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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

One Day Is Not Four Years: Barring Entrance Ranks From Placement Resumes

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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THE LIFT LINE

The rank that opened the gate should not also be the badge you wear at the exit, because a number earned in one three-hour examination cannot describe what a person became over the four years that followed.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

The decision to bar Joint Entrance Examination ranks and Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering scores from placement resumes is a small administrative act with a large idea inside it. The idea is that an admission filter is not a competence certificate. A candidate's JEE rank measures how that candidate performed, relative to a cohort, on a single day of testing at the age of seventeen or eighteen. It says nothing about the engineering that student then learned, the projects built, the failures survived, or the maturity gained. To let recruiters screen final-year students by that rank is to declare four years of education irrelevant, which is a strange message for an institution of learning to send. The reform pushes hiring back towards what the degree was supposed to signal all along: demonstrated learning.

GS Paper 2: issues relating to the development and management of the education sector; government policies and interventions; social justice and equity in access to opportunity.

For **Prelims**, hold the specifics: the National Education Policy 2020 and its emphasis on competency-based, [holistic](https://ujjyari.com/vocab/holistic/) and continuous assessment, learning outcomes, and multidisciplinary education; the Choice Based Credit System and the Academic Bank of Credits; the difference between norm-referenced testing, where a candidate is ranked against others, and criterion-referenced testing, where a candidate is measured against a defined standard; and the coaching economy concentrated in centres that prepare students for JEE and NEET. For **Mains**, argue that an over-reliance on a single high-stakes entrance test creates [perverse](https://ujjyari.com/vocab/perverse/) incentives, from coaching dependence to neglect of in-course learning, and that assessment reform must reward what a student demonstrably knows and can do.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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India's engineering pipeline is built on one filter of extraordinary weight. Millions sit the JEE; a rank in the tens or hundreds decides which institution and often which branch a student enters. Because the stakes are so concentrated on a single test, an entire coaching industry has grown around cracking it, families relocate and borrow to fund it, and adolescence for lakhs of aspirants narrows into exam preparation. The rank, once obtained, acquires a mystique that outlasts its usefulness. Alumni cite it years later; recruiters ask for it; a hierarchy of prestige is frozen at eighteen.

The trouble is that the rank was only ever an admission tool. It sorted applicants for scarce seats. It was never designed to certify engineering competence, and it cannot, because the competence in question is acquired after admission, not before. Allowing it to travel onto a placement resume confuses the ticket of entry with the achievement of the journey.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

Signalling theory and its distortion

In labour economics, education works partly as a signal: a degree tells an employer something the employer cannot directly observe about a candidate's ability and diligence. A healthy signal reflects what happened during the course. An entrance rank is a pre-course signal, and privileging it inverts the logic, telling students that the decisive event already happened before their education began. That inversion corrodes the incentive to learn once admitted, because if the rank still opens doors at graduation, the four years in between matter less.

What an entrance rank does and does not measure

ATTRIBUTE AN EMPLOYER WANTS	DOES THE ENTRANCE RANK CAPTURE IT	WHERE IT SHOULD BE READ
Foundational aptitude at entry	Partly, on one day	JEE or GATE, at admission only
Engineering knowledge gained	No	Course grades, projects, viva
Ability to apply and build	No	Internships, portfolio, labs
Teamwork and communication	No	Group projects, interviews
Growth over four years	No	Continuous, in-course assessment
Persistence and character	No	Sustained record, references

The table makes the point plainly. Almost everything a recruiter genuinely needs to know is generated during the programme, not at its gate.

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Equity and the coaching premium

The entrance rank also carries an equity charge. A high rank often reflects access to expensive coaching as much as raw ability, so a hiring practice that leans on it quietly rewards the family that could pay for preparation. Judging students by what they built during a level playing-field of four years, rather than by a rank shaped partly by pre-college privilege, is the fairer test.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

Ask what any measurement is a proxy (<https://ujjayari.com/vocab/proxy/>) for, and whether the proxy still tracks the thing after circumstances change. The JEE rank is a decent proxy for readiness to begin an engineering course. It is a poor proxy for readiness to practise engineering four years later, because the intervening education is precisely what should now be measured. The transferable rule for GS2 education answers: reforms should shift assessment from a single high-stakes gate to continuous, competency-based evaluation, because what you measure is what students optimise for. Measure entry alone, and you get a coaching arms race. Measure demonstrated learning, and you get students who actually learn. NEP 2020 is built on this exact insight, and this placement decision is one small application of it.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

Single high-stakes entrance (JEE or GATE) -> rank decides institution and branch at age eighteen -> coaching economy and family debt around the filter -> rank acquires lasting mystique -> recruiters screen final-year students by rank -> four years of learning discounted, in-course effort de-incentivised, pre-college privilege rewarded -> reform: bar entrance ranks from placement resumes -> hiring reads course record, projects, internships, interviews -> assessment realigned with NEP 2020 competency and learning-outcome goals

WAY FORWARD

- ❶ **Make the in-course record the primary signal.** Ensure transcripts, capstone projects, internships and verified portfolios, rather than an admission rank, are what recruiters see first, so that learning during the degree becomes the thing that pays.
- ❷ **Deepen continuous, competency-based assessment.** Implement the NEP 2020 vision of learning outcomes and criterion-referenced evaluation across institutions, so a degree certifies demonstrated ability against a standard, not a position in a cohort.

- ③ **Cool the coaching arms race.** Reduce the singular weight of one entrance test through broader eligibility bands and multiple assessment inputs, easing the adolescent pressure and the equity distortion that heavy coaching dependence creates.
- ④ **Educate employers on what predicts performance.** Encourage recruiters to value structured assessments of applied skill and behaviour over legacy rank-worship, since evidence links on-the-job performance to demonstrated competence, not to an entrance percentile.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

UPSC has asked about the coaching culture, the National Education Policy, and equity in education. This editorial converts those themes into an evaluative argument about the difference between an admission filter and a competence certificate, which is the analytical depth the examiner looks for beyond a description of the policy.

Practice question: “A single entrance examination cannot substitute for the assessment of four years of learning.” In the light of this statement, examine how India’s reliance on high-stakes entrance tests distorts education and hiring, and suggest reforms consistent with NEP 2020. (250 words, 15 marks)

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/>), *Ministry of Education* (<https://www.education.gov.in/>)

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