

Standing Committee Report Summary

Learning gaps due to school lockdown and review of instruction, exams, and plans for reopening schools

- The Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports (Chair: Dr. Vinay Sahasrabudde) submitted its report on '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' on August 6, 2021. Key observations and recommendations made by the Committee include:
 - **Re-opening guidelines:** The Committee noted that school closures had negatively impacted students, family structures, and learning outcomes (in reading, writing, and arithmetic). To enable opening of schools, it recommended: (i) initiating vaccination for students, teachers, and allied staff, (ii) adhering to COVID-19 protocols by holding classes in shifts to maintain social distancing, (iii) providing face masks and sanitisers to students, especially those from economically weaker sections, (iv) ensuring strict enforcement of these by measures by undertaking, and (v) providing incentives (like study material, food, and digital devices) to re-enrol dropped out students. random inspections.
 - **Bridging learning gaps:** To effectively bridge gaps in student learning outcomes, it recommended: (i) undertaking assessment of learning outcomes to understand learning gaps, (ii) developing expert-led bridge courses and accelerated learning programmes to address learning gaps (iii) instituting personalised remedial classes for students with learning gaps, (iv) encouraging parental engagement and collaborative learning through peers, (v) creating communication channels (mandatory Helpline Centres, and WhatsApp groups) for clearing doubts.
 - **Remote learning:** The Committee noted that digital mode of education would continue to be the 'new normal' even after the pandemic. It recommended: (i) increasing investment in electrical (including non-conventional sources), communication (satellite TV and radio), and digital infrastructure to enable access to digital education, (ii) distributing subsidised internet connections and content pre-loaded devices to students from backward sections of society, and (iii) developing tools for monitoring students' learning progress and interactive learning (through virtual reality and augmented reality).
- **Accessible educational content:** To ensure that students understand the educational content being provided, the Committee recommended: (i) developing an integrated learning management system to track availability and delivery of online educational modules (including virtual lab simulations) across languages, and (ii) creating special content and textbooks for differently abled children through audiobooks and using Sign Language in regional languages
- **Teaching:** The Committee recommended training teachers in: (i) creating digital content through modern tools, (ii) using digital devices to deliver online content, and (iii) interacting with students in the online mode. Additionally, teachers from backward areas may be given incentives (including internet packages and free devices) to shift to digital education. It recommended assessing teachers on their ability to handle audio-visual tools.
- **Blended education:** The Committee recommended developing a long-term strategy to ensure continued access to digital education. It also suggested remodelling education to incorporate greater use of digital education. A school functioning on the hybrid model may be established in each district as a case study for other schools by October 2021.
- **Examination:** The Committee recommended establishing a uniform system of continuous assessments, over and above the board exams. To do this, it suggested using workbooks and topic-wise exercises. Further, it recommended using experiential learning, and alternative evaluations based on presentations and other methods.

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