



EXAMINATION SYSTEM - GS II AND IV MAINS

Q. An examination should test memory, application and critical thinking. Do you think it contradicts the Indian examination system? Elucidate (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *The need to examine the examination system*

What's in the news?

- Every examination season, the media reports scandals that engulf some universities or even school boards.
- The credibility of the examination system is linked to the standard of the certificates that the examination/school boards issue.

Key takeaways:

- The lack of credibility of the examination system in educational institutions affects educational standards because learning is conditioned by the proposed examination system.
- Teaching and learning should prepare a student to face any type of examination.

Examination System in India:

- A credible examination system is one of the key ways to improve the standard of education.
- The employability of a graduate depends on higher order learning, while examination boards do not certify students on those skills.
- The higher education regulator truly believes in decentralization through autonomous institutions without oversight.”

Status of Higher Education:

- India has more than **1,100 universities** and **50,000 affiliated colleges** including 700 autonomous colleges. This includes a total enrolment of **40.15 million students**.
- There are also **60 school boards** for secondary and higher secondary levels of school education, certifying more than **15 million students every year**.
- These reflect the diversity of higher education examination systems in India



Issues with examination system in India:

1. Focus on Memory and Rote Learning:

- An examination should test memory, application and critical thinking. However, there are complaints that the examination boards test only memory. Hence, students are only taught to memorise answers and score marks.

2. Narrow Objectives:

- Scoring marks and achieving a very high pass percentage have become the key objectives.

3. Quality Issues:

- There are question papers that have flaws such as language errors, errors in conceptualization, irrelevant questions and questions that do not test higher order learning.

4. Poor Mode of Assessment:

- The employability of a graduate depends on higher order learning; however, the examination boards do not assess students on those skills.

5. Creation of a Coaching Market:

- Since employers have their own rigorous assessment of a candidate's academic achievements and suitability, it has created a coaching market for competitive examinations and skilling.

6. Advisories Not Followed:

- There are elaborate advisories on curriculum design, pedagogy, and examination systems from all the regulatory boards. In the absence of regular and effective oversight, these advisories are hardly followed by educational institutions.

7. Lack of Standardizations:

- The presence of the provision of autonomy of colleges gives the regulatory bodies no oversight authority over the autonomous colleges and their examinations.

8. Issues with Secrecy:

- Secrecy without proper checks and balances and audits leads to negative outcomes.
- There is secrecy involved in the whole examination process, from question paper setting to evaluation of answer scripts and mark sheet preparation. They are prone to malpractice.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Specify learning outcome standards:

- Establish minimum standards for learning outcomes to provide a clear benchmark.



2. Inclusive Curriculum Design:

- Encourage academic contributions: Motivate academics from diverse disciplines to contribute to curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment systems.

3. Comprehensive Evaluation:

- Integrate subject-specific and skill-specific assessment processes for a comprehensive evaluation.

4. Advocate for challenging assessments:

- Promote comprehensive and challenging assessments that distinguish students based on academic attainments.
- Prioritize continuous assessment with teacher involvement and student participation.

5. Transparency and Checks:

- Make summative assessment and evaluation transparent through the implementation of checks and balances.

6. Technology Integration:

- Incorporate technology in assessments to enhance credibility, standardize question papers, and streamline evaluations.
- Evaluate market-available software solutions for both centralized and distributed assessment systems.

7. External Audits:

- Perform regular external audits of assessment systems in universities and school boards.
- Set benchmark principles and standards for audit reports to ensure reliability and consistency.

8. Grading Examination Boards:

- Grade examination boards based on transparency, reliability, and consistency, reflecting these aspects in audit reports.

9. Transparency Measures:

- Introduce measures for transparency, allowing students access to the evaluation process and avenues to address grievances.