NEET - The Politics of Education

What is the issue?

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- The suicide of a 17 year old medical aspirant has snowballed into a major political controversy in Tamil Nadu around NEET.
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- This brings back the focus on the need for de-regulating admissions.
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What is the basic problem?

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- People against NEET argue that the exam imposes unreasonable demands on students from rural areas.
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- Its supporters, on the other hand, say that NEET is a welcome push to improve the quality of school education in the State.
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- Interestingly, both sides agree that the government has a crucial role to play in education.
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- It’s just that one group wants the Centre to be in charge, while others prefer the State government.
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How has education been politicised?

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- The rigor of school education standards in Tamil Nadu was reduced with the introduction of “Samacheer”.
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- This was a populist moves to appease rural voters.

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- The current State government has been more than willing to tweak college admission rules to suit its political ambitions.
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- The Centre’s stance on NEET has also been fluctuating in tandem with its political equation in the state, which was the primary reason for the uncertainty created.
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- The only real solution to prevent polarisation in the long run is to keep politicians out of education by de-regulating it.
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- This involves freeing higher educational institutions from government control by giving autonomy to choose the tests based on which they admit students.
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Will deregulating admissions help?

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- It is believed that colleges which have their reputation on the line will care more than the government about the quality of students they admit.
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- This will also effectively end politicisation of education.
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- Critics however, fear that in the absence of a central regulator, some colleges will admit students without sufficient screening.
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- They might resort to profiteering by granting admissions in an unfair manner.
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- While deregulation is a good option in the long run, it should also be noted that Autonomy should come with Accountability.
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Source: The Hindu

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