

**Examrace**

## Competitive Exams Essay: Maladies Afflicting the Education System

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The Indian educational scene today presents a picture of bewildering contradictions but one feature sticking out like a sore thumb is that of utter confusion. The contradictions arise from a variety of factors which include: Social inequalities, rising expectations of the emerging generation and erosion of the value system which prevailed during the mid-twentieth century, in fact, these had led to the creation of educational institutions of different types ranging from the very good alas, very few in number to the average or mediocre type and way down to the poor a very large number. The disparities in relation to the quality and commitment of the teachers, the type of laboratory and library facilities and the amenities like playgrounds are to say the least startling.

The confusion arises on account of the pulls and pushes which the system is subjected to by a wide array of agencies, both government and private. There are a few bright spots in the picture but these are fast dwindling.

Come June, the scramble for admission into the higher educational institutions becomes almost painful to the parents and their wards. While a large number of arts and science colleges have sprung up in the last two decades all over the country, the number of seats also going up in proportion, the growing number of aspirants desiring to acquire degrees must also be reckoned with. There has been unfortunately a sort of distortion in the way students are gaining entry into the colleges theoretically all those who are eager to gain knowledge must be accommodated but due to various reasons it has not been happening. Several social factors and inequalities have led to this situation. There is now a danger of the social fabric itself being torn asunder since the divisions into caste, sub-castes, communities apart from religion are playing havoc with the campus atmosphere. No part of subcontinent is immune from this malaise.

When it comes to professional education, the picture turns still more murky. The parents of the student completing the school leaving stage 10th class get into an anxiety syndrome, worrying constantly about the subjects their wards should take up in the higher or senior secondary stage 11th and 12th class which goes by different names in different States intermediate or pre-degree or plain higher or senior secondary. It is at the end of the 12th class that the pupils must be prepared to get grilled appearing for a number of entrance tests Joint Entrance Examination or JEE for the Indian Institutes of Technology, State level engineering or medical colleges. April, May and June turn out to be a harrowing period for a large number of middle class families as a result.

With several thousand students appearing for these examinations and the chances of only a few getting in, the outcome is quite grim. It is frustration all round. The amount of time, money and energy spent in preparing and appearing for these tests is staggering. In some cases, almost a permanent scar is left as a result of this traumatic phase.

The Governments in several States have evolved different norms for selection of candidates to the engineering, medical and other professional courses. Since the competition is very stiff, a sort of adjustment in relation to reservation, quota for other States and special categories becomes necessary but nowhere in the country has a satisfactory system been evolved. The emergence of the self-financing professional colleges over the last two decades has in a way eased the situation but other complications arose, mainly relating to the huge amounts collected by way of capitation fees euphemism for donation, not of a voluntary type and the tuition fees levied. The Supreme Court's intervention has now resulted in a fee structure which goes to prove that the remedy is worse than the disease.

Indeed, right from the kindergarten stage, the education of a citizen is being shaped in devious ways. In recent years, the demand for seats in the KG classes has gone up. Actually, people go to any extent in order to admit the toddlers even in the pre-KG section. This is part of the early childhood education ECE scenario. Several arguments are given in favor of this trend.

These include: a the children get a head-start in schooling and in these days of hectic competition, the little ones must get used early to the habit of turning sociable; b since both parents are almost invariably employed, it is difficult to keep the children at home or entrust them to the care of some domestic help; c after the break-up of the joint family system, housewives by themselves are not able to look after the little ones since no in-laws or mothers are there to help.

What must make the people sit up and take note is the erosion of values in the social set-up. Respect for the elders and a spirit of give and take have virtually disappeared among the youth of today. This can be traced to the influence o films and television which, unfortunately, portray in a stark fashion the seamier side of life.

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