

Date: 03 Aug 2024

## Anti-Cheating Laws for Competitive Exams

(The Hindu, 03-08-24)

Recently, the Bihar Assembly has passed Bihar Public Examinations (PE) (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024. All offences are set to be cognizable and non-bailable.

- **For individuals found guilty** - Imprisonment ranging from 3 to 5 years and a fine of ₹ 10 lakh.
- **For service providers** – A penalty of ₹1 crore, a suspension of their services for up to 4 years, and even the seizure of assets in cases of organised crime.
- **Investigation authority** – It is to be officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSP)
- It is in line with the central law — the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024.

### What is cheating and what are its consequences?

- Cheating takes place when an examinee attempts to attain academic credit through dishonest, disrespectful, irresponsible, untrustworthy, or unfair means.
- Leakage can occur in any of processes of the examination like while setting the question paper or in the exam centre or during evaluation/tabulation.
- According to data analysed by India Today's report, 64 major exams across 19 states affected by leaks since 2019

Consequences are:

- **Degradation of educational standards** and widespread cheating can lead to inflated grades and degrees that don't reflect true knowledge or skills.
- **Erosion of meritocracy** as cheating can lead to less qualified individuals occupying important positions, potentially affecting various sectors' efficiency and productivity.
- The overall workforce quality might decline, potentially impacting **national economic competitiveness**.
- **Public safety concerns** in fields like medicine, engineering, or law, inadequately prepared professionals could pose serious risks to public safety.
- Widespread cheating can **erode trust in educational** institutions and the credentials they issue. This loss of trust can extend to other social institutions, potentially weakening social cohesion.
- If a country's educational system becomes known for widespread cheating, it could **damage its international reputation** and the perceived value of its academic credentials.
- Cheating might **exacerbate social inequalities** if access to sophisticated cheating methods becomes a factor in academic success.
- Tolerance of cheating in education could **shape cultural attitudes**, potentially leading to greater acceptance of dishonesty in other areas of society.

### Why are the pros and cons of having specific legislations to deal with this menace?

Pros of specific legislation:

- **Deterrence**: Clear legal consequences could discourage cheating attempts.
- **Standardization**: Uniform rules and penalties across institutions and regions.
- **Resource allocation**: Legislation could mandate funding for anti-cheating measures.
- **Public awareness**: Laws can highlight the seriousness of the issue.
- **Modernization**: Laws could address new technologies used in cheating.

- International recognition: Strict laws could enhance the credibility of a country's educational system.

Cons of specific legislation:

- Implementation challenges: Difficulty in enforcing laws consistently across diverse educational settings.
- Resource drain: Enforcing such laws could be costly and time-consuming.
- Stress on students: Could increase exam-related anxiety.
- Overcriminalization: Risk of treating academic misconduct as criminal behavior.
- Potential for abuse: Laws might be misused to target specific individuals or groups.
- Overreliance on legal solutions: May neglect other important approaches like improving teaching methods or addressing systemic pressures.

*Can you answer the following question?*

*In light of the increasing sophistication of cheating methods in academic examinations, there have been calls for specific legislative measures to combat this issue. Critically analyze the potential benefits and drawbacks of enacting dedicated laws to prevent unfair means in public examinations.*

