

Concerns in HECI as the Regulator

What is the issue?

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- Government proposes to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC) with a Higher Education Commission of India.

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- The proposal raises many concerns and has many unanswered questions.

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What are the concerns?

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- **Role** - The role of HECI in relation to professional bodies is unclear.
- Depriving the HECI completely of funding functions may affect its efficacy.
- It may affect its stature in discharging its onerous responsibility.
- **Funding** - The MHRD has been directly funding more than a hundred institutions of national importance.
- It includes Indian Institutes of Technology, National Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research.
- Funding 47 Central universities should not pose a problem for the ministry.
- However, funding scheme for the State universities needs to be clearly worked out.
- This is because they account for more than 50% of the student enrolment.
- A clear and transparent mechanism should be spelt out if it is to be funded

through the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan.

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- Besides, the effective role of HECI in regulating state institutions needs attention.

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- **Autonomy** - Certain new initiatives are proposed recently in the higher education sector.

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- This includes granting near complete autonomy to the Indian Institutes of Management.

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- It also includes providing graded autonomy to other institutions.

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- Besides, more institutions are encouraged to move out of the regulatory ambit to develop into institutes of excellence.

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- Given these, the role of HECI as an overarching regulator has to be reassessed.

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- **Structure** - HECI will have a chairperson, vice-chairperson and 12 members.

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- The secretary of the HECI will be an officer of the rank of joint secretary and above.

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- S/he could also be a reputed academic and will serve as its member-secretary.

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- Will the secretary have voting rights or not as a member is unanswered.

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- Also, government has overwhelming power to remove the chairperson and members.

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- **Secretary** - The secretary is expected to play multiple roles:

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- i. acting as a member of the HECI

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- ii. serving as a member of search-cum-selection committee of the chairperson and vice-chairperson

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iii. processing their appointment as a key functionary of the government

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- Such multiplicity of roles may create difficulties and conflict of interest.

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Source: The Hindu

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