



## Rethinking India's Examination System

**For Prelims:** Rethinking India's Examination System, Prioritizes Competition over Comprehension, [New Education Policy 2020](#).

**For Mains:** Rethinking India's Examination System, Issues Arising Out of Design & Implementation of Policies.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

As examination season looms, the debate surrounding India's Examination system intensifies, highlighting its **shortcomings and proposing pathways for reform**.

### What are the Issues Related to the Examination System in India?

- **School-Leaving Examinations leading and Lesser Secondary Education:**
  - The school-leaving examination was designed in the latter half of the 19th century as a way to determine who **can be selected for further education**, which was very scarce at that time, and also for **lower-level jobs in offices**.
    - It was basically a means of elimination. And it has remained that way all the way up to now. The Grade 10 exam, for instance, fails a large number of **children and stops them from going any further**.
  - This is a kind of structural arrangement in a system in which secondary education is not very widespread and **higher secondary education is even less so**. Opportunities for further education at the undergraduate level or various kinds of technical education are also relatively scarce.
- **Illusion of Equal Opportunity:**
  - It is in the exam that all children, irrespective of their background, **face the same test of three hours**.
  - The identity of paper-setters and evaluators is not revealed, thus, confidentiality enhances the **legitimacy of a situation where children from contrasting circumstances** are given an equal-looking opportunity.
- **Prioritizes Competition over Comprehension:**
  - India's Education system prioritises **competition over comprehension**, fostering a culture of rote **memorization rather than genuine understanding**.
  - Furthermore, the **structure of schools** and curricula exacerbates the problem, leaving scant room for exploration and holistic learning.
- **Intensely Competitive and Stressful:**
  - India's Examination system compares **very poorly with the evaluation and assessment systems** which are in place in other societies, including **European and North American societies as well as China**.
    - They have reformed their evaluation systems from within by improving teachers' understanding of what they are looking for in a child right from the start.

- The Indian system right from the beginning becomes **intensely competitive and stressful** and starts promoting cramming as a way to move forward with high marks.
- **Poor Academic Infrastructure:**
  - Many of the **Boards don't have adequate staff**, enough academic faculty to monitor their own procedures. Many of the State Boards are actually in very poor shape as far as their academic **infrastructure is concerned**.
  - Even the [CBSE \(Central Board of School Education\)](#) and [ICSE \(Indian Certificate of Secondary Education\)](#) operate as bureaucratic, mechanical set-ups, potentially compromising the quality of examination processes.

## What can be Done to Reform India's Examination System?

- **Addressing Institutional Dysfunction:**
  - There is a need to **recognize and rectify the systemic inadequacies** within examination boards, **including staffing shortages and infrastructure deficiencies**.
  - Prioritise the enhancement of academic faculty and administrative capabilities to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation processes.
  - There is a **need to foster a culture of transparency and accountability** within examination boards to uphold standards of integrity and fairness.
- **Comprehensive Curriculum Reform:**
  - Streamline and **rationalise the curriculum** to accommodate diverse learning needs and interests, while ensuring coherence and depth of content.
  - There is a **need to Emphasise the development of critical thinking**, problem-solving skills, and real-world application of **knowledge over rote memorization**.
  - Integrate **interdisciplinary approaches to learning** that promote holistic understanding and cross-cutting competencies.
- **Flexible Assessment Methods:**
  - There is a need to introduce **modular examination formats** that allow students to demonstrate **proficiency in individual subjects over an extended period**.
  - Shift from high-stakes, one-size-fits-all examinations to **a more nuanced assessment framework** that values continuous learning and growth.
  - Provide **opportunities for formative assessment** and feedback throughout the learning process to facilitate personalized learning trajectories.
- **Professional Development for Educators:**
  - There is a **need to invest in comprehensive training** programs for educators to deepen their understanding of **pedagogical principles and assessment practices**.
  - Promote **collaboration and knowledge-sharing among teachers** to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.
  - Equip teachers with the tools and resources necessary to implement **learner-centred approaches and cater to diverse student needs effectively**.
- **Holistic Evaluation Criteria:**
  - Expand the **criteria for evaluating student performance** to encompass a broader **range of competencies**, including creativity, collaboration, and emotional intelligence.
  - Develop **alternative assessment methods, such as portfolios, projects, and presentations**, to capture the multifaceted nature of student achievement.
  - Encourage a **shift towards authentic, contextually relevant assessments** that reflect real-world challenges and opportunities.
- **Role of National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 (NCF):**
  - It aims to **help in positively transforming the school education system** of India as **envisioned in NEP 2020**, through corresponding positive changes in the curriculum including pedagogy.
  - It aims **to realise the highest quality education for all children**, consistent with realizing an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by the Constitution of India.

## What Initiatives have been Taken to Reform the Education System?

- [Right To Education Act of 2009](#).

- [New Education Policy 2020.](#)
- [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan \(SSA\).](#)
- [Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan.](#)
- [Rashtriya Uchhatar Shiksha Abhiyan \(RUSA\).](#)
- [National Testing Agency \(NTA\)](#)
- [National Curriculum Framework.](#)

## Conclusion

- By adopting a multifaceted approach that addresses the structural, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions of the examination system, India can pave the way for a more equitable, empowering, and inclusive education system that nurtures the potential of every learner.
- It is imperative that stakeholders collaborate proactively to enact meaningful reforms that prioritize the holistic development and well-being of students, laying the foundation for a brighter future for generations to come.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution does India have a bearing on Education? (2012)**

1. Directive Principles of State Policy
2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
3. Fifth Schedule
4. Sixth Schedule
5. Seventh Schedule

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 3, 4 and 5 only  
(c) 1, 2 and 5 only  
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

**Ans- (d)**

### Mains

**Q1.** How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate on your answer. (2020)