



Reforming Examination System in India

For Prelims: Rethinking India's Examination System, [New Education Policy 2020](#), [Public Examinations \(Prevention of Unfair Means\) Act, 2024](#), **UGC, NTA**.

For Mains: Rethinking India's Examination System, Issues Arising Out of Design & Implementation of Policies.

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Education** abruptly cancelled the June 2024 **edition of the UGC-NET exam**. Additionally, there were allegations **regarding the fairness of the NEET-UG exam**, citing a potential compromise of its integrity and fairness.

- This has led the government to pass the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024** as a measure to curb illegal practices in exams.

Note

- **NET UGC Exam:**
 - The [University Grants Commission National Eligibility Test \(UGC-NET\)](#) exam is conducted to fill positions of **Junior Research Fellowship and Assistant Professor** in Indian universities and colleges.
 - It is conducted by the [National Testing Agency \(NTA\)](#) **twice every year** (June & December).
 - The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** is a **statutory body** established by an Act of [Parliament](#) in 1956. It came into existence on 28th December 1953.
 - It aims for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education.
- **NEET UG:**
 - [National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test \(Undergraduate\) or NEET](#), formerly the **All India Pre-Medical Test**, is an **entrance examination** for admission in **undergraduate medical programs** (MBBS and BDS courses) in India.
 - It is conducted by the NTA.

What is the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024?

- **About:**
 - The [Public Examinations \(Prevention of Unfair Means\) Act, 2024](#) is law passed in the [Lok Sabha](#) aimed at addressing the issue of malpractices in government recruitment

examinations. It came into effect on 21st June 2024.

- **Key Features:**
 - It defines various offences related to unfair means, such as paper leaks, the use of **fake websites, and collusion with service providers.**
 - It prescribes strict penalties, including a **minimum jail term of 3-5 years** and a **fine up to Rs. 1 crore.**
 - It holds **service providers** engaged for exam conduct liable with fines up to Rs 1 crore and a 4-year ban on their involvement in public exams.
 - It empowers **police officers** not below the rank of **Deputy Superintendent of Police or Assistant Commissioner of Police** to investigate offences under the Act.
 - It will cover a wide range of central government recruitment exams, including those conducted by UPSC, SSC, RRBs, IBPS, and NTA.
- **Punishable Offences Defined in the Act:**
 - **Leakage of question paper** or answer key
 - Directly or **indirectly assisting candidates in** an unauthorised manner
 - **Tampering with computer networks**, resources, or systems
 - **Creation of fake websites** to cheat or for monetary gain
 - Conduct of **fake examinations, issuance of fake admit cards** or offer letters
 - Manipulation of seating **arrangements, and allocation of dates** and shifts to facilitate unfair means.
- **Need for Act:**
 - Public exams are currently **vulnerable to cheating and disruptions**, affecting millions of students.
 - There's **no strong legal framework** to deter individuals or groups involved in exam malpractice.
 - This bill aims to **establish transparency, fairness, and trust** in the public examination system.

What are the Issues Related to the Existing Examination System in India?

- **Declining Credibility: Lack of credibility and consistency** in exams by different boards and universities leads to frequent scandals such as **paper leaks, cheating, and fake degrees, eroding public trust.**
 - Employers often conduct separate assessments of candidates, disregarding university/board certificates.
- **More Theoretical in Nature:** The current education **system focuses heavily on theoretical knowledge** and memorisation of facts through textbooks.
 - This can **lead to graduates who are well-versed in theory** but lack the practical skills needed to succeed in their professions.
- **Subjectivity:** The **examiner's biases can influence question phrasing**, students answer based on their own understanding, and different graders may award varying marks for the same response.
 - This **subjectivity creates an unfair and inconsistent evaluation** process for students.
- **Stifling Creativity and Critical Thinking:** The pressure to **perform well in standardized tests often discourages students** from asking questions, exploring diverse perspectives, or developing critical thinking skills.
 - A curriculum **focused on rote learning leaves little room for creativity** and intellectual curiosity, hindering innovation and problem-solving abilities.
- **Impact on Employability:** Employers **prioritise their evaluations over institutional certifications** when assessing candidates, placing importance on higher-order learning for employability.
 - This has led to a growing market for coaching for competitive exams and skill development.

What are the Initiatives to Reform the Education System?

- [Right To Education Act of 2009.](#)
- [New Education Policy 2020.](#)
- [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan \(SSA\).](#)

- [Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan.](#)
- [Rashtriya Uchhattar Shiksha Abhiyan \(RUSA\).](#)
- [National Testing Agency \(NTA\)](#)
- [National Curriculum Framework.](#)

What Steps Can Be Taken to Address the Challenges in the Examination System?

- **Focus on Understanding and Analytical Ability:** Examinations should assess **students' comprehension and analytical skills.**
 - Question papers should **include various forms of questions to evaluate different abilities** in line with the instructional objectives of each course.
 - **Memory-based questions should be minimised** to encourage deeper learning.
- **Subject and Skill-Specific Assessments:** Incorporate **subject-specific and skill-specific assessments** for a comprehensive evaluation of students' learning achievements. Advocate for **challenging assessments that distinguish students** based on their academic attainments.
 - **Proper importance should be given to practical components** of the curriculum. Practical exams should be designed to assess students' hands-on skills and application of theoretical knowledge.
- **Prevent Cheating:** Strict measures such as **installing CCTV cameras, appointing vigilant invigilators**, and providing adequate guidance to students on avoiding unfair means should be implemented to curb cheating.
 - Examination centers that **fail to prevent cheating should** be penalised or cancelled.
- **Examinations as a Means, Not an End:** The primary purpose of examinations should be **to facilitate learning and help students achieve educational** objectives. Examinations should not be treated as the final goal but as a tool to promote continuous learning and improvement.
- **Leverage Technology for Credibility:** Utilise technology in **assessments to enhance credibility, standardising question papers** and evaluations. Explore market-available software solutions for both centralized and distributed assessment systems.

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Drishhti Mains Question:

Critically examine the challenges posed by exam paper leaks and the shortcomings of the current examination system in India. Suggest strategies for reforming the examination system, aligning it with the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution does India have a bearing on Education? (2012)

1. Directive Principles of State Policy
2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
3. Fifth Schedule
4. Sixth Schedule
5. Seventh Schedule

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
 (b) 3, 4 and 5 only

- (c) 1, 2 and 5 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans- (d)

Mains

Q1. How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate on your answer. **(2020)**

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