

## **Concerns With Plan on HECI**

### What is the issue?

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- Union government has planned to replace the UGC with HECI.
- $\bullet$  The Centre's bid to replace the UGC with a higher education commission does not inspire confidence.  $\mbox{\sc h}$

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# What is government's plan on UGC?

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- $\bullet$  Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be the new, apex regulator for university and higher education in India. \n
- $\bullet$  It has to set benchmarks for academic performance, ensure that institutions adhere to these and act against those that violate standards. \n
- Draft legislation appears to be part of a stated overarching strategy towards greater autonomy in institutes of higher learning, including the premier Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management.
- The broad thrust of the Higher Education Commission legislation is to separate governance from funding.
- The proposed commission will focus on academic issues, such as course curricula, faculty standards and outcomes, leaving "monetary matters" to the ministry of human resource development.

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### What are the concerns with HECI?

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- The Centre has invited a barrage of criticism after placing in the public domain the HECI (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill 2018.
- A fundamental feature of the proposed HECI, as opposed to the UGC, is that it will focus only on enforcement of standards and not disburse grants.
- The latter role will be vested with the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD).
- With reference to proposal that the grant functions will be carried out by the HRD Ministry, the draft Bill merely hints at a regime of direct governmental control, contrary to its promise of autonomy.
- $\bullet$  The UGC agreed to the Centre's proposal to have a four-year undergraduate programme, going against its own rules.  $\mbox{\sc have}$
- Likewise, State governments of all hues have had no qualms in politicising key appointments in universities and colleges.
- HECI as an extension of the MHRD may end up legitimising all of this, while also raising apprehensions of ideological control.

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### What measures needs to be taken?

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- The Centre should modify this proposal to vest the role of disbursing grants in an independent agency.
- The autonomy of universities in framing curricula should not be tampered with.
- $\bullet$  Higher education needs both autonomy which has led to the IITs, IISc and IIMs emerging as centres of repute and accountability in the right measure. \n
- A present system of according 'graded autonomy', depending on independent rankings and assessments, should be continued, without the MHRD superimposing its own views.
- An independent regulator, manned by individuals of probity and academic excellence, could make a difference.

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 $\bullet$  Reforms in higher education are finally about creating the right ambience of liberalism, academic rigour, universal access and, above all, accountability. \n

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**Source: Business Line** 

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