

How Exam Fever Defeats the Purpose of Education?

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The period from January to March is crucial both for the teachers and the students of X and XII in almost all the schools in India. Why is it so? It is because these students for the first time would be appearing for their X/XII board examinations and how different are these compared to the annual examinations of IX/XI?

Let us examine the table given below.

Parameter	IX & XI	X & XII
Who conducts the exam?	School	Board to which the school is affiliated to
Exam Venue	Same School	School other than the one where the student studied X/XII
Exam Date Sheet	Decided by the school and differs across schools	Decided by the examining body and is uniform across schools
Syllabus	Different from X and XII	Different from IX and XI
Evaluation done by	Internal examiners	External examiners
Evaluation Pattern	IX similar to X XI similar to XII	
Qualifying Criteria	IX similar to X XI similar to XII	

A careful examination of the above table helps us understand that except for a few functional aspects, there is not much of a difference between the two. So, what makes these examinations such a big affair? It is only the not so necessary importance attributed by each one of us to them which eventually changed the entire focus of education from learning for life to mere preparation for achieving marks/grades in the board examinations. Isn't it true? Undoubtedly this notion in the minds of all stakeholders has completely changed the dynamics of teaching-learning-assessment cycle.

Some of the new trends which have emerged in the last few years include:

- Uncovering one-year's syllabus in less than six months.
- Providing students with printed notes called study material.
- 10 – 12 hours of study inside the school campus.
- Study Plan in school and at home solely designed by the school leaders with no room for flexibility
- Maximum thrust on theory with no scope to provide hands on experience.

- Different tracks within the system wherein students prepare simultaneously for Board Examinations and Competitive Examinations. However, maximum time is devoted only for the Competitive Examinations.
- Daily tests upto a maximum of three in a day.
- Ability based grouping of students into various sections. Best of the faculty are beyond the reach of 90% of students and they devote time to the top 10% of students.
- IIT/NEET Foundation Programme right from Class VI onwards
- Dummy school concept wherein schools and coaching institutes tie up with an understanding that students are exempted from not coming to school.
- Conducting practicals (in science subjects) like a marathon just before the Board Examinations where students are made to simply copy matter from previous year files.
- Teachers must make calls to the students at around 4 am asking them to wake up and study.

The list is endless. Each of the above-mentioned trends clearly reveal the unseen damage being done in the process of educating a child. In this entire process, the child is deprived of the freedom to learn by self, explore, experiment and experience.

After an intensive and thorough research, NCERT/SCERT design syllabus in each subject of each class for a period of one academic year keeping in mind several aspects pertaining to the child's psyche. In such a case how can schools take the liberty of uncovering the syllabus within six months. It is ironical that teachers who are nation builders easily fall prey in implementing such wrong practices not realizing its impact on the child's mind. In order to economize on time, schools provide printed study material (or notes) promoting rote learning uniform across sections with no room to nurture originality and creativity among students. Above that to make things worse, students need to follow a study plan which is highly rigid say one subject per day and taking three to four tests in identified topics. Can we not rely on our students guiding them to prepare their own study schedule? Are they incapable of doing it for themselves? In such a case how do we expect them to resolve conflicts and crisis situations in their lives?

No wonder if one comes across students from private schools and colleges who never saw an experiment demonstrated by a teacher be it in Physics/Chemistry/Biology. On the contrary these schools advertise that they prepare students for entry into IITs, AIIMS etc. It is still a mystery when one starts thinking about how such schools in India attract huge number of admissions. Where lies the fault?

Does a school which classifies students into star batch or not star batch based on their academic performance has any right to talk about right to equality in the classroom? How unethical it is for someone who is in the teaching profession to offer their expertise only to a selected few? Last few decades has been witness to the mushrooming of coaching institutes across the country completely shifting the focus of education away from schools. Do we have any Fee Regulation Committee in India which genuinely investigates the way these institutes are exploiting both students and parents?

It is quite difficult for us to find answers to most of the questions discussed above. Instead of functioning with double standards, it is high time to come to a clear consensus about the purpose of educating a child. Most importantly, it is teachers who should be immune to such faulty practices which may seem benefitting the child for time being but the effect of it is like not allowing the butterfly to come out of the cocoon on its own.

My sincere appeal to all those who are genuinely concerned about the cause of education is to stand tall in times of resistance, fight for what really matters to a child rather than compromising on ideals and values for short term benefits which might have an adverse effect on all those concerned with the child. Let us collectively work towards this endeavour and look forward for a generation who are epitomes of all the virtues meant to be imbibed to drive a nation forward.

Category: Teacher Development

Subject: Views and Reflections

Board: All boards

Grade/Standard: Early Childhood Education

Class 1-2

Class 3-5

Class 6-8

Class 9-10

Class 11-12

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