Failing the NEET test

What is the issue?

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- A 17-year-old student from Tamil Nadu, Anitha, has committed suicide for failing in the NEET and not making it to a medical college.
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- This has raised the need for looking into the objectives of the NEET that the country had adopted recently.
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What did the NEET aim for?

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- There was a long felt need to have **uniform criteria** to judge students across the country in terms of eligibility for medical courses.
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- This is against the backdrop that **medical seats** were decided not on the basis of merit but by **capitation fee.**
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- The burgeoning private medical colleges and their intention to recover the investment made, reduced the **quality of medical education.**
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- Also, with rising **inter-state competition**, states were driven to give better marks to their own students.
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- The resultant **loss of credibility for many state exams** necessitated some national-level certification for school leavers.
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- The Medical Council of India, thus, amended norms to streamline the admission mechanism by replacing all existing processes by the NEET.
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- It proposed the noble intention of **rewarding merit** and creating a **level-playing field** for all students.
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Is NEET meeting its objectives?

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- There are a number of factors which makes NEET fail on its purpose of providing a level playing field as it has introduced a range of **new inequalities**.
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- Firstly, it is based on the CBSE’s syllabus and thus discriminates against students from the state boards.
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- Neither being the biggest board nor being the best for science education, there is no rationale behind preferring CBSE over other boards.
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- This has ultimately **devalued** the worth of **school board results**.
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- Nextly, the merit rewarding which NEET aimed for has become a casualty in itself.
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- In the recent Anitha's case, her 98 % score in 12th standard has not helped her to get a medical seat as she got a low 12% in the NEET.
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- The **gaps between school syllabi and the nature of NEET** have introduced their own inequalities furthering discrimination and marginalisation.
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- Private coaching institutes are exploiting the situation and students from poor background become disadvantaged.
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- Also, there is a factor of **language bias**, as there are complaints that the level of questions in the English version was easier than in the vernacular versions.
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What is the case with Tamil Nadu?

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- The education system of India has always been chaotic with presence of multiple syllabi and long felt need for levelling it.
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- In particular, education system like that of Tamil Nadu, based on rote learning i.e. mechanical memorisation of the subjects, is a major drawback.
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- Also, the school system is in the hands of big money, supported from behind by big politics.
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- The state has been trying by all means to get exception from NEET but has made little initiation in reforming the education system.
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- Politicians and political parties are largely playing identity politics and has long given false promises to students in the NEET issue.
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What is the way forward?

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- Has Anitha failed in the NEET test or has the country failed with its NEET experiment is still to be answered.
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- A common entrance exam is indispensable to guarantee the supremacy of merit and work against corruption in medical admission.
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- But, essentially it has to be preceded by a uniform and quality education system.
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- Bringing parity in the testing system without the presence of parity in the school boards is a major flaw with the existent NEET system.
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Source: Indian Express, Business Standard

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