

Modi wants one body to regulate higher education, Niti gets to work

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NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asked for a new body to subsume the present higher education regulators and the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog has been told to suggest a new framework after consulting stakeholders.

A committee headed by NITI Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya and having members from various fields of the academia has been constituted to give recommendations in three months, sources said.

A NITI Aayog functionary said replacing the existing higher education regulatory bodies — University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), National Council for Teacher's Education (NCTE) and Medical Council of India (MCI) — was on the agenda of the committee's discussions.

The existing bodies could be replaced by a National Commission for Higher Education, whose operational framework would be formulated by the NITI Aayog panel whose members include health secretary PK Mishra and NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

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Higher education

The four bodies control some 50,000 educational institutions among themselves, with UGC being the oldest -- set up in 1956 through a central law.

Senior functionaries in regulators such as the MCI, the AICTE and the NCTE have of late been accused of corruption and favouritism in the absence of clear and transparent guidelines, leading to the misuse of discretionary powers.

Prime Minister (Narendra

Hyderabad and Delhi to Rajasthan and Jharkhand -- find themselves embroiled in controversies over so-called nationalism, leading to the arrest of some students and disciplinary action against faculty members.

This is not the first time an attempt is being made to revamp higher education regulators.

The National Knowledge Commission headed by Sam Pitroda had suggested an autonomous higher education commission with experts as heads of different streams such as technical education, health, teacher training

medical commission through legislation. Earlier, the standing committee on education had raised questions over the efficacy of the AICTE and the UGC.

"We will examine recommendations made by the parliamentary committee and other bodies and will suggest a complete overhaul framework as present regulators cannot build a modern education system," said one of the committee members, who was not willing to speak on the record till the committee finalised its report.