UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 2 – International Relations

Challenges faced by WEF – Davos is a talk show

Key Highlights from Davos 2024

The 45th annual World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Davos brought together prominent leaders and delegates from across the globe to deliberate on pressing global issues. Here are some key highlights:

1. **Diverse Attendees:**
   Notable attendees included France's President Emmanuel Macron, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and a 100-member delegation led by India's representative, Smriti Irani.

2. **Emphasis on Collaboration:**
   WEF President Børge Brende underscored the crucial need for public-private collaboration to effectively address the complex challenges facing the world today. The call for collective action reflects the WEF's commitment to fostering global cooperation.

3. **Theme: 'Rebuilding Trust':**
   The overarching theme for Davos 2024 is 'Rebuilding Trust,' centering on the principles of transparency, consistency, and accountability among leaders. The focus on trust restoration aligns with the imperative for renewed confidence in the wake of global uncertainties.

Significance of the World Economic Forum:

The WEF, held annually in Davos, serves as a platform for high-profile leaders, policymakers, and business figures to engage in dialogue on critical global issues. The significance of the WEF lies in its ability to:

1. **Address Multifaceted Objectives:**
   Davos 2024 addresses diverse objectives, spanning security and cooperation, economic growth and job creation, the role of artificial intelligence (AI), and strategies for climate, nature, and energy. These align with the goals of various international organizations, enhancing coordination on a global scale.

2. **Fostering International Understanding:**
   Despite criticisms, Davos contributes to fostering a better understanding of global challenges. It facilitates discussions that can lead to enhanced cooperation and shared solutions among nations.

3. **Valued Amidst International Entities:**
   The WEF's objectives resonate with those of key multilateral entities, including the United Nations, Bretton Woods institutions, UNESCO, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC). Davos serves as a complementary platform for addressing global challenges in alignment with broader international goals.

Challenges Confronting WEF:

1. **Notable Absences:**
   One significant challenge faced by the WEF is the growing number of notable absentees, particularly among influential politicians. This absence can potentially limit the effectiveness of the forum in addressing global issues.

2. **Theme Misalignment with Global Scenario:**
   The current theme of 'Rebuilding Trust' may not fully capture the complexities of the current global scenario, marked by conflicts such as Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Gaza, along with security threats in the Red Sea.

3. **Limited Tangible Outcomes:**
   Despite its high-profile nature, Davos is increasingly perceived as a global talk show with limited tangible outcomes. It struggles to make significant news headlines or achieve substantial progress on its ambitious agenda.

In conclusion, the 45th annual WEF meeting provides a crucial platform for global leaders to collaborate and address multifaceted challenges. While facing certain challenges, Davos continues to contribute to the discourse on global issues and encourages dialogue towards collective solutions.

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 2 – Governance – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

Smartphone Impact on Education in India- How smartphones can make education inclusive

Introduction: This article delves into the transformative impact of smartphones on education in India, enabling a paradigm shift towards 'education anytime, anywhere.' It underscores the dual role of smartphones in both academic pursuits and recreational activities, with a specific focus on the necessity for adaptable, technology-driven learning, particularly in fields like agriculture.

Opportunities Brought by Smartphones to Education:

1. **Widespread Smartphone Access:** According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023, a staggering 89% of Indian youths aged 14-18 possess a smartphone at home, and 92% can proficiently use one. Notably, around two-thirds of these individuals leverage smartphones for educational purposes, indicating a significant departure from traditional learning methods.
2. **Opportunity for Flexible Learning:** Smartphones introduce the prospect of flexible, anytime-anywhere education, proving especially advantageous for working students and those seeking alternative educational pathways.

Challenges Presented by Smartphones in Education:

1. **Overemphasis on Entertainment:** Despite the ubiquity of smartphones, their predominant use leans towards entertainment rather than education, posing a potential distraction for students.
2. **Exam-Centric Focus***:* Current technological solutions in education primarily concentrate on exam preparation, neglecting comprehensive learning and skill development.
3. **Challenge in Knowledge Transfer and Certification:** Despite the easy access to information, the processes of knowledge transfer and certification remain restricted and challenging.
4. **Misinformation Risks:** The widespread availability of smartphones and affordable data plans introduces challenges in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of educational content.

Recommendations for Addressing Challenges:

1. **Develop Flexible Learning Models:** Tailor open schooling and digital technology to support students engaged in work, addressing the need for underprivileged students to pursue education while earning a livelihood.
2. **Focus on Practical and Environmental Education:** Incorporate practical subjects such as agriculture and environmental studies to align with real-life applications and workforce demands, responding to the low enrolment rates in agriculture despite its economic significance.
3. **Enhance Open Schooling Systems:** Utilize digital technology to strengthen open schooling systems, providing flexible learning opportunities for students juggling education with employment.

In conclusion, while smartphones offer unprecedented opportunities for education in India, addressing associated challenges is crucial to harness their full potential and ensure a balanced focus on both academic and practical aspects of learning.

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UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 2 International Relations – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

ASER 2023 Report Unveils Educational Realities in Rural India

Introduction: The 'Beyond Basics' Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) by Pratham delves into the educational landscape of rural India, focusing on a survey of students aged 14 to 18. This comprehensive report sheds light on both the progress and challenges faced by these students in the pursuit of education.

Major Findings in ASER 2023:

1. **Enrolment Rates:** Overall, 86.8% of 14-18-year-olds are enrolled in educational institutions. However, the percentage of unenrolled youth is notably high, with 3.9% for 14-year-olds and a staggering 32.6% for 18-year-olds. The majority of students in this age group are enrolled in the Arts/Humanities streams.
2. **Foundational Skill Gaps:** Approximately 25% of students face challenges in reading Grade 2 text, while over 50% struggle with arithmetic skills expected by Grade 5, exposing foundational learning gaps.
3. **Underutilization of Digital Technology:** Despite a 95% prevalence of smartphones in rural households, their educational use remains limited.
4. **Gender Disparities:**
   - Fewer females (28.1%) enrol in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) stream compared to males (36.3%).
   - Females demonstrate proficiency in reading regional languages, while males excel in arithmetic and English.
   - Males are more likely to own and use smartphones.
5. **Vocational Training:** The survey reveals a low enrolment in vocational training, with only 5.6% of young people participating. Notably, college students exhibit higher engagement, with 16.2% enrolled in courses typically lasting no more than six months.

Suggestions in ASER 2023 Report:

1. **Pedagogic Reforms for Rural Students:** The report advocates for pedagogic reforms, recognising the need for teaching methods that cater to students balancing academic and farm work, thereby addressing the unique educational challenges prevalent in rural areas.
2. **Leverage Smartphones for Education and Address Digital Gender Gaps:** ASER recommends harnessing the widespread access to smartphones (95% of households) for educational purposes. Additionally, there is an emphasis on closing the gender gap in digital skills, as females lag behind males in smartphone proficiency.
3. **Rethink Vocational Education:** To elevate the low enrolment (6%) in vocational courses, ASER proposes a reimagination of vocational training, making it more aspirational and aligning it with students' interests.

In conclusion, the ASER 2023 report provides crucial insights into the state of education in rural India, underscoring the need for targeted reforms to bridge gaps and enhance the overall learning experience for young individuals.