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Q11

How are the principles followed by NITI Aayog different from those followed by the erstwhile planning commission in India?(250 Words, 15 Marks).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS III · 15 marks · Indian Economy

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Core demand of the question

- Show how **NITI Aayog**'s principles differ from those of the erstwhile **Planning Commission**
- Cover federal role, **planning** method, funds, and evaluation, then recommend how NITI should work

Revision summary

The **Planning Commission** set Five-Year Plans and allocated Central plan funds in a top-down way.

- **NITI Aayog is a shared think tank:** **Governing Council** of CMs, no scheme-money power, and long-term strategy.

Cooperative and competitive federalism, SDG dashboards, and Aspirational Districts replace quota-style **planning**.

Centrally sponsored schemes still limit how federal NITI really is.

NITI must evaluate honestly and help weak States with capacity, not only with ranks.

Flow diagram

Planning Commission -> Top-down Five-Year Plans

Planning Commission -> Plan fund allocation

NITI Aayog -> Cooperative federalism

NITI Aayog -> Think tank no purse

NITI Aayog -> Competitive rankings SDGs

Cooperative federalism -> State-led outcomes

Competitive rankings SDGs -> State-led outcomes

Conclusion

- Keep NITI as an honest **evaluator** of schemes, not as a silent cheerleader of every Union programme.
- Give States a real say in scheme design, and publish dissenting notes from the **Governing Council** so cooperative federalism is more than a photograph.

- Tie Aspirational District lessons to **finance and personnel**, or competition will stay a dashboard sport.

The **Planning Commission** planned and paid from the Centre; **NITI Aayog** is meant to think with States and to compete on outcomes without holding the cheque. The principle-shift is federal, evidence-based, and long-horizon. It will matter only if advice can change schemes and if weak States get capacity, not only ranks.

Facts & figures

Planning Commission

Set up in 1950 by Cabinet resolution; wound up in 2014 after the last complete Twelfth Plan cycle.

NITI Aayog

National Institution for Transforming India, created in 2015 as the successor think tank, not as a fund-allocating planner.

Governing Council

Chief Ministers and Lieutenant Governors sit with the Prime Minister; this is the federal face NITI claims.

Aspirational Districts Programme

NITI-led effort to raise health, education, and basic infrastructure outcomes in backward districts through competition and convergence.

Finance Commission vs NITI

Constitutional tax devolution and grants remain with the **Finance Commission**; NITI does not replace that purse.

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