

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper2- governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education.

Crucial Imperative: The Significance of Measuring Digital Literacy in India

The provided information highlights both positive strides and challenges in youth education in India, particularly in the context of digital literacy. Here's a summary of the key points:

Current Condition of Youth Education in India:

1. **Increased Elementary Education Enrollment:** The percentage of children aged 6-14 not in school has significantly dropped to 1.6% in 2022, indicating substantial progress in elementary education.
2. **Slower Secondary School Transition:** Despite the launch of the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan in 2009, the transition to secondary education has been gradual, with a decline in out-of-school children aged 15-16 from 16.1% in 2010 to 7.5% in 2022.
3. **COVID-19 Impact:** The pandemic led to extended school closures, particularly affecting primary-level education.

Importance of Measuring Digital Literacy:

1. **Supporting Educational Goals:** The rise in smartphone usage emphasizes the need to measure digital literacy to ensure that digital tools effectively support education.
2. **Economic Development:** Understanding digital literacy is crucial for realizing the potential of the digital dividend in economic growth.
3. **Pandemic Recovery:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the necessity of digital literacy for uninterrupted learning, making its measurement vital for educational resilience.
4. **Future Workforce Preparedness:** Accurate measurement of digital literacy is key to preparing India's youth for a digital economy, ensuring they can contribute productively.

Initiatives to Enhance Digital Literacy in India:

1. **National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) and Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA) (2014-2016):** Aimed at training 52.50 lakh candidates in digital literacy.
2. **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) (Since 2017):** Targeted to impart digital literacy in rural India, covering 6 crore households.

Way Forward:

1. **Maximizing Demographic and Digital Dividends:** India must focus on enhancing digital literacy and accessibility, especially given the significant rise in smartphone usage in rural areas.
2. **Leveraging Technology for Education:** With increased smartphone usage, utilizing digital platforms for educational resources and skills development is crucial.
3. **Continued Support for Youth Aspirations:** Providing sustained support for the aspirations of the youth will be essential in driving economic participation and growth.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring a smooth transition to secondary education, and enhancing digital literacy are key components of fostering a robust education system in India, preparing the youth for the challenges and opportunities of the digital era.

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper2- governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Promoting Public Health: The Imperative of Taxing High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) Foods

HFSS stands for High Fat, Sugar, and Salt, and it is a classification used to identify foods that are high in these particular components. The definition you provided aligns with the idea that HFSS foods are characterized by low amounts of essential nutrients like proteins, vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber, while being rich in fat, salt, and sugar, leading to negative health impacts if consumed regularly or in large amounts.

Taxing HFSS foods is considered a public health strategy to address the rising health risks associated with the consumption of such foods. Here are some reasons why taxing HFSS foods is deemed necessary:

1. **Health Risks:** HFSS foods are linked to health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure. The increase in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) due to poor diets is a significant concern.
2. **Economic Burden:** The economic costs associated with health issues related to poor diets, such as obesity, can be substantial. The financial burden on the healthcare system and the economy as a whole is a compelling reason to address unhealthy dietary patterns.
3. **Growing Consumption:** The consumption of HFSS foods is on the rise globally, leading to an increase in health-related issues. This trend is particularly alarming in countries like India, where the sales of snacks and soft drinks have tripled.

Several initiatives have been taken globally and in India to address the issue of HFSS foods through taxation:

Global Initiatives:

- Over 60 countries have implemented taxes on sugary drinks, and 16 countries tax other HFSS foods.
- Countries like Denmark, France, Hungary, Mexico, South Africa, the UK, and the US have specific HFSS food taxes.
- Colombia recently introduced a law to tax ultra-processed foods.

Indian Initiatives:

- Kerala introduced a 'fat tax' in 2016, which later merged into India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017.
- The current GST system in India taxes ultra-processed foods uniformly, without differentiation based on their health impacts.

Recommendations for addressing the issue include:

1. Clearly defining HFSS foods to ensure transparency.
2. Implementing a nutrient-based tax model that levies higher taxes on products high in fat, sugar, and salt, and lower taxes on healthier alternatives.
3. Ensuring that HFSS taxes are non-regressive and do not disproportionately affect lower-income groups.

The goal is not just to generate revenue but to improve public health by encouraging the food industry to produce healthier options and motivating consumers to make better dietary choices. The emphasis is on creating a tax system that is both effective in reducing the consumption of unhealthy foods and fair in its impact on different socioeconomic groups.

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper 2 – Polity – Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Examining the Recent Mass Suspension of MPs: Rules, Consequences, and Potential Reforms

The rules governing the suspension of Members of Parliament (MPs) and the recent mass suspension of MPs have raised important questions about parliamentary proceedings and democratic principles. Here's a breakdown of the key aspects:

Rules on Suspension of MPs:

- Suspension of MPs is governed by parliamentary rules, and the government holds significant authority in conducting proceedings.

Reasons for Recent Mass Suspension:

- Opposition MPs demanded a discussion on a security breach, leading to disruptions.
- Disruptions in Parliament have become a political strategy over time.

Consequences of Mass Suspension:

- Reduced representation for the constituents of the suspended MPs.
- Criticism for disproportionality and potential undermining of democratic principles.
- Sets a negative precedent for legislatures, surpassing historical suspension records.

Interventions by the Court:

- Judicial actions are rare due to the principle of separation of powers.
- Article 122 prevents courts from questioning parliamentary proceedings.
- Exceptions include judicial intervention for procedural violations or constitutional rights infringements.
- The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Case (2021) serves as an example of the court's role in ensuring procedural correctness and protecting constitutional principles.

Recommendations for Addressing the Issue:

- Conduct open investigations into security breaches and encourage transparent discussions in Parliament.
- Reform parliamentary procedures to reflect the collaborative essence of a modern democratic legislature.
- Address deliberate disruptions through structured debates and improved conflict resolution methods.
- Enhance inclusivity and balance in the legislative process by allowing the Opposition a significant role in agenda-setting.

This analysis emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to parliamentary proceedings, ensuring both effective governance and the preservation of democratic values.