



Higher Education Commission of India

For Prelims: Higher Education Commission of India, National Education Policy, University Grants Commission

For Mains: Significance of National Education Policy, Functions & Challenges of HECI

Why in News?

Recently, the Government of India announced that they're reworking a draft of the Bill ([Draft Higher Education Commission of India \(Repeal of University Grants Commission Act\) Bill, 2018](#)) that will bring to life the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**, for college and university-level education, cutting across disciplines.

- The new reworked draft will also be in tune with the [National Education Policy of India](#).

What is the Draft Higher Education Commission of India Bill, 2018?

▪ About:

- The bill stands for "**Draft Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill, 2018**".
- It was introduced in January, 2018.
 - But it was never finalised, and within two years, the **National Education Policy 2020** was announced.

▪ Key Points:

- The Bill **repeals the** [University Grants Commission Act, 1956](#) and establishes the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**.
- The HECI will **maintain academic standards** in higher education by:
 - Specifying learning outcomes for courses.
 - Specifying eligibility criteria for Vice Chancellors.
 - Ordering closure of higher educational institutions which fail to adhere to minimum standards.
- Every higher educational institution empowered to award degrees or diplomas will have to **apply to the HECI to commence its first academic operations**.
 - The HECI also has the power to **revoke permission on specified grounds**.
- The Bill sets up an **Advisory Council** chaired by the **Union Minister of Human Resource Development**.
 - The Council will advise on **coordination and determination of standards** in higher education between the centre and states.

▪ Coverage:

- The Bill will apply to '**higher educational institutions**' which include:
 - **Universities** set up by [Acts of Parliament](#) or **state legislatures**.
 - Institutions **deemed to be a university, and colleges**.
 - It excludes **institutions of national importance**.

What were Major Challenges in 2018's Bill?

- **Autonomy:**
 - The Bill aims to promote **autonomy of higher educational institutions**.
 - However, certain provisions of the Bill **do not meet this stated objective**.
 - It may be argued that instead of granting higher educational institutions increased autonomy, the **Bill provides HECI with extensive regulatory control**.
- **Regulatory Ambit:**
 - Currently, institutions offering professional courses **are regulated by 14 professional councils**.
 - Of these, the Bill seeks to bring **legal and architecture education** within the purview of HECI.
 - It is unclear why **only these two areas are included within the regulatory ambit** of the HECI and not the other fields of professional education.
- **Disbursal of Grants:**
 - At present, the **UGC has the power to allocate and disburse grants to universities and colleges**.
 - While the **Bill replaces the UGC**, it does not include any provisions **regarding disbursal of grants**.
 - This raises a question whether **HECI will have any role in the disbursal of grants** to higher educational institutions.
- **Independent Regulations:**
 - Presently, the **Central Advisory Board of Higher Education (CABE)** co-ordinates and advises the centre and states on education related matters.
 - The Bill creates an **Advisory Council** and requires HECI to implement its recommendations.
 - This may **restrict HECI from functioning as an independent regulator**.

What are the Functions of HECI?

- The HECI will **recommend ways** to promote **autonomy of higher educational institutions** and ensure maintenance of academic standards in higher education.
- **It will specify norms for:**
 - Learning outcomes for courses.
 - Standards of teaching and research.
 - Evaluation procedure to measure yearly academic performance of institutions.
 - Accreditation of institutions.
 - Ordering closure of institutions.
- **Further, the HECI may specify norms for:**
 - Granting authorisation to institutions to commence academic operations.
 - Award of degree or diploma.
 - Affiliation of institutions with universities.
 - Grant of autonomy.
 - Graded autonomy.
 - Eligibility **criteria** for appointment of Vice Chancellors.
 - Setting & winding up of institutions.
 - Fee regulation.

What is the Significance of National Education Policy, 2020?

- **Recognising Importance of Formative years:**
 - In adopting a **5+3+3+4 model for school education starting at age 3**, the policy recognises the **primacy of the formative years** from ages 3 to 8 in shaping the child's future.
- **Departure from Silos Mentality:**
 - Another key aspect of school education in the new policy is the **breaking of the strict division of arts, commerce and science streams in high school**.
- **The Confluence of Education and Skills:**

- Introduction of **vocational courses with an internship.**
 - This may nudge the **vulnerable sections of society** to send their children to school.
- **Making Education More Inclusive:**
 - The NEP proposes the extension of the [Right to Education \(RTE\)](#) to all children up to the age of 18.
- **Allowing Foreign Universities:**
 - The document states **universities from among the top 100 in the world** will be able to set up campuses in India.
- **Ending Hindi vs English Debate:**
 - It emphasizes on making [mother tongue](#), **local language or the regional language** the medium of instruction at least till Grade 5, which is considered the best medium of teaching.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. National Education Policy 2020 is in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (2030). It intends to restructure and reorient education system in India. Critically examine the statement. **(2020)**

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