Chapter 4
Digital Divide and
Its Dimensions:
A Study in India

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ABSTRACT

Information communication and technology (ICT) has brought about revolutionary change in the life style of common man. Usage of technology is now mandatory for every transaction made by two or more persons staying in distant places. Mobile number and e-mail ID are believed to be the genuine identities of any person or institution in the contemporary world. However, spread of ICT and its applications is uneven in developing countries with particular reference to India. While the rich and influential people make use of latest technology and its related applications, others are unable to do so. They suffer from stale and outdated technology and many more do not have access to ICT on account of their geographical position, illiteracy ignorance, and the like reasons. This gap between haves and have-nots of ICT is termed as "digital divide." While high income countries, over 90% of the population is using internet, and in lower income countries, less than 10% of the population uses it.

INTRODUCTION

Information Communication and Technology has brought about a revolutionary change in the lifestyle of a common man in this contemporary world. Every small activity or transaction today is incomplete without the aid of ICT. In fact this world

is reduced to a global village due to the fast developments in communication and technology. Mobile Number and Email ID have become genuine identities for people and organizations. However situation is not the same with all the countries in this world. While the rich and developed countries in the west are having access to latest ICT most of the Asian and African countries have limited or no access to ICT and its applications. India is one among those countries having limited access to ICT and many parts of India suffer from lack of ICT facilities. This gap between countries and places with high accessibility of ICT to less or no accessibility is termed as 'Digital Divide'. There is a wide gap in the pace of development between the countries having high access to ICT and the ones having low or total absence of ICT. Long time later it was identified that real issue is not so much about access to digital technology but about the usage and benefits derived from it (Arif, n.d.).

Objectives of This Chapter: Reader Should Be Able to Understand

1. The concept of digital divide
2. Digital divide and its various dimensions in India
3. Government Efforts to bridge digital divide in India
4. Barriers to bridging digital divide and thus
5. Importance of digital education

DIGITAL DIVIDE

The term 'digital divide' is said to have been coined a decade ago by a former United States Assistant Secretary for Commerce for Telecommunications, Larry Irving Jr. focus attention on "...the existing gap in access to information services between those who can afford to purchase the computer hardware and software necessary to participate in the global information network and low income families and communication that cannot……" (Dragulanescu, 2002).

DEFINITION AND MEANING OF DIGITAL DIVIDE

There are many definitions of 'Digital divide'. Some view it primarily as a technological gap in terms of access to and usage of ICT. Others however take a broader perspective, 'The Digital divide refers to social stratification due to unequal ability to access, adapt and create knowledge via usage of ICT' (Warschauer Mark, 2012).

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