Annual Decision Making/Teaching Case Study Competition-2022

Digital India-A Case Study of Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMDISHA)

Part I

Introduction

Recognizing the fact that there is a lack of digital access and literacy, especially in the rural areas, resulted in the deprivation of a large number of people in the country from exercising the benefits provided by the Government of India. So, the Government of India launched the 'digital India" campaign in order to transform the country into a digitally empowered society and economy by way of bridging the digital divide.

Digital India is a flagship programme of Government of India launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 1 July 2015. The objective of this programme is to ensure the services offered by the government to be made available to the citizens electronically. Methodologically, this work can be done by improving online infrastructure, by increasing internet connectivity and making the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. The focus of this programme is on connecting rural areas with high speed internet networks which comprises three core components: the development of secure and stable digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally and universal digital literacy. Digital India not only renders benefits electronically but also provides benefits of other important Government of India schemes such as BharatNet, Make in India, Startup India, Standup India,

Industrial corridors, Bharatmala and Sagarmala. Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL): an entity of Government of India executes the BharatNet project is the custodian of Digital India programme.

Looking at the policy behind introduction of Digital India programme, it is found that the programme has an objective of connecting rural areas with high-speed internet networks and also improving digital literacy. The policy behind this programme is inclusive growth in areas of electronic services, products, manufacturing and job opportunities. It is centred on three key areas: digital infrastructure as a utility to every citizen, governance and services on demand and digital empowerment of citizens.

Objectives of Digital India

The motto of Digital India Mission is 'Power to Empower'. There are three core components to the Digital India initiative: digital infrastructure creation, digital delivery of services and digital literacy.

The major objectives of this initiative are listed below:

- To provide high-speed internet in all gram panchayats.
- To provide easy access to Common Service Centre (CSC) in all the locality.
- Digital India is an initiative that combines a large number of ideas and thoughts into a single, comprehensive vision so that each of them is seen as part of a larger goal.
- The Digital India Programme also focuses on restructuring many existing schemes that can be implemented in a synchronized manner.

Key facilities provided through digital India initiatives are: Bharat, digital locker, e-health, e-sign, e-shopping and national scholarship portal. For realization of these services, the Government of India launched Botnet cleaning centres for bringing all the front-end government services online. Further, MyGov.in is a platform to share inputs and ideas on matters of policy and governance. It is a platform for citizen engagement in governance, through a "Discuss", "Do" and "Disseminate" approach.

Digital India Initiatives and Its Impact

There are several initiatives which have been taken under Digital India Mission and its impact is listed below:

Sl. No.	Initiative	Description	Current Status
1.	Aadhar	It was launched in 2009 to provide every Indian resident with a unique identity or Aadhar number	According to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), 129 crore residents of India possess Aadhar as of April 2021.
2.	DigiLocker	It was launched in 2015 to create a cloud-based platform to issue, exchange and verify essential documents or certificates	There are 60.09 million registered DigiLocker used in India as of April 2021.

3.	MyGov	It was launched in 2014 to bring the government closed to the people by providing an interface (online forum) for exchange of ideas	There are >171.51 lakh registered members on MyGov as of April 2021.
4.	BharatNet	It was introduced in 2012 (renamed in 2015) to connect all 250000 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country and provide 100 mbps internet connectivity	There were 146872 service ready GPs as of November 2020.
5.	Smart Cities	It was initiated in 2015 to transform all Indian cities into smart cities by leveraging various technologies	100 cities have been selected for area-based and pan-city development between 2019 and 2023.
6.	Common Service Centres (CSCs)	Under the Digital India programme, CSC 2.0 aims to establish a self-sustaining network of 2.5 lakh CSC centres in Gram Panchayats. It was implemented by Deity (Department of Electronics and Information Technology).	There were 255798 active CSC IDs and 687 districts had CSCs in India as of 2020.

7.	Digitisation of Post Offices	Under the Digital India programme, the government aims to convert 150000 post offices into multiservice centres	As of February 2020, India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) enabled 1.36 lakh post offices to provide banking services, including access of Aadhar-linked bank account, at the customer's doorstep, resulted in 2.5x increase in rural banking infrastructure.
8.	Universal Access to Mobile	It was launched to provide mobile connectivity to >55600 villages in India.	As of 2020, 572551 villages were provided with mobile and internet connectivity
9.	Public Wi-Fi Hotspots	It was introduced to develop public Wi-Fi hotspots to allow people to access internet without relying on mobile data	India's public Wi-Fi hotspots were estimated to increase from 0.3 million in 2019 to 2.1 million in 2021, according to digiAnalysis
10.	India Stack	India Stack aims to develop payment-enabled applications, using Aadhar as the base for authentication	The government uses JAM's (Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile) direct benefit transfers for 317 services. In Financial Year 21, it conducted 2.6 billion transactions.

			transferring>US$46 billion to beneficiaries
11.	Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMDISHA)	It was launched in 2017 to make 6 crore rural citizens digitally literate by March 2020, achieving 40% rural households by targeting one member from every eligible household	As of July 2019, 23097324 beneficiaries were registered while 13491306 beneficiaries were certified
12.	e-Health	It was introduced to provide timely and effective healthcare services such as online registrations, payments, reports and claims.	As of February 2021, 420 e-Hospitals were established across India
13.	e-education	It was started to provide online education in remote and urban areas using technologies such as smartphones, apps and internet services	In May 2020, the government launched PMeVidya a programme for multimode access to digital/online education. In Financial Year 21, NISHTHA-Phase II was launched at the secondary level to customise modules for online delivery. According to the Union Budget, 2021-22, under the NISHTHA training

			programme, 5.6 million teachers will be trained in Financial Year 22.

With regard to Digital India Mission, Union Budget 2021-22 highlighted on a proposal to develop a world-class fintech hub in Gandhinagar's Gujarat international Finance Tec-City(GIFT), allocated funds of Rs.1.15 lakh crore to digitise the Indian railways, enabled funds of Rs.9000 crore to compensate service providers for creating and augmenting their telecom infrastructure and allowed all voters to access their 'Digital voter ID card' by linking their mobile number with the election commission's website from February 01, 2021.

Looking at the results of these efforts, it is found that there is a rising use of unified payments interface (UPIs) which strongly reveal that more and more people in the country are adopting a digital lifestyle. Furthermore, the number of transactions being processed via UPIs are reached from 1.25 billion in March 2020 to 2.73 billion (>2x) in March 2021. This data further reveals that initiatives taken by the government under 'Digital India' has helped the country achieve significant digital progress.

Review of Literature

There are usual challenges in any government programme of scale of India comprising economic costs, illiteracy etc., lack of digital literacy, attitude of citizens along with government departments and personnel resisting change, redressal of digital grievances and broad range of cybercrimes. In addition, there emerges various policy challenges facing Digital

India. In this regard, there is need of continued support from the central as well as state governments in order to achieve the targets of Digital India (Beriya, 2021).

India being a diverse country due to varied profiles and preferences of its citizens, digital divide is also prevalent in a complex manner. There are different factors responsible for it comprising age, literacy, awareness, demography, disability, gender, connectivity, infrastructure, etc. For the redressal of these issues, it is essential to actively participate in the process of governance. Looking at different reasons responsible for active participation in the process of governance, digital literacy is an effective way of participation in the process of governance (Malhotra, 2018).

Government of India has carried out three impact assessment studies for PMDISHA scheme by Council for Social Development (CSD), New Delhi, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi and Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi in the financial year 2020-21. The IIPA made a comprehensive and methodological evaluation of the scheme and concluded that PMDISHA as a digital literacy programme plays an indispensable part in not only bridging the digital gap in the country but also transforming it into a knowledge economy and society. This is evident by the number of enrolments to the tune of more than 6.15 crore under the PMDISHA scheme (PIB, 20 July 2022).

Looking at the benefits accrued from the PMDISHA scheme, it is found that the scheme not only made base for digital education but also reduced poverty and improved economic conditions of the citizens of India. The scheme also contributed in rural development of the country. The scheme thus improved digital literacy status and found effective in developing the standard and quality of education system of the country (Vimla, 2020).

With regard to the percentage of Indian population/households which can be categorized as digitally literate and the overall importance of digital literacy in India, the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology informed as under:

According to Census of India, 2011, approximately 68.84% of population resides in rural India which comes to approximately 83 crore. The number of rural household is indicated as 17 crore. The census data also indicates that merely around 5.2% of rural households possess a computer set. According to 71st NSSO Survey on Education 2014, merely around 6% of rural households and 29% urban households are having computer sets. Furthermore, 27% of Indian households (16% rural and 49% urban) had access to internet facility in the survey year 2014. Among persons of age group of 14-29 years in rural India, approximately 18% were able to operate a computer. Similarly for the age group of 30-45 years, the percentage drops to 4% merely. Further, for the age group of 46-60 years, the percentage is just more than 1%. This highlights that approximately 16 crore rural households are not having computers and a significant number of these households are likely to be digitally illiterate. "

According to National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 71st round report on social consumption relating to education, the proportion of households in the country having computers during 2014 was around 14 %(merely 6% in rural households and 29% in urban households possessed computers). (Standing Committee Report, 2018-19).

Challenges of Digital India

The major focus of the government of India through the Digital India Mission is to connect the rural areas of the country with high-speed internet networks. In the realization of this dream, there are several challenges which are listed below:

- The daily internet speed, as well as the Wi-Fi hotspots, are slow in comparison to other developed countries.
- Most of the small and medium scale industry has to struggle a lot for adapting to the new modern technology.
- Limited capability of entry-level smartphones for smooth internet access.
- Lack of skilled manpower in the field of digital technology.
- To look for about one million cybersecurity experts to check and monitor the growing menace of digital crime.
- Lack of user education.

Though, there are several challenges in the successful implementation of Digital India Mission but most significant challenge is level of digital literacy prevalent in the country. So, the case study focuses on the achievements of the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMDISHA) scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMDISHA)

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMDISHA) was initiated with an outlay of Rs.2351.38 crore with the objective of making 6 crore rural households digitally literate reaching around 40% of rural households by covering one member from every eligible household by March 2020.

PMGDisha logo

Eligibility Criteria for PMDISHA

- The beneficiary should be digitally illiterate
- Only one person per eligible household is considered for training (all such households where none of the family member is digitally literate is considered as eligible household under the scheme).
- Age group 14-60 years.

The objective of the scheme was to achieve the target by 31st March 2019 but later on it was extended for another one year till 31st March 2020. The Scheme is being implemented by the CSC e-governance Services India Limited through the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) of the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology with active support of state governments and Union Territories. In order to provide better representation, due preference was given to SC, ST, BPL, Minorities, Women and differently abled persons. In order to ensure even geographical coverage across the country, a Gram Panchayat centric approach was adopted with targets being assigned and monitored for each of the 2.50 lakh Gram Panchayats.

Objectives

- To understand the Digital India Mission

- To review the progress made under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMDISHA)

Methodology

The case study makes use of secondary literature collected from various research papers, reports, magazines, journals and websites. The methodology used in writing this chapter is review of literature and content analysis.

Part II

The PMDISHA Scheme covers candidates in the age group of 14-60 years. Therefore, approximately 5.66 crore candidates have been enrolled and 4.81 crore candidates have completed the training out of which 3.54 crore candidates have been certified under the Scheme. This data further reveals that a total of 0.85 crore candidates could not still complete training. Among the total trained candidates, a total of 1.27 crore could not be certified as on 30.3.2022(PIB, GOI, 30.3.2022).

On reviewing the literature and also content analysis on the issue of achievement of abysmal targets, it is found that there are several reasons responsible for it comprising non availability of Aadhar in NPR states, non-availability of training centres/CSCs in some locations, lack of awareness among general public about digital literacy and its impact, issues of internet connectivity in rural areas, difficult to enter the non-accessible and sparsely populated areas, issues related to infrastructure and exclusion of urban agglomeration.

Executive Summary

PMDISHA is a unique effort of the Government of India towards bridging the digital divide in rural areas in the sense that it not only provides digital literacy but also provides chance of social inclusion through digital literacy programmes. Furthermore, it also empowers the citizens specially residing in rural areas. India lives in villages so providing digital literacy to the masses in rural areas is an important effort for the realization of egalitarian society. The success of Digital India Mission will only be complete on the success of PMDISHA keeping the target of the providing digital literacy in rural areas.

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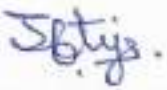

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