



# IAS PARLIAMENT

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## Examination Reforms

### Why in news?

Tamil Nadu government has decided to conduct Grade X board examination from June 15 in the middle of the pandemic.

### What arrangements have been made?

- The announcement carries the reassurance that all special arrangements have been made.
- These arrangements include **sparse seating** to meet the medical requirement of physical distancing between candidates.
- No more than 10 will sit in a room.
- To enable this to happen, the **number of exam centres** has been radically increased from over 3,000 to 12,690.

### How should the decision of the state government seen?

- In the discourse of public exams, children change into “candidates”.
- Schools become exam centres and teachers turn into invigilators.
- All examinations follow a strict ritual that has remained unchanged for over a century.
- A board exam has little to do with education or learning.
- The values it encourages children to imbibe are fear of failing, sacrifice of joy and selfish competitiveness, etc.
- The urgency felt by the Tamil Nadu government to take the exam in the middle of a health emergency can only be understood as the **expression of a mindset** rather than reasoning.
- The annual exam is seen as the culmination of the academic calendar.
- The set pattern it follows ensures that the exam questions will have no intellectual substance. They all require rote memory.

### What is the argument?

- The real purpose for the board exams is to divide students into “pass”-“fail”

categories and into divisions based on marks.

- This standard argument does not fit the State of Tamil Nadu.
- The Class X result last year placed more than 95% of the total number of students who took the exam in the “pass” category.
- In several districts, the pass percentage was close to 99%.
- Therefore, the exam does not fulfil the structural purpose that some States have, such as reducing the numbers so that the limited infrastructure for the higher secondary stage proves sufficient.

### What could be the middle path?

- In Tamil Nadu, most children are likely to move on to Grade XI in the same school.
- This is the main ground for the recommendation made in the National Curriculum Framework (2005) to make the Grade X exam **voluntary**.
- This is a middle path that the Tamil Nadu government can consider now.
- Whenever schools reopen, children who want to take the board exam can do so. Others can carry on in the next grade.
- All that this exam might achieve in Tamil Nadu is to sort students into different subject streams, based on their marks.
- This is hardly a worthwhile reason to risk the spread of the virus or to harass the young.
- It is a matter of belief that marks attained in the Grade X Board exam are a reasonable basis for judging who should study what.
- One might consider this as a valid argument if the exam papers and marking scheme of the Grade X exam had some substance.
- The questions are so uniformly inane, that a good or bad score shows little more than preparedness for facing the exam.

### What does the word ‘refresh’ used by teachers mean?

- It is the job of teachers to ensure that every child is all set for the kind of questions that are asked.
- Teachers are rightly complaining that the notice period given for the June exam is much too short to “refresh” the children.
- By refresh, they mean **activate children’s rote memory into performance mode**.
- Teachers do not enjoy real autonomy in teaching and assessment.
- If they did, they would have told the government not to worry about using exam scores to sort children into subject streams.
- The pass percentages of the most districts in Tamil Nadu are high and almost identical.
- As there is a micro difference in their pass percentages, it cannot be argue

that the children of a district are not as good as another one.

### What changes could be made?

- The experience of going through a crisis has created the desire for examination reform.
- A system so well-established as the board exam does not easily yield to pressure even for a minor improvement.
- A good starting point for change is to think of an alternative name for the certificate given after passing the Class X Board exam.
- Tamil Nadu is among very few States left where the term 'school leaving certificate' is used.
- Ironically, these are the States with the highest rate of transition from Class X to XI.
- So, the first step will be to **drop 'school leaving certificate' title**.
- The next step will be to start **trusting the teacher** and nurture the growth of a school-based system of evaluation.

Source: The Hindu



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