Ed-Sector Reforms

What is the issue?

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- Our socio-economic context demands a comprehensive overhaul of the education landscape for ensuring sustained progress.
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- Enhancing the autonomy for higher education institutions is a positive sign, but a lot more is needed.
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What is the socio-demographic context?

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- The competitive landscape of advanced manufacturing and services places India in direct competition with advanced countries of the world.
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- To sustain this challenging stature, India needs to benchmark its education and skills systems with the best in the world.
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- This is even more significant for our country as it has envisioned being the ‘Skill Capital’ of the world driven by its favourable demographics.
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- Also, the vision of ‘Make in India’ can be achieved only if there is alignment of skill development, education and research with the overall economic agenda.
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- In this context, the developments in the education space in the last two years have been very encouraging, particularly regarding enhancing autonomy.
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How are the significant changes in the Ed-sector?

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- **Autonomy -** The UGC has provided almost complete academic autonomy to universities and colleges through gazette notifications recently.
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- Top rated universities are freed of UGC inspections and can start new programmes and skill courses without prior approvals.
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- They can also set up open research parks, incubation centres and engage in foreign collaboration with leading global universities by their own terms.
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- Regulations for permitting universities to opening constituent autonomous off-campus colleges have also been liberalised.
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- **Financing -** Higher education institutes can now avail concessional loans from 'Higher Education finance Agency' (HEFA) for infrastructure expansion.
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- Notably, the government would pay back the loan and institutions would only be liable to pay back the interests for the loan taken.
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- This is expected to bring a lot of accountability in the public higher education system and could open up a credit market for higher education.
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- **Skilling -** Basic skills for low-end manufacturing also has to be developed with an appropriate approach by establishing a relevant skilling setup.
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- Several skilling initiatives have been initiated through stand-alone schemes and also along with private collaborations (like NSDC).
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How does the future look?

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- Mutual recognition of Indian higher and vocational education qualifications abroad which shall go a long way in global benchmarking of Indian learning.
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- The recent agreement with France, Australia, Malaysia, Qatar and Mauritius among others for cooperation is significant in this regard.
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- We also need a continued stream of structural reforms (through financial and administrative autonomy) to catch up with the world.
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- Government needs to enhance budgetary allocation for education to 6% of

GDP and aid quality enhancement of research.
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- The process for ‘Institutes of Eminence’ and complete freedom to elite institutions like IIMs is a good start.
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- Also, Ed-tech companies are already transforming learning, which needs to be promoted in a big way.
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Source: Business Line

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