was also undertaken. The Committee was also given to understand that a survey was being undertaken in Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs), CBSE and other government schools regarding students' access to online education.

4.6 The Chairman, CBSE emphasized that it followed the procedures and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education. A new initiative on their part was giving affiliation to schools through the process of virtual inspection. He

apprised the Committee that by the year 2025, 60 per cent questions in 10th and 12th boards would be competency based. The Chairman, NCERT informed that they have developed an alternate academic calendar which was being used by most of the States/UTs. Live interactions with students through *Swayam Prabha* channel was another of their initiatives. He emphasized that the focus of NCERT was to promote core competency in the students.

4.7 School education which lays the very basic foundation for all future learning was the most affected as it relied heavily on physical classes and face-to-face teaching/learning, particularly at pre-primary and primary levels. Moreover, small children need constant support/guidance of parents or elders in the use of digital/electronic devices and in comprehending and assimilating the lessons/content as well as to monitor their learning process due to comparatively short attention spans and the inability to self-learn. Being in school, in a class, in a learning oriented environment with requisite infrastructure, learning amongst peers not only addresses the academic needs of the children but also aids in developing their social abilities, communication skills etc. As these aspects are more pronounced in the school education sector as compared to the higher education sector, the Committee decided to focus its attention on the impact of the pandemic on school education and the remedial action required, so that the basic foundation of learning is not compromised and our future generations are not adversely affected due to the learning loss/gap.

4.8 The Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy during her deposition before the Committee on 12th January, 2021 apprised the Committee of the various measures taken by the Department to minimize learning loss and to overcome the difficulties faced in imparting online education. The Committee was informed that it would take considerable time to compensate for this learning loss, but the Department has been preparing bridge courses to make up for the learning loss. She also informed that NCERT has framed Alternative Learning Calendar to help overcome learning loss, which has been adopted by the States with due adaptations to suit their specific needs. Content for Children with Special Needs were uploaded on the DIKSHA platform and Project Coherence has been started to overcome non-availability of internet and gadgets, wherein high quality content available on DIKSHA platform will be made available *via* television and radio for the students. States are also joining in the Project by making use of the content by translating it in their regional languages and making use of one-class-one-T.V. channel initiative (class-wise content developed by NCERT) of the Department. The Department is also utilizing radio, podcast and community radio for transmitting the course content to the students. PRAGYATA guidelines were issued detailing the screen time, online content and method of assessment among other things. The Department of School Education and Literacy also issued guidelines, such as Learning Enhancement Guidelines, School Reopening Guidelines, Learning with social

distancing guidelines, Guidelines for out of school children etc. Besides, training was conducted for KV and NVS teachers for handling online classes. The Secretary informed that as per a survey conducted by CBSE, 85% children are studying online and the remaining students are being reached personally. She also stated that National Achievement Survey will be done in November, 2021, which will give an estimate of the learning loss of the students and the kind of interventions required. The Committee was also apprised that a Joint Committee of Ministry of Education, Department of Telecommunications and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had also been constituted, in which it was decided that whenever Bharatnet reaches a Gram Panchayat, all the schools in that Gram Panchayat will be covered by optic fibre to provide Wi-Fi connectivity to that school.

4.9 The representative of the State of Assam in his deposition before the Committee on 12th January, 2021 informed the Committee that in the initial stage of pandemic the need for digital education was first felt. They first used Whatsapp for digital education but realized its limitations in the case of students from economically weaker background and backward and remote areas. Thereafter, the State used local TV channels, AIR, Doordarshan, community radio and telephone operators for digital education. They also opened a call centre for doubt clearing. To assess the outcome of its initiatives, a survey was also conducted in Assam which indicated that the level of children's concentration and understanding on digital media was not sufficient. Thereafter, schools were opened from Class I onwards with reduced timings and social distancing in Assam when the case load of the pandemic decreased in the State. It was informed that Assam was one of the best managed States in terms of COVID and around 30 to 35 per cent students attended schools after phase-1 of the Pandemic. The State also utilized the pandemic time to bring in digital initiatives, complete civil works etc.

4.10 The representative of the State of Madhya Pradesh in his deposition before the Committee on 12th January, 2021 stated that initially they started Whatsapp based digital learning enhancement programme, Digilab, containing curated study material per day for Classes 1-12. They used Doordarshan to broadcast class wise content for Classes 9-12. The State popularized *Swayam Prabha* channel also. The schools were opened in the State for Classes 9-12 only in the end of December, 2020 and around 60-70 per cent children attended schools. The representative apprised that pandemic time was utilized for capacity building of teachers for both digital training and regular classroom handling. Among the difficulties faced, the representative cited large number of children having no digital connection and migrant children. As for opening of schools from Class 1-8, a decision will be taken after 31st March, 2021. However, children of these classes would not be given general promotions and would be assessed on project based assignments. The State Education

Department also prepared a lot of bridge material to help children to cover up for the loss of the academic year.

4.11 The representative of the State of Uttar Pradesh in his deposition before the Committee on 12th January, 2021 briefed the Committee about their digital initiatives and outreach programmes for Classes 1 to 8. These included 700+ teaching videos; class-wise, grade wise and subject-wise classes on Doordarshan; Whatsapp classes covering all 1.59 lakh schools, constant communication between teachers and others, e- pathshala phase 2 etc. To make up for the loss of academic time, the State had designed a separate module called "*Samruddh*" for accelerated and remedial learning. For Classes 9-12, first Whatsapp was used. Teachers created videos on specific subjects which were telecast on channels. However, realizing that the reach of smart phones is limited, Uttar Pradesh started using DD-UP for Classes 10 and 12. For other classes, e-vidya channels were used. Among other measures, Whatsapp based assessment, curriculum reduction and project work were cited. Since October 2020, schools were opened for Classes 9 to 12 with all the safety protocols in place and it was informed that about 40 per cent students were attending schools.

4.12 The representative of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir in his deposition before the Committee on 12th January, 2021 emphasized that there has been substantial learning loss and an endeavour would be made to compensate for that through bridge courses. Elaborating on the digital platform, the representative apprised the Committee that in Kashmir digital classes were fewer as the area lacked connectivity and, therefore, community classes were held. In Jammu, as 4G connectivity was available, digital classes were more extensively conducted. The UT of Jammu & Kashmir also made an assessment of learning. The UT also did well in teachers training programmes, *i.e.*, NISHTHA and Impact NCERT with participation of around 86,000 teachers.

4.13 The above deliberations of the Committee with the stakeholders brought out some critical aspects of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the entire education sector of the country, which has been dealt with in the following paragraphs.

5. Concerns/ Problem Areas and Continuous Learning devised by Centre/States/UTs

5.1 The Committee was given to understand that the concern areas identified by the Department which needs to be addressed for enhancing the quality, outreach and effectiveness of digital/online education in the country are solution for students having access and no access to any digital device for learning, process to be followed by the State to reach out to students who do not have any

digital device and remedial action, the process of assessment of students during pandemic, problems faced by the children of migrant labourers, ensuring safety of students on re-opening of schools, concising the syllabus during pandemic, psychosocial problems faced by the students during pandemic, preventing drop outs, locating out of school children and mainstreaming them, tracking children and their learning levels, mitigating learning loss- by developing effective home-learning programme and tracking learning and teacher capacity building during pandemic. The Department apprised the Committee of the various types of student resources have been made available to ensure continued and active learning during the pandemic, as given below:-

- (i) PM e-Vidya with components such as DIKSHA- One nation, one digital education platform; Swayam Prabha -One Class one TV channel, E-content for Open School, Extensive use of Radio, Community Radio and podcast and E-content for visually and hearing- impaired students.
- (ii) Energised (QR coded) Textbooks for students and teachers - so far 4147 textbooks of States and NCERT have been QR coded and tagged with approximately 1,78,368 pieces of e-content including 357 textbooks of NCERT.
- (iii) E-Textbooks and E-Contents on National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER), an open storehouse of e-content by NCERT - Nearly 19,277 pieces of e-content are available for all grades for various school subjects. These include 700 collections, 5935 documents, 1453 interactives, 2885 audios, 6421 videos and 2583 images. All the NCERT textbooks on NROER are QR coded and are mapped to various e-resources for a holistic teaching learning experience.

5.2 The Department also apprised the Committee that resilient Continuous Learning Plans (CLP) to meet the unique requirement of each child, each grade and each school had to be evolved to bridge the learning gap due to various factor and ensure equitable and sustainable access to learning to each and every child. As directed by the Department, most of the States/UTs prepared school-based CLP for each and every learner. Child-wise mapping of full access, limited access or no access to any form of digital device for continued learning; preparation of learning plans based thereon to reach last learner; tracking and monitoring learning progress separately for those with access and no access to digital devices; special planning for children of migrant workers; CWSN and children in schools in Aspirational districts and innovative interventions for mental and physical health and well being of children were the main parameters for devising CLPs and most of the States/UTs took appropriate action

accordingly. Many States/ UTs have implemented creative solutions with low-tech forms of teaching-learning not requiring internet connections or digital devices. The Committee also took note of the innovative ways adopted by the States and UTs to access students without access to internet and digital devices, some of them being Bultuke Bol app – Live classes on normal feature phone, Motor Cycle iskool and Loudspeaker school in Chhattisgarh, Masti ki Pathshala and Khoob Padho campaign in Madhya Pradesh, Project Mashal in Punjab for psychological counseling, AaoGhar Par Seekhen- books and workbooks delivered at home in Rajasthan, Vidyavahini Bihar – a mobile app containing textbooks of Bihar Board for Classes 1 to 12, Odisha Shiksha Sanjog – a digital learning programme through WhatsApp groups, distribution of notes to students in Himachal Pradesh, etc.

6. Learning Loss

6.1 Covid-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented global education crisis. The most immediate impact of Covid-19 outbreak was the temporary stalling of classroom activities and postponement of all examinations in schools, colleges and Universities including the entrance tests for tertiary education sector. This left the students in complete disarray. Around 320 million children in India have not stepped into a classroom for more than a year and have lost a tenth of their entire schooling already. There was no clarity as to how long the cessation of classroom activities will continue. With passing time and continued cessation of classes, especially at school level, learning loss was widening and acquiring critical dimensions. The Indian Education System being dominated by classroom study, the sudden shift to digital/virtual education induced by the pandemic brought in its wake certain inherent problems like non-availability of digital devices and technical infrastructure with students, teachers and schools, irregular interrupted internet connectivity, power outages, limited awareness, lack of preparedness of schools, particularly government schools in rural areas and remote corners, lack of adaptation either because of inaccessibility of technology or the educational backgrounds of their parents to guide them through tech-savvy applications etc. contributed towards learning loss among students of all classes and regions.

6.2 The Committee noted that it was not only the learning loss but also the loss of social contact and socialization routine that were part of the daily experience of a student's life in schools and educational institutions. Further, loss of learning opportunities always have adverse impact on the most vulnerable sections of the society like students from economically weaker sections, rural and tribal areas and marginalized sections of society and girls. Past evidence suggests that short-term disruptions in schooling often lead to permanent dropouts amongst these categories. The pandemic induced lockdown

might have reduced the earning capacity of many households resulting in children being pushed to the labour market and young girls being pushed into marriage instead of education.

6.3 The Committee further noted that the learning loss of more than one whole academic year would necessarily have weakened the foundational knowledge of the students especially in the subjects of mathematics, sciences and languages at school level. This learning loss is a big deficit and is likely to impair the cognitive capabilities of students. This might have a debilitating effect on vulnerable sections of the society like poor and rural students, marginalized sections of society and young women who might have been unable to connect to any form of digital education during the pandemic. This needs to be addressed and immediate remedial steps required to be taken.

6.4 A study undertaken by the Research Group of Azim Premji University in 44 districts across 5 States, *namely*, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand covering 16067 children in Classes 2 to 6 in 1137 schools in January 2021 indicates that 92% children lost at least one specific language ability and 82% lost at least one specific mathematical ability from the previous year across all classes. Thus, school closures have resulted in loss of not only curricular learning but given rise to a widespread phenomenon of regression (forgetting) by students of learning from the previous class. This includes loss of foundational learning abilities such as reading with understanding and performing addition and multiplication which they had learnt earlier and had become proficient in. This regression in curricular learning will impact learning of not only more complex abilities but also conceptual understanding across subjects leading to a cumulative loss over the years impacting academic performance in school years and their future learning in college.

6.5 Studies conducted by UNICEF and UNESCO globally also reveal the extent of impact of the pandemic on the educational sector and its adverse effects on the physical, emotional and learning aspects of children. In the meeting held on 23rd July, 2021 the representatives of UNICEF, India briefed the Committee about the studies conducted by them on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on school education across the globe. UNICEF informed the Committee of some significant findings of the study conducted by them, as follows:

- a. 1.5 million schools / 1.37 million AWC closed disrupting education of over 286 million students;
- b. only 24% households have access to the internet and only 61.8% households own a smartphone;
- c. 40% of students had not accessed any remote learning;

- d. Rural students were 10% less likely to have accessed remote learning than their urban peers; and
- e. children faced psychosocial challenges due to school closures which affecting learning.

6.6 They also informed that School closures have put children's learning, nutrition, mental health, and overall development at risk and some students, particularly girls, are at risk of never returning to school. In fact long closure of schools will lead to children not returning to schools and potential for children getting engaged in labour and early marriage. Therefore, the immediate need is to bring children back to school. For this UNICEF India suggested the following steps:

- i. preparation for safe reopening of schools-convergence with other departments;
- ii. mapping and identifying children out of school with special focus on children from vulnerable groups and ensuring that all children safely return to schools;
- iii. raise awareness about returning to school for children and parents;
- iv. tracking of children and develop an early warning system so they remain in school;
- v. ensure child-friendly learning environment in school - psychosocial and well-being of children; and
- vi. establish a system of monitoring of school reopening/closure.

6.7 The Committee was also briefed about certain best practices adopted by different countries which may be adopted with suitable modifications like for example:

A. Proactive planning; clear protocols for re-closings; flexibility in local decision making

- **Somalia:** MoE tracking system to monitor returns and identify at-risk students
- **Poland:** principals given authority to suspend classes due to outbreaks

B. Simplifying curriculum; adapting academic calendar

- **Many countries:** smaller in-person classes, staggered school days/weeks/breaks, classes in shifts, blended learning
- **Zambia:** adjusted calendar by shortening vacation periods for examination classes
- **China:** Helping teachers adapt to online teachings - training rural teachers on online teaching methodologies and information and communication technology skills.

C. Supporting teachers, principals, & school staff on remediation and to manage new psychosocial needs

- **Jordan:** ‘Learning Bridges’- series of weekly activities on core curriculum for Grades 4 to 9
- **Turkey:** training teachers on phone-based psychosocial support
- **Nicaragua:** recreation kits to develop socio-emotional skills through play

D. Cancelled and modified examinations

- **Albania:** cancelled primary and lower secondary exams; adjusted content of upper secondary exam
- **Egypt:** replaced exams in Grades 3-9 with research projects; Grades 10 and 11 exams held online

6.8 The Committee thereafter took into consideration the publication *COVID-19 and School Closures: One year of education disruption*¹ brought out by UNICEF in March, 2021. The Committee took note of the following aspects covered in the publication:

Key findings:

- a. In the period between March 11, 2020 and February 2, 2021, schools have been fully closed for an average of 95 instruction days globally, which represents approximately half the time intended for classroom instruction.
- b. Countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region were the most affected with 158 days of full school closures on average, followed by

¹[COVID-19 and School Closures: One year of education disruption - UNICEF DATA](#)

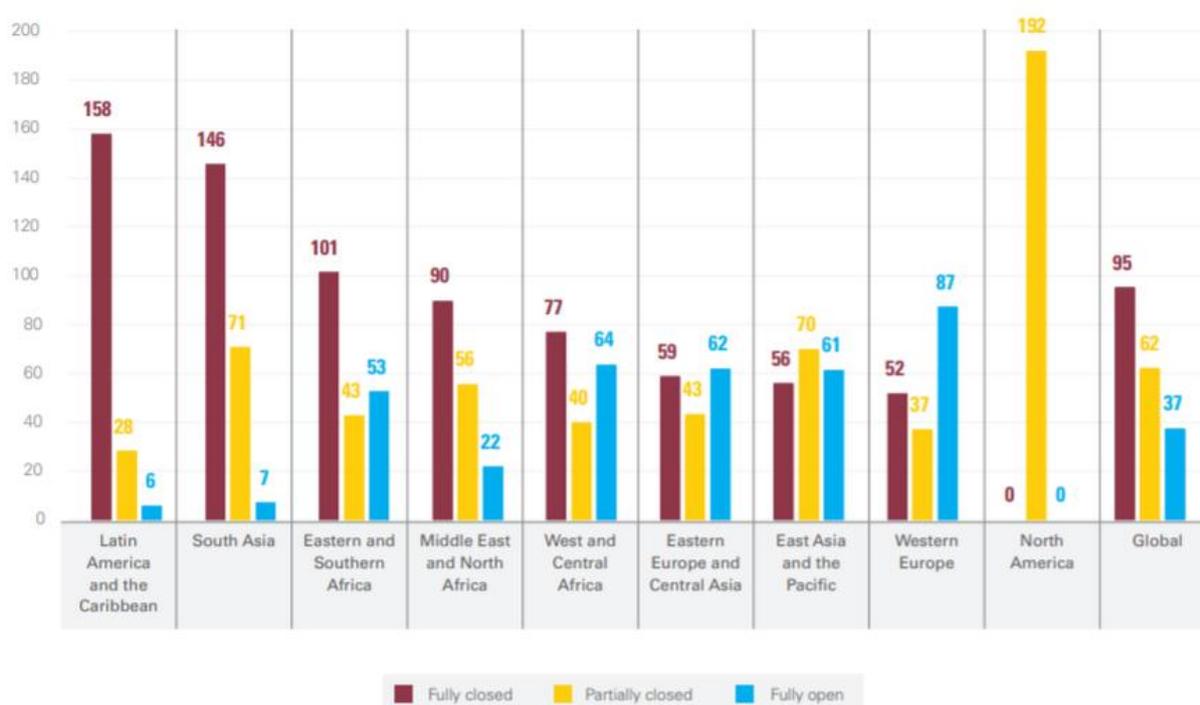
countries in South Asia with 146 days. Countries in the Eastern and Southern Africa region were the third most affected with an average of 101 days.

- c. Among the top 20 countries with the longest full school closures during this period, more than half are situated in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.
- d. Globally, 214 million students from pre-primary to upper secondary education in 23 countries have missed at least three-quarters of classroom instruction time at the pre-primary to upper secondary level since March 2020.
- e. Of these 214 million students, 168 million in 14 countries missed almost all classroom instruction time due to school closures.
- f. Countries with the longest durations of school closures tend to have a low prevalence of school-age children with a fixed internet connection at home.
- g. While the majority of countries have fully opened schools (53 per cent) and almost a quarter of the world's countries have partially opened schools, 196 million students in 27 countries (13 per cent globally) have schools that were fully
- h. closed as of February 2, 2021, the most recent date for which data is available.
- i. On average, in countries where schools were still closed as of February 2, 2021, nearly 80 per cent of classroom instruction has been missed in the eleven-month period since March 2020.

The magnitude of school closures: A regional perspective

The duration of school closures indicates the number of days students did not receive inperson classroom instruction. Different regions were affected disproportionately in terms of the magnitude of school closures (Figure below). The highest average number of days when classroom instruction was disrupted was seen in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, followed by the South Asia, and Eastern and Southern Africa regions. In contrast, in North America region schools closed partially. Globally, schools were closed for an average of 95 (roughly 50 per cent) instruction days, which represents a high proportion of intended classroom instruction time.

School closure status in number of days and by region, from March 2020 to February 2021 (weighted average)



Source: UNESCO Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19

Note: Estimates are weighted by the number of students in pre-primary to upper secondary education in each country.

Countries with the greatest number of days of full school closures

Some countries closed all schools initially but then eventually reopened schools. Others have had full school closures for almost the entire year since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Figure below summarizes the 20 countries with the highest number of days of full school closures since March 11, 2020, in descending order. The data reveal that more than half of the top 20 countries are concentrated in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, and

the number of days of full school closure ranges from 148 days in Jordan to 211 days in Panama. It is important to note that the total days of instruction differ among countries and therefore the highest number of days of full closures may not translate to that largest share of instruction days missed.

Countries with the highest number of days of full school closures (March 2020 – February 2021)



Source: UNESCO Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19
Note: The analysis covers schools from pre-primary to upper secondary level.

The number of students affected globally by school closure

Globally, 214 million pre-primary to upper secondary education students in 23 countries missed at least three-quarters of classroom instruction time. Primary school students constitute the majority of the world’s schoolchildren, so they are also the majority among those who missed at least three-quarters of classroom instruction (105 million), followed by lower secondary schoolstudents (53 million).

Call for Action: the way ahead

Concluding UNICEF states that despite overwhelming evidence of the impact of school closures on children, and despite increasing evidence that schools are not drivers of the pandemic, too many countries have opted to keep schools closed, some for nearly a year. It needs to be understood that schools are essential for children's learning, health, safety and well-being. For the most vulnerable children, school closures have deprived them of their one nutritious meal a day; children living in violent or dysfunctional family settings who rely on school to provide a safe, nurturing environment have also been cut off from this safety net (Borkowski et al, 2020; WHO, 2020).

In many countries, schools also play essential role in immunization and health support. As schools reopen, governments must nurture the development and well-being of every student when they return to the classroom, with comprehensive services including remedial learning, health and nutrition, and mental health and protection measures. Authorities must also ensure all children return to school when classrooms reopen.

7. Digital Education and its efficacy

7.1 The Committee noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had disrupted students' lives immensely. Classes and examinations had to be postponed/stalled across the country. To ensure that the students did not miss out on studies, higher educational institutions and schools moved to online classes in place of face to face teaching. While it must have worked to a certain extent in the higher education sector, it surely pushed school students to sit before the screen to attend classes, do assignments and get themselves evaluated online. It is however, debatable whether the screen time helped students learn or it actually impeded their progress, including their social and emotional well being. The Committee is of the view that online education is not a real education because it is only a transmission of contents and the student is deprived of real learning and understanding of concepts. Both teachers and students faced many hurdles during online education. Lack of basic facilities, external distraction and family interruption during teaching, i.e., lack of classroom like ambience were major issues in home learning. Therefore, it cannot be a substitute for face to face learning in a physical class. It is believed that students learn more with face to face teaching, while engaging with fellow students in collective tasks. In online/digital education, students just stare at the screen, they do not think, question, argue or discuss. It is mostly a one-way communication channel with no scope of interaction and engagement. Additionally, online/digital classes have burdened parents, forced them to sit with their children, especially those belonging to primary classes, for online/digital classes. The Committee is of the view that IT enabled online/digital education cannot be the sole provider of education and a substitute for teachers who provide personalized coaching

customized to suit the needs of each student as per his/her capability and learning capacity.

7.2 The Department of School Education and Literacy's own sample survey of experience of online education in KVs itself is self revealing. Only 33.8% students, 29.6% teachers and 27.2% parents found it joyful, whereas 26.4% students, 15.7% teachers and 25% parents found it difficult. In terms of identifying difficulties in various subjects, mathematics, sciences and social sciences were the subjects of concern. In terms of use of devices, mobiles were being used by the students in highest percentage, *i.e.*, 84 per cent followed by laptops (19.4%), television (5.5%) and radio (0.6%). This survey was in respect of KVs which are better equipped with infrastructural facilities including the availability of computers and computer labs. However, Indian education system is such that maximum students, *i.e.*, around 70% go to Government schools which lack even the basic infrastructural facilities and to assume that they would have digital infrastructural facilities would be unrealistic. On a query by the Committee, the Department furnished the data regarding number of ICT Labs per 1000 students across the country, a perusal of which indicates that UT of Puducherry tops the list with 35% availability followed by Tripura with 4.9%, UT of Ladakh with 4.1% and Gujarat with 4%. The rest of the States/UTs lag far behind with percentage availability ranging from 2.9% to 0.2%. This highlights the lack of technological infrastructural facilities in schools across the country. It was also found that only 11.58% schools across the country has internet facilities. Even some of the higher educational institutions both government and private may not be equipped with required infrastructural facilities for imparting digital education. In such a scenario, to assume that digital/online education was being imparted at all levels successfully may not be true.

7.3 Though the total shift to online education was sudden in our country, it is slowly becoming the new normal and the pandemic has highlighted that the partnership between technology and education is going to stay forever. The positive impact of digital education on Indian Education System enhanced development of soft copies of learning materials, digital content, enhanced digital literacy, improved use of electronic media for sharing information, rise in virtual meetings, teleconferencing, webinars etc. facilitating remote learning, better time management and opportunity to self-learn from diverse resources and customize learning as per needs. Therefore, the Committee is of the view that educational institutions should adopt both conventional and online teaching methodologies as this will help in inculcating technology into classrooms, increase digital literacy among teachers and students and their exposure and learning thus making them more employable for the digital world.

8.Digital Divide

8.1 The Committee noted that the Department of Higher Education had made available course content digitally up to 40 per cent for the benefit of students. It was also noted that as per the Department of School Education & Literacy, around 85 per cent students were connected with the online classes and the remaining students were being approached with other modes. The States and Union Territory heard by the Committee also stated that they switched to online mode of education and reported that a good percentage of students were taking online classes. This envisaged availability of internet connectivity and smart phones which made digital education accessible to students.

8.2 The Committee, however, observes that the ground reality is completely different. All parts of the country are not equipped to make digital education reach to all corners and cover all groups of the people. In higher education sector, one can understand student's access to e-modes, but in school education availability of digital platforms and their access to students is debatable. The Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy during her deposition before the Committee herself admitted that connectivity was a major issue. An effort has been made by the Department in coordination with the Department of Telecommunications and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to connect one lakh Gram Panchayats with Bharatnet. In reply to the Questionnaire provided, the Department informed that the CSC e-Governance Services of India Ltd (CSC-SPV) of Meity has been assigned the task of providing Fibre to the Home (FTTH) connectivity to the Government Institutions, including schools. This project is for providing Internet connection to the Government schools in respective Gram Panchayats. The School Education Departments of the respective State Governments have appointed State/Districts-wise Nodal Officers for the project for effective implementation and as of May 2021, 46,750 active connections have been provided of the identified 63,063 schools at various levels. The States and UT heard by the Committee also submitted that connectivity and access to gadgets were major issues affecting the outreach of the digital education in a big way. However, the Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy informed the Committee in response to a query that it is likely to take another two years to achieve the target of the Department to cover 2.5 lakh gram panchayats.

8.3 The Committee feels that two interconnected issues are involved in the matter, *i.e.*, internet connectivity and its speed across the country and access to gadgets, *i.e.*, availability of smart phones, tablets, computers, laptops etc. The Committee is well aware that these facilities are available more in metro and big cities. Most of rural, remote areas lack these facilities indicating a huge digital divide. In other words, about 70 per cent of the country does not have access to internet connectivity and available quality of connectivity is poor. Many households, especially belonging to the lower income groups, do not have smart

phones, tablets, desktop computers/laptops even television and radio to connect digitally/electronically. This effectively means that poor and marginal people in rural areas, labourers, migrant workers and women have been deprived of the benefits of digital education. The Committee also noted that an effort was made to reach out to students through television and radio and to supply digital devices to students belonging to economically weaker sections in some States. However, the Ministry's own sample survey in respect of KVs showed that only 5 and 0.5 per cent students used television and radio for online education. The increased drop-out rates at the Secondary level (17% Boys and 15.1% Girls) in the UDISE Report, 2019-20 is also indicative of the adverse impact of school closure and digital divide on children, especially those belonging to remote areas and marginalized sections of society.

9. Children with Special Needs, Out-of-School children, Children of Migrant Workers

9.1 In response to queries of the Committee, the Department informed that in order to mitigate the impact of challenges thrown by the COVID-19 pandemic for migrant children and preventing drop-outs, lower enrolments and loss of learning, guidelines were issued by the Ministry of Education for identification, smooth admission process and continued education of migrant children on 13th July, 2020. This was done despite the fact that education falls under the Concurrent List of the Constitution and majority of the schools come under the purview of the respective State and UT Governments. The Department also requested the States to identify and enroll all children of migrant workers in nearby government schools without the requirement of submitting any document except an Identity Card and maintain a database of migrant children admitted. Guidelines were also issued to provide the residential school students with temporary admission in schools nearby their homes, as they may not go back to their residential schools during COVID-19. The Department further informed that guidelines issued on 7th January, 2021 include identification of out of school children from age 6-18 years, enrolment drives and awareness generation, student support while schools are closed, continued education for children with special needs (CWSN), student support on school reopening and Teacher capacity building. Under the centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha, financial assistance has been provided to the States and UTs for undertaking various activities to reduce number of out of school children including drop-outs.

9.2 The Department further informed that a new online system to capture the Out of School Children (missing children) on PRABANDH portal of the Department was launched through which a unique id will be generated to track the child until they are mainstreamed to regular school. As regards Children

with Special Needs (CWSN), digital version of Barkha reading Series including a set of 40 story booklets were developed to promote reading for all in inclusive settings. More than 120 audio books, 91 videos in Sign Language for CWSN, 20 videos for CWSN from CIET etc. have been uploaded on DIKSHA portal and Read Aloud Textbooks are also available on E-Pathshala platform. The Department also apprised the Committee that study material has been developed in Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY), a technical standard for digital audio books, periodicals and computerized text and that 25 NCERT textbooks have been converted into DAISY format in English and Hindi language.

10. **Curriculum Remodelling**

10.1 The Committee was given to understand by the stakeholders that since COVID-19 blended approach towards education would be the norm, different modes of conveying knowledge and technological tools would be used to impart knowledge in the entire education system. This in essence would require curriculum remodeling. The Committee also noted that to combat COVID-19 situation, Ministry of Education reduced syllabus by 30 per cent. Most of the States/UTs also reduced the syllabus by 30 per cent to help students to cover the syllabus. The Committee is of the view that a class-wise, subject-wise question bank of 100 questions should be prepared so that the students are aware of the topics to be covered in an academic year.

11. **Capacity Building of Teachers**

11.1 Although the focus was placed on the impact on students, teachers also suffered significantly at work and professionally. The most evident impact of Covid-19 on teachers was the expectation to shift to virtual mode of teaching, especially when no formal training was provided to them. The ability of each teacher to continue teaching largely depended on their experience in this regard. Further, lack of virtual campus and virtual classroom for each subject also placed serious difficulties in delivering lectures, particularly in those subjects which included the development of professional competencies through practice, *for e.g.* engineering, science and those heavily dependent on practical workshops, laboratory work or institutional practices.

11.2 Further, in many institutions, there were the issues of part-time faculties appointed under contract basis and absence of subject-teachers especially in rural, remote areas. The Committee was given to understand that extensive teacher training programmes were conducted by the Department and various States to make teachers digital friendly.

12. Use of Satellite TV for telecasting Educational content- a cost effective and viable solution

12.1 The Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy in the deliberations held on 21st June, 2021 informed the Committee about the steps taken by the Department in collaboration with the Ministry of Telecommunications and CSC E-Governance Ltd. for ensuring internet connectivity through Bharatnet in 2.5 lakh villages and the schools therein; and funding for ICT, such as, smart rooms, virtual studios, digital devices like preloaded tablets etc.

12.2 CEO, Prasar Bharati informed the Committee that they had issued guidelines on Educational Broadcast/Telecast on 22nd April, 2020 first for three months and later extended it for another nine months. It was informed that Educational telecast was done on 25 Doordarshan State Networks and 8 State Networks i.e. DD UP, DD Bihar, DD Girnar, DD Odia, DD Punjabi, DD Sahayadri, DD Kashir, DD Port Blair were still continuing educational telecast. Likewise educational broadcast in All India Radio was done by 12 States with an average daily broadcast in 2020-21 been 16.10 hours and 5 AIR Stations i.e. Chennai, Guwahati, Jammu, Srinagar and were still continuing with it.

12.3 Director-General, Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications & Geo-Informatics (BISAG-N), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology in his deliberations stated that telecast of educational content through satellite TV on DTH channels of Doordarshan is the most cost effective technology to ensure wider outreach in all States. He also informed that this system could be developed further across the country to provide not only education, but teacher training, entertainment and public awareness programmes.

12.4 The Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy in her deliberations in a meeting held on 2nd July, 2021 informed the Committee about the efforts made by the Department in ensuring continued education through television network. It was informed that after a discussion with BISAG, a letter had been issued on 13th September, 2017 to all States regarding the possibility of expanding the channels for the purpose of education along with guidelines on the utilization of DTH TV channels, which were prepared in consultation with BISAG's team. Seven States, *namely*, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Tripura had sought time on *Swayam Prabha*, a satellite channel with four hours relay time, which was approved and after the pandemic struck, the Department started follow-up with the States as to the measures taken by them for TV broadcast. She informed that many States have dedicated Doordarshan channels, like, *Vidya Varadhi* in Andhra Pradesh, which broadcasts for classes 1 to 10 daily; *Arun Prabha* in

Arunachal Pradesh on which there is a 40 minute relay on 6 days a week for classes 6 to 8; *Mera Doordarshan Mera Vidyalay* in Bihar, with 5 hour slots for classes 1 to 12; *Vande Gujarat* and DD Girnar which broadcasts lessons for all classes and *Gyanshala* programme in Himachal Pradesh. Thus, most of the States have taken slots on Doordarshan on a daily basis, class-wise and 'One Class, One TV Channel', which is also on *Swayam Prabha* with one dedicated channel for all classes. Most of these lessons are being prepared in the studios of NCERT, both in its Regional Institutes of education and in the Headquarters.

12.5 CEO, Prasar Bharati further informed the Committee that several States had approached them to reactivate broadcast of educational classes on account of the fairly large value base of DD Free Dish DTH with 51 channels of BISAG and Doordarshan channels along with some private DTH operators, all available on one single DTH platform. The only investment is a regular DTH set top box, regular DTH dish antennae and TV sets. He also informed that Andaman and Nicobar Islands is the only region not reachable in the country at present, due to non-extension of GSAT footprints there and the only issue being faced by them is transponder capacity regarding which ISRO has assured them that by the year 2022, they are planning to launch another satellite in the same orbital slot which will assure more satellite capacity. He further apprised the Committee that the number of TV households in the country is about 20 Crore, which is a fairly large base and this platform was being utilized in view of its potential reach to many households. He also stated that Prasar Bharati has been working with CDAC and IIT Kanpur to bring in technology with automated way of content delivery for visually and hearing impaired.

12.6 The Committee was also apprised by the representatives of the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh on the steps taken by them to ensure continued education of the students in their States and for utilize satellite TV as a cost effective and viable mechanism to ensure reach of online education to the remotest corners of their States and thus to bridge the digital divide.

12.7 The Committee in its deliberations also took note of the fact that the cost of utilization of DTH TV channels for the purpose of broadcasting educational content was very reasonable and a very nominal investment had to be made at the ground level to avail its services. Further, the country already had the example of the States of Gujarat and Odisha which had invested in it even before the pandemic and thereby could make effective utilization of its services in the pandemic phase.

13. **Review of Examinations and Assessments**

13.1 The prolonged school closures have not only impacted curricular learning but also have major implications on examinations, assessments and credentials. Examinations offer a proper yardstick to measure a students' learning progress in a particular class, the learning gap/loss and aids in determining whether the student is actually ready for the next class/next level of learning. To promote a student to the next higher grade without actual assessment of his/her learning level in the lower grade would not only impede his/her future learning leading to increased drop-out rates due to the inability of cope with the learning standards, but also result in the creation of a future generation lacking the requisite foundational strength in core concepts of each subjects, which will have a cascading effect on their future employment prospects as well. The interruption of examinations is thus likely to have a negative impact on students' progression in terms of their actual learning outcomes, their future learning avenues, university admissions and employment requirements. This is more pronounced in the case of vocational and technical education sectors. The Committee was of the view that this is a matter of grave concern for all the stakeholders including students, teachers, parents and even employers and therefore needs to be duly considered.

13.2 The Committee was given to understand that the Department along with CBSE rose to the occasion and came out with a set of guidelines for internal assessment of students in Classes 10 and 12 in the absence of board examinations. This, however, was a stop-gap arrangement which had to be devised within no time to deal with the situation on hand and avoid loss of academic year of students. Some Members pointed out the apprehension amongst students and parents regarding this arrangement and the moderation policy of fair distribution of marks and whether it would actually be able to assess the learning progress of each student. They suggested that a more transparent, fair and credible system should be developed to deal with such emergent situations in future.

14. **Budget for the Digital/Online education**

14.1. On a query by the Committee regarding the financial support/aid requested from the Ministry of Education by the States and UTs during the pandemic phase, the Ministry informed that during the current financial year 2021-22, it had released ₹.5228 Crore in ad-hoc grants to the States under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme and an additional ₹. 2500 Crore will also be released to ensure continuity of various educational initiatives by the States and UTs during the pandemic and for the major identified initiatives like identifying and mainstreaming of Out of School Children and ensuring sustained enrolment, retention and transition, academic learning and cognitive development of students, capacity building with specific focus on blended and home-based learning including student assessments and data use, nutritional and socio-

economical support, digital education and monitoring, tracking and remedial measures etc. The Ministry also informed that ₹.224.49 Crore has been approved for smart classrooms in 12026 schools under project innovation and ₹.763.04 Crore has been approved for 4049 schools under ICT and Digital Initiatives. On another query regarding the funds earmarked in BE 2021-22 for providing digital/online education, the Department informed that a budget of ₹.1181.31 Crore was allotted to 25 States, whose Project Appraisal Board (PAB) for the year 2021-22 had taken place in April-May,2021 and approximately ₹. 500 Crore will be considered by the PAB for proposals of the remaining 11 States. In the year 2020-21, the Ministry, under the pandemic situation, had approved ₹.1081.68 Crore to 36 States/UTs, out of which ₹.808.79 Crore was utilized by the States/ UTs.

15. School re-opening guidelines during the COVID-19 Pandemic

15.1 It is an undisputed fact that that online education can only be a stop gap alternative for face to face physical classes in the ongoing pandemic phase. It has also been noticed that there is no value addition in online schooling and parents are even ready to skip a year. Face to face physical classes are therefore essential as they are more effective way of teaching especially for children of primary classes where the children not only imbibe the teaching but also learn other valuable social skills and life skills. Learning happens only when the teacher is present along with the children. All efforts should be made to bring teachers and students together. Children attending online classes with handheld devices need constant parental support and supervision. Further, as per reports only 23% of the students had access to devices to attend online classes so the remaining 77% of the students were deprived of the attending online classes. It was also noted that education of the students belonging to remote and marginal areas of the country was the worst affected by the pandemic. The impact of long term school closures on the mental and psychological well being and their social behaviour also needs to be taken into account.

15.2 The Committee took note of the fact that 90% of the countries re-opened schools in some capacity during the pandemic phase. The Committee further noted that for the overall growth and well being of the students the schools need to be re-opened in a phased manner. It was also pointed out that some of the States had re-opened their schools in October and November, 2020 in piecemeal manner. However, with the onslaught of the second wave in April-May, 2021, schools were again closed. Now that the situation has started improving for better, many States have opened up schools exclusively for class IX onwards upto class XII.

16. **Blended (Hybrid) mode of education for the future**

16.1. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the education system not only in India but also in countries across the world due to closure of schools. This also led to a situation where the Centre, States and educational institutions had to adopt online technologies at a very rapid pace to ensure continued education of the students. The efforts and initiatives taken to harness ICT to ensure that education reaches even the remotest parts of the country has helped create an infrastructure which has a lot of scope and possibilities for the future. The Committee was apprised of the various initiatives taken by the Department in this direction, some of the novel ones being (i) Vidyadaan – a national content contribution program that leverages DIKSHA platform to seek and allow contribution/donation of e-learning resources for school education by educational bodies, private bodies and individual experts, (ii) Chat Bot – Technology Aided Responses and Answers (TARA), National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) – a technological framework which aims to enable existing systems to upgrade and become interoperable, while making available the building blocks for the creation of new tools and solutions and thus to energize and catalyse the digital education ecosystem.

16.2 The Committee took note of the fact that though a number of issues like insufficient bandwidth and connectivity issues, lack of devices for the students and teachers, training of teachers for online mode among other concerns are very relevant but still online education will eventually become an integral component of school education. Thereby in the near future a Blended (Hybrid) mode of education needs to be developed based on the experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic so as to meet any such situations in future.

17. **Case Study- Visit to Leh and Srinagar**

17.1 The Committee visited a number of schools and also interacted on the issue of continued education through various modes during COVID-19 pandemic period with the U.T. administration of Ladakh and UT of J&K during its study-visit to Leh and Srinagar from 5th to 8th July, 2021.

17.2 The Committee was briefed about the steps taken to ensure continued education through various modes during COVID-19 pandemic period such as:

- i. broadcast of lectures as prescribed by JK Board through National DD;
- ii. broadcast of lectures through AIR Leh/Kargil to reach out to students that do not have internet access;

- iii. arrangement of community classes in open spaces by community teachers and volunteers; and
- iv. distribution of pre-loaded educational tablets 'Youngtab' for students of class 6th to 12th.

17.3 The Committee appreciated the steps taken by the UT administration. However, certain infrastructural bottlenecks needed to be addressed on an urgent basis like ensuring internet connectivity in the remote and inaccessible areas of the UT and also electricity network needs to be developed so that the electronic devices can operate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After a study of the documents submitted and depositions made before the Committee, the Committee accordingly recommends the following:

18.1 Learning Loss

- (a) Intensive bridge courses and accelerated learning programmes should be developed in consultation with experts in the field to make up for the learning loss and bring students to the level of learning of each class.**
- (b) Learning Outcomes, subject-wise, during the pandemic period should be assessed by regularly conducting tests with multiple-choice questions or quizzes and remedial measures taken through intense customized personal remedial classes to address the problem areas of each student.**
- (c) Extra classes, curtailment of vacations, assigning expert teachers for personalized coaching, parental engagement, peer-group and collaborative learning may be explored to help students, who are lagging behind and provide them personalized and dedicated attention to bridge the learning gap. Senior class students should be advised to take up the role of mentors and take classes of the junior students and it should be taken as a criteria of assessment in more structured manner.**
- (d) Specific instructional materials and worksheets, workbooks may be created to address the specific learning requirements of students thus enabling them to bridge the learning gap/loss.**
- (e) Mandatory Helpline Centers for every subject to clear the doubts of the students should be made operational to clear the doubts of students in each subject. Phone-in programmes may also be aired through TV and on community radio with subject experts to elaborate on topics and explain difficult concepts to students. Whatsapp Groups comprising teachers/subject experts may be created for each class in schools to aid students in their learning, clarification of doubts/concepts etc.**
- (f) The best formative assessments, like ChatBot Assessment, may be encouraged to map students learning processes/outcomes and identify those who require specific attention and the subjects in which targeted instruction is needed.**

18.2 Need for proper documentation and data collection

The Committee recommends that a comprehensive assessment to collect data of the post COVID situation leading to the learning loss due to school lockdown may be under taken by the Department of School Education & Literacy to cover the following areas of concern:

- a) learning loss assessment immediately across the country covering each and every student, with specific emphasis on students belonging to rural and backward areas as well as economically weaker and marginalized sections of the society and also Children with Special Needs. The findings/results of the survey should be compared with the figures for the pre-COVID period and the groups of students and areas/subjects which require immediate remedial action should be identified;
- b) the basic reading, writing and arithmetical skills of students of various classes and compare them with the results during pre-COVID period. Thereafter, remedial programmes/evidence based multi-pronged strategies may be devised to make up for the learning loss so that future learning and employment prospects are not adversely affected;
- c) out-of-school children, particularly girls, during the pandemic and concerted action taken to bring them back to school and mainstream education by giving them incentives in the form of study material, digital devices, wholesome nutritional food etc;
- d) impact of online/digital/distant education during the pandemic to create data sets based on demography, socio-economic status, student's learning habits, including hours of online study, students perception of their self-learning, occupational aspirations, psychological effect etc. for a comparative study/analysis and for augmenting policy makers' awareness and aid them in formulating policies for ensuring better preparedness and for planning for future scenarios;
- e) availability of digital devices and their usage, with special emphasis on rural, tribal and backward areas of the country and the economically weaker and marginalized sections of society and remedial action taken based on the findings thereof;

- f) performance assessment of teachers, especially in coordination with the States and UTs, to ascertain their potential in handling audio-visual tools and imparting digital education;
- g) the minimum requirements of technological infrastructure for improving digital education in schools across the country, particularly in rural, tribal, hilly and backward areas as well as in Aspirational Districts, and chalk out a roadmap for development of such facilities with increased investment to meet any such emergent situations in future; and
- h) weekly assessment of digital learning outcomes to regularly assess learning progress of students to enable them to course correct in case requisite targets are not achieved.

18.3 Steps to ensure Continued Learning

I. Budget for the Digital/Online education

The Committee noted with concern the under utilization of the allotted funds by some States and recommends that the Department should urge the States/UTs to fully utilize the budget grants made to them during the financial year 2021-22 to augment digital/online education and create necessary infrastructural and technological facilities required therefor. The Committee also recommends that since the digital/online mode of education is going to be the new normal even after the pandemic subsides, efforts to technologically empower every school and students across the country may be aggressively pursued and additional funds allocated for the purpose, as per requirement.

II. Use of Satellite TV for telecasting Educational content- a cost effective and viable solution

- a) Telecast of educational programmes through satellite TV, on the model of Gujarat and Odisha, for a cost-effective mode of online education with wide outreach should be developed in all other States/UTs in collaborating with BISAG-N.
- b) Wide publicity may be given to the educational programmes being aired on Doordarshan and on satellite TV to create awareness amongst general public. The educational channels of the Department may be clubbed and placed along with entertainment or news channels having high TRPs for enhanced visibility and attract higher

viewership, instead of placing them at the end of the spectrum of available channels as being done at present.

- c) **The presentation of educational programmes on Doordarshan may be re-designed to make it more lively and engaging for the students. Theatre/Cine artists, Cartoonists may be roped in for creating interesting and engaging educational content.**
- d) **ISRO may provide increased transponder capacity for enhanced content delivery through satellite TV;**
- e) **Increased bandwidth may be provided for community radios to air educational content and wide publicity may be given to such programmes.**
- f) **States should be encouraged to use available time slots on DD regional TV channels to air educational content by utilizing existing resources and satellite capacity optimally.**
- g) **The Department should take proactive measures along with Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Department of Telecommunication to upgrade and revive tele-education networks in different States under Edusat Programme by upgrading networks, replacing obsolete equipment with latest gadgets.**
- h) **All schools, community halls in villages, small towns etc. should be equipped with Doordarshan Free Dish, so that students can watch educational channels and learn there from.**

18.4. Digital Education and its efficacy

- a) **Recorded online courses/Massive Open Online Courses may be developed in all regional languages for each class where students can customize learning speeds and timings.**
- b) **An Integrated Learning Management System, a software application for overall administration may be created for availability, tracking, reporting and delivery of all educational content created across the country in multiple languages on a single platform as well as for training-learning and development/capacity building programmes for both students and teachers.**

- c) **Artificial Intelligence-based education tools which can collect data on a student's level of understanding and learning progress, analyze it and accordingly determine or customize the digital content/course to augment comprehension and spur learning progress.**
- d) **Augmented and Virtual Reality Education solutions may be developed for enabling interactive learning and understanding core concepts. The Department may enter into collaboration with the Indian Institutes of Technology and other leading engineering colleges to develop low cost technologies for the same.**
- e) **Virtual labs with simulation exercises for practical classes should be developed for extensive use in all classes across schools.**
- f) **Regular feedback/control mechanism for e-content should be made mandatory as the course designer needs to be aware of the needs of the 'end users' *i.e.*, students and teachers and tailor/customize content and delivery to suit their needs/requirement.**
- g) **Technical courses may be incorporated in the curriculum to equip students for technological and digital advancements and enhance their digital literacy.**

18.5 **Digital Divide**

- a) **The Department should make concerted efforts in coordination with Ministries/Departments concerned to make available high-speed internet connectivity and at least one TV Set, one Desktop Computer, large screens with projectors etc. in all schools across the country to bridge the digital divide. The problem of power outages in various parts of the country may be tackled by leveraging non-conventional energy sources like solar power, wind power etc. in schools and make them self-sufficient educational hubs.**
- b) **The step taken by UT of Ladakh to distribute pre-loaded Tablets may be replicated in other parts of the country to distribute pre-loaded Tablets customized for each class for students in middle school and re-furbished laptops with pre-loaded educational programmes for students of secondary and senior secondary classes may be distributed instead of providing free textbooks. Efforts may**

also be made to manufacture such tablets/laptops indigenously at low cost through public-private partnership and by involving IITs, IT Industry, business houses etc.

- c) **A Digital Library with tablets, laptops, educational videos and other digital devices may be set up in each school, wherefrom students may borrow such devices for their educational needs for a specified time period.**
- d) **Leverage private sector expertise and resources through effective collaboration to provide digital devices to students belonging to economically weaker and marginalized sections of society. The Department should make concerted efforts to utilise CSR funds for this purpose.**
- e) **Classes with physical distancing in community halls, auditorium etc. in villages and small towns, mobile classes etc. may be explored as innovative strategies for students who cannot afford digital devices. Large Screens with projectors may be set up in playgrounds or open areas for such students to avail online classes.**
- f) **The Department should moot a proposal with MeitY and Ministry of Communications for provision of internet packs at concessional rates to students particularly from economically backward and marginalized sections of society as well as high speed internet connectivity to all schools.**
- g) **The best practices adopted by teachers/schools in various States/UTs to ensure continued education during the pandemic, bridge the digital divide and minimize learning loss may be collated and issued by the Department in the form of guidelines/practices to be adapted by other States/UTs to suit their specific requirements.**

18.6. Children with Special Needs, Out-of-School children, Children of Migrant Workers

The Committee, while appreciating the efforts made by the Department to provide inclusive and equitable learning to all by enhancing and integrating learning with technology, recommends that:-

- a) **the Department should give wide publicity to the various steps and measures taken by it to impart inclusive and equitable education to all sections of students, including CWSN, OoSC,**

- children of migrant workers etc., so that the beneficiaries are aware of the facilities available for them;
- b) the Department should urge the States/UTs for better and stricter implementation of the various guidelines issued in this regard, so that the benefits actually percolate to the ground level;
 - c) concerted efforts may be made to develop textbooks in DAISY format in regional languages also; and
 - d) special audio/video content and in Indian Sign Language may be created to cater to the curricular learning requirements of physically challenged children/children with special needs.

18.7 Capacity Building of Teachers

- a) The Department should encourage States/UTs to augment existing digital/technological infrastructure and create more such facilities for optimal utilization of the same by teachers/students for efficient and effective delivery of content via online mode.
- b) Teachers may be trained in a strategic manner so as to enable them to create captivating content for digital education and engage students in online mode through active interaction and creation of a school like ambience.
- c) Teachers, particularly in rural, tribal and backward areas may be given intensive training in use of digital devices and Information Technology in collaboration with IITs, NITs, private sector etc.
- d) Provision of incentives in the form of digital devices, internet connectivity, data packs etc. at home to teachers, particularly those in rural, remote or backward areas, in order to encourage them to shift to digital education and explore new strategies/innovations therein; and
- e) Specialised training programmes may also be developed for teaching children with special needs, physically challenged children and children with learning disabilities, particularly for imparting online/distance education.

18.8. Review of Examinations and Assessments

- a) A credible, fair and transparent system of continuous assessment throughout the year may be developed and put in place even when

normal functioning of schools re-commences, so as to meet any future emergent scenarios. This system should be over and above the final board examinations and would aid in helping students and teachers get a correct perspective of their learning curve and course correct wherever required.

- b) **Guidelines for Internal Assessment, Practicals, Project Work, particularly for classes 10 and 12, be formulated and circulated for strict implementation in every school at the Centre and in States/UTs, be it Government, Government-aided or private, in order to ensure objective and uniform standard of assessment across the country.**
- c) **Workbooks be designed to test and assess the understanding of core concepts and their practical application in each subject and teachers may assign topic-wise exercises from these workbooks to regularly assess their students' learning progress by assigning marks thereto and tabulating them for final assessment.**
- d) **Experiential learning may be encouraged and teachers may be given extensive training to adopt new and innovative teaching methodologies to impart such learning and progressively assess students' learning abilities and difficulties. Research Projects based on the experiential learning and understanding of core concepts in each subject and Presentations by students of their own projects before a panel of subject experts for objective evaluation thereof may also be considered as an alternative assessment method.**

18.9 School re-opening guidelines during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The closure of schools for over a year has had a deep impact on the well-being of students, especially their mental health. The hazards of not opening the schools are too serious to be ignored. The confinement of young children within the four walls of the house, being unable to attend school, has altered the relationship between the parent and the children adversely. The closure of schools has impacted the social fabric of the family in negative manner leading to early/child marriage and increased involvement of children in household chores. The present situation has exacerbated the learning crisis that existed even before the pandemic with the marginal and vulnerable children getting adversely affected. Keeping this situation in mind, it becomes all the more imperative to open schools.

The seriousness of the matter should not be overlooked and a well balanced reasoned view may be taken for opening up of the schools. The Committee accordingly recommends the following:

- a) Accentuated vaccine programmes for all students, teachers and allied staff so that schools may start functioning normally at the earliest.**
- b) Classes may be held on alternate days or in two shifts to thin out students along with observance of physical distancing and compulsory wearing of face masks at all times, frequent hand sanitization etc.**
- c) Regular thermal screening at the time of attendance and random RT-PCR tests may be conducted to identify and isolate any infected student/teacher/staff immediately. A sick-room with essential facilities/medicines may be set up in each school for facilitating observation, immediate isolation and for providing basic medical kit in case of emergency.**
- d) Zero tolerance towards laxity in maintaining Covid protocols and appropriate behavior by all the stake holders, *namely*, school management/authorities, teachers, students, allied staff, parents, visitors, school and private transporter and any other person(s) connected with school management and functioning.**
- e) Each school should have at least two Oxygen concentrators with trained personnel to address any eventuality and provide first aid till availability of outside medical help.**
- f) Students belonging to economically weaker and marginalized sections of society may be supplied hand sanitizer/facemask at regular intervals.**
- g) Frequent/surprise inspection of schools may be done by health inspectors/health workers to ensure strict adherence to hygiene and COVID protocols.**
- h) Best practices being followed in different countries for opening of schools may be taken into consideration for taking an informed decision**

18.10 Blended (Hybrid) mode of education for the future

- a) The Department may ensure that the investment made by the Centre and States for developing digital/online education during the**

pandemic period are systematically integrated into the education system, so that the gains achieved are not lost once normal functioning of schools recommence.

- b) The Department may chalk out a long term strategy to sort out the impediments in this field and ensure access to good quality and equitable digital education at economical rates to students in each and every part of the country.**
- c) Conscious efforts may be made by the Department to remodel curricular learning at all levels to incorporate both conventional pedagogy and digital/online education in equal measure, so that Blended learning becomes a norm rather than a concept in the near future.**
- d) A study of the methods adopted by other countries in the field of blended education may be conducted and best practices may be collated and adapted to suit the educational requirements of our country.**
- e) The Department should set up at least one school on the complete hybrid model of teaching in every district and tehsil of the country. These schools should become operational by October and all the necessary infrastructure should be made available to them. These schools will be a case study for setting up more such schools in the future and will help inspire other schools.**

MINUTES

XV

FIFTEENTH MEETING

The Committee on Human Resource Development met at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, the 10th August, 2020 in Main Committee Room, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

MEMBERS PRESENT

RAJYA SABHA

1. **Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabuddhe** - *Chairman*
2. Shri. Bhubaneswar Kalita
3. Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia
4. Shri Vishambhar Prasad Nishad
5. Dr. Sasmit Patra
6. Shri G.K. Vasani
7. Shri Gopal Narayan Singh
8. Shri Akhilesh Prasad Singh

LOK SABHA

9. Shri Rajendra Agrawal
10. Shri Santokh Singh Chaudhary
11. Shri Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu
12. Shri Sangamlal Kadedin Gupta
13. Shri Balak Nath
14. Shri Jagannath Sarkar
15. Shri Arvind Kumar Sharma
16. Shri Dharmbir Singh
17. Shri Ashok Kumar Yadav

SECRETARIAT

1. Dr. Shikha Darbari, Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor
2. Shri Rajiva Srivastava, Director
3. Shri Sammer Kapoor, Deputy Secretary
4. Shri Mohit Misra, Committee Officer
5. Smt. Suman Khurana, Committee Officer
6. Smt. Meera Nair, Assistant Research Officer

WITNESSES

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Shri. Amit Khare, Secretary (HE)

2. Shri Rakesh Ranjan, Additional Secretary
3. Ms. Kamini Chauhan Ratan, Joint Secretary
4. Shri Madhu Ranjan Kumar, Joint Secretary
5. Prof. D. P. Singh, Chairman, UGC
6. Dr. Rajnish Jain, Secretary, UGC
7. Dr. Anil D. Sahasrabuddhe, Chairman, AICTE

DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION & LITERACY

1. Ms. Anita Karwal, Secretary
2. Shri. Santosh Kumar Yadav, Joint Secretary
3. Shri Maneesh Garg, Joint Secretary
4. Shri R. C. Meena, Joint Secretary
5. Smt. L.S. Changsan, Joint Secretary
6. Shri Vipin Kumar, Joint Secretary
7. Shri Manoj Ahuja, Chairman, CBSE
8. Shri H.K. Senapati, Director, NCERT

2. At the outset, Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor of the Secretariat welcomed the new Chairman and briefed the Committee about his background.

3. ***.

4. ***.

5. The Chairman then welcomed the Secretary of the Department of Higher Education, Chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC), Chairman, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and other officials of the Ministry and briefly informed them about the agenda of the meeting and asked them to make their submissions regarding the preparedness of the Ministry in the Covid-19 situation.

6. The Secretary, Department of Higher Education informed the Committee about the major steps taken by the Ministry to address the challenges to the higher education sector in view of the pandemic and roadmap ahead which included (i) Fight Corona IDEathon, organized by AICTE (ii) making arrangements for the digital content of 40 percent of courses (iii) constitution of Committee of Universities to communicate with the universities (iv) Google and

Facebook accounts to reach out to students (v) imparting courses through SWAYAM PRABHA TV channels (viii) digitalisation of engineering courses by IITs (ix) launching 'MANODARPAN' for providing psychosocial support for Mental Health & Well being of the students during the COVID outbreak and beyond etc.

7. Chairman AICTE, informed that they had conducted online HACKATHON with 10,000 students at 40 virtual centres, conducted 85 Faculty Training Programmes with the help of Webex, Zoom and Google platforms where 18 thousand faculties had been trained.

8. Chairman, UGC, informed that they had made arrangements of e-content and online resources *via* INFLIBNET in collaboration with various universities. He also mentioned about the Guru-Dakshta Programme for Faculty Development and SATAT developed by UGC, eVIDYA programme launched under 'Aatma Nirbhar Bharat' to meet the Pandemic crisis.

9. Thereafter the Members sought clarifications regarding (i) Practical Classes (ii) availability of online material and digital resources in remote / rural areas (iii) Mid-day Meal Scheme (iv) Post-Matric Scholarships (v) shortage of faculties (vi) learning assessment and outcome measurement (vi) Teacher Education etc. The Secretary, Department of Higher Education along with the Chairmen UGC and AICTE briefly replied to the Members queries.

(The Witnesses then withdrew)

10. Thereafter the Chairman welcomed the Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy, Chairman, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Director, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) along with other officers of the Department and briefly informed them about the agenda of the meeting and asked them to apprise the Committee about the preparedness of the Department in the Covid-19 situation.

11. The Secretary then informed the Committee about the major steps taken by the Department to address the challenges to the school education sector in view of the pandemic and roadmap ahead which included (i) opening of online education through DIKSHA platform (ii) MANODARPAN for the mental well-being of the children (iii) National Tele-Counselling Centre (iv) Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of Mid-day Meal (v) energising of textbooks etc. Further, Director NCERT mentioned about their initiatives namely NROER, ePathshala, DIKSHA, Swayam Prabha Channel, SAHYOG etc.

12. The Members thereafter raised some queries viz. (i) virtual laboratories and online classes (ii) regulating the private coaching centres (iii) universal access to school education at pre-school and at secondary school level (iv) digital resources to poor students (v) facilities available to students of weaker sections (vi) availability of study materials etc.

13. The Secretary and the Chairman, CBSE and Director NCERT briefly replied to the Members queries.

14. The Chairman then congratulated both the Departments for their efforts to maintain the continuity of education despite the unprecedented situation created due to the pandemic and requested them to send written replies on the unanswered issues raised by the Members and concluded the proceedings of the Committee.

15. The meeting then adjourned at 5.11 p.m.

V

FIFTH MEETING

The Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports met at 2.00 P.M. on Tuesday, the 12th January, 2021 in Committee Room 'A', Ground Floor, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabuddhe - *Chairman*

RAJYA SABHA

2. Shri Bhubaneswar Kalita
3. Shri Vishambhar Prasad Nishad
4. Dr. Sasmit Patra
5. Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia
6. Shri Gopal Narayan Singh
7. Shri Akhilesh Prasad Singh

LOK SABHA

8. Shri Rajendra Agarwal
9. Dr. Dhal Singh Bisen
10. Shri Santokh Singh Chaudhary
11. Shri Sangamlal Kadedin Gupta
12. Dr. Jaisiddeshwar Shivacharya Mahaswamiji
13. Shri Anubhav Mohanty
14. Shri Balak Nath
15. Shri Chandeshwar Prasad
16. Shri T. N. Prathapan
17. Shri Jagannath Sarkar
18. Shri Dharambir Singh

SECRETARIAT

Dr. Shikha Darbari, Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor
Shri Rajiva Srivastava, Director

Shri Ashok K. Sahoo, Director
Shri Sammer Kapoor, Deputy Secretary
Shri Mohit Misra, Committee Officer
Smt. Suman Khurana, Committee Officer

Witnesses

**Ministry of Education, Department of School Education and
Literacy**

1. Ms. Anita Karwal, Secretary
2. Ms. L.S. Changsan, Joint Secretary
3. Shri R.C. Meena, Joint Secretary
4. Shri Maneesh Garg, Joint Secretary
5. Shri Santosh Kumar Yadav, Joint Secretary
6. Shri Vipin Kumar, Joint Secretary
7. Shri Manoj Ahuja, Chairman, CBSE
8. Prof. Sridhar Srivastava, Director, NCERT
9. Ms. Nidhi Pandey, Commissioner, KVS
10. Shri Vinayak Garg, Commissioner, NVS
11. Shri B. Kalayan Chakravorthy, Principal Secretary, Department of Education, State of Assam
12. Ms. Rashmi Arun Shami, Principal Secretary, Department of Education, State of Madhya Pradesh
13. Shri Lokesh Jatav, Rajya Shiksha Kendra, Department of Education, State of Madhya Pradesh
14. Shri Vijay Kiran Anand, State Project Director, Department of Education, State of Uttar Pradesh
15. Ms. Aryaka Akhoury, Special Secretary, Secondary Education, Department of Education, State of Uttar Pradesh
16. Shri B.K. Singh, Education Secretary, Department of Education, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Members present in the sitting and apprised them that Reports of the Committee on action taken on its

recommendations contained in its Reports on Demand for Grants (2020-21) of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women and Child Development are under preparation would be placed before the Committee for its consideration and adoption in its sitting to be held on 21st January, 2021. He also informed that the Parliament Diary Page under Facebook and Twitter handle have been created to give wide publicity to the Subjects/Bills under consideration of the Committee for soliciting suggestions from stakeholders and Civil Society Organizations. Referring to agenda of the sitting he mentioned that Secretary, School Education and Literacy along with senior officers from CBSE, NCERT, KVS and NVS has been invited to brief the Committee about steps and measures taken to bridge the learning gap caused due to COVID induced lockdown and plan for reopening schools and assessment of online and offline education offered to the students during lockdown period. The Education Secretaries of States of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Assam and Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir have also been invited to share their experience of reopening of schools in their respective States and Union Territory.

3. Commencing her deposition, the Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy informed the Committee that several guidelines/advisories including those relating to learning enhancement, reopening of schools have been issued to States and UTs. A few States/UTs, namely, Assam and UT of Lakshadweep and Jammu and Kashmir have reopened all Classes from Grade 1 to 12 in staggered manner with proper COVID protocol. She added that her Department has been in constant touch with other States about reopening of schools, however, it largely depends on the situation at local level. Thereafter, she referred to alternative academic calendar developed by NCERT to maintain continuity of learning of students during lockdown period; in that context she also mentioned about Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) platform for online education;

PRAGYATA guidelines on digital education, Swayam Prabha TV Channel, Podcast, Community Radio, digital content for visually and hearing impaired students developed with co-ordination of NIOS, NCERT and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to complement the learning gap, etc. Teachers have also been provided requisite training to adapt the online teaching methodology by making shift from traditional chalk and board method. The next National Achievement Survey (NAS) would be conducted in November, 2021 in order to assess the learning gap occasioned due to COVID induced lockdown and bridge course as learning enhancement would also be developed to compensate the learning loss among the students.

4. The Chairman, CBSE while supplementing the Secretary, mentioned that the CBSE has reduced syllabus in 24,000 odd CBSE affiliated schools by 30 percent and some of the States have also reduced syllabus to the extent of 40 percent as a measure to adjust the learning loss caused due to shut down.

5. Several queries on the issues relating to the estimation of extent of learning loss; adaptation of teachers to digital training; limited outreach of educational TV Channels and community radios due to lack of awareness; stress on eyes and minds of children caused by digital learning; shortage of teachers particularly in the subjects of Mathematics, English and Science in schools; increased incidence of child labour and child marriage due to closure of schools; delay in availability of dry ration under Mid-day Meal to students; increased drop-out rates; convening offline pre-board examination for Classes 10 and 12; taking back NVS and KVS schools used as quarantine centers from the district administration for the purpose of reopening of those schools; lack of digital infrastructure and lack of access to internet in rural areas; digital education widening digital divide, etc. were posed during the sitting.

6. The Secretary, while responding to some of those queries submitted that assessment of learning loss could be ascertained after upcoming National

Achievement Survey to be conducted in November, 2021 or after reopening of schools once pandemic situation reaches new normal. The Secretary added that bridge course has been under preparation to compensate the learning loss caused during pandemic. About bridging digital divide and lack of internet connectivity, she submitted that Wi-Fi connectivity at panchayat level under Bharat Net Project has been under implementation by Department of Telecommunication which would take a couple of years to reach to all Panchayats. The Joint Secretary concerned apprised the Committee that Direct Money Transfer of the cooking cost of the Midday Meal was made to the passbook of the students during the pandemic

(Officers except Secretary of the Department of School Education and Literacy withdrew).

7. Thereafter, Education Secretary of States of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir shared their experiences about reopening of schools in those States. The Secretary, Department of Education of State of Assam apprised the Committee that schools from primary to secondary levels in the State of Assam have been reopened with proper COVID protocol. During lockdown period local TV Channels and Whatsapp were used to disseminate contents of learning to ensure continuity in learning amongst the students. Thereafter, Education Secretary, State of Madhya Pradesh apprised the Committee that many teachers held Mohalla Classes; some of the teachers even took blackboard on their motorcycle to the villages to teach students where digital learning was not possible due to weak connectivity; even loudspeakers from the office of Panchayat and Mandir were also used for dissemination of instructions by the teachers to the students in the villages. She referred to digital teacher training programme (CM-RISE Programme) along with NISHTHA Module of NCERT used to build capacities of their teachers. In Madhya Pradesh schools from

Classes 1 to 8 were closed till March, 2021 with general promotion to everyone whereas Classes 9 to 12 have been reopened with COVID protocol. In Uttar Pradesh schools from Classes 9 to 12 have been reopened. They apprised the Committee that subject-specific videos and modules on teacher professional development prepared by private bodies was also shared with latter's partnership. They referred to initiatives of digital learning interventions taken during lock down period including shiksha chaupals, E-vidya channel, etc. for continuity of education during lockdown and students have been encouraged from Class 9 to 12 to come to school for clearing their doubts with the consent of the guardians. The migrant children were also enrolled in the schools under the programme for out of school children enrolment. The percentage of attendance has been increased from 17 % in September, 2020 to 40 % in January, 2021. The representatives of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir then informed that schools have been reopened and board examinations have already been held and the result of that exam would be available by 15th February, 2021 which would indicate the extent of learning loss. He also submitted that in addition to digital learning, community classes were held in open grounds of schools for dissemination of knowledge. Special enrollment drive in Kashmir Zone was conducted by the administration of Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed positive outcome. Queries relating to incidence of COVID cases amongst the students after reopening was posed and responded to.

8. The verbatim record of proceedings of the meeting was kept.
9. The meeting adjourned at 4.41 P.M.

XIV

FOURTEENTH MEETING

The Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports met at 11.00 A.M. on Monday, the 21st June, 2021 in Committee Room No. 4, Parliament House Annexe Extension Building, New Delhi.

MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabuddhe - *Chairman*

RAJYA SABHA

2. Ms. Arpita Ghosh
3. Shri Vishambhar Prasad Nishad
4. Dr. Sasmit Patra
5. Shri Gopal Narayan Singh

LOK SABHA

6. Shri Rajendra Agrawal
7. Shri Durai Murugan Kathir Anand
8. Dr. Dhal Singh Bisen
9. Shri Santokh Singh Chaudhary
10. Shri Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu
11. Dr. Jaisiddeshwar Shivacharya Mahaswamiji
12. Shri Asit Kumar Mal
13. Shri Balak Nath
14. Shri T.N. Prathapan
15. Shri Ratansinh Magansinh Rathod
16. Shri Jagannath Sarkar
17. Dr. Arvind Kumar Sharma
18. Shri Dharambir Singh
19. Shri S. Venkatesan

SECRETARIAT

Dr. Shikha Darbari, Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor

Ms. Chitra. G, Deputy Secretary

Shri K. Sudhir Kumar, Deputy Director (LARRDIS)

Shri Mohit Misra, Committee Officer(in-situ)

Witnesses

Department of School Education and Literacy

1. Ms. Anita Karwal, Secretary
2. Ms. L.S. Changsan, Joint Secretary
3. Shri R.C. Meena, Joint Secretary
4. Shri Maneesh Garg, Joint Secretary
5. Shri Santosh Kumar Yadav, Joint Secretary

National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

6. Prof. Sridhar Srivastava, Director

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)

7. Shri Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Additional Secretary

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)

8. Shri Manoj Ahuja, Chairperson

Prasar Bharati

9. Shri S.S. Vempati, CEO

Doordarshan

10. Shri Mayank Kumar Agrawal, Director-General

All India Radio

11. Shri N. Venudhar Reddy, Director-General, NSD

Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications & Geo- Informatics (BISAG-N), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology

12. Shri T.P. Singh, Director-General

Public Policy Research Centre, New Delhi

13. Dr. Chandni Sengupta
14. Ms. Deepa Kaushik

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting of the Committee and informed them about the sad and untimely demise of Shri Ashok Kumar Sahoo, Director of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, who had served the Committee for a brief period. The Committee also observed silence for a minute as a mark of respect to the departed soul. The Chairman briefed the Committee about the agenda for the day's meeting, *namely*, examination of the subjects "Reforms in the Contents and Design of School Textbooks" in the forenoon Session and "Plans for bridging the learning gap caused due to school lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic as well as Review of online and offline instructions and examination and plans for reopening schools" in the afternoon Session.

3. ***

4. ***

5. ***

6. ***

7. In the afternoon Session, the Committee took up the subject "Plans for bridging the learning gap caused due to school lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic as well as Review of online and offline instructions and examination and plans for reopening schools" for consideration. The Chairman welcomed the Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy along with team of officers; Director, NCERT; Chairman, CBSE; CEO, Prasar Bharati; representatives of Doordarshan and All India Radio and Director-General, BISAG-N to the meeting. He informed that in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic, schools could not be reopened as expected and the Committee is concerned especially about the functioning of the Government schools and the vast majority of under privileged students who do not have access or have limited access to the digital platforms and would like to be updated on the various steps and measures taken by the Department to address the various

challenges and by the Prasar Bharati to provide educational coverage to the students, particularly in the remotest and inaccessible parts of the country with limited or no internet connectivity.

8. Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy apprised the Committee of the online and offline strategies adopted by the Department and the States to ensure continued education of children through online classes, teacher/volunteer visits, mohalla/motorcycle classes, worksheets etc. and stated that a survey has also been conducted on various parameters like, availability of digital devices, out-of-school children, drop-out rates, requirements of special need children and girl children, teacher capacity building etc. Thereafter, Joint Secretary of the Department gave a presentation. The Chairman raised some queries, such as, whether any impact assessment study of the various initiatives taken by the Department and States has been conducted and if so, the results thereof, especially the methods/initiatives that are actually delivering and helping in achieving the objective of overcoming the learning loss; whether any guidelines had been issued to parents to monitor the screen time, sitting posture etc. of children during online study; and whether any risk assessment study was conducted in schools which re-opened after the first wave of the pandemic and whether any documentation has been made about the best practices and creative and innovative methods adopted by schools, teachers etc., particularly in tribal and rural areas, to ensure continued education during the pandemic, which could be adopted by others as well. Members also raised several queries and suggestions regarding the awareness, impact in terms of practical application and effectiveness of the guidelines issued by the Department on schools in urban and rural areas; whether admissions and upkeep of COVID orphans is being considered through Kendriya Vidyalayas, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas or through Central Government Institutions; creation of a centralized search platform on an algorithm with ability to draw from the vast e-resources of educational content; whether surveys have been conducted on the reach of

digital devices, radio, TV etc.; drop-out rates; impact of inaccessibility of digital devices on students and teachers; learning gap assessment and outcomes; reopening of schools and vaccination of all students; conduct of future examinations; provision of digital devices to students belonging to marginalized and economically weaker section of society; mental well-being of students through online participatory arts/music/dance/theatre workshops; and network connectivity issues, especially in rural areas etc.

9. Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy while responding to some of the queries raised, agreed that there has been learning loss due to the pandemic and that a National Achievement Survey will be undertaken district-wise in all schools to assess it accurately. Amongst best practices and initiatives, she highlighted the Online Students Registry in Gujarat, which conducts tests for students weekly or fortnightly, analyses the marks and then recommends remediation, which the Department has recommended in other States as well; the Diksha Platform, a one-stop-source for all e-learning content, available in 32 languages, including all languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and some local languages like Bundelkhandi, Chhattisgarhi etc.; Joint Committee of the Department with Ministry of Telecommunications and CSC E-Governance Ltd. to ensure internet connectivity through Bharatnet in 2.5 lakh villages and the schools there; funding for ICT, such as, smart rooms, virtual studios, digital devices like pre-loaded tablets; survey of out-of-school children and their integration into mainstream etc.

10. CEO, Prasar Bharati then gave a presentation on the measures and initiatives taken by them to ensure continued education during the pandemic. Chairman and Members raised some points and gave suggestions on impact assessment study of the usage of Doordarshan, community radio etc. on education and its cost-effectiveness; availability of State-wise viewership details of various programmes of Swayam Prabha; use of EDUSAT (satellite)

technology for telecast of educational programmes in areas with no internet connectivity and also in view of the higher outreach of Doordarshan vis-à-vis Cable TV and lower expenditure involved on account of Doordarshan being free-to-air etc. Director-General, BISAG explained that telecast of educational content through satellite TV on DTH channels of Doordarshan is the most cost effective technology to ensure wider outreach in all States. He also informed the Committee that this system could be developed further across the country to provide not only education, but teacher training, entertainment and public awareness programmes. The Committee decided to explore the possibility and feasibility of satellite TV for educational purpose and to have an interaction with Prasar Bharati, ISRO, some States and BISAG in its next meeting for collating further inputs thereon.

11. The verbatim record of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee was kept.

12. The meeting adjourned at 05.08 P.M.

XVI

SIXTEENTH MEETING

The Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports met at 02.10 P.M. on Friday, the 2nd July, 2021 in Main Committee Room, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabuddhe - *Chairman*

RAJYA SABHA

2. Shri Vishambhar Prasad Nishad
3. Dr. Sasmit Patra
4. Shri Gopal Narayan Singh
5. Shri Akhilesh Prasad Singh
6. Shri Bhubaneswar Kalita
7. Ms. Arpita Ghosh

LOK SABHA

8. Shri Rajendra Agrawal
9. Dr. Dhal Singh Bisen
10. Shri Santokh Singh Chaudhary
11. Shri Asit Kumar Mal
12. Shri Ratansinh Magansinh Rathod
13. Shri Chandeshwar Prasad
14. Shri T.N. Prathapan
15. Shri Dharambir Singh
16. Dr. Arvind Kumar Sharma
17. Shri S. Venkatesan

SECRETARIAT

Dr. Shikha Darbari, Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor

Ms. Chitra. G, Deputy Secretary

Shri K. Sudhir Kumar, Deputy Director (LARRDIS)

Shri Mohit Misra, Committee Officer

Witnesses

Department of School Education and Literacy

1. Ms. Anita Karwal, Secretary
2. Shri Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Additional Secretary
3. Shri R.C. Meena, Joint Secretary
4. Shri Maneesh Garg, Joint Secretary
5. Shri Santosh Kumar Yadav, Joint Secretary

National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

6. Prof. Sridhar Srivastava, Director

National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)

7. Prof. Saroj Sharma, Chairperson

National Bal Bhavan (NBB)

8. Shri Mahesh Gupta, Deputy Director

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)

9. Shri Manoj Ahuja, Chairperson

Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications & Geo-Informatics (BISAG-N), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology

10. Shri T.P. Singh, Director-General

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

11. Shri Hanumantharayappa, Associate Director

Prasar Bharati

12. Shri S.S. Vempati, CEO
13. Shri Sunil, Additional Director-General
14. Ms. Anuradha Agarwal, Additional Director-General

Doordarshan

15. Shri Mayank Kumar Agrawal, Director-General

All India Radio

16. Shri N. Venudhar Reddy, Director-General

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

17. Shri Sanjiv Shankar, Joint Secretary (Broadcasting)

Education Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh

18. Shri Sachin Rana, Special Secretary

Education Department, Government of Bihar

19. Shri Asangba Chuba Ao, Secretary

Education Department, Government of Maharashtra

20. Shri Vikas Garad, Joint Director

Education Department, Government of Telangana

21. Shrimati A. Devasena, Director

Education Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh

22. Shri Vijay Kiran Anand, Project Director

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting of the Committee and apprised them of the arrangements made for the study visit of the Committee to Leh and Srinagar from 5th to 8th July, 2021. He then drew attention of the Members to the previous meetings held by the Committee on the subject "Plans for bridging the learning gap caused by COVID-19 pandemic as well as review of online and offline instructions and examinations and plans for re-opening of schools" wherein the Committee had held detailed consultations with the Department of School Education & Literacy, representatives of the Education Departments of some States, *namely*, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and the U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir as well as of NCERT and CBSE. He also referred to the recently published Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) Report regarding the learning

loss which occurred during the COVID pandemic period, wherein it has been stated that only 23% students had access to smart phones, which highlighted the digital divide in the country. He stated that this gap in the reach of online education could be covered by the use of satellite television, since Doordarshan has outreach in each and every corner of the country including the far-flung areas. He apprised the Members that already a presentation on the effective use of satellite TV for telecast of educational channels was done by BISAG-N, a public sector organization under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, whose services have been utilized in an effective manner by the Governments of Gujarat and Odisha and could be utilized by other States for the benefit of the students. He also informed the Members that representatives from the Education Departments of six States have also been invited to the meeting for hearing their views on the learning loss in their States due to the pandemic and the various steps and measures taken by them in ensuring continued education during the period and to impress upon their State Governments to utilize satellite TV as a cost effective and viable mechanism to ensure reach of online education to the remotest corners of their States and thus to bridge the digital divide. Thereafter, the Chairman, welcomed Shri T.P. Singh, Director-General, BISAG-N, Secretary of the Department of School Education & Literacy along with her team, representatives of the Indian Space Research Organisation, Prasar Bharati, Doordarshan, All India Radio and the Education Departments of the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh to the meeting. He also informed the Committee that though representatives of the Education Department of the State of Gujarat had also been called for the meeting, the Secretary had sought exemption in writing due to pressing COVID management duties assigned to him.

3. The Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy apprised the Committee of the efforts made by the Department in ensuring continued education through television network. She informed that after a discussion with

BISAG, a letter had been issued on 13th September, 2017 to all States regarding the possibility of expanding the channels for the purpose of education along with guidelines on the utilization of DTH TV channels, which were prepared in consultation with BISAG's team. Seven States, *namely*, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Tripura had sought time on *Swayam Prabha*, a satellite channel with 4 hours relay time which was approved and after the pandemic struck, the Department started follow-up with the States as to the measures taken by them for TV broadcast. She informed that many States have dedicated Doordarshan channels, like, *Vidya Varadhi* in Andhra Pradesh, which broadcasts for classes 1 to 10 daily; *Arun Prabha* in Arunachal Pradesh on which there is a 40 minute relay on 6 days a week for classes 6 to 8; *Mera Doordarshan Mera Vidyalay* in Bihar, with 5 hour slots for classes 1 to 12; *Vande Gujarat* and DD Girnar which broadcasts lessons for all classes and *Gyanshala* programme in Himachal Pradesh. Thus, most of the States have taken slots on Doordarshan on a daily basis, class-wise and 'One Class, One TV Channel', which is also on *Swayam Prabha* with one dedicated channel for all classes. Most of these lessons are being prepared in the studios of NCERT, both in its Regional Institutes of education and in the Headquarters. On a query of the Chairman as to whether satellite TV is more economical, the Secretary explained that it would be economically viable in North-East and in hilly and remote areas like Uttarakhand and Coorg side with low connectivity, whereas it might not be so in the plains with the possibility of service through telecom. Already, 4 Crore families have free dish, which is the antenna required for Swayam Prabha channels, which is quite a good outreach.

4. Thereafter, Director-General, BISAG did a presentation on the "Universalization of Quality Education through DTH TV", after which Members raised certain queries, as follows:-

- (i) whether any impact assessment study regarding the viewership and outreach of satellite TV and the number of beneficiaries has been conducted;
- (ii) data of drop-out children during the pandemic and the measures taken to bring them back to the mainstream of education, particularly in Bihar;
- (iii) how to create school like ambience at home and ensure learning outcomes of students, particularly those with low IQs and slow grasping power and retention through the system of online education;
- (iv) steps for continuing physical education and sports training;
- (v) the digital divide between rural and urban areas;
- (v) whether need based assessment in terms of technological efficiency, access, reach and affordability of telecom-enabled education *vis-à-vis* satellite-enabled education as well as comparative study of the cost-effectiveness of both modes has been conducted and if so, the details thereof; and
- (vi) the deployment of technology in case of satellite-enabled education as well as its cost component - both one time and recurring, including purchase and repair costs of TV sets.

Members also voiced their concerns regarding the continuous learning loss for more than 2 academic years caused due to the pandemic and their adverse effects on the future generation of the country; the effectiveness of online education versus offline education in terms of general lack of interest, concentration and sincerity on the part of both students and teachers, where students lack the facility of direct and immediate interaction with the teachers and its impact on the understanding levels and learning outcomes; non-availability of television sets in many economically backward households in

villages combined with the problem of load shedding which is likely to deprive students of the benefits of education through television channels; and contradictory situation engendered to shutting down of infrastructure such as the State Institutes of Educational Technology *vis-a-vis* development of content and studios for online education. The majority of the Members were of the view that online education is no substitute to offline education and that it is a grim fact that despite various measures to ensure continued education, learning loss and gap has occurred in the past few years. Some Members gave certain suggestions, such as, calling students shift-wise to schools with observance of physical distancing for taking online classes through TV channels under the inspection and guidance of teachers; provision of android smart phones to students with the examination fees collected from them in view of non-conduct of examinations for classes 10 and 12; need for developing community radio as an effective tool for school education and to ensure its outreach to socially and economically weaker sections of society by enhancing its frequency; perfection of the evaluation system/assessment criteria developed by CBSE in view of non-conduct of examinations to classes 10th and 12th on account of the pandemic by removing dualities to ensure overall satisfaction of students, parents and teachers; and opening of schools for conduct of physical classes with adequate safety precautions and with observance of COVID protocol for limited hours with shift system and in small batches, so as to minimize further learning loss. Members also suggested that the Committee should recommend to the Government to make arrangements for the vaccination of children below the age of 18 years on priority basis, so that offline education can be recommenced at the earliest and that the system of both offline and online classes should be balanced and continued along with creation of a value system, so as to be well prepared for situations like the pandemic in future.

5. The Special Secretary, Education Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh briefed the Committee about the various initiatives taken by them for

ensuring continued education during the pandemic, such as, Radio School daily for students of primary classes 1 to 5; classes for students of 6th to 8th standard on Arun Prabha, the local Doordarshan channel; Swayam Prabha for classes 9 to 12; use of 'Edusat' and creation of one e-learning studio; arrangement of district-wise extra classes; worksheet distribution; recorded lectures on Youtube; creation of WhatsApp groups for interaction; personal interaction of teachers with students etc. He apprised the Committee that Arunachal Pradesh being a hilly terrain and a tribal State with 26 major multi-lingual tribes and 2 lakh students from classes 1 to 12, physical connectivity and digital connectivity both are problem areas compounded with non-availability of TV sets, satellite dishes and power. A survey by District Education Officers, through the medium of Google form indicated that students of primary classes and of classes 6 to 8 are the most affected due to the pandemic on account of lack of resources. He also highlighted that they are planning to install TV sets in schools through VSAT communication technology provided by a company named Valuable Edutainment, which enables the students to interact and clear doubts during live classes and the teachers to observe each student and maintain discipline as during physical/offline class. He further informed the Committee that it has been decided to commence physical classes on alternate days for 9th to 12th standard from 16th July, 2021 onwards, in view of the fall in COVID cases. However, for classes 1 to 8 online classes will continue.

6. The Secretary, Education Department, Government of Bihar apprised the Committee of the interventions done by them, *namely*, creation of online portal "e-LOTS (e-Library of Teachers and Students)" with teaching-learning tools and other resources, which is downloadable on android phones through Google Play; broadcast of "*Mera Doordarshan, Mera Vidyalay*" programme through DD Bihar daily for 5 hours; 'Mobile Learning Center', a mobile van with TV, video games, videos, illustrated posters, toys etc. to bridge the digital divide in rural areas and to reach out to the most socially and economically backward

areas of the State; Catch up Course designed to bridge the learning gap/loss due to first wave of COVID in which extensive training was provided to teachers on a State and district-wise level; special enrolment drive named 'Pravesh Utsav' etc. He also informed that examinations had already been conducted for classes 10 and 12 in Bihar and students of classes 9 and 11, were promoted without examination and assessment. He further informed that the Government is planning to open schools from mid-July in a phase-wise manner with proper precautionary measures, as done in January after the first wave. On a query by the Chairman, the Secretary informed that though they have not considered using satellite-based education as educational programmes are being broadcast through Doordarshan, the same would be examined to assess its feasibility.

7. The Joint Director, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra commenced his briefing with a mention of the teacher training course launched *via* satellite in that State which had benefitted almost 4 lakh teachers and stated that Maharashtra had carried out almost 26 initiatives, out of which some prominent ones are daily study campaign on DIKSHA portal through which live classes are conducted via online, TV programmes on DD Sahyadri, daily classes for 6 hours on *Swayam Prabha* channel for classes 1 to 12, bridge course for the previous academic year to bridge the learning gap, *Shalebaherchi Shala* related to Art and Craft learning and WhatsApp Chat Bot weekly assessment in which 82 lakh students, out of the total 2.15 Crore students in the State participated. He also informed that for generating educational content for TV, they have 4 recording studios each in Mumbai Corporation and Pune and 2 being constructed in Gadchiroli and Nandurbar.

8. Director, Education Department, Government of Telangana apprised the Committee that they had first done an e-resource mapping to find out the access of each child in the State and it was found that at least 95% students had access to at least one or the other digital device and the most accessible was TV. She also stated that the State has its own TSAT channel with studios and recording

facilities, which relays content daily for 7 hours in addition to 3 hour classes for 1st to 10th standards on Doordarshan in 3 languages, *namely*, Urdu, Telugu and English. The content is generated by their own SIET, which has been strengthened with the induction of more funds and have generated around 1500 videos for all classes in their own recording facilities with the available teacher resources. Other initiatives includes the TSAT App launched for use of teachers and students; Read Along App and videos for smaller children; preparatory webinars and video conferences for stakeholders, *namely*, teachers, parents, children and officials, District level Education Monitoring Committee headed by the Collector to address issues of telecast schedules, power cuts etc; live phone-in programmes for clearing doubts of students; publishing of numbers of groups of teachers and subject experts; and WhatsApp Chat Bot assessment.

9. The Project Director, Education Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh briefed the Committee that continued education was ensured through e-pathshala, slots on Doordarshan, Swayam Prabha channels, Diksha Portal and App. He stated that Swayam Prabha being a DTH channel was cost intensive, as it required set top box, dish antenna and TV set. Another initiative was WhatsApp groups wherein each syllabus was mapped, based on which SCERT created good content, which was forwarded on a weekly basis for personalized learning. In order to ensure community participation, mohalla classes and volunteers to promote peer learning were organized. Bridge courses to make up for learning loss/gap, home visits and interactions with teachers and efforts to track 5½ lakh out-of-school children identified are also ongoing. He further informed the Committee that Doordarshan is the main online educational tool as radio is not very cost effective.

10. CEO, Prasar Bharati informed the Committee that several States had approached them to reactivate broadcast of educational classes on account of the fairly large value base of DD Free Dish DTH with 51 channels of BISAG and Doordarshan channels along with some private DTH operators, all available

on one single DTH platform. The only investment is a regular DTH set top box, regular DTH dish antennae and TV sets. He also informed that Andaman and Nicobar Islands is the only region not reachable in the country at present, due to non-extension of GSAT footprints there and the only issue being faced there is transponder capacity regarding which ISRO has assured them that by the year 2022, they are planning to launch another satellite in the same orbital slot which will assure more satellite capacity. He further apprised the Committee that the number of TV households in the country is about 20 Crore, which is a fairly large base and this platform was being utilized in view of its potential reach to many households. He also stated that Prasar Bharati has been working with CDAC and IIT Kanpur to bring in technology with automated way of content delivery for visually and hearing impaired. He further informed that 19 cities have digital terrestrial using roof-top based antenna assisted technology, in which 6 channels are available to be utilized for educational purpose.

11. Thereafter, Associate Director, ISRO made a presentation on the "Technological support for the universalization of education through satellite/DTH platforms". The Chairman appreciated the existing arrangements and new initiatives being made by Doordarshan and ISRO for the propagation of education. The Chairman then raised some queries as to what the Ministry is doing to ensure continued education to Divyang children, especially the deaf and dumb in this situation as well as for children with low IQ and slow learners. He also asked the Ministry to clarify whether satellite technology can be utilized to impart education in all Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalayas through a dedicated channel and whether a permanent system can be devised wherein a big TV or screen can be set up in an open area in each village of the country to conduct classes and run schools in such situations like the ongoing pandemic, natural disasters etc. with the available technology and resources. The Chairman also asked the Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy whether the available satellite

technology and Doordarshan is being officially used under the initiative of the Department for ensuring continued education in a mission mode throughout the country and whether all State Governments are using it to the maximum extent possible.

12. In response thereto, the Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy informed the Committee that guidelines had been issued for Divyang children and Children with Special Needs which includes children with low IQ, slow learners and children with learning disabilities. She also informed that the States had come up with interesting innovative ideas, like home-based learning in Andhra Pradesh with special educators, who were imparted online training as to how to reach out to the children and students and aid in their learning and outreach programmes, special educators and special kits in other States. She also stated that the 12 Swayam Prabha channels, which are BISAG channels, airing NCERT content in both Hindi and English are directly applicable and are already being used by CBSE, KVS and JNV schools. She further clarified that the Department in consultation with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had issued a letter to the States to utilize the TV sets in community halls of villages, Panchayat halls as well as the TV and computer available in every village under the CSC e-governance scheme for common viewing and educational purposes once broadcast starts. Panchayats themselves have offered their TV sets for the said purpose. The Secretary apprised the Committee that the Department is planning to conduct a district-wise National Achievement Survey to assess the learning outcomes of students (girls, boys and children with learning disabilities) in classes 3, 5, 8 and 10 in Private, Government and Government-aided schools in the second week of November, 2021, the results of which will be released within 4 to 4½ weeks in the month of March, 2022. Nipun Bharat Mission on the foundational literacy and numeracy skill will also be launched on 5th of July, 2021 which would focus on the targets to be achieved by children in pre-school, first, second and third classes, the training to

be given to teachers, the role of States, DIET, SCERT and the responsibilities of parents, community and local self-government. In response to a query of the Chairman, the Secretary informed that the cost of running BISAG channels 24x7 would be 1.5 Crores, whereas the cost of running programmes daily for 4 hours for 25 days in a month would be approximately 1.5 Crores. Keeping in view the very large reach of BISAG, the Ministry has preferred it in comparison to other channels and therefore, the Ministry is looking into the possibility and feasibility of expanding this in consultation with the States. On another query of the Chairman as to what would be the fate of examinations in 2022 in case of third or fourth wave of the pandemic as predicted and whether the Department has made any preparations for dealing with such situations, the Secretary highlighted that some system is being chalked out with lot of consultations on how to conduct internal assessments with objectivity and how CBSE would intervene for the midterm examinations so that in case it is impossible to conduct final examinations, they will be able to extrapolate those marks and that the same would be announced by the end of July.

13. The Chairman directed Prasar Bharati to give due publicity to the Swayam Prabha and other educational channels being telecast by Doordarshan and create awareness amongst general public to the existence of a cost effective online system of education so as to increase the number of beneficiaries.

14. The verbatim record of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee was kept.

15. The meeting adjourned at 04.26 P.M.

XVII

SEVENTEENTH MEETING

The Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports met at 03.00 P.M. on Friday, the 23rd July, 2021 in Main Committee Room, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabuddhe - *Chairman*

RAJYA SABHA

2. Shri. Bhubaneswar Kalita
3. Dr. Sasmit Patra
4. Shri Akhilesh Prasad Singh

LOK SABHA

5. Shri Rajendra Agrawal
6. Dr. Dhal Singh Bisen
7. Shri Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu
8. Shri Sadashiv Kisan Lokhande
9. Shri Asit Kumar Mal
10. Shri Anubhav Mohanty
11. Shri Balak Nath
12. Shri Chandeshwar Prasad
13. Shri Ratansinh Magansinh Rathod
14. Shri Jagannath Sarkar
15. Shri Dharambir Singh
16. Shri Ashok Kumar Yadav

SECRETARIAT

Dr. Shikha Darbari, Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor

Shri K. Sudhakaran, Director

Smt. Oindrila Roy, Deputy Secretary

Shri Arun Bakshi, Under Secretary

Shri K. Sudhir Kumar, Deputy Director (LARRDIS)

Shri Mohit Misra, Committee Officer

Smt. Suman Khurana, Committee Officer

Witnesses

(I) SAMVIT RESEARCH FOUNDATION, BANGALORE

1. Shri Gajanan Londhe, Executive Director
2. Dr. V. Ramanathan

(II) 1. Prof. Nachiketa Tiwari, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

2. Dr. Perna Malhotra

(III) UNICEF INDIA

1. Mr. Terry Durnnian, Chief of Education
2. Ms. Sunisha Ahuja, Education Specialist
3. Ms. Zafrin Chowdhury, Chief of Communication, Advocacy and Partnerships
4. Ms. Amrita Singh, Communication Officer

(IV) Shri Hukmdev Narayan Yadav, Ex-MP, Lok Sabha

(V) DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION AND LITERACY

1. Shri Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Additional Secretary
2. Smt. L.S. Changsan, Joint Secretary
3. Shri Santosh Kumar Yadav, Joint Secretary
4. Prof. Sridhar Srivastava, Director, NCERT
5. Shri Pankaj Tripathi, Secretary, CBSE

At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Members to the meeting and congratulated the Committee for the having the maximum attendance in its meetings and also for the longest average duration of its meetings. He further informed that this was graciously acknowledged by the Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha in his opening remarks on the first day of the Monsoon Session, 2021.

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9. ***

(the witnesses then withdrew)

10. The Chairman then welcomed the representatives of UNICEF, India to the meeting and informed the Committee about the pioneering work done by UNICEF in India and other countries so that a more balanced view can be taken on the effect of COVID-19 pandemic and school education.

11. The representatives of UNICEF, India briefed the Committee about the studies conducted by them on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on school education. It was informed that as per the study conducted by UNICEF, 1.5 million schools / 1.37 million Anganwadi Centres closed, disrupting education of over 286 million students; only 24% households have access to the internet; 61.8% households own a smartphone; 40% of students had not accessed any remote learning; rural students were 10% less likely to have accessed remote learning than urban peers; and children faced psychosocial challenges due to school closures which is affecting learning.

12. It was further informed that school closures have put children's learning, nutrition, mental health, and overall development at risk and some students, particularly girls, are at risk of never returning to school. In fact, long closure of schools will lead to children not returning to schools and has the potential for children getting engaged in labour and early marriage. Therefore, the immediate need is to bring children back to school.

13. The Committee was also briefed about certain best practices adopted by different countries which may be adopted in India with suitable modifications like proactive planning; clear protocols for re-opening and closing; flexibility in

local decision making simplifying curriculum; adapting academic calendar, and supporting teachers, principals, & school staff on remediation and to manage new psychosocial needs.

14. Concluding the meeting, the Chairman thanked the Members and the participants for their contribution and expressed the hope that the reports on the subjects would be drafted at the earliest for the consideration of the Committee in its next meeting.

15. The verbatim record of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee was kept.

16. The meeting adjourned at 05.50 P.M.