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**What methods can Boards
employ for evaluation
after cancellation of
exams?**



OFFICER TRAINEEE OF IP&TAFS CSE 2018

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The story so far

Faced with a massive surge in COVID-19 cases, the Central government cancelled the CBSE Class X examination and postponed the Class XII examination scheduled to be held from May 4.

The decision, which will be reviewed by the Ministry of Education on June 1, was followed by the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE or Class X) and Indian School Certificate (ISC or Class XII) examinations also being postponed, with a review scheduled in the first week of June. The International Baccalaureate and several State Boards had taken similar decisions.

What are the challenges?

- Aligning examinations of various Boards is a practical necessity since admission to higher education courses must be done uniformly and entrance examinations have to be conducted for professional courses.
- While the government has bought itself time to address the wildfire spread of COVID-19 by getting public examinations out of the way, students are left wondering about the nature of formative academic assessment that will be applied to their Class X performance during the year gone by, which was marked by a shift to online classes and TV-based instruction.

- For many, it was a total lack of access without electricity, connectivity, computers and smartphones.
- The challenge now is to take up formative assessments where pen-and-pencil annual examinations cannot be held.

What is formative assessment?

- The annual high-stakes public school examination is referred to as a summative assessment.
- It had to be cancelled or deferred this year due to the pandemic, and the academic system had to fall back on **continuous evaluation** techniques or other metrics. This is known as formative assessment.
- According to the UNESCO, the key aspects of this pattern **are use of observation, quizzes, assignments and feedback.**

- While summative assessment is described as a '**testing of learning**', formative assessment is '**testing for learning**,' which helps teachers assess the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and suggest remedial measures.
- The CBSE introduced a formative assessment system through a **Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) framework in 2009-10** but abandoned it in favour of a compulsory public examination for Class X, eight years later.

- However, the year 2020-21 stands apart due to the disruption to routine schooling and the use of online and remote instruction.
- UNESCO says that in such a remote-learning situation, formative assessment has to rely on **Learning Management Solutions and digital tools** such as the open-source **Moodle**, **Google Classroom** and **Schoology**, and other tools that facilitate the creation of adaptive instructions for personalised learning.

- Many teachers in India used video-calling tools to deliver instructional material and to coach and assess students.
- The Boards must now come up with a formative assessment framework that fixes clear metrics.

How have schools responded?

- After the latest move by the Centre, prominent CBSE schools say they will not face disruption because they conducted periodic **internal examinations, practicals, as well as "pre-Board" testing** for Class X. This will be useful to evaluate students.
- However, the switch from a reformist model of formative assessment to the traditional public examination was not seen as a move forward by others.
- The decision to reintroduce a public examination for Class X in CBSE was defended by the then Human Resource Development Minister, Prakash Javadekar, as the removal of **discrimination against 1.93 crore secondary students of State and other Boards** who continued to take an exit examination.

Can all schools assess fairly?

- The question of schools' capabilities to conduct sound formative assessments has become important because not all have similar facilities.
- While CBSE schools may be more urbanised, the picture for other Boards is mixed.
- The **Unified District Information System for Education** data show that in 2017-18, there were 1,88,742 rural schools and 83,207 urban schools under all managements.

- Data from the **National Sample Survey (NSS)** for the same year indicate that **only 4% of rural households and 23% of urban households had a computer.**
- **Internet** access was restricted to **15% of rural and 42% of urban households.**

What reforms are needed?

- As COVID-19 cases from the first wave dropped, CBSE launched a **competency-based assessment plan** for Classes VI to X in March this year, aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.
- It was prepared jointly with the British Council, for science, mathematics and English. The aim was **to strengthen critical thinking and analytical capacity** for competency-based learning.
- In fact, even the National Policy on Education, 1986, had de-emphasised rote learning and recommended a CCE-like framework.

- The NEP 2020 emphasises (formative) assessment for learning and critiques existing Board examinations as forcing students “to learn a very narrow band of content/material in a single stream”.
- Future reforms would, therefore, have to work on two fronts — to **ensure access to learning** for every student, in classrooms or remotely, and **make formative assessment possible** through a scientifically designed set of metrics.

Thank you 🌞

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