



Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically evaluate the functioning of NITI Aayog since its inception. (150 words)

19 Apr, 2022 GS Paper 2 Polity & Governance

Approach

- Provide a brief introduction of the NITI Aayog
- Highlight the achievements/work done by NITI Aayog so far
- Then bring out the challenges being faced by the institution in its functioning
- Provide a balanced conclusion

Ans.

India has undergone a paradigm shift over the past six decades - politically, economically, socially, technologically as well as demographically. The role of Government in national development has seen a parallel evolution. Keeping with these changing times, the Government of India set up NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India), in place of the erstwhile Planning Commission, as a means to better serve the needs and aspirations of the people of India. NITI Aayog is basically a policy think tank of the Government of India and State Governments.

- **Cooperative Federalism:** It has enabled States to have active participation in the formulation of national policy, as well as achieving time-bound implementation of quantitative and qualitative targets through the combined authority of the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers.
- **Competitive Federalism:** This Cooperation is further enhanced by the vibrancy of Competitive Federalism. NITI Aayog comes up with performance-based rankings of States across various verticals fostering a spirit of competitive federalism. For eg. Health Index, Composite Water Management Index etc.
- **Shared National Agenda:** NITI Ayog has helped evolve a shared vision of national development priorities and strategies, with the active involvement of States thus furthering the ideals of unity and integrity in the nation.
- **Knowledge and Innovation hub:** NITI Aayog has acted as an accumulator as well as disseminator of research and best practices on good governance, through a state-of-the-art Resource Centre which identifies, analyses, shares and facilitates replication of the same. NITI Ayog has established more than 1,500 Atal Tinkering Labs in schools across the country to improve the innovation ecosystem in India.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office monitors the implementation of policies and programmes, and evaluates their impact. This not only helps identify weaknesses and bottlenecks for necessary course correction, but also enables data-driven policy making, leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness of policies and programmes.
- **Catalysing Reforms in Agriculture:** Through Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act 2016; Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Committee (APLMC) Act 2017; Agricultural Marketing and Farmer Friendly Reforms Index etc.

However there are certain challenges regarding the functioning of the institution such as

- **Independence:** There is deep concern that NITI Aayog has lost its integrity as an independent

institution to guide the government; that it has become a mouthpiece of the government and an implementer of the government's projects.

- **Too Many Voices:** The NITI Aayog has a considerably large number of members as compared to the erstwhile Planning Commission. The membership ranges from ministers to subject experts to state executive heads. Coming up with a consensus and trying to convince everybody is certainly a challenge.
- **Lack of active actionable targets:** It needs to take active measures to solve some of the challenges that India faces today such as job creations, increasing economic growth, etc. Even its three-year action agenda had too wide an approach for imminent challenges.
- **Expectations:** When an institution older than half a century is replaced by a new one, people look up to it as bringing immediate change and development. This expectation from the people might come as a hindrance to NITI Aayog.
- **Limited focus on implementation:** It doesn't focus adequately on the practical aspects of its recommendations such as fixing accountability of bureaucrats, government-citizen interaction etc. which is core to several good ideas remaining on paper.

NITI Aayog needs to adopt a bold, unconstrained and unconventional approach to resolve inherent contradictions of our systems and find innovative solutions to the differences among the states and between the centre and the states to take this country forward on a sustainable path of all-inclusive development on a substantially higher trajectory.

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