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## **NEP 2020, common entrance examination and coaching business**

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### **Abstract**

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) propose a national level entrance examination in all national level general higher education institutions, and it has also been envisioned that in future all state level and private institutions will adopt it. The country is already victim of ill effects (such as pro-rich, undermines school system, no value added, wastage of national income, does not effective to catch the best mind) of private coaching culture for entrance in professional and technical examination and it seems that these ill effects may afflict the general higher education as well. The entrance examination may be unavoidable, but some corrections such as standardisation of all states school boards, weightage of Class 12 marks, provision of free coaching for disadvantaged groups of the society.

**Keywords:** NEP 2020, entrance examination, business

### **1. Introduction**

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) says that there will be a national level entrance examination for every course in general higher education for admission in all the national level institutions. For convenience, other state-level and non-government institutions may also use its score for admission therein. A national level entrance examination has been proposed in NEP 2020, for Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) of national level by National Testing Agency (NTA). There is a very tuff and cut-throat competition for these entrance examinations which has created a big and organised market for private coaching. The size of the private coaching industry (shadow education) is approximately Rs. 24000 crores a year (Times of India, 24-9-2020). Our education system is already a victim of the adverse effects of the coaching culture that are caused by entrance examinations for professional and technical education.

Will it (coaching culture) not again strengthen and expand the market for coaching for entrance examinations for the general education as well? Now, out of the total students in higher education approximately 67 per cent students (AISHE, MHRD 2017-18, GoI) are enrolled in academic courses (non-professional/non-technical) who gets admission based on the grades of Class 12 examination. In such conditions, all of them might have to go for the entrance examinations in the coming years. This will in turn, the ill effects coaching that affecting the aspirants of professional courses, may afflict with all the remaining streams of education.

### **2. NEP 2020, and common entrance examination for admission**

The policy says that common aptitude test and specialised subject-wise test will be conducted by the NTA and its score will be used by the various universities and colleges for admission at undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. It will be beneficial for students and the universities as well as for colleges. It will reduce the burden on students to apply for multiple institutions for entrance examination, and the burden on each institution to conduct a separate entrance examination. These entrance examinations will be conducted twice a year, and the higher scores will be considered for admission. Its score may be used by the all state-level public and private institutions. Currently, almost the same practice is being followed in the case of Gate (Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering) score for admissions nation-wide at postgraduate engineering programmes.

In future, all higher education institutions (HEIs) will become multidisciplinary. "The principles for university entrance examinations will be similar. The National Testing Agency (NTA) will work to offer a high-quality common aptitude test, as well as specialised common subject examinations in the sciences, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational

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subjects, at least twice every year. These examinations shall test conceptual understanding and the ability to apply knowledge and shall aim to eliminate the need for taking coaching for these examinations. Students will be able to choose the subjects for taking the test, and each university will be able to see each student's individual subject portfolio and admit students into their programmes based on individual interests and talents. The NTA will serve as a premier, expert, autonomous testing organisation to conduct entrance examinations for undergraduate and graduate admissions and fellowships in higher education institutions. The high quality, range, and flexibility of the NTA testing services will enable most universities to use these common entrance examinations - rather than having hundreds of universities each devising their own entrance examinations - thereby drastically reducing the burden on students, universities and colleges, and the entire education system. It will be left up to individual universities and colleges to use NTA assessments for their admissions"(Para 4.42, NEP, 2020).

### 3. Emergence and Development of coaching business

Earlier, before the entrance examinations, admissions in all professional and technical institutions were given on the basis of the merit of Class 12. Over the period of time, the Number of students increased with the expansion of school education but the number of seats for admission in the professional and technical education could not match with it. Therefore, the competition for the admission in these institutions has been increased many folds. At the state level institutions, cut-off marks in the merit for the admission changed every year. Every year board examination was not the same and comparable, therefore, the students started to repeat the board examination. To solve this problem the state-level institutions started the common entrance examination. Along with the question of parity of the grades of Class 12 of various state level school boards emerged for the admission in the national level institutions. Many state boards started to give very generous grades, particularly in practical examinations, and then the question of parity became more complex. To give equal opportunities to all the candidates, the national level institutions started to conduct a national level common entrance examination for admission. Since the competition is cut-throat, coaching becomes indispensable. Some established and prestigious coaching firms have a very high success rate, and it further attracts the best aspirants. In this way, this business is thriving leaps and bounds. Finally, coaching has become the norms for success.

#### 3.1 Need for the entrance examination

Right now, because of the multiplicity of the state boards, their credentials are not comparable. Therefore, it becomes unavoidable to hold entrance examination for the sake of equity of opportunity, particularly for the medical education, institutions of national importance in technology, management, law and other professional education of high repute. As the Class 12 board examinations of various boards are not comparable and standardised to maintain the national level parity. For the other national-level reputed institutions of general education (liberal education), the entrance examinations are also going to be unavoidable. Even at the level postgraduate admission again the problem of parity arises. Various universities have different

standards of undergraduate examination, which are not comparable for common merit for admission in postgraduate courses.

We already have many national-level entrance examinations for professional and technical courses, such as NEET, JEE, CAT, CLAT, GEAT, etc. Therefore, the market for private coaching for these entrance examinations already exists. Students have to go for costly coaching to get admission in medical colleges, IITs, NITs, and other colleges of repute. At the same time, they are not attending to schools in which they are enrolled. They are enrolled as dummy students and going for coaching after passing the Class 10, and some of them even before that. Right now, in most of the college and universities, admissions at undergraduate programmes of the general education are offered based on grades of Class 12 examinations. Even from the range of the best colleges of Delhi University to the low standard local district and sub-district level colleges, the same method is being followed. The reputation and importance of Class 12 examination has already been declined by the introduction of entrance examinations for the professional courses.

#### 3.2 Acute demand for and shortage of good quality institutions

Given the Indian employment and educational scenario, generally the candidates who possess the professional and technical degrees from reputed institution have relatively higher opportunity for better employment than who possess the other general (liberal) education degree. National level technical and professional education institutions like IITs, NITs, AIIMS, NLU, etc., enjoy very high prestige as the students from these institutions get the best employment in the job market. Therefore, there is a very tough competition to get admission therein. Students and their parents have very high aspirations and try hard to get admission there. Admissions are given through open and transparent common entrance examinations, where everybody has an equal opportunity. Generally, most of those who pass out from these institutions get not only the employment immediately but also sometimes a corporate employment at very lucrative and high pay with perks. It changes not only the life style of the candidate and their family but sometimes the economic class of the candidate as well. Thus, admission to these institutions becomes a break-even point in life of a student. As the prestige of these institutions is very high, the competition is also very high for admission. Particularly for middle-class families, the parents do whatever within their means with all possible best efforts to get entry of their wards. It makes competition extremely tough. As the competition is very harsh, the parents and student take the help of private coaching classes, which are very costly, sometimes even beyond their economic and financial means.

On the other, our past experience in the case of NEET, JEE, etc. shows that in these examinations, it is always tried that rote memorisation can help the students; only analytical ability and conceptual understanding are tested in these examinations, even then the culture of coaching has been mushrooming at a large scale, and it has become a big industry. Every time the organising agencies try hard to design the examinations in such a way that coaching and rote learning cannot help, still the culture of coaching is increasing day after day. Coaching for entrance is not increasing due to an imitation or copying effect rather up to

some extent it is creating a real effect on the performance of the aspirants. Every time coaching institutions advertise at large scale about the number of successful students from their coaching institutions and that is true also. Most of the successful candidates in these examinations have taken the help of these prestigious coaching institutions.

After all, why every attempt to eliminate the coaching classes by the organisers of these examinations is failed? It is true that in the entrance examinations, analytical ability, comprehension, and conceptual clarity are being tested, but the level of competition is extremely high and tough, and the number of available seats is very limited (see Table). When the number of applicants who have all these skills and abilities is many times higher than the number of seats available, the role of coaching starts then. If the number of candidates who have all these natural abilities and high level of effort significantly outnumbers the available seats, the agency which conducts the entrance examination has very high pressure to increase the level of difficulty and speed of solving the questions in the limited time. The more the competition, the higher will be the level of difficulties of the examination, to eliminate the candidates. In the coaching classes, students who have all these types of calibres and abilities, do practice many years (may be two or more) to enhance their ability further to solve more difficult and cumbersome problems at a high speed. Coaching classes groom and train these high calibre students to crack the entrance examinations. Finally, only the students who get the long, continuous, and rigorous training from these coaching institutions, have very high success rate. The number of available seats in good quality institutions is much less than the number of aspirants. The competition is not only among the students but also among the coaching institutions because the latter are business concerns.

### 3.3 Education as signalling device is going weak

One of the important roles of formal education is to work as a signalling device. It gives the signals to the employers about their prospective employees. Credentials like degrees, diplomas, and certificates, etc. of a candidate gives the signals about the ability, quality, dexterity, and capability of the candidate, so that one can assess them and give the employment accordingly. Nowadays this signalling device is going weak. One cannot give the assurance of the quality of a candidate by assessing their credentials only. Therefore, every employer has to organise their own competitive examinations to search the appropriate candidates for their requirement out of the army of unemployed youth. In the same way, this signalling device has become poor for the higher educational institutions, therefore for admissions they have to organise entrance examinations, particularly the prestigious institutions, to know the real merit of the students.

### 3.4 Private coaching is unavoidable

Whatever is asked in the common entrance examination the level of difficulty and designing, unpredictable, and ever-changing pattern of the questions is not taught in schools, rather it is taught only in the private coaching institutions. In some specific entrance examination such as aptitude test and higher and advance level curricula of the specific subjects, general knowledge, current affairs, verbal, and non-verbal reasoning are not the part of school curriculum. For example, in the national level entrance examination of

National Law Universities (CLAT), questions related to constitution and law are asked which is not generally part of the curriculum at Class 12. Only in the coaching classes for CLAT these things are taught and made practice. Coaching can also help to the academically weak students to improve their capabilities. Many students drop a year or more from their academic studies because they have not got admission in the desired course through entrance examination. They have to appear again and again to improve their performance in entrance examination, and for that they take help of private coaching institutions, full time for a year or more.

Private coaching service providers always try to maximise their profit and minimise the cost. For that they advertise only the stories of successful students and hide all their unsuccesses. In such a way, they establish a brand name in the coaching market. Once they are established, and become famous, then the best available students start coming to these famous institutions. As a result, the rate of success of these institutions further increases. In order to get more success, they give admission after sorting out only the best students, whose possibility to get success is higher. Thus, only the best students can get entry in the institutions which have the brand name, and the remaining have to go in the low ranked institutions with low success rate.

In such a way the students are segregated according to the ranks of the institutions. Because of this segregation process the success rate of the branded institutions, situated at higher echelon continues to increase their rank and their fees accordingly. Therefore, a very few institutions have very high success rate which is not because of only the best teaching there. Indeed, the whole process of branding and being famous is a result of getting the best students, whose probability to get success is high. This segregation process is not found only among the institutions but also within a specific institution. Every institution always segregates the students according to their future prospective and ability, by creating various groups of different levels, such as special ranker group (SRG) and treats them better. They work hard for the better students and remain careless for others. Top branded coaching institutions become huge corporate companies and they have cut-throat competition too. These companies are listed in stock market as well and their share prices are ever hiking.

### 3.5 How does private coaching help

How does the coaching business affect the national economy? Does the coaching really give a value added to the students? The objective of the entrance examination is to search the best mind among all the applicants. To crack the entrance examination and to get into the merit, it requires practicing the syllabi many times, so that one can get more efficiency to solve the problems. Though, the entrance examination organising agency try hard to set such a question paper which can completely eliminate the candidates who rely only on memorising and rote learning. For this purpose, they design the examinations in such a manner that requires analytical ability, problem solving ability and application of knowledge. They try to do this for eliminating the requirement of any coaching, but the competition is so severe and cut-throat, that it requires long practice with memorising the facts, which can only be provided by private coaching classes, where such regular tests are frequently organised with the same intensity and

competitive environment. Indirectly, these private coaching classes give training to aspirants in scientific and professional way, organised at large scale to enhance the competition to an extreme level among the aspirants. A negative aspect of these coaching classes is that it increases the level of competition and ability by the training is limited only to the candidates who take the coaching. It further increases the success rate of the coaching-trained aspirants. Those who do not go for coaching are deprived of all these long trainings, practice, and competitive environment, so their success rate is also found to be very low. Here, the objective of the entrance examination is to select the best minds becomes questionable. The organising agency of these common entrance examinations may not succeed in selecting the best minds rather it may select the best trained minds through private coaching, who can crack the entrance examination and get place into the merit. Thus, the objective of common entrance examination may be compromised to a great extent by the intervention of this private coaching business.

#### **4. Pros and Cons for common entrance examination**

##### **4.1 Positive aspects of coaching**

Though, there can be many arguments against and for the common entrance examination. It may promote the private coaching business, at the same time, there may be many positive aspects of initiating a common entrance examination at national level. In the NEP 2020, a national level common entrance examination has been proposed for higher education i.e., after Class12. Up to Class12 there is no entrance examination or even there is no merit for admission in any subject or stream as everybody has a right to get admissions in a school up to Class12, at least in a government school. There are a few special kind of government schools like Navodaya Vidyalayas, Kendriya Vidyalayas, Military Schools, etc., where admissions are restricted. At the level of higher education more resources are required therefore, everybody does not have a right to get admission. The number of seats is limited therefore, always merit is required to get admission, particularly in professional and technical education. As the resources are limited, we have to use all the resources with optimal allocation so that we can get maximum output. At the level of higher education, the resources are scarce, so to get maximum output we have to give admission to only the meritorious applicants. Higher educational institutions may be private or government but both are a part of national resources and whatever they produce is the part of the national income.

In higher education institutions a lot of subjects and streams are available and at the same time a long vertical hierarchy exists. Everybody wants to get admission in the institution located at the top in the hierarchy and in the course which is most popular. How to grant admission to the applicant is a vital problem? What should be the modus operandi? What should be the basis of admission- school level grades or a separate entrance examination of the subject and aptitude test or a mix of both? Multiple school boards (more than 50) exist in the country and their standards vary. Every state has at least one state school board. These state boards make the curriculum and conduct the examination according to the state specific necessities. These boards do not meet together for common standardisation so their grades are not comparable. To make a common merit at the national level

for admissions on the basis of Class 12 grades is almost impossible. Thus, to organise a common entrance examination is the only fair and just method remains to make national level common merit for admissions in higher education institutions.

The NEP 2020, suggests a common entrance examination comprising, an aptitude test, and another subject specific test. The Aptitude Test will be common for all subjects but subject specific tests will be as per the choice of the candidate in which they want to get admission. An applicant can choose as many subjects as they want to get admission in. As the number of seats is limited in higher education institutions, only a limited number of candidates can be given admission, an entrance examination looks reasonable. Now, no compartmentalisation will remain as per the NEP, 2020 in education system, so anybody can get admission in any subject or of any stream and a mix of any faculty, at the level of higher education. It becomes essential to test the knowledge of the specific subject of an individual candidate in which they want to get admission. The aptitude test gauges the analytical ability and ability of application of knowledge, so that higher cognitive ability of the candidate can be identified. At the same time, non-serious applicants can also be eliminated through this test.

All the higher education institutions want to give admission to the candidates of their choice. They want to test particularly the subject specific knowledge of the candidate in which they want to get admission, no matter in which subject they possesses the certificate or degree. If one's knowledge regarding the specific subject is good enough or up to the mark, one can be given the admission in the desired subject/course. Consequently, only Class 12 grades cannot help, merit can only be revealed through the entrance exam.

##### **4.2 Negative aspects of coaching**

###### **4.2.1 Coaching is Pro-rich**

In India the enrolment in the secondary education has increased at a very fast pace, and as a result the number of pass-outs has also increased in the same manner, but the capacity of higher education institutions is not commensurate with this growth of Class 12 pass-outs. Particularly, after 1991, implementation of new economic policies, namely economic liberalisation and globalisation, the economic growth rate of the country has increased rapidly. As a result, per capita income has also increased. People have become more aware about the education and size of the family has also declined, and finally family income has increased. Resultantly, the capacity of households to spend on education has increased. The enrolment in schools has also increased and the dropout rate has declined sharply. Many first-generation children have reached the school. Aspirations of the people have also got wings. Parents have become not only able to pay more for education of their wards but also, they want to invest more on education. They want to see that the next generation should not only be prosperous but also well educated. They are ready to cut their current consumption, and even ready to work harder for that.

All these first generation children generally went to government schools. Most of the government schools are not providing good quality education, particularly in the rural areas, where the number of vacant posts is high and governance is very poor. Some of these children are going

to the low-cost private school where quality of education is somewhat better than the government schools due to better governance. Their parents cannot send them to better quality private schools because they cannot afford the high fees and other expenditures of these schools. Though the enrolment in education system has increased at a satisfactory level, the overall quality of the education system could not commensurate with. Good quality private schools are not only very costly and beyond the capacity of the middle class but also their number is very few. Even the parents of highest income stratum of the society, have to struggle to obtain admission of their wards in these good quality private schools. Among the private schools most of the school are the low cost and so-called English medium ones, where the quality of education is low. A very few private schools are at middle level where the quality of education is up to the mark or reasonably good. But the best quality private schools are very few and extremely pricy.

The private coaching institutions are very discriminatory against the poor. Only the well-off have access. Though the government is also trying to provide coaching to the socially and economically disadvantaged group of the society at a very concessional rate, it is at a very small level and has not been successful in filling the gap between haves and have-not. Because of low quality of education in government schools and low-cost private schools, the parents have to send their wards to the private coaching or private tuition to compensate the quality of education. Private tuition can be of two types: one, is the supplementary to the main stream education, and the other is the substitute of the main stream education.

Moreover, the students from the well-off section of the society will be able to take admission in better institutions and better courses therein for general higher education, because only they can afford to go to costly private coaching institutions to prepare for entrance examinations, as is the already practice for admission in professional and technical courses just after passing Class 10. They may not be in their school; instead, they can be found in private coaching institutions. They may drop for one or more years if they could not get admission in the desired courses or institutions.

#### **4.2.2 Undermine the importance of school learning**

This proposed entrance examination system for all academic courses of general education may further decrease the importance of Class 12 examination. Quality of education depends upon many things including the quality of teachers and governance. Again the quality of teachers depends on many factors but mainly the salary and other facilities, which are given to them by the employer to attract the best minds. It is true that some missionary teachers who are very qualified and talented can teach on average or even a low salary and average service conditions. It is not always true for all teachers. We cannot attract the best minds by mediocre salary and service conditions. The government has limitations to pay the teacher which may not always be sufficient to attract the best minds available in the market.

Big corporate sized private coaching institutions do not have such restriction on package and service conditions. They can pay whatever is needed to attract the best minds available in the market. It is beyond common imagination, what they are paying to the teachers. The best coaching institutions in Kota, Rajasthan are giving the package of rupees 1 to 2

crore annually to attract the best minds. Such a package cannot be given in a school. In some private schools it is given rarely in extra ordinary circumstances but it is not common, particularly for the government schools. Most of the private schools are budget schools which do not charge very high fees, so they cannot pay high salaries to the teachers.

Nowadays, most of the private coaching institutions are substituting the main stream education in reality. Coaching institutions are not only supplementing but also giving the full time education as a school, and the students are formally enrolled in a dummy school where they do not need to go. Over the period of time this private coaching system is substituting the main stream education system. Though the process is very slow, it is increasing steadily.

Earlier the only upper-most income stratum of the society could afford the private coaching and only for supplementing the main stream education. Now, this prosperous stratum is also substituting the main stream education by the private coaching. Up to some extent, the middle stratum and neo-rich also are attracted by private coaching and using it as a supplement. Even at a slow pace, this middle stratum is also substituting the main stream education by private coaching. Earlier it was started in the metro and mega cities only, but nowadays it is expanding in the middle tire cities, townships and even in some rural areas. Earlier it was an exception but slowly it is going to be the common, socially accepted and even prestigious one.

#### **4.2.3 Nature versus nurture and coaching**

Inherent capacities of every person or faculty of mind are genetically given and cannot be changed, that is called 'nature'. We can give the training and education to a person or nurture them, so that their higher cognitive abilities can be realised up to its full potential. It includes proper food, shelter, social and emotional environments, education, and training; all these are equally important and essential for full realisation of the potential of higher cognitive abilities of a person. All these efforts are called 'nurture'. There is a debate which is more important for the educational outcome- nature or nurture. Without adequate of natural abilities i.e., nature, nurturing alone has its limitations. Similarly, without nurturing one cannot reach the stage of full potential of his own higher cognitive potential. Thus, nature alone has its own limitations too. Hence, nature and nurture both have their own role in the development of the potential of a person.

Nature is statistically distributed among all groups of people in a normal distribution pattern, given the sample size is large enough. It is distributed across all the classes, creeds, castes, religions, and geographical areas in the same pattern. As it is a natural attribute so statistically, it is distributed normally. An extremely small proportion of people will possess a very low amount of 'nature' and an extremely small proportion of people will have a very high amount of 'nature'. This pattern will be found in all classes, creeds, castes, religions and in geographical areas if the size of the group is large enough. Most of the people (a large proportion) will be in between the both extremes, which have average amount of nature. If our sample size is large enough or tends to infinite, there will be a continuum from lowest to highest amount of 'nature'.

One of the important objectives of entrance examination is to find out the best mind from the pool of available pass-

outs of the schools, which can be given the best opportunity for the best education and training. It can be done through the process of elimination. For this elimination, in order to search the best mind, entrance examination is found to be more appropriate than Class 12 examination. As the Class 12 examination, grades are not a good indicator of merit; it does not work as a good signalling device.

#### 4.2.4 Loss of national income

How private coaching system is wasting the national income? The best coaching institutions for entrance examination are claiming that their success rate is 10 per cent. If we assume this claim to be correct then what about the other coaching institutions? So, overall success rate in the private coaching institutions is 10 per cent or less than 10 per cent. What happens to those 90 per cent candidates who could not get success in the entrance examination? Some of them drop their formal education and continue the coaching for one year or sometimes two years also. The number of pass-outs from schools is many times more than the available seats in the good quality higher education institutions. As a result, all the aspirants for admission in higher education cannot be accommodated. It creates tough competition among the aspirants, particularly, to get the admission in best quality liberal, technical and professional education institutions

After the economic liberalisation, particularly after 1991, private sector has been expanding tremendously. As the private sector increase, the new big corporation also expand. It creates new jobs in the corporate sector, paying extremely huge package at the middle and higher-level management. These pay packages were not available earlier. Their packages are so attractive and big that sometimes they pay to a fresher much higher than what a top government official gets. These highly paid jobs are possible only through the education and training in top quality higher education institutions. It makes the admission in these top institutions much attractive and it becomes the key to success. Once somebody gets admission in these institutions, the probability to get a very high paid job is very high. Not only professional institutions like IITs, NITs, IIMs, and NLUs but also the best institutions of liberal educations can provide such kinds of placements.

For the middle class and neo-rich parents, whose wards are first generation learners, to provide good quality education and for that to get admission in top quality higher education institutions, is a legal and decent way for social mobilisation towards higher stratum of the society. It is the only respectful and socially accepted way for upward social mobility. But the problem is that success rate there is very low. Then the question arise what happens to those who could not get success even after dropping many years to get admission in these top institutions.

The condition of the candidates, who could not get success in entrance examination even after successive dropping of one or two years, becomes very miserable. Sometimes a few failure students could not get assimilated in the main stream in alternative educational institutions. Whatever they learnt in the coaching institutions in many years with their hard labour and efforts has no use for their future life any more. It becomes futile. If we think at macro level, whatever the money, time, and efforts they spent in coaching institution is the part of national income. Not only those who could not get success, but also those who get success the money, time,

and efforts spend are not useful for their future studies. Indeed, the objective of entrance examination is only to choose the best minds, therefore, it works only as a signalling device, it does not have any value added. Keeping in the mind, all these factors (money, time, and efforts spent on the coaching) is the wastage of national income. Indirectly the whole business of coaching classes and its related and allied services also plays the negative role in national income. These coaching related and allied services are the by-product of coaching business such as advertisements, hostels, paying guest home, transportation, books, stationery, etc. It is like a government scheme in which out of 100 rupees spend and only 10 rupees reach to beneficiaries and the remaining spending on the implementation process of scheme is mere wastage. Whatever is taught in the coaching gives no value addition. It is only the signalling technique which helps us to search the best mind. We should look for new alternatives to search the best mind. There is no evidence that students who get admission after coaching perform better while studying after admission in the desired course, as compared to the students who get admission without any private coaching (Dang and Rogers, 2008).

Although the government and the entrance examination organisers are also aware about the negative effects of coaching culture and trying to minimise this, their remedial measures are not very effective. Every year the organisers of entrance examination design and change the pattern of the examinations in such a way that it cannot be predicted by coaching institutions. They design the question paper in a very analytical manner where practical application of knowledge is required and rote learning cannot work. The organisers of entrance examinations are also trying to increase the weight of the eligibility examination (Class 12).

#### 4.2.5 No Returns from education in coaching

Education is considered an investment good, where the returns are very high and lifelong. If a person has good academic record at school level their prospects to get admission in the best higher education institution increase, and as a result the probability to get better employment and higher income also enhances. Thus, the elementary and secondary education is the basis of higher education. If we invest more on education, higher will be the probability to get higher income in future. There is a positive correlation between better education and higher future income. If we consider all these arguments, the private tuition and private coaching can be justified. If somebody is academically weak and wants to improve it through private tuition or coaching, then it cannot be considered a negative thing. Everybody has a right to invest in education if they consider it gives them more returns in future. Similarly, if somebody is good at academics and even then, they want to improve their capability through private tuition or private coaching, it should not be considered negative.

As education is also a merit good so, if somebody wants to invest more in education, it should not be considered undesirable, rather the private investment in education should be promoted by the state. At the same time education is the consumption good. In an open market economy, somebody has money and wants to consume any good or service which is legally allowed, then he should be free to consume whatever quantity he wants. If the education is privately available in the form of private tuition or coaching

then everybody has a right to consume as far as they have desire to consume and have money to spend. So far as education is a merit good, and economy is open then private tuition and coaching cannot be considered an evil for the society, rather it is positive.

### 5. Challenges

Although, it is assured in the policy that the entrance examination will be designed in such a manner, there will be no need for any private coaching, our experience, in case of NEET, JEE and CLAT, etc., does not agree with this argument of the policy. In these existing entrance examinations, organising agencies always try to design the question papers and curricula in such a way that private coaching will not be required. After all these continuous efforts of the organising agency, coaching institutions for these examinations are not only proliferated but also become unavoidable and essential to crack the entrance examination. The importance and prestige of Class 12 examination has already been declining day after day and this new common aptitude test for entrance for admission at undergraduate level may further decline it. It will further demean the school level examination and teaching-learning process. We can construe that only the well-off may be benefited by this new common entrance test. The importance of regular schooling has been declined already for the aspirants of professional and technical courses. Similarly, it may apply for all the general education. It may again widen the gap between the various social and economic classes of haves and have-nots.

'The current nature of secondary school examinations, including Board examinations and entrance examinations - and the resulting coaching culture of today-- is doing much harm, especially at the secondary school level, replacing valuable time for true learning with excessive examination coaching and preparation. These examinations also force students to learn a very narrow band of material in a single stream, rather than allowing the flexibility and choice that will be so important in the education system of the future'. (Para 4.36, NEP, 2020)

In the Policy, a deep concern has been expressed about the coaching culture, not only for the entrance examinations but for the board examinations also. Students are substituting their valuable time from learning process in the schools coaching and preparation for the entrance examinations. The policy has envisioned that in the future the course curriculum and the examination pattern will be designed in such a way that core capacities, critical analysis, and application of knowledge can be tested, not merely memorising and psittacism. In the current education system, the board examinations are held annually and too much undue importance is given to memorising and rote-learning rather than continuous and comprehensive evaluation of

analytical abilities of the students. In future, the examination pattern will be designed in such a way that it will not be a burden and high pressure on the students, the examination will be easier than today, may be conducted twice a year and better results will be accounted (Para 4.42, NEP, 2020). The proposed common aptitude test and specialised common subject examination will change the admission process. The entrance examination will be for both undergraduate and postgraduate admissions. The scores of the entrance examination will also be used for fellowships. The Policy claims that only conceptual understanding and ability to apply the knowledge will be tested rather than rote memorisation in the entrance examination, so that coaching will not be required for the entrance test.

The number of the best institutions and seats therein are much less than the number of aspirants. The number of aspirants is many times more than seats for admission (sometime 40 times, Table No.1). Every candidate has a high ambition to get admission and Parents are much desirous of making their wards successful in getting admission to the best institution. They try hard and leave no stone unturned for that and make every possible effort. Some parents are so desperate that they start their efforts at an early age, even from Class 1. They try for admission in the best English medium school, then go for private tuition, and after Class 10 private coaching for that. Indeed, they are so eager to get admission, leaving apart professional and technical education, in the best college even for the general education for their child at any cost. If we observe in University of Delhi in the year 2012, 354003 students applied for its 63 Colleges, and every student wanted to get admission within the top 5 or top 10 colleges and most popular courses therein. Some of the top colleges of Delhi University had declared their cut-off 100 per cent marks in Class 12 for admission in undergraduate studies (India Today online, New Delhi, June 26, 2012), then the MHRD had to intervene in the matter. Even in the CBSE results, the number of students who secured 100 per cent marks in Class 12 was more than the number of available seats in these prestigious colleges. Some colleges organised aptitude test for some courses for further screening apart from Class 12 marks.

We can see the extent of competition for admission at various courses in prestigious institutions (see Table). These data clearly indicate that private coaching and private tuition is going to be an unavoidable disease that is mushrooming in our education system. Although the policy gives a hint that the coaching culture has many negative effects on the education system, the solution suggested in the policy to get rid from the coaching system may not get succeed. As has been envisioned in the policy that a better designing of entrance examinations will eliminate coaching classes may not necessarily be successful.

**Table 1:** Extent of Competition (Year 2020)

Details	No. of applicant	No. of seats	Number of candidates per seat
MBBS (Only Govt.)	1597000	42495	37.58
MBBS (Govt + Pvt.)	1597000	80000	19.96
IITs	858000	16053	53.45
NLU's	75183	3258	23.08
university of Delhi	354003	70000	5.06
JNU*	108982	3018	36.11

Source: Various organising agencies, \* Data belongs to 2019

Indeed, the need for the coaching is not due to the lack of only pedagogical method and problem in question design of entrance examination; it is something beyond these factors.

There is cut-throat competition for admission in the best institutions and the best courses therein. When such an extreme level of competition exists, where the number of

candidates is many folds higher than the number of available seats (sometimes 40-fold, Table 1), top five percentile candidate are almost at par in terms of academic quality and brilliance, and have the best mind as well as best training to crack the entrance examination. Obviously, the organiser has to increase the level of difficulty to eliminate the candidate and limit them to the number of seats, in such a way the entire process becomes elimination-centric, consequently the aspirants do their best to achieve the target from the beginning of their education. Some belong to the affluent class, where money does not matter, they also make all efforts whatever for their wards' best education. They can afford anything from personal tutor to personal attendant for their wards. Their houses are to be found with full of servants, every kind of facilities are available for them at back and call.

Education is in concurrent list in the Indian constitution, where states (provinces) as well as central government can make their policies and laws regarding education. As India is a federal country, it will be very difficult and challenging to implement an education policy, which is made only by the central government. Recently, after the declaration of the Education Policy 2020, many states opposed to implement its various provisions. The government of Tamil Nadu opposed the common entrance examination for higher education organised by the NTA at national level. It argues that a national level common entrance examination will be against the rural students and at the same time it will also be an extra burden on the students (ref. NBT). Tamil Nadu has already adopted the policy to oppose the national level entrance examination for medical institution, organised by the NTA i.e., NEET. In such conditions, a nationwide acceptance of any entrance examination at national level will be a challenge because it may be opposed by the government of some states (provinces).

## 6. Conclusions

The proposed entrance examination in NEP 2020, for general higher education, may enhance an unwanted by-product that is private coaching. However, the policy itself says that the need for coaching will be eliminated through better design of the question paper for entrance examination, but, to what extent these measures will be effective are not beyond doubt. As we know that country is already afflicted with negative effects of the private coaching system, in the case of professional and technical education.

Approximate one third population in the country is still below the poverty line, in such a condition – how the private coaching system will ensure the equal opportunity for all? Only the well-off can afford the private coaching. The coaching system is so embodied in the society that for getting admission in the best institutions is almost unavoidable. Aspirants are not going to the regular school, rather they are enrolled in dummy schools which are arranged by the private coaching institutions. Indirectly this private coaching system is completely undermining the teaching learning in school system. Apart from this, the private coaching system does not impart any value addition in the education system. Moreover, it may not be an efficient method to search the best mind from the pool of aspirants, rather it may select the only aspirants who get the opportunity to attend the best training to crack the entrance examination, from the best private coaching institution. In this system we select the candidate from a small pool who can attend the best private coaching, and not only this, among this pool we select not the best mind but the best trained mind to crack the examination only.

There are multiple school boards in the country and their standards may vary because there is no common curriculum or system for standardising the grades. Not only this, the integrity of various state boards is not beyond doubt. Therefore, we cannot make a national level common merit for admission by using the grades of Class 12. Although, in the NEP 2020, a provision has been made that a national level and a state level body for every state will be constitute for the common standardisation of various state and national level boards. And before this policy many state boards have already adopted a common curriculum in science and commerce faculty for Class 12. Moreover, education department of a few states have adopted almost full curriculum of NCERT. This step may help for common standardisation of school education among all states. It may help to some extent to solve the problem of parity across the school education boards.

The common entrance examination at national level may be unavoidable but some reforms may be helpful to minimise the ill effects of private coaching culture. Apart from the standardising the Class 12 grades across all the school boards, weightage of the Class 12 grades can be added with entrance examination so that school learning system can be given its due importance. At the same time government can provide, free or at a reasonable rate, to the disadvantaged group of the society. Private coaching is regulated as a business concern for the tax purposes, but it is not regulated as an education provider like private schools and colleges, where fee structure, admission norms, reservation, holidays, basic infrastructure facilities, transparency in the declaration of teachers' profile and their salary structure etc, are regulated by the state. We have seen earlier that there are many complaints against private coaching institutions such as they are charging exorbitant fee, their faculties are substandard. Some of them are deceiving the students and parents through exaggerate and false advertisements, they do not have even the basic infrastructure and give admission more than their capacity without fire safety clearance.

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