

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: A BOON TO REFORM THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

University Education Commission-1948, has rightly stated that “If we are to suggest in single reform in education system, it should be of examination reform, still Significant and not achieved yet. The new education policy emphasis to move away from rote learning of facts. Examination is a continuous and life long process of our educational system. It also occupies a central position in our educational system. From time to time, examinations in our educational system have come in for severe criticism. Since the time India attained independence the question of changing pattern of examination along with changing the educational system in our country has been engaging the attention of the researchers, educationists, teachers as well as government. Unfortunately, the maxim happens to be misconceived and misinterpreted. It does not achieve the real objective of the curriculum. The majority of the students have come to look upon them as necessary evils- hurdles to be crossed by fair means or foulds. With increasing malpractices coming into vogue, examinations have actually become farcical in the character.

Keywords: *Examination reform, higher education, rebuilding, NEP, rote memory, formative and summative.*



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Introduction

The present examination system has evolved over a period of time from ancient India to the present time. During ancient times there were Gurukuls to impart education which did not have the concept of examination, whereas, the present time has the concept of rigorous examination system, which is an inherent part of education system. Redundant, to say that the present examination system has been borrowed from British Education System which is the result of the colonization of the education system by the British. The purpose of education, nowadays, has been shifted from imparting knowledge to just executing examinations, without giving due attention to the learning and retainment of knowledge of students. Here, I must quote, in the year 2018 the day after the CBSE results were declared, a seventeen-year-old girl committed suicide having failed to clear the exam. Unfortunately, this was not the

first time when such an incident has happened. Concerned about the students' well-being, Awanish Sharan, who was the collector of Kabirdham district, M.P. posted a picture of his class 10th and 12th board results. He wanted to send out a message that scoring poor marks or failing in an examination is not the end of the world and that there is always a way to turn things around. He cites his journey as an example and says that he too scored average marks in his board exams but through sheer hard work and perseverance, he managed to crack one of the toughest exams in the country. His post, which clearly articulates the point, is a beacon of hope for countless students who might be wallowing in despair and self-pity at present.

His words were: - *"The other day I came across shocking news in the newspaper that one student committed suicide because of unexpected results in the exam. I appeal to all students and their parents not to take the result very seriously! It's just a number game. You will be getting many more chances to prove your caliber. Keep moving...I am sharing my marks of 10th, 12th, and graduation!"*

Every year, board exam results are often followed by news of students committing suicide for failing to secure "adequate" marks in an exam. Here I solicit, who is responsible for that, what is the real, the core purpose of education? Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru while delivering a convocation address speech at the University of Allahabad in 1947 said: What should be the objectives of the University and its role in national life? A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas, and for the search for truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If the university discharges its duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people."

Nowadays, we have adhered to the orthodox examination system. A scholar having knowledge of the different domain is declared 'failed' or of low ability in a particular set of examination". However, they have contributed a lot to the world in their life later. If we remember, Einstein has failed in high school mathematics; Maynard Keynes 'scored' lowest marks in Economics in the British Civil Service Examination. George Mendel 'failed' in Biology twice and the second time his examiner wrote that Mendel "lacks insight and the requisite clarity of knowledge." The list can go on. We the teachers-cum-examiners should ponder over our evaluation system, about how we classify and certify our learners. We are ignoring the hard fact that no two evaluators can assign the same marks to the same answer script if evaluated separately (falls 1928) as quoted by Pandita Ramesh.

Apart from this, we are facing a lot of other problems, there are many other reasons due to which students commit suicide. If we have gone through various printed and non-

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printed media we shall know the news like students commit suicide due to exam stress, leakage of question paper before exams, malpractices in examination, etc. students not satisfied with their teachers Let's think, etc. Why it is happening so? Who is responsible for it? Either our education system or mismanagement in the examination system. So, it is the need of the hour for rebuilding the examination system. Although we know that, there is no standard or we can say the full proof system of examination, which may be considered as perfect. In this case, we can follow the system of evaluation of our ancient good practices where a direct mode of the evaluation was implemented, but day by day we have diluted the concept. (Ramesh. P., 2017)

Numerous research studies have been conducted on examination reform and suggested various measures of examination reform. Simultaneously various committees and commissions were constituted for the sake of rebuilding of examination pattern, most of them made strong recommendations. Apart from this UGC in its report entitled, "Examination Reforms-A plan of Action" recommended various measures for the rebuilding of the examination system, and more emphasis is given to internal assessment. In spite of the efforts of UGC, the recommendations could not be carried out wholeheartedly by the colleges and universities. The recommendations made by the Kothari Commission (1964) can be quoted here, "*reform in examination or for the matter in the evaluation should be aimed to improve the reliability and validity of exam rather than certifying the performance at a given moment of time.*" In the National Workshop on "Examination Reforms in Higher Education" organized by Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi (2018), Prof. Furkan Qamar, quoted that, "trust the teacher, for assessment, examination, and evaluation" and recommended the concept of giving autonomy to the teachers itself in conducting the examinations, and opposed the idea of having a well-defined controller of examinations office. He cited the system followed by Sri Aurobindo School of International Education, Pondicherry and the Leeds University of United Kingdom, where there are no examinations other than the entrance examinations. We should shift from the present concept.

School is not only a center of knowledge and knowing, but also a junction of a variety of sources of knowledge and different ways of knowing. We should move towards a system of learning to outcome-based learning. In the year 2018, the University Grant Commission (UGC), the apex body of higher education, has issued a public notice to take suggestions from various stakeholders on examination reforms. In this regard, UGC has constituted a committee to recommend and suggest reforms in the examination system. We all know that

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the Indian education system is one of the largest education systems in the world but an honest question that needs to be asked to all of us today is, does India well qualifies to avail the status of a developed nation with respect to education? In spite of numerous absurdities, there are still many causes for which we can feel to be privileged, to be proud for many accomplishments that match with most developed nations in the world. Many of the developed countries are far behind Indian achievements. We have the largest democracy; we serve as a promising place for the international market, the largest booming economy, the largest user of the internet, and many intellectual capabilities working outside India in different capacities.

When we talk about the quality of the bulk of our graduates is appalling, we mean that the students are doing their best – they are studious and disciplined, they cram, clear entrance tests, pass examinations, and obtain degrees. But on the other hand of this scenario where, many university graduates do not have even rudimentary knowledge, conceptual understanding, or problem-solving skills in their own discipline. A culture of rote learning, lack of practical knowledge, and a poor examination system has undermined our higher education. Most graduates lack basic communication skills and have no problem-solving capacity. Educated unemployment is on the rise, largely because most graduates cannot promote wealth creation and are therefore unemployable. Annual Employability Survey 2019 report followed by Aspiring Minds reveals that 80% of Indian engineers are not fit for any job in the knowledge economy and only 2.5% of them possess tech skills in Artificial Intelligence (AI) that industry requires and we can see the similar data from other professions also.

Behind this is the fact that students of higher education feel extreme pressure because of the cutthroat competition for their survival. Everyone wants good grades in fact outstanding grades, necessary to excel in today's competitive professional world. Not only the students but parents' and teachers' expectations from their children have also been influenced by this trend. They expect higher grades from their children and put pressure on them to perform better. The success of students is decided by their examination score rather than the knowledge or skill they acquire. It is generally believed that a fair amount of examination stress is beneficial for academic success but sometimes excess of it may lead to anxiety, depression, examination phobia, and many other psychological problems among students. The high level of stress during examination is not only the result of a student's aspiration or parental expectation, the archaic and disgraceful examination system for higher

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education is equally responsible for it.

The stress is often on testing the student's memory and rote learning. A careful memorizing of answers to questions posed in the three previous years (excluding the immediate past year) will guarantee high grades! Analytical skills, application of knowledge, problem-solving capacity, and innovation are rarely tested. There is no stress on continuous appraisal and the student is only judged by his/her performance in a single final examination. There is an absolute disconnect between what is taught in the class and what is tested. One would imagine that the teacher who teaches the course is best suited to evaluate a student's performance in that course. But in the current system, a completely disconnected evaluator sitting somewhere else grades the student's exam.

In most western universities, the professor who teaches the course evaluates the students throughout the duration of the course, administers tests or exams, and grades the test papers! Very often, the student's final grade for the course is published within a week after the finals and there is a transparent mechanism for addressing any issues the student may have with the way his/her work is evaluated or graded. The tragedy is that Indian students are smart, ambitious, and hardworking and are just responding to what the system is demanding. The entire education infrastructure with the myriad coaching institutes is feeding this demand. If only the nature of demand is altered, the students and the associated infrastructure will respond to adapt to the new conditions and improve supply. There are many models of examinations for evaluating the students skillfully and creating demand for better education by redefining success.

According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), about 2% of the total suicides that happened in 2015 were because of failure in examinations. That number is about 2672. Assam (414), Maharashtra (383), Tamil Nadu (322), and Karnataka (282) are the top four states contributing to this high number of suicides.

Where Exams are becoming one major killer of the country among youth, then what is the sole purpose of the Education and testing mechanism that we had developed. Examination (Rote method) is just a tool taken by our system to test our Knowledge/Skill over a Subject, but our entire learning/teaching process is defined by the structure of exams. Standardization is the biggest killer of Learning. I get a feel of the 'Observer Effect' with our Exams, the very Act of Exams (Observing) itself is altering the way we 'Learn' (behave). Our pressure, stress is always high during exams, and it is always projected that the three hours of our life are going to be a path decider. Then comes the next three hours and so on.

The time has really come to pave way for new 'Open-Assessment' methodologies which is practically possible in every school in India. Assessment should be more of horizontal segregation and not of the vertical one. Assessment should help the student realize his strengths/skills and properly channelize them. If that is the case, I will be proud of my competencies more than the percentage. That speaks for me and about me.

The examination system of India has remained unchanged for so many years. No doubt, this system is full of stress. That's why most Newspapers and Magazines publish articles on this topic during the examination sessions. In the education system of India, the ability of a student is decided by an exam. In this system, there is no place for the performance of a student in a full academic session. Scoring more and more marks in exams has become the only aim of a student.

The impact of this stressful examination system is immense. Those who are in favor of this system should think about those bad impacts. First of all, if this system is good then all those who secure good marks in these must be brilliant and successful in life but the reality is different. Nowadays, most institutions don't give admission on the basis of marks. They have a separate test and this trend is growing rapidly because they have no faith in this examination system. This faulty examination system is forcing so many students to commit suicide every year. These incidents are growing rapidly.

Examination is a continuous and lifelong process of our education system. It also occupies a central position in our education system. From time to time, examinations in our education system have come in for severe criticism. Since the time India attained independence the question of changing the pattern of examination along with changing the educational system in our country has been engaging the attention of the researchers, educationists, teachers as well as government. Unfortunately, the maxim happens to be misconceived and misinterpreted. It does not achieve the real objective of the curriculum. The majority of the students have come to look upon them as necessary evils-hurdles to be crossed by fair means or fould. With increasing malpractices coming into vogue, examinations have actually become farcical in the character. Almost everybody feels convinced that, as conducted at present; they do not serve the purpose for which they are intended. A very convincing demonstration of this growing cynicism about the university, college, and school examinations is the increasing preference shown by employers for recruitment tests devised by them.

The main aim of education is to develop all domains of the student's personality
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includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The extent to which these three domains of personality have been developed and at which level the aim of education is achieved can be evaluated only by the means of examination, it helps to measure the levels of development. To evaluate the three different domains the examination system should also be designed in such a manner as to analyze the three aspects of human personality. The examination system should include the interest, aptitude, intelligence, and emotions of the students but the present examination system is only cognitive-based in which affective and psychomotor domains lag behind.

We should have shifted from the concept of examination, evaluation, to the concept of creation of knowledge and self-evaluation, in this process students can play a very important role in the rebuilding of the examination system & quality of education. In order to implement a self- evaluation system, we can use the concept of assessment as, Assessment as learning, whereas Assessment as learning stands to emphasizes students' meta-cognition. In this, students are active assessors of their learning.

Assessment associated with metacognition aims to enable learners to become autonomous learners. It requires that learners be aware of what is required from them and monitor and assess their own learning during the learning process. With the information obtained, they can regulate their learning to meet the goals they set earlier. Apart from this, we are using assessment for learning as a way to see what the teachers should do in response. (Terry Heick, 2018). Generally, we can study the term 'assessment' in the form of 'examination', 'test', 'evaluation' etc. We can break down the term 'assessment' into three categories: 'assessment- before instruction'; 'assessment-during instruction'; and 'assessment-after instruction'.

Learning cannot be reduced to exams only. Our education must equip us to face various challenges of life as well. I sincerely believe that anything that challenges us polishes us too. Here, I must quote the statement made by our honorable Prime Minister while delivering the '*Prakisha Pe Charcha*': "How we deal with examination is only important. We should take it as an opportunity. Do not live life for an exam but should live life to attain knowledge. If you treat exams as an opportunity, you will learn and enjoy them. Exams give you an opportunity to assess your own strengths."

The Way to Achieve the Goal of NEP 2020 through Examination Reform

The NEP 2020 speaks to move away from high-stakes examinations, rote memory towards more continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Formative and summative

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evaluation evaluates the assessment and provides feedback to students/learners, this will, in turn, minimize the rote memory.

Dr. Kasturiranjana, chairman NEP, draft committee rightly writes *'learning to be developing one's personality and being able to set with autonomy, judgment, and personal responsibility while ensuring that education does not disregard any aspect of the potential of a person: memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capabilities, and communication skills.'*

The above discussion provides us a direction to invent a system whereas we can use the term evaluation to assess the creation of knowledge by the student, their emotion in form of change rather than assess the information stored in his/her mind. Keeping in mind that assessment stands for prediction. It's just (Anuman lagana) means that we can evaluate or assess, we can only predict what he /she will do on the basis of their performance which is not accurate. We can measure all the domains of Knowledge. Let's think to 'create abstract thinking mind to solve problems. Where there is a system that has no place for malpractice, anxiety, and stress which leads to the commission of suicide. Full disclosure and transparency in grading and mark/grade reporting need to be appreciated. Our examination system has been facing a question mark and can face at any point of time in reference to Quality of question paper, ambiguous phrasing of questions or questions phrased, ethical issue, unfair means, method of examination, evaluation process and individual evaluator, time lag, reevaluation, coding & decoding and many other kinds of practices.

What are the ways to overcome these challenges? *Firstly*, the entire stakeholder should be honest, accountable, and not to be self-seeking. *Secondly*, evaluation should be guided by curricular objectives and overcharging education goals as reflected in NEP 2020. *Thirdly*, exam systems need to be given more autonomy and more flexibility to the teacher where a teacher can decide and students can accept her performance. We must accept that assessment only predicts not ensure a particular performance. Educational-psychological principles suggest that different learners learn differently, and, hence, to test all learners through a written test of the same type in the subject after the subject is unfair to those whose verbal proficiency is superior to their writing skills, those who work more slowly but with deeper insight, or those who work better in groups than individually.

Here I remember my college time, when I was doing M.Ed. one of my friends presently working in university system often said, "I cannot qualify UGC-NET Exam with the subjective pattern. I can't write a long answer script, my writing skill is very poor, etc. Copyright © 2021, *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*

What I will do?” My reply to him was, “you have the competency, and you will qualify.” But I was wrong. He was true. He did not qualify the same. After sometime, the pattern of UGC-NET was changed from ‘subjective’ to ‘objective’, and he did qualify and got selected. This example indicates the diversity of learners on one side and the requisite capabilities to carry research on the other. These loopholes of the examination system should be addressed to move forward as desired by NEP 2020.

Reduction of Exam Stress & Anxiety

The current pattern of examination is quite orthodox in nature that induces unnecessary anxiety and stress among the learner’s which leads to various kinds of malpractices and as we know education is all about making lateral linkages or creating “ecology of knowledge in the brain, a shift is required to test real understanding of core concepts. Students should be allowed to give the exam at their pace. And Teachers can assess the knowledge of students in their own way and can do more work to attain desired standards. Special chance should be provided to those students who have proved themselves that he/she can qualify the desired standards set by the teacher.

To start best practices in exams, ethical consideration is required from all the stakeholders of education. In this consideration, we need to take an oath that we will follow honesty, transparency, accountability. To move forward in this direction, detailed mark schemes should also be made public through various modes, and marking should be done by experienced examiners.

A reform, which we believe to be of vital importance is of replacing marks by grade which is full disclosure of how the student has performed as compared to his or her peers. To present a wider range of performance parameters on the marks sheet provides a better, broad, and wholesome assessment of students which could not be possible by just providing the marks/grades, percentile of subjects.

We often used the term merit although it is a more complicated concept. Can we honestly assert that two students who both attained 75% in their board exams are equally meritorious? The answer is ‘No’ because they can differ with respect to their school, learning style, examiner subjectivity & individuality. So, printing this detailed data about the performance of a student in each subject will pave a fairer, transparent, and accurate way towards the assessment of a student and which in turn provides the most authentic definition of the word ‘merit’.

We should establish an evaluation system in which there is no stress on children.
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Provide autonomy to the teacher and students. Let them decide the mode of evaluation, provide space for the teacher & Students.

Conclusion:

The above discussion laid down the foundation that there is a need to reform the Examination system in education, it should be recognized that reform in exams has the potential to reform the education system. The present Examination System has many drawbacks which need to be debated to resolve certain trivial and ticklish issues. Performance of any students depend upon the various factor associated with education, and performance can be assessed through the exam in this *vice-versa* connection. There is a demand for reforms in all the components like teacher-training, teacher-quality and teacher-student ratio, curriculum, etc. It is a matter of pride that in India, we have a lot of Potential for making advancements in the system in far better way, Assessment as learning can be practice in Broadway to the effectiveness of both the concept of learning and teaching, Examination Reform in Higher Education should go hand in hand with the structure of examination conducting mechanism. The teacher's role is of supreme importance in conducting speedy and secure examinations, and it should never be underestimated as Teachers are the backbone of any Examination system. It is recommended that a uniform system of evaluation across the country should be practiced and implemented.

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