



Digital Libraries in Indian Government Schools: Assessing Accessibility, Educational Impact, Challenges and Opportunities

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23036718>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Received: 14-07-2026

Accepted: 13-08-2026

Published: 25-09-2026

Keywords:

*Digital Libraries,
Government Schools,
Educational Technology,
Learning Outcomes and
Digital Divide*

ABSTRACT

The integration of digital libraries in government schools has emerged as a transformative tool in enhancing educational access and quality in India. This study aims to assess the availability of digital libraries in government schools across different regions, examining the infrastructural, technological, and policy-related challenges that affect their implementation. It further explores the impact of digital libraries on student learning outcomes, teacher engagement, and overall academic performance. While government initiatives such as the National Digital Library of India (NDLI) and ICT@Schools have sought to bridge the digital divide, disparities in infrastructure, internet connectivity, and teacher training continue to hinder effective utilization. Through a secondary data analysis, this study identifies key opportunities to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of digital libraries in government schools. The findings highlight the need for stronger policy interventions, increased investment in digital infrastructure, and capacity-building programs for teachers and students. Addressing these challenges can significantly contribute to the development of an

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Introduction

The integration of digital technologies in education has transformed learning experiences globally, with digital libraries playing a crucial role in enhancing accessibility to knowledge. In India, government schools, which cater to a significant portion of the student population, face challenges related to infrastructure, resources, and quality education delivery. Digital libraries have the potential to bridge these gaps by providing students and teachers with vast learning resources, interactive content, and research materials. However, disparities in digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and teacher preparedness remain significant barriers to the effective implementation of digital libraries in government schools (Agarwal & Mittal, 2021).

The Indian government has launched several initiatives, such as the National Digital Library of India (NDLI) and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) @ Schools scheme, to promote digital learning in schools. Despite these efforts, the extent of digital library adoption varies across states due to differences in funding, administrative support, and technological readiness (Ministry of Education, 2022). Understanding the availability and impact of digital libraries in government schools is essential for addressing these disparities and ensuring equitable access to educational resources.

This study aims to assess the current state of digital libraries in government schools in India, exploring their impact on student learning outcomes and teacher engagement. Additionally, it will identify the key challenges hindering their successful implementation and propose strategies to improve digital infrastructure, accessibility, and utilization. By analyzing the role of digital libraries in enhancing education, this research will contribute to policy recommendations for strengthening digital learning initiatives in government schools.

Review of Literature

The increasing adoption of digital technologies in education has transformed the way knowledge is accessed, shared, and utilized. Digital libraries, in particular, have become essential tools for enhancing educational opportunities, especially in resource-constrained environments like government schools in India. This section reviews existing literature on the availability, impact, challenges, and opportunities associated with digital libraries in government schools.



Digital libraries provide students and teachers with access to vast educational resources, including e-books, research papers, and multimedia content. Studies suggest that digital libraries enhance students' learning experiences by offering interactive and self-paced learning opportunities (Kumar & Sharma, 2020). Additionally, they facilitate information retrieval, knowledge dissemination, and academic collaboration (Bansal & Agarwal, 2019). The integration of digital libraries in schools has been linked to improved student engagement and academic performance, as they offer diverse learning materials beyond traditional textbooks (Mishra & Gupta, 2021).

The Indian government has launched several initiatives to promote digital learning, including the National Digital Library of India (NDLI), DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), and the ICT@Schools scheme (Ministry of Education, 2022). These programs aim to provide free access to digital resources and enhance digital literacy among students and teachers. However, despite these efforts, disparities in infrastructure, connectivity, and adoption persist, particularly in rural areas (Patel, 2021).

Several studies highlight infrastructural and technological barriers to the successful implementation of digital libraries in government schools. The lack of reliable internet connectivity, inadequate digital infrastructure, and limited access to computers hinder effective usage (Rana & Singh, 2020). Additionally, teachers' insufficient training in digital literacy and resistance to technology adoption further limit the potential of digital libraries (Saxena, 2019). Socio-economic factors, including affordability and access to devices, also contribute to digital inequalities among students (Chakraborty & Roy, 2021).

Research indicates that digital libraries have a positive impact on student learning outcomes and teacher engagement. Digital resources enhance subject comprehension, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students (Nair & Menon, 2020). Moreover, digital libraries support teachers in lesson planning, curriculum development, and professional growth by providing access to up-to-date pedagogical materials (Sharma, 2021). However, the effectiveness of digital libraries depends on their proper implementation, usability, and integration into the school curriculum.

To maximize the benefits of digital libraries, researchers suggest strengthening policy frameworks, improving digital infrastructure, and investing in teacher training programs (Joshi & Verma, 2022). Expanding mobile-based digital learning platforms and providing affordable internet access in rural areas can bridge the digital divide (Kaur, 2021). Additionally, collaborative efforts between government agencies, private organizations, and non-profits can enhance the reach and effectiveness of digital libraries in government schools.



The literature underscores the significance of digital libraries in transforming education in government schools. While digital libraries offer numerous advantages, their implementation is hindered by infrastructural, technological, and socio-economic barriers. Addressing these challenges through targeted policies, improved infrastructure, and teacher training initiatives can enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of digital libraries in India's government schools.

Objectives of the Study

To assess the availability and accessibility of digital libraries in government schools across different regions of India.

To evaluate the impact of digital libraries on student learning outcomes and teacher engagement.

To identify key infrastructural, technological, and policy-related challenges in implementing digital libraries in government schools.

To analyze the effectiveness of government initiatives and policies in promoting digital libraries in the education sector.

To provide recommendations for improving digital library infrastructure, accessibility, and utilization in government schools.

Research Methodology

This study employs a secondary data research methodology to assess the availability and impact of digital libraries in government schools across India. Data is collected from government reports, policy documents, official portals such as DIKSHA and NDLI, and existing academic literature. Statistical data from sources like the Ministry of Education, NCERT, and UDISE+ are analyzed to evaluate digital infrastructure, usage patterns, and educational outcomes. The methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of the current scenario, identifies key challenges, and explores opportunities for strengthening digital library implementation in the public education system.

Result and Discussion

The study reveals that while digital library initiatives like DIKSHA and NDLI have improved access to educational resources, their impact remains uneven due to infrastructural gaps, inconsistent internet connectivity, and limited digital literacy among teachers and students. Accessibility is notably better in urban schools compared to rural ones. Although digital libraries positively influence student engagement

and resource availability, their utilization in many government schools remains low. Inadequate funding, insufficient teacher training, and a lack of localized content further hinder effective implementation. Addressing these challenges through targeted investments, capacity-building, and stronger policy interventions is essential for inclusive and impactful digital learning.

Table – 1 Availability and Accessibility of Digital Libraries in Government Schools in India

Factor	Government Schools (%)	Private Schools (%)	Source
Schools with functional computers	44%	71%	India Spend (2023)
Schools with internet access	<50%	Majority	India Spend (2023)
Schools with functional electricity	77.34%	Higher availability	News click (2023)
Digital library accessibility (urban areas)	Higher	Higher	UDISE+ (2021-22)
Digital library accessibility (rural areas)	Lower	Moderate	UDISE+ (2021-22)
Major challenges	Infrastructure, funding, training gaps	Fewer challenges	Multiple sources

Source: author research

The data presented in Table 1 highlights significant disparities in the availability and accessibility of digital libraries between government and private schools in India. One of the key findings is that only 44% of government schools have functional computers, whereas private schools report a much higher availability of 71% (IndiaSpend, 2023). Similarly, internet access remains a major challenge for government schools, with less than 50% having connectivity, while private schools benefit from widespread internet availability. This lack of technological infrastructure directly affects the ability of students and teachers in government schools to utilize digital libraries effectively.

Electricity availability is another crucial factor influencing digital library accessibility. Approximately 77.34% of government schools have a functional electricity connection, but this figure, while relatively high, does not account for power supply inconsistencies that are common in rural areas (Newslick, 2023). The urban-rural divide is particularly evident in digital library accessibility. Urban government schools are

more likely to benefit from digital resources due to better infrastructure and policy support, whereas rural schools face significant barriers such as inadequate connectivity, limited financial resources, and lack of trained personnel (UDISE+, 2021-22).

Furthermore, government schools encounter major challenges in implementing digital libraries, including poor infrastructure, insufficient funding, and a lack of digital literacy training for teachers. In contrast, private schools face fewer difficulties as they have better access to financial resources, infrastructure, and trained educators. These disparities highlight the urgent need for policy interventions to bridge the digital divide. Improving digital infrastructure, expanding internet access, ensuring stable electricity supply, and enhancing teacher training programs are crucial steps to ensure equitable access to digital learning resources across all government schools in India. Without these measures, students in government schools will continue to face disadvantages in the digital education landscape.

Table – 2 Percentage of Government Schools with Digital Library Availability in India (2023-24)

State/UT	Percentage of Government Schools with Digital Library (2023-24)
Tamil Nadu	99.9%
Kerala	21.1%
Odisha	12.2%
Andhra Pradesh	9.5%
Maharashtra	8%
Sikkim	6.7%
Puducherry	6.4%
Ladakh	5%
Punjab	5.6%
Delhi	5%
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	2.4%
Tripura	2.9%
Lakshadweep	2.7%
Gujarat	1.5%
Jharkhand	1.5%
Karnataka	1.4%



Himachal Pradesh	1.4%
Telangana	1.1%
Uttar Pradesh	1%
Madhya Pradesh	0.9%
Chhattisgarh	0.9%
Rajasthan	0.8%
Jammu & Kashmir	0.8%
Bihar	0.6%
Uttarakhand	0.6%
Assam	0.6%
Nagaland	0.6%
Arunachal Pradesh	0.6%
Goa	0.6%
Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu	0.6%
Manipur	0.5%
West Bengal	0.2%
Meghalaya	0.3%
Mizoram	0.1%
India (Overall)	6.1%

Source: UDISE+ 2023-2024 report published by the Ministry of Education.

The data in Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the percentage of government schools with digital library availability across different states and Union Territories (UTs) in India for the academic year 2023-24. The figures reveal a stark disparity in digital library implementation across the country, with Tamil Nadu standing out as a significant outlier, boasting an impressive 99.9% of government schools equipped with digital libraries. This suggests a strong commitment to digital education in the state, likely driven by proactive government policies and infrastructure investment.

In contrast, Kerala, a state known for its high literacy rate and educational advancements, reports a relatively low 21.1% digital library availability, indicating potential gaps in integrating digital resources within government schools. Other states, such as Odisha (12.2%), Andhra Pradesh (9.5%), and Maharashtra (8%), have moderate levels of digital library penetration but still lag far behind Tamil Nadu.



The overall digital library availability in government schools across India stands at only 6.1%, highlighting the limited reach of digital educational resources nationwide. Several states, including Karnataka (1.4%), Uttar Pradesh (1%), Madhya Pradesh (0.9%), and Rajasthan (0.8%), report extremely low digital library accessibility. The northeastern states and smaller Union Territories, such as Nagaland (0.6%), Arunachal Pradesh (0.6%), and Mizoram (0.1%), also reflect minimal digital library presence, which can be attributed to inadequate infrastructure, lack of funding, and geographical challenges.

The data underscores the urgent need for policy interventions and targeted investments to bridge the digital divide in government schools. While Tamil Nadu serves as a model for digital library integration, other states must prioritize similar initiatives by improving internet connectivity, enhancing teacher training programs, and increasing budget allocations for digital infrastructure. Without significant efforts, students in most government schools will continue to face limitations in accessing quality digital learning resources, widening the educational inequality gap in the country.

The Impact of Digital Libraries on Student Learning Outcomes and Teacher Engagement in India

Digital libraries have emerged as transformative tools in India's educational landscape, particularly in the context of rapid digitization, the expansion of e-learning platforms, and national efforts to improve access to quality education. Platforms like the National Digital Library of India (NDLI), e-PG Pathshala, SWAYAM, and DIKSHA offer centralized, multilingual access to millions of academic resources for both students and educators.

These repositories are designed not only to address the traditional limitations of physical libraries such as accessibility, cost, and outdated materials but also to support inclusive and lifelong learning across geographies, disciplines, and educational levels.

Impact on Student Learning Outcomes

- **Access to Quality Educational Resources:** Digital libraries provide students with access to vast collections of textbooks, scholarly articles, video lectures, audio books, past question papers, and reference materials. This immediate access enhances their ability to explore, compare, and validate information essential for critical thinking and academic development.
- **Personalized and Self-Paced Learning:** Students can learn at their own pace, reviewing complex topics multiple times or accelerating through easier content. Adaptive platforms can track progress and recommend additional resources based on learning needs.



- **Bridging Geographical and Socioeconomic Gaps:** In remote and under-resourced regions, students often lack access to well-stocked libraries or updated textbooks. Digital libraries democratize learning by offering uniform access to high-quality materials regardless of location or background, helping to close the educational divide.
- **Supporting Multilingual and Inclusive Education:** Many digital libraries in India offer content in multiple Indian languages, catering to diverse linguistic groups and promoting regional education. This inclusivity enhances comprehension and engagement, especially for students from vernacular backgrounds.
- **Enhancing Academic Performance and Research Skills:** Access to a broader range of scholarly content encourages deeper research and inquiry. Students improve their information-seeking behaviors, academic writing, and presentation skills, leading to better performance in exams and projects.

Impact on Teacher Engagement

- **Professional Development and Lifelong Learning:** Teachers can access MOOCs, pedagogical training modules, and new curriculum materials via digital libraries. Platforms like SWAYAM and NISHTHA offer continuing education that enhances their teaching competence and subject knowledge.
- **Curriculum Enrichment:** Digital libraries supplement textbooks with up-to-date and diversified teaching resources. Teachers can integrate multimedia, simulations, and case studies into lesson plans to enhance classroom interaction and student engagement.
- **Collaboration and Peer Learning:** Teachers across regions can share lesson plans, teaching strategies, and content through collaborative portals. This fosters a professional community of practice and encourages innovation in teaching methodologies.
- **Evidence-Based Instruction:** Data analytics provided by some platforms allow teachers to monitor student progress, identify gaps in learning, and adapt instruction accordingly, thereby personalizing the learning experience even in group settings.

Digital libraries hold immense potential in shaping the future of education in India. By improving access to knowledge, supporting innovation in teaching, and bridging educational divides, they play a critical role in achieving the goals of equity, quality, and inclusivity as outlined in the NEP 2020. To realize this vision, focused investments in digital infrastructure, training, and policy support are essential.



Addressing Infrastructure, Technology, and Policy Gaps in Implementing Digital Libraries in Government Schools of India

1. Infrastructural Challenges

1.1 Poor Internet Connectivity

- Many government schools, especially in rural and remote areas, suffer from unreliable or no internet access.
- Lack of broadband infrastructure severely limits the ability to access digital library content.

1.2 Inadequate Power Supply

- Frequent power cuts or absence of electricity in tribal and rural schools hinder consistent use of digital resources.

1.3 Lack of ICT Infrastructure

- Shortage of basic digital devices like computers, tablets, projectors, and servers.
- Many schools lack dedicated computer labs or functional smart classrooms.

1.4 Inadequate Physical Space

- Overcrowded schools with limited classroom or library space may find it difficult to set up digital reading or learning zones.

2. Technological Challenges

2.1 Limited Availability of Devices

- Insufficient number of computers or tablets for students; often, a single device is shared among many users.

2.2 Low Digital Literacy

- Teachers and students often lack training in basic computer skills and digital navigation, making it difficult to utilize digital libraries effectively.

2.3 Compatibility and Maintenance Issues



- Outdated software, obsolete hardware, and lack of technical support lead to system failures or non-usage.
- Schools may not have access to technicians or funds for equipment repair.

2.4 Language and Content Accessibility

- A significant amount of digital content is available only in English or Hindi, excluding students who speak regional or tribal languages.
- Lack of age-appropriate, curriculum-aligned, and localized content reduces engagement.

3. Policy-Related Challenges

3.1 Fragmented Implementation

- Multiple overlapping schemes (e.g., ICT@Schools, Digital India, e-Pathshala) without coordination often lead to duplication and inefficiency.

3.2 Lack of Long-Term Funding

- Budgetary allocations are often one-time or short-term, affecting sustainability and upgradation of digital library infrastructure.

3.3 Weak Monitoring and Evaluation

- Absence of robust systems to track digital library usage, content quality, and learning outcomes.
- Limited accountability among implementing agencies.

3.4 Inadequate Teacher Training Policies

- Digital library use is not fully integrated into pre-service and in-service teacher training programs.
- Teachers may view digital tools as an add-on rather than an essential teaching aid.

3.5 Policy-Practice Gaps

- While national policies like NEP 2020 promote digital education, there's often a gap in ground-level implementation due to lack of capacity, leadership, or state-specific action plans.



To successfully implement digital libraries in government schools, India must address systemic infrastructural and technological deficiencies and adopt coherent, well-funded, and inclusive policy frameworks. Bridging the digital divide, investing in capacity-building, and ensuring local language content will be key to enabling equitable digital learning environments.

The Effectiveness of Government Initiatives and Policies in Promoting Digital Libraries in the Education Sector in India

In recent years, the Government of India has launched multiple initiatives to integrate digital libraries into the education system, aiming to democratize access to knowledge, bridge learning gaps, and modernize classroom teaching. These efforts are part of broader national programs like Digital India, Samagra Shiksha, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

1. Government Initiatives Promoting Digital Libraries

1.1 National Digital Library of India (NDLI)

- Developed by IIT Kharagpur under the Ministry of Education.
- Provides access to over 70 million learning resources in multiple languages.
- Accessible to students, teachers, researchers, and lifelong learners.

1.2 e-PG Pathshala

- An initiative of the UGC under the NMEICT.
- Offers high-quality postgraduate-level e-content in over 70 subjects.

1.3 DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing)

- A national platform launched by the Ministry of Education.
- Provides digital textbooks, lesson plans, and teaching content aligned with state curricula.

1.4 SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds)

- Offers free online courses from school to post-graduate level.
- Supports blended learning and teacher training.

1.5 e-Pathshala

- Joint initiative of NCERT and CIET.



- Provides access to NCERT textbooks, audio, video, and other learning resources for students, teachers, and parents.

2. Effectiveness of Government Policies and Programs

- **Wider Reach and Access:** Millions of students across India have accessed NDLI and DIKSHA, especially during the COVID-19 lockdowns.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Many digital platforms offer content aligned with CBSE and state board curricula.
- **Support for Multilingual Content:** Availability of content in regional languages promotes inclusivity.
- **Teacher Empowerment:** Platforms like DIKSHA and NISHTHA offer teacher training modules that boost digital pedagogy.

3. Policy Support and Alignment

- The NEP 2020 advocates for digital content development and integration in school and higher education.
- The National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) aims to create a unified digital infrastructure for education.
- Samagra Shiksha supports ICT infrastructure, smart classrooms, and digital content development at school levels.

While government initiatives have laid a strong foundation for digital libraries in education, their effectiveness is uneven due to infrastructural and human resource challenges. Strategic investments in connectivity, capacity-building, and content alignment will be key to unlocking the full potential of digital libraries in transforming Indian education.

Recommendations for Improving Digital Library Infrastructure, Accessibility, and Utilization in Government Schools

1. Infrastructure Development

1.1 Upgrade ICT Facilities

- Equip schools with adequate computers, tablets, smart boards, and projectors.
- Establish well-designed digital library rooms with seating and charging facilities.



1.2 Ensure Reliable Power Supply

- Install solar panels or backup generators in schools facing frequent electricity issues.
- Integrate energy-efficient solutions to ensure uninterrupted access to digital libraries.

1.3 Expand Internet Connectivity

- Provide high-speed internet through government-subsidized broadband or satellite services.
- Collaborate with BSNL, BharatNet, or private telecom providers to reach remote areas.

2. Enhancing Accessibility

2.1 Provide Shared Devices

- Introduce device-sharing programs and tablet banks for students without personal access.
- Encourage state governments to distribute digital devices under schemes like PM eVidya.

2.2 Develop Multilingual Content

- Ensure digital library platforms include resources in regional languages and dialects.
- Promote the translation and localization of high-quality educational materials.

2.3 Ensure Inclusive Design

- Integrate features for differently-abled students (e.g., screen readers, audio books, large fonts).
- Create child-friendly interfaces for younger students.

3. Teacher Capacity Building

3.1 Digital Literacy Training

- Mandate regular digital skills training for teachers as part of in-service programs.
- Include digital pedagogy in teacher education curricula (B.Ed, D.El.Ed.).

3.2 Promote Digital Library Integration

- Train teachers on how to incorporate digital library resources into lesson plans.
- Encourage use of digital tools during classroom teaching and assessments.

4. Content Enrichment and Customization



4.1 Align Content with Curriculum

- Ensure digital libraries host resources aligned with NCERT and state board syllabi.
- Encourage the use of interactive, age-appropriate materials (e.g., videos, quizzes, simulations).

4.2 Promote Local Content Creation

- Involve teachers and local educators in developing and uploading region-specific materials.
- Document and digitize traditional knowledge, folk tales, and indigenous learning methods.

5. Monitoring, Promotion, and Engagement

5.1 Usage Tracking and Feedback

- Implement dashboards to monitor digital library usage by students and teachers.
- Collect regular feedback to improve content quality and user experience.

5.2 Awareness Campaigns

- Conduct school-level orientations, student fairs, and parent meetings to promote digital libraries.
- Use school radio, newsletters, and posters to highlight digital library benefits.

5.3 Recognition and Incentives

- Reward schools, teachers, and students for effective use of digital library resources.
- Include digital usage as part of school evaluations under Samagra Shiksha.

6. Partnerships and Policy Support

6.1 Collaborate with EdTech Providers

- Partner with NGOs, universities, and EdTech companies for content, training, and tech support.

6.2 Strengthen Policy Frameworks

- Implement NEP 2020 provisions on digital education with clear state-level action plans.
- Ensure budget allocations under Samagra Shiksha for digital library infrastructure and content development.



Strengthening digital libraries in government schools requires a multi-pronged approach involving infrastructure enhancement, teacher training, content development, and robust policy execution. These recommendations, if implemented effectively, can bridge the digital divide and transform teaching-learning experiences across India's public education system.

Conclusion

Assessing the availability and impact of digital libraries in government schools in India reveals a landscape filled with both promise and persistent challenges. While national initiatives such as NDLI, DIKSHA, and e-Pathshala have significantly broadened access to digital educational content, their effectiveness is often hampered by infrastructural deficits, limited digital literacy, and uneven policy implementation across states. The digital divide marked by disparities in connectivity, devices, and teacher readiness continues to constrain equitable access and utilization. However, the growing emphasis on digital learning under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Digital India presents strong opportunities for transformation. With targeted investments in ICT infrastructure, capacity-building for educators, localized content development, and stronger institutional support, digital libraries can evolve into powerful tools for enhancing student learning outcomes, empowering teachers, and promoting inclusive education across India's government schools.

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