Syllabus subtopic:

- Public/Civil Service Values and Ethics in Public Administration

Prelims and Mains focus: about RUSA: objectives and corruption

News: The HRD Ministry has approached the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) to flag alleged corruption in the implementation of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

Background

In a meeting held in July, 2019 between the Ministry and TISS, the institute’s director pointed out some “serious irregularities” in utilisation of funds. Following the meeting, TISS was asked by the Ministry to conduct a complete audit of funds released under RUSA.

How was the corruption unravelled?

- An audit by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) last year uncovered that Rs 23 lakh was allegedly spent out of RUSA funds on the personal trips of an IAS officer of the Kerala cadre, who was RUSA’s national mission director during her stint as joint secretary at the HRD Ministry. She left the Ministry seven months ago and is currently posted as Principal Secretary, Fisheries, in Kerala.

- The audit also discovered that RUSA’s national coordinator allegedly misappropriated Rs 2.02 crore of the funds. He had submitted handwritten taxi bills of Rs 1.26 crore to justify some of the expenditure.

- The alleged corruption undermines the Centre’s efforts to streamline functioning of higher educational institutions in states. RUSA aims to improve the quality of such institutions by ensuring conformity to prescribed norms.
About Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

- RUSA, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), launched in October 2013, is aimed at **improving higher education in states.**

- The scheme is being operated in mission mode for funding state universities and colleges to achieve the aims of equity, access and excellence. Since 2016-17, the government has spent an average of Rs 1,500 crore every year on RUSA.

- **TISS has been the implementing agency of the scheme** since November 2013 and, as per the government’s MoU with the institute, will incur expenditure and submit claims to the HRD Ministry for reimbursement.

- The central funding (in the ratio of 60:40 for general category States, 90:10 for special category states and 100% for union territories) would be **norm based and outcome dependent.** The funding would flow from the central ministry through the state governments/union territories to the State Higher Education Councils before reaching the identified institutions. The funding to states would be made on the basis of critical appraisal of State Higher Education Plans, which would describe each state’s strategy to address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.

**Objectives**

The salient objectives of RUSA are to;

- Improve the overall quality of state institutions by ensuring conformity to prescribed norms and standards and adopt accreditation as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
- Usher transformative reforms in the state higher education system by creating a facilitating institutional structure for planning and monitoring at the state level, promoting autonomy in State Universities and improving governance in institutions.
- Ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination systems.
- Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational
institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
- Create an enabling atmosphere in the higher educational institutions to devote themselves to research and innovations.
- Expand the institutional base by creating additional capacity in existing institutions and establishing new institutions, in order to achieve enrolment targets.
- Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by setting up institutions in unserved & underserved areas.
- Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities of higher education to SC/STs and socially and educationally backward classes; promote inclusion of women, minorities, and differently abled persons.

**Components**

- RUSA would **create new universities through upgradation of existing autonomous colleges and conversion of colleges in a cluster**. It would create new model degree colleges, new professional colleges and provide infrastructural support to universities and colleges.

  - Faculty recruitment support, faculty improvements programmes and leadership development of educational administrators are also an important part of the scheme. In order to enhance skill development the existing central scheme of Polytechnics has been subsumed within RUSA. A separate component to synergise vocational education with higher education has also been included in RUSA. Besides these, RUSA **also supports reforming, restructuring and building capacity of institutions in participating state**.

The following are the primary components of RUSA that capture the key action and funding areas that must be pursued for the fulfilment of the targets:

- Upgradation of existing autonomous colleges to Universities
- Conversion of colleges to Cluster Universities
- Infrastructure grants to Universities
- New Model Colleges (General)
- Upgradation of existing degree colleges to model colleges
- New Colleges (Professional)
- Infrastructure grants to colleges
- Research, innovation and quality improvement
- Equity initiatives
- Faculty Recruitment Support
- Faculty improvements
- Vocationalisation of Higher Education
- Leadership Development of Educational Administrators
Institutional restructuring & reforms
Capacity building & preparation, data collection & planning