Issue over Granting Autonomy to Colleges

What is the issue?

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- A proposal by Delhi University's prestigious St Stephen's College to seek autonomy has triggered protests.
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- Both teachers and students of the college gathering outside the principal's office and demanded that they must be consulted before making any such move.
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What do the UGC guidelines to grant autonomy say?

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- The University Grants Commission (UGC) released a new set of guidelines for autonomous colleges in November 2016.
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- According to the guidelines, the current system, in which many colleges are affiliated to one university and are dependent on it, is clumsy.
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- The guidelines say that it is becoming difficult for one university to meet the needs of several colleges.
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- **The colleges do not get any freedom** to set syllabi or start new courses.
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- Also, the degrees awarded to students of most colleges (that don't have autonomy) currently contain only the name of the university, and not that of the college.
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Which colleges are eligible for autonomy?

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- Colleges that have been granted **at least a ‘B’ ranking** by the National Accreditation and Assessment Council are eligible to apply.
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- UGC will also take into account academic achievements of the faculty, infrastructure, and financial resources of the institution.
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- The UGC will give funding for additional needs such as guest faculty, orientation and retraining of teachers, redesigning courses, development of teaching material etc.,
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What the new guidelines say?

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- Under the new guidelines, **the university’s main role will be that of facilitator.**
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- It will focus on promoting academic freedom in colleges, help start new courses, and ensure that degrees/ certificates issued indicate the name of the college.
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- The university will not have much say in teaching methodology, examination, evaluation and course curriculum.
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Why teachers oppose the idea?

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- Teachers have alleged that the push for autonomy is a sinister move **towards privatisation of education.**
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- Autonomous colleges will be asked to fund part of their expenditure, and this will force colleges to introduce self-financing courses that are geared towards getting jobs.
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- Students who study these courses will be forced to take a loan as these **professional courses are more expensive.**
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- Concerns have been raised also about the kind of academic and cultural

freedom that an autonomous college can give to teachers and students.
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Source: The Indian Express

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