



State schools need our urgent attention

- Close to four million students shifted to State-run schools in 2020-21, according to the Union ministry of education's Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) report.
- The report shows that the bulk of the drop in the enrolment from pre-primary to Class 12 was found in the early classes (enrolment in pre-primary and first grade fell by 2.9 million and 1.9 million respectively) and that nearly 75% of schools did not have internet facilities and 59% had no computer facilities.

Pandemic and School education:

1. When read together with the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey and Azim Premji University's field studies, it becomes clear that financial distress precipitated by the pandemic, the inability of many schools to conduct online classes, and migration caused by lockdowns have ravaged the education sector.
2. Before Covid, stakeholders were concerned with what they called a "crisis of learning". This has been exacerbated by Covid, but the UDISE+ data shines a light on what can be done.

Way Forward:

1. For one, invest in government schools, in terms of teachers and infrastructure such as computers and internet connectivity. This also means a different training mode for teachers and the development of educational material that can be used for online classes.
2. Many parents may still not have the wherewithal to enroll their children in pre-primary classes. These children must be identified and brought back to classrooms.
3. A significant challenge is the learning loss due to the pandemic and the extended closure of schools. While schools have now reopened, the focus should be on reversing the learning loss and ensuring that any future infection spikes don't harm learning levels the same way.