Plan on Higher Education

Why in news?

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Union government is enabling regulatory architecture to emerge public and private institutions as world-class institutions.

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What actions were taken by government in this regard?

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- In early 2017, the UGC approved the guidelines for creating 20 world-class institutions that were renamed “institutes of eminence” (IoE).
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- The outcome of the process that took more than two years was that out of over 900 universities, only six have the potential to become world-class universities.
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- In all, 114 institutions applied on the basis of a promise laid down in policies announced by the government.
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- The terms of references under which the Empowered Committee was tasked to identify universities were not made public.
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- The process of selecting the empowering universities was arbitrary.
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What are the challenges involved?

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- Only three Indian universities featured in the top 250 in the QS World University Rankings 2018, while just 11 made it to top 700.
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- No Indian university features in the top 250 in the Times Higher

Education World Rankings 2018 while only two have made it to the top 500.
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- This is because the key characteristics that are vital to any world-class university were missing from the exercise of selecting institutions.
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- This includes, for instance, internationalisation of faculty, research, students, courses and outlook
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- There seems to be a paralysis in India's higher education system in not just policy, but also in procedure, planning and perspective.
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What measures needs to be taken?

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- Universities take decades to evolve, attention should have been on empowering existing brown-field universities, rather than recognising non-existing universities as contenders.
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- Institution building is about a deeper recognition of what it takes to build a culture of excellence, thus Lived experiences of individuals matter more in universities than in any other organisation.
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- Even if there was a vision to recognise green-field institutions, there should have been a separate criteria and process to evaluate them.
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- The task for the Committee should have been to simply select from the existing pool of universities and empower them to compete internationally.
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- The Committee should have taken cognisance of the robust methodology that is used to rank institutions. Of course, research is of paramount importance.
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- Thus the selection process should have had a holistic approach to disciplines.
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Source: Indian Express

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