Decline in Enrollment of school students

Mains: GS II – *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

Why in News?

Recently the data released by the ministry of environment revealed that the students aged 3 to 11 falls by 25 lakh.

What is the issue?

- **Decline in enrollment** – Total school enrolment, from Class 1-12, drops by 11 lakh, an all-time low since 2018-19.
- Total enrolment of students aged between 3 and 11 in schools across India encompassing anganwadi, pre-school and Class 1 to 5 dropped by nearly 25 lakh in 2024-25 as compared to 2023-24.
- This data was given by the latest Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) released by the Ministry of Education (MoE)
- The UDISE+ 2023-24 report said that 12.09 crore students enrolled in foundational and preparatory stages, which declined to 11.84 crore students, a dip of 24.93 lakh, in 2024-25.
- The latest data show that the total school enrolment number (from Class 1-12) has fallen by 11 lakh students, from 24.8 crore (2023-24) to 24.69 crore (2024-25), an all-time low since 2018-19.
- These include students in government, government-aided, private and other schools

What are the causes pointed out in the report?

- **Falling birth rates** – The decline in the enrolment numbers may largely be attributed to demographic shifts with falling birth rates in primary school-age population.
- Except Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Meghalaya, all States have achieved fertility rates below replacement levels.
- Fewer children being born may be leading to lower enrollment.
- **India's total fertility rate (TFR)** – It dropped to 1.91 per woman by 2021, below the replacement level of 2.1, according to the latest National Family Health Survey 2021 data which is available.

***TFR** indicates average children born to a woman.*

Replacement level *is the level of fertility at which a population replaces itself.*

- **Preference for private institution** – In addition, the decline could also be explained in terms of the presence of the children in pre-primary standalone private institutions, a senior official in MoE
- For calculating parameters such as Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) – the total enrolment in a specific level of education and expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population – the 2011 Census data was used.
- Once the 2026 census data is available, a lot of these projections will be modified.
- In the 2012-13 report, the total number of students studying in India from Class 1 to 12 was reported to be 26.3 crore.
- In November 2022, when the 2021-22 data were released, the number hovered around 26 crore.
- The 2022-23 data pegged the enrolment at 25.18 crore, which further fell to 24.8 crore in 2023-24, a drop of 6% or 1.22 crore, when compared to 2021-22.
- MoE officials have given a disclaimer that the reports of 2022-23 and 2023-24 are not strictly comparable to previous years because of a change in the 'methodology' of data collection.

What are some positive outcomes?

- **Increased enrollment** – Officials pointed out that there was an increase of total enrolment of students by approximately 6 lakh between 2023-24 and 2024-25 in middle school (Class 6 to 8).
- While 6.31 crore students were accounted for in the 2023-24 report, this increased to 6.36 crore in 2024-25.
- **Total Enrolment in secondary section (Class 9 to 12)** – It saw an increase of roughly 8 lakh, a spike from 6.39 crore in 2023-24 to 6.48 crore in 2024-25.
- While the total enrolment has gone down, officials said that GER has improved.
- **At middle school level** – The GER rose from 89.5% in 2023-24 to 90.3% in 2024-25, while at secondary level it increased from 66.5% in 2023-24 to 68.5% in 2024-25.
- Also, dropout rates have reduced, meaning those joining school are not leaving as compared to earlier years.
- In preparatory stages, dropout rates have reduced from 3.7% to 2.3% between 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- During the same years in middle school, dropouts reduced from 5.2% to 3.5% and in secondary school from 10.9% to 8.2%.
- **Improved teacher-student ratio –** The Ministry said that while there was an increase in teacher student ratio between 2014-15 to 2024-25
    - **Foundational stage** – 1 teacher for every 15 students which has now improved to 1 teacher for every 10 students.
    - **Preparatory stage** - There was one teacher per 18 students which has improved to 1 teacher per 13 students in.
    - **Middle school** – This has improved from 1 teacher per 26 students to one teacher per 17 students.
    - **Secondary school** - From 1 teacher per 31 students to 1 teacher per 21

students, during the same duration.

Quick facts

UDISE+ Report
• **UDISE+ –** It is a report from Unified District Information System for Education Plus initiative • **Prepared by** – Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSE&L). • **Released by** – Ministry of Education (MoE). • **Based on** – Voluntary uploading of data by the schools having active UDISE+ codes. • It is one of the largest Management Information Systems (MIS). • **UDISE+ code** – It is allotted to a recognized school by the Central Government based on the recommendation of the respective State/UT Government where the school is located • **Aim** – To facilitate online uploading of data at school level with inbuilt validation checks and the subsequent data verification at the Block, District and State level. • It becomes truly "One Nation One Database". • Data – It captures data for more than 60 fields for each student. • **Child Aadhaar**– They were collected on the voluntarily basis. • **EID** – A separate unique Educational ID (EID) for every student created in the UDISE+ portal which covers each and every child across the country.

Reference

The Hindu| Decline in Enrollment

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