Making Public Education Inclusive

Syllabus: GS2/ Education

In Context
- Education is a human right & it ought to be accessible and affordable for all sections of society so that development is truly inclusive.

Inclusive Education
- The right to education aims to ensure everyone achieves their human right to **access quality education throughout life**.
- An inclusive approach to education means that **each individual's needs are taken into account** and that all learners **participate and achieve together**.
  - It acknowledges that all children **can learn** and that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
- **Special focus** is placed on learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement.

Public education in India
- **Challenge of Poor Quality:**
  - A study by IIM Ahmedabad's **Right to Education Resource Center** confirmed that parents lack trust in government schools due to poor quality of education and prefer to admit their children into private schools even if that means spending significantly more on tuition and other fees.
- **Odisha's revolutionary reforms:**
  - However, the Odisha government's revolutionary reforms in the State's public education sector through the **Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAV), the 'Mo School' Abhiyan, and the 5T- High School Transformation Programme** are on their way to making government schools better than private schools in all parameters — infrastructure, affordability and quality.
  - **Education World India School Rankings 2022-23** ranked the OAV in Polasara and two more OAVs among the top 10.

Odisha's model of Public Education
- **OAV Model:**
  - In order to address the struggle faced by students in securing admission to the Kendriya Vidyalaya schools **after the first standard**, the OAVs provide **admission at the secondary stage.**

- Odisha's OAV model aims to **bridge the rural-urban gap** by providing **accessible, qualitative and affordable English-medium education**.
- There are 315 English medium co-ed OAVs in all 314 blocks in rural and semi-urban areas (as of February 2023).
- They ensure **representation for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and female students** through reservations.
- OAVs also provide different types of coaching facilities to enable students crack national-level tests.
    - Twenty-four OAV students cracked the NEET exam in July 2023.
- OAVs have promoted social equity by providing a level-playing field to students from **rural and poor socio-economic backgrounds**.
- To **address pedagogical gaps**, the OAV model focuses on continuous teacher education programmes and maintains a **teacher-pupil ratio of 1:25.**
- It has also **leveraged digital technology** to enhance the accountability and transparency of the system.
- **The Enterprise Resource Planning system** and **OAV Sangathan website** help **track the academic and non-academic progress** of each child alongside monitoring the performance of each school, enabling timely strategic interventions.
- Plans are afoot to **transform the OAVs into scientifically upgraded Centres** of Excellence to foster an ecosystem of innovation and inquiry-driven learning.

- **Mo School Abhiyan**
    - In 2017, Odisha launched the Mo School Abhiyan, a one-of-its-kind initiative that **strives to motivate and mobilise the alumni community** to contribute towards revamping the government schools in Odisha.
    - The **School Adoption Programme (SAP)**, under the above programme, enables the alumni to make financial contributions to the schools adopted by them.

- **5T-High School Transformation Programme**
    - The 5T-High School Transformation Programme is rooted in the 5T concept of **transparency, technology, teamwork, and timeliness** leading to **transformation**.
    - Launched in 2021, the programme focuses on the adoption of educational technology, in the form of
        - smart and digital classrooms,
        - e-libraries,
        - modern science laboratories,
        - improved sanitation facilities, and
        - sports facilities in all high schools.
    - The programme also caters to the **needs of specially-abled children.**
        - It provides assistive devices and tailored teaching-learning materials for students with autism, cerebral palsy, and intellectual disabilities.

- ○ The government has also launched campaigns like **'Mo School Hockey Clubs' and 'Football for All'**, thus enabling holistic **development of students' personalities**.

Outcome of inclusivity
- This proactive approach to transforming the education system has led to an **unprecedented shift in enrolment patterns**.
  - ○ In 2019-20, private schools had 16,05,000 students; in 2021-22, this number dwindled to 14,62,000.
  - ○ Currently, 81% of students in the State are studying in government schools.
- The programme has led to a **higher enrolment of female students** (43,410) compared to males (30,949).
- Thirty-one **vulnerable children** who had been victims of child abuse, trafficking, child labour, and child marriage were rescued and prepared for the OAV entrance in 2021.

Suggestions &
- **Integrated approach:**
  - ○ To accelerate the progress towards achieving the 2030 agenda, the educational institutions and universities in India should work together.
- **Multidisciplinary outlook:**
  - ○ Universities should come out reinvigorated and play a part in the **education, innovation, culture, and civic life** of their local communities.
  - ○ Community health, energy-saving measures, efficient resource allocation, waste reduction, development of local skills, as well as the sharing of services, infrastructure, and facilities with other universities or external partners should become a culture in universities.
- **Role in socio-economic development:**
  - ○ It has been realised that education cannot work in isolation; rather it must be directly integrated with socio-economic development where each activity and transaction has meaningful and multiple impacts on SDGs.
  - ○ Every citizen must feel that schools & universities contribute directly to their well-being and nation-building.
- **Strengthening the research-teaching nexus:**
  - ○ Universities should strengthen the research-teaching nexus in university education.
  - ○ That way, students will become direct benefactors of the knowledge generated from research.
- **Adopting sustainability as a mantra:**
  - ○ It is high time that universities adopted sustainability as a mantra and incorporated SDGs into their institutional strategies, both in daily administration and in teaching and research.

Way ahead
- The education system needs an infusion of resources for multiple years and also a strengthened **focus on the needs of the poor and disadvantaged** children.

- The government, in collaboration with the industrial sector, must invest in **continuous skill enhancement and training** to bring our **teachers** on par with global standards.

Daily Mains Question
[Q] What are the challenges faced by Public education in India? Elucidate Odisha's revolutionary reforms in the Public education of the state.