Annual Status of Education Report

Why in news?

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Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2017 has been brought out by NGO Pratham.

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What is the report on?

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- Previous ASERs focused on 6-14 year olds and have reached almost all rural districts to make estimates representative at district, State, and national levels.
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- However, ASER 2017 focuses on an older age group i.e. youth who are 14 to 18 years old.
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- Also, it was conducted in 28 districts spread across 24 States and generated only district level estimates.
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- The survey looks 'Beyond Basics', exploring a wider set of domains beyond foundational reading and arithmetic abilities of youth.
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What are the highlights?

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- **Enrolment** - In 14-18 age group, around 14% are not currently enrolled in school or college.
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- However, this number varies a lot with age, ranging from around 5% at age 14 to around 30% at age 18.
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- The low 5% at age 14 is a positive outcome of the compulsory education for

6-14 years under the RTE.
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- The enrolment ratios for boys and girls are almost the same at 14 years.
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- However, at 18 years 32% of girls are not enrolled, as against 28% for boys.
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- There are also discrete differences among States on the number of youth who are not enrolled in appropriate levels of schooling.
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- **Knowledge** - 14% of rural youth in the age group of 14-18 failed to identify the map of India.
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- A worrying 36% of those surveyed did not know that Delhi is the capital of India.
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- 60-80% of them cannot even tell the time correctly.
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- About 25% of this age group still cannot read basic texts fluently in their own language.
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- 53% of all 14 year-olds in the sample can read English sentences.
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- More than half in the age group struggle with simple division (3 digit by 1 digit) problems.
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- **Besides,** the report points to a massive digital divide, with poor access to facilities.
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- In this again, girls were worse off in terms of access to computers and the Internet.
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What does it imply?

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- Almost 10% of India's population falls in the 14-18 group.
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- Thus the 14% of the **un-enrolled** population in this translates to a total of 125 million young Indians out of formal education system.
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- The enrolment scenario highlights **gender discrimination**, with the number of girls falling sharply with age.

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- India's predominantly youth population is seen as a **demographic dividend.**
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- But the education scenario fall short of capitalising on this factor and deriving an economic dividend.
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- As, a large number of Indian youths **lack even basic employability**.
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- Successive studies point to progress in raw enrolment of children in school, with **poor achievement on learning outcomes**.
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What should be done?

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- Policy makers must acknowledge that all expenditure on good education is bound to have a multiplier effect on productivity.
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- The right to free and compulsory education must be extended to the 14-18 age group as well, beyond the 6 to 14 at present.
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- Guaranteed inclusion will empower those in the 14-18 age group and help them acquire finishing education.
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- This is so vital for their participation in the workforce, as India lacks trained manpower to boost its manufacturing capabilities.
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- Equipping them with the skills, especially job-oriented vocational capabilities is essential.
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- Learning deficits highlight the need for pedagogic tools that synchronise knowledge with lived realities.
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- Scaling up access to digital facilities by bringing all children under the umbrella of a school, college or training institution is desirable.
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Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

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