

Ever since the first issue in 1966, EPW has been India's premier journal for comment on current affairs and research in the social sciences. It succeeded *Economic Weekly* (1949–1965), which was launched and shepherded by SACHIN CHAUDHURI, who was also the founder-editor of EPW. As editor for 35 years (1969–2004) KRISHNA RAJ gave EPW the reputation it now enjoys.

## EDITOR

**GOPAL GURU**

## EXECUTIVE EDITOR

**LINA MATHIAS**

## SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITORS

**LUBNA DUGGAL****INDU K****SUNIPA DASGUPTA**

## COPY EDITORS

**JYOTI SHETTY****TEJAS HARAD**

## ASSISTANT EDITORS

**NACHIKET KULKARNI****SHRUTI JAIN**

## EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

**JEMIMAH GOMES**

## PRODUCTION

**U RAGHUNATHAN****SUNEETHI NAIR**

## CIRCULATION

**KULDEEP NAWATHE**

## ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER

**KAMAL G FANIBANDA**

## GENERAL MANAGER &amp; PUBLISHER

**GAURAANG PRADHAN**

EDITORIAL: edit@epw.in

CIRCULATION: circulation@epw.in

ADVERTISING: advertisement@epw.in

**ECONOMIC & POLITICAL WEEKLY**

320–322, A TO Z INDUSTRIAL ESTATE  
GANPATRAO KADAM MARG, LOWER PAREL  
MUMBAI 400 013  
PHONE: (022) 4063 8282

**EPW RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

EPW Research Foundation, established in 1993, conducts research on financial and macro-economic issues in India.

## DIRECTOR

**J DENNIS RAJAKUMAR**

C 212, AKURLI INDUSTRIAL ESTATE  
KANDIVALI (EAST), MUMBAI 400 101

PHONES: (022) 2887 3038/41  
epwrf@epwrf.in

**SAMEEKSHA TRUST**

(Publishers of *Economic & Political Weekly*)

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**DEEPAK NAYYAR**, CHAIRMAN**SHYAM MENON**, MANAGING TRUSTEE**ANDRÉ BÉTEILLE**, **D N GHOSH**,**DEEPAK PAREKH**, **ROMILA THAPAR**,**RAJEEV BHARGAVA**, **DIPANKAR GUPTA**,**N JAYARAM**, **SUDIPTO MUNDLE**

Printed and published by Gauraang Pradhan, for and on behalf of Sameeksha Trust and printed at Modern Arts and Industries, 151, A–Z Industrial Estate, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai–400 013 and published at 320–322, A–Z Industrial Estate, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai–400 013

Editor: Gopal Guru (Editor responsible for selection of news under the FRB Act)

**Revisiting NEET**

The medical health education systems in India have not grown qualitatively over the years in spite of a massive expansion in the number and interventions from various stakeholders. The chapter on health education in the draft National Education Policy (NEP), 2019 also does not provide for any improvement on quality, and is subject to many contradictions and ambiguities.

The proposal for a national common exit exams at the end of the fourth year, which will also serve as an entrance test for postgraduate programmes, like the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test postgraduate (NEET-PG), is very likely a farce. Mandating exit exams for prospective postgraduate students massacres the tradition of clinical practice after graduation and the ideology of serving the rural public. The medical graduates will be carried away by the competitive multiple choice question (MCQ) exams, rather than the acquiring of clinical skills. As per a senior professor from a government medical college in Tamil Nadu,

Now the medicos are keen to attend entrance coaching classes rather than my theory classes in medicine and attending the patients in OP/bedside unlike previous times. This has tremendously affected the quality of doctors passing out these days.

The locus standi for an exit exam itself is suspect, and bringing it forward into the fourth year is even more undesirable. The NEET UG [undergraduate], NEET-PG and exit exams are forcing students to enrol in coaching centres, which distance healthcare education from medical students hailing from middle and poor socio-economic backgrounds, thus contradicting the NEP's goal.

One central problem with the policy draft is reducing all considerations of quality to performance in a common national examination, which is a poor indicator of medical competence and none at all of skills, either hard or soft. The present system is not up to the mark, but it has the potential for improvement through more reforms. This includes a greater emphasis on teacher education, process criteria like residency work in different

departments, regular formative internal evaluation, exposure to field situations, training on soft skills, learning the use of information technology (IT) platforms and so on. The draft NEP seems to be integrating healthcare education, but not actually respecting the various professions within the healthcare sector.

The other problem with the policy draft is an unquestioned acceptance of MCQ-based common testing as the only objective test of merit, where merit is conceptualised much like a physical quality (like measuring the height or weight of students), over its primary strategy of developing clinical skills. In reality, MCQs fragment knowledge into small bits that can be memorised, usually without context. Performance would inadvertently reflect the way a subject is treated in the school board examinations, as well as have its own implicit knowledge structures. Students also respond differently to stress and to making rapid-fire choices within a limited time period. All these facts account for the huge success of coaching institutes, and within these, of some more than others. Under-served states, regions and communities would need affirmative action and this understanding of a standardised and absolute measure of merit runs counter to all that we know about what makes for a sensitive healthcare provider who can serve such communities. Many meritorious students have committed suicide as a result of the NEET examination in the last two years. The NEET is also less favourable to those students with a non-CBSE, background and those from rural and backward communities.

Another side of this understanding of merit is the high levels of discrimination that Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) and to a lesser extent Other Backward Class (OBC) students face within the educational institutions even after admission, merely because they have a lower cut-off at the time of admission (as brought out recently by the suicide of Payal Tadvi in one of Mumbai's prestigious medical education institutions).

Most important, the NEET undermines the federal powers of states to make plans to expand healthcare education on

terms that can serve their own populations. It is not only knowledge that makes for a good healthcare provider. An ability to relate to the community served and to find fulfilment in this service is even more important. While tests cannot measure this, the policies of admission, the site, contexts and modes of training, and the nature of curriculum adaptation are all important to build this understanding. The presence of a standardised NEET reduces the scope for medical institutions to draft their own curriculum within a broader framework, and their capacity for innovations and improvements. A case in point is with regard to Christian Medical College Vellore, whose entire admission process was disrupted by the NEET. While this did not undermine or improve the quality of graduates they produce, it completely disrupted their ability to reach out to under-served and marginalised communities.

While granting individual institutions autonomy to draft their own curriculum will be a fatal blow to medical education, there is a need for innovation, adaptation and constant improvements, which a standardised NEET obstructs. Much better forms of assessment and regulation are required, and again, the draft NEP is found wanting in this regard. The concern that medical institutions will game any system of regulation, and therefore common examinations are the only solution, rises in a context where there are many for-profit agencies operating at huge profit margins. The obvious solution is limiting healthcare education to public agencies and select not-for-profits, and excluding profit considerations from the running of these institutions.

In Tamil Nadu, after the implementation of the NEET exam in speciality and super-specialty courses, the in-service reservation of seats was scrapped. In the past three years, the number of in-service doctors entering into higher studies decreased, which ultimately will result in a deficit of specialists in the public health sector. To restore in-service reservation in post-graduate medical degree/diploma, a case filed by the Tamil Nadu Medical Officers Association (TNMOA) is still pending in the Supreme Court. Hence, it is not a

coincidence that Tamil Nadu, one of India's best-performing states in healthcare and having one of the best planned expansions of medical education under the public sector, has come out in united opposition to the NEET and pushed for its withdrawal. All political parties, with the sole exception of the Bharatiya Janata Party, have adopted resolutions or included the withdrawal of Tamil Nadu from NEET in their manifestos.

The solutions are to limit the scope of the NEET to All India Quota seats (UG [15%], PG seats [50%]) and State Quota seats, allowing the states to formulate their own transparent admission systems, which provides fair access to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The admission systems should be tested for fairness in assessing merit and for effectiveness in meeting the service requirements of the regions and communities where they are needed the most. It is also necessary to build a strong process-oriented quality regulation system for healthcare education, creating special participatory public institutions that can play this role. Such regulatory bodies would include—but not be limited to—medical professionals even in leadership roles. The quality regulation process that would include the exit examination would need the approval of a central regulatory body for conformity to basic standards, but need not be fully defined by the central body.

**T Sundararaman , Adithyan GS**

**MUMBAI**

### **Philosophy in Daily Life**

The postscript article “What Is Philosophy?” by Suyash Saxena (*EPW*, 15 June 2019) was a delightful read. The author answered a question that was not so easy to answer, that too in a form understandable to a nine-year-old child.

It is learned that philosophy, like all sciences, is a pursuit of knowledge in the mundane affairs of daily life; that philosophy, like art, is essentially an activity

of discovering the abstract beauty hidden behind the obviousness of ordinary things, which go unnoticed by an ordinary person.

There is not much difference between the “mysterious” smile of Mona Lisa and the smiles one encounters daily. But Leonardo Da Vinci, with his extraordinary mind, successfully extracted the beauty of this ordinary smile and brilliantly expressed it through the art of painting. Ordinary minds lack such perception. Hence, many events of everyday life go unnoticed and unappreciated until thought of and acted upon by extraordinary minds, like those of Da Vinci, Picasso and their ilk.

“Where science ends, philosophy starts.” Essentially, there is no conflict between science and philosophy or science and art as believed by the common person. Rabindranath Tagore asserted that the essence of science lies in its beauty. Incidentally, Einstein's “ $E=mc^2$ ” is the most beautiful equation ever created by man. Thus, philosophy is the mother of all wisdom and all sciences are her children.

The author further goes on to state, “Philosophy is an activity of making the obvious a bit more obvious.” Having understood the essence of philosophy and its application in ordinary business of life, it may be asserted that in today's chaotic world, a large number of philosophers are needed, not only to make sense of daily life, but to “help people shape their behaviour in the desirable direction.”

**Samares Kumar Das**

**NAGALAND**

### **Corrigendum**

In the article “Statewise Report Cards on Ecological Sustainability of Agriculture in India” by Velguri et al in the Review of Rural Affairs supplement (in this issue), some data in column 12 of Figure 1 was incorrect.

The errors have been corrected on the website.

### **EPW Engage**

The following article has been published in the past week in the *EPW Engage* section ([www.epw.in/engage](http://www.epw.in/engage)).

(1) Examining the Draft National Education Policy, 2019—*Kumkum Roy*

# Subscription Rates

(Revised rates effective April, 2019)

## Print Edition – For India

### Rates for Six Months (in Rs)

Category	Print	Print + Digital Archives
Individuals	1,900	2,655

### Rates for One Year (in Rs)

Category	Print	Print + Digital Archives (According to Number of Concurrent Users)		
		Up to 5	More than 5	Single User
Institutions	5,500	11,800	17,700	
Individuals	3,300			4,720
Students	1,800			3,068

### Rates for Three Years (in Rs)

Category	Print	Print + Digital Archives Single User
Individuals	9,000	11,800

Concessional rates are restricted to students in India. To subscribe at concessional rates, please submit proof of eligibility from an institution.

*Print Edition:* Subscriber receives the print copy by post to the address given.

*Print plus Digital Archives:* Subscriber receives the print copy and has access to the entire archives on the EPW website.

## Print Edition — For SAARC and Rest of the World (Air Mail)

### Airmail Subscription for One Year (in US \$)

	Print	Print + Digital Archives (According to Number of Concurrent Users)		
		Up to 5	More than 5	Single User
<b>Institutions</b>				
SAARC	215		500	
Rest of the World	430	600	1,000	
<b>Individuals</b>				
SAARC	175			200
Rest of the World	250			300

## Web Edition/Digital Archives

The full content of the EPW and the entire archives are also available to those who do not wish to subscribe to the print edition.

Category	India (in Rs)		SAARC (in US \$)		Rest of the World (in US \$)	
	Number of Concurrent Users		Number of Concurrent Users		Number of Concurrent Users	
Institutions	Up to Five	6,490			Up to Five	300
	More than 5	14,160	More than 5	250	More than 5	750
Individuals	Single User	2,360	Single User	100	Single User	150

## Types of Web Access to the Digital Archives

Individual subscribers can access the site by a username and a password, while institutional subscribers get access by specifying IP ranges.

To know more about online access to the archives and how to access the archives send us an email at [circulation@epw.in](mailto:circulation@epw.in) and we will be pleased to explain the process.

## How to Subscribe:

Payment can be made by either sending a demand draft/cheque in favour of **Economic and Political Weekly** or by making online payment with a credit card/net banking on our secure site at [www.epw.in](http://www.epw.in).

Address for communication: **Economic & Political Weekly**  
320–322, A to Z Industrial Estate, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg,  
Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 013, India

### Increase in Subscription Rates

The EPW is compelled to raise the Digital Subscription Rates on account of Goods and Service Tax (GST) being applicable to Digital Subscriptions. The GST rate for Online Information Data Base Access and Retrieval (OIDAR) is 18%. The category Print plus Digital will also attract 18% as GST. The subscription rates quoted are inclusive of the 18% GST rate.

## Notes for Contributors

Contributors are requested to follow EPW's style sheet while preparing their articles. The style sheet is posted on EPW's website at <http://www.epw.in/style-sheet.html>.

It will help immensely for faster processing and error-free editing if writers follow the recommended style sheet, especially with regard to citation and preparation of the bibliography.

### Special Articles

EPW welcomes original research papers in any of the social sciences.

- Articles must be no more than 7,000 words long, including notes and references. Longer articles will not be processed.
- Contributions should be sent preferably by email.
- Special articles should be accompanied by an abstract of a maximum of 200 words.
- Papers should not have been simultaneously submitted for publication to another journal or newspaper. If the paper has appeared earlier in a different version, we would appreciate a copy of this along with the submitted paper.
- Graphs and charts need to be prepared in MS Office (Word/Excel) and not in jpeg or other formats.**
- Receipt of articles will be immediately acknowledged by email. If contributors have not received an acknowledgement within a week of submission, they are requested to check their spam folders for the mail and write to us.
- Every effort is taken to complete early processing of the papers we receive. However, we receive 100 articles every week and adequate time has to be

provided for internal reading and external refereeing. It can therefore take up to four months for a final decision on whether the paper for the Special Article section is accepted for publication.

- Articles accepted for publication can take up to twelve months from date of acceptance to appear in the EPW. Papers with immediate relevance for policy would be considered for early publication. Please note that this is a matter of editorial judgment.

### Commentary

EPW invites short contributions to the 'Commentary' section on topical social, economic and political developments. These should ideally be between 1,500 and 2,500 words.

A decision on Commentary-length articles will be communicated within 6-8 weeks, or earlier.

### Keywords

Authors are requested to list six to eight keywords for their articles.

### Book Reviews

EPW sends out books for review. It does not normally accept unsolicited reviews. However, all reviews that are received are read with interest and unsolicited review on occasion is considered for publication.

### Discussion

EPW encourages researchers to comment on articles published in EPW. Submissions should be 1,000 to 1,600 words.

### Letters

Readers of EPW are encouraged to comment (300 words) on published articles.

**All letters should have the writer's full name and postal address.**

### Postscript

EPW welcomes submissions of 800-1,200 words on travel, literature, dance, music and films for publication in this section.

### General Guidelines

- Writers are requested to provide full details for correspondence: postal address, day-time phone numbers and email address.
- EPW requests writers not to send revised versions based on stylistic changes/additions, deletions of references, minor changes, etc, as this poses challenges in processing. Revised versions will not be processed. When there are major developments in the field of study after the first submission, authors can send a revised version.

### Copyright

- EPW posts all published articles on its website and may reproduce them on CDs.
- EPW also posts all published articles on select databases.
- Copyright of all articles published in EPW belongs to the author or to the organisation where the author is employed as determined by the author's terms of employment.

### Permission for Reproduction

- No published article or part thereof should be reproduced in any form without prior permission of the author(s).
- A soft/hard copy of the author(s)'s approval should be sent to EPW.

Address for communication:  
**Economic & Political Weekly**  
320–322, A to Z Industrial Estate Ganpatrao Kadam Marg,  
Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 013, India  
Email: [edit@epw.in](mailto:edit@epw.in), [epw.mumbai@gmail.com](mailto:epw.mumbai@gmail.com)