

Why don't exams have the goal of stirring thirst and search for knowledge among students?



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In India, one's knowledge is measured in terms of his/her pass in examinations. The recently released results of NEET (National Eligibility Entrance Test) have made a mockery of the exam system. A couple of big coaching corporates have advertised the reputed top-rankers as their "own products." It amounts to fraud that the companies are advertising the top tankers they have taken on auction at a huge cost. But the union government, the exam agency and even the overall society have taken such fraudulent ad blitzes in their stride. A few powerful people are harvesting reap of subtle commercial success techniques that have transformed a knowledge-oriented society into an entrance exam-oriented society.

Failure of IIT

India's first Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) was launched at Kharagpur in West Bengal. It was in 1961 that the IIT entrance exam was introduced. The amount the government spends on each IIT student is now Rs.2.2 crore. The Joint Entrance Exam

(JEE) is considered as a forerunner to NEET. Tamil Nadu's educational progress is above the national average; the admission rate of students in higher education is more than the national average. In the man-woman equality index in education, Tamil Nadu holds the third slot in the country. All said and done, Tamil Nadu has been criticized on several grounds including the one that the students from the state are not qualified immensely in the IIT entrance exam.

But what's the ground reality? A private TV channel got the 2019 JEE question paper discussed by international educationists. Several educationists including James Hattingson dismissed the question paper as a piece of fraud and called the system of awarding marks unjust.

It is blatantly manifest that the IIT higher education is a total failure. Since 1961 when it was launched, it has not produced any Nobel Laureate in the past 62 years. Subramanian Chandrasekhar (Madras University), who got the Nobel Prize in physics in 1983 and Venkatraman Ramakrishnan (Baroda University) who got the Nobel in chemistry in 2009, had studied in the universities which had no entrance exam at all. Not even 1.2 per cent of the ISRO scientists had had their higher education in IITs. About 63 per cent of IIT students had taken up unlikely jobs abroad – jobs not even remotely connected with their education. Seven per cent of IIT students do not complete their courses. This category does not include those who commit suicide.

Market of NEET

The single-window entrance exam for medical education, called NEET, is found in no medical council across the world. It is absolutely unjust that only NEET marks are given weightage, bypassing one's qualification attained in the 12-year education system. The world educationists slam JEE and NEET as unjust evaluation systems. The private coaching centres that have mushroomed, charging fees ranging from Rs.1.5 lakh to 11 lakh for preparing students for the competitive exams, have

transformed NEET into a massive commercial market. Kota, a city in Rajasthan, has changed into a large coaching centre. The coaching experts themselves have admitted that students are being rigorously trained in recognizing the pattern of answers to NEET questions. So, coming through NEET with flying colours is not tantamount to attaining expertise in physics, chemistry and biology. It is for this reason that students, who score centum in all these subjects in the higher secondary exam, fail in NEET.

Only five per cent of about 18 lakh NEET candidates who just fill in question paper on computer (NEET is not written, but filled up) are selected to fill 91,000 seats in medical education across the country. It is a very bad and unjust proportion a kind of which can hardly be found in any education system anywhere in the world.

Here it is worthwhile to note that in India one faces a total of 23 exams right from the school to the job market in a marks-centric society that is full of panic and edginess, concentrating on nothing but exams galore.

Exams in world countries

In fact, there is no country without exam system in the world. Three kinds of exam system are in practice in the world.

Firstly, there is the 'checking exam' system in vogue in Finland, Norway and Sweden where the teachers check and evaluate the impact of their teaching methods on the students.

Secondly is the exam system adopted in countries such as China, Japan, Germany etc. where the students choose their fields of study through exams. In China the exam known as 'Gaokao' is conducted on June 7 and 8 every year. Students take exams in maths, Chinese and any one of the foreign languages along with science, art and vocational streams and depending on their national percentage, they choose their fields of study and go to colleges (pass percentage there in 2020 was 90.6; NEET pass percentage was just 5). Similar are the Japan's Daigaku and

Germany's Aitur. These exam systems help students choose their fields of study they would like to do courses in. They are, in fact, no filtering systems confined to particular fields of study.

Thirdly, there is this 'Yediny' system in Russia - a self-examination system which sharpens one's learning by revealing to the students what they have learnt and what they are yet to learn in a subject and a sub-subject or a department. In a few provinces in France, the students themselves prepare the question papers for what's called 'self-examination.' In this Russian exam system that expands in creativity and logic, the students are allowed to use smart phones and internet on computer. In Cuba there is no time-limit for exams. Till class 10 question papers are provided like brochures to students at the doorstep.

From these exam systems in world countries what is manifest is that their primary goal is to set the students searching for knowledge.

Needed: Clarity

None will dare to say there is no need for exams. But our educational exam system has only one aim: that is, to issue certificates. By way of filtering the students, it makes the students either pass or fail. It tacitly orders the children in flesh and blood and full of emotions to either pass or fail cramming them with question paper after question paper in quarterly, half-yearly and yearly exams. Nothing in the world is as violent as expecting the same standard answers to a single question paper from 18 lakh students left with the same question paper.

The need of the hour is an exam system which spots the students' instinct for knowledge search, reading habit, natural endowments, unique capabilities and special skills, celebrate them, tap them and bring them to the fore.

When will we realise this dire need?

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