NEAT Initiative

For Prelims: NEAT Scheme, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

For Mains: Edtech, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Divide

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Education** has announced a new **National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT 3.0)** to **use technology for better learning outcomes in Higher Education.**

Key Points

- **Model of NEAT Scheme**: It is based on a **Public-Private Partnership model** between the Government and the **Education Technology (Ed-Tech) companies of India.**
- **Objective:** The objectives of NEAT are to bring the best technological solutions in education pedagogy on **a single platform for the convenience of Economically and Socially weaker sections of society.**
- **Target Areas:** Technology solutions using **Artificial Intelligence** for customized learning or e-content in niche areas having highly employable skills are being identified for showcasing on the portal.
- **Modus Operandi**: Under this, the government plans to **distribute free coupons** for an array of courses offered by ed-tech companies.
- **Implementing Agency:** All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

- It was set up in November 1945 as a **national-level apex advisory body.**
- Its purpose was to conduct a survey on the facilities available for technical education and to promote development in the country in a coordinated and integrated manner.
- According to the **National Policy of Education (1986)**, AICTE is vested with:
  - Statutory authority for planning, formulation, and maintenance of norms & standards,
  - Quality assurance through accreditation,
  - Funding in priority areas, monitoring, and evaluation,
  - Maintaining parity of certification & awards,
  - The management of technical education in the country.

Ed-Tech

- **About:** Edtech is the practice of introducing **IT tools into the classroom** to create a more engaging, inclusive and individualized learning experience.
- **Intended Benefits of Ed-Tech:** Technology holds promise and has incredible potential. It can

help in:
- Enabling greater personalisation of education
- Enhancing educational productivity by improving rates of learning,
- Reducing costs of instructional material and service delivery at scale
- Better utilisation of teacher/instructor time.

- **National Education Policy 2020:** India's new **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** is responsive to the clarion call to integrate technology at every level of instruction.
  - It envisions the establishment of an autonomous body, the **National Education Technology Forum (NETF)**, to spearhead efforts towards providing a strategic thrust to the deployment and use of technology.
- **Scope:** The Indian ed-tech ecosystem has a lot of potential for innovation.
  - With over 4,500 start-ups and a current valuation of around **USD 700 million**, the market is geared for exponential growth — estimates project an astounding market size of **USD 30 billion in the next 10 years.**
- **Associated Issues With Ed-Tech:**
  - **Lack of Technology Access:** Not everyone who can afford to go to school can afford to have phones, computers, or even a quality internet connection for attending classes online.
    - According to National Sample Survey data for 2017-18, only **42% of urban and 15% of rural households** had internet access.
    - In this case, Ed-tech can increase the already existing digital divide.
  - **Contradiction with Right to Education:** Technology is not affordable to all, shifting towards online education completely is like taking away the **Right to Education** of those who cannot access the technology.
- **Related Steps Taken:**
  - **Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing** (DIKSHA).
  - **PM eVidya.**
  - Swayam Prabha TV Channel
  - **SWAYAM portal**

Way Forward

- **Comprehensive Ed-tech Policy:** A comprehensive **Ed-tech policy** architecture must focus on four key elements-
  - Providing **access to learning, especially to disadvantaged groups.**
  - Enabling **processes of teaching, learning, and evaluation.**
  - **Facilitating teacher training** and continuous professional development.
  - Improving governance systems including planning, management, and monitoring processes.
- **Technology is a Tool, Not a Panacea:** Public educational institutions play an exemplary role in social inclusion and relative equality.
  - It is the place where people of all genders, classes, castes, and communities can meet without one group being forced to bow to others.
  - Therefore, technology cannot substitute schools or replace teachers. Thus, it **should not be "teachers versus technology" rather "teachers and technology".**
- **Providing Infrastructure for Ed-Tech:** In the immediate term, there must be a mechanism to thoroughly map the ed-tech landscape, especially their scale, reach, and impact.
  - The focus should be on access, equity, infrastructure, governance, and quality-related outcomes and challenges for teachers and students.
  - Special attention must be paid to address the digital divide at two levels — access and skills to effectively use technology and leverage its benefits.

Source: IE