



# Envisioning New Policy for Examination and Assessment in the Era of Uncertainty

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***Abstract:** The Policy of Examination and Assessment matters a lot as it decides the future of the students. Every policy of education needs reform at certain point of time on account of the prevailing scenario of that time. Recently, the era of pandemic of CoViD 19 has created long distance between the institutions and the students to conduct examinations. Especially the annual/final year examinations are affected by this. So, the time has arrived to rethink about the examination and assessment policy in order to reach the expectations of the students as the development of education as well. In this research article, the researcher has analyzed how examinations can be conducted, what approaches are in our hand for examinations and assessment; and what policy reformation can be idealized and implemented as well for the betterment of students. One will find the new challenges for exams and evaluation, discussion on UGC's recommendations for exams, online platforms for conducting examinations and recommendations and suggestions for reforming exam and assessment policy.*

***Key Words:** Examination and Assessment, Policy Reforms, Online Exams, Technology*

## **Introduction**

***Reformation, like Education, is a journey, not a destination.***

– Mary Harris Jones

There is always a scope for an alternative of everything. The only thing is that we have to look all around and find a way leading towards the destination. From the ancient times to the modern age, we can see a lot of things have been changed and improved also. As the time demanded, we improved things and made it easier to avail or achieve than before. Recently, the Pandemic created by CoViD (Corona Virus Disease) 19 has been paralyzing all systems of great nations and created the era of uncertainty worldwide. Every system is damaged very badly including economics, agriculture, industry and education sector. And it is still damaging and destructing these and no one knows when it will end and normal human life will

begin as it was before. Education sector has to face lot more challenges and setbacks on account of this pandemic. The country like India, where the population of students is the largest one (around 315 million students) and can be compared with the total population of the United States of America, is struggling in rethinking on the examinations.

Examinations are often used to certify students and allowing them to go ahead in the next standards or obtaining degrees. Due to the pandemic, the government decided to cancel exams for Std.1 to 9 and 11 and promoted the students to next class without exams. The big part of examinations of Std.10 and 12 had successfully been conducted before the situation because of Corona becomes

dreadful in India. The pending papers of these classes will be conducted in July as stated by the HRD Minister of India. So, for school examinations, there is no any big issue right now for this year; but the university exams are still in the wait list. No proper decision has been made regarding this. Recently, a report of UGC Committee on Examinations and Academic Calendar (April, 2020) has been introduced which recommended a lot of things for University exams, admission process and academic session for the next year. UGC has given freedom to the universities and institutions to arrange examinations and starting the new session at their convenience.

### **New Challenges in Examination and Assessment now**

The system of examination and assessment has been traditional arrangement prevailed in India as well as all over the world for many years. Students were supposed to attend personally the exam paper and write answer sitting side by side in one classroom as per the time table and arrangement of the institutions. But due to recent lockdown situation, it has become completely impossible to arrange exams at the institutions. The biggest challenge is if the exams are not going to be held, how students will be graded and promoted to the next academic year. Also it is important to follow the CBCS system of passing the students and grading them. This has created anxiety and frustration in students' mind. Some of the challenges are:

- Anxiety and frustration among students regarding exams and results. Last semester students are afraid of getting low results which can affect their future.
- Conventional system of exams is not allowed as social distancing has to be maintained
- Creating an alternative examination and assessment platform

- Low knowledge of technology among the teachers for conducting classes and exams online

### **New Policy for Examination and Assessment**

The policies prepared so far for the betterment of the aspects of education had helped it develop and grows. With the demands of time and need of the situations new policy are made and reforms are initiated by governments. Recently UGC has released certain guidelines for universities and higher education institutions in which it is stated that – *Maintaining the sanctity of academic expectations and integrity of examination process, the universities may adopt alternative and simplified modes and methods of examinations to complete the process in shorter period of time in compliance with CBCS requirements as prescribed by UGC from time to time. These may include MCQ/OMR based examinations, Open Book Examination, Open Choices, assignment/ presentation-based assessment etc.*<sup>1</sup> So, this is what the time is demanding now. Further UGC recommended to conduct practical examinations and Viva-Voce through Skype or other meeting apps. Some of the major ideas for reforming and guiding new paths for examination in colleges are discussed here.

#### **1. Open Book Examinations**

The system of open book examination has been initiated for many years in which the students can apply their critical understanding and analytical thinking for writing answers. Now seeing the contemporary situation of inability of conducting examinations, this model of Open Book Examination can be applied in university exams. The students can be given test papers via online mode and at home they can write answers in their notebooks, scan the pages and submit online in Pdf format. *The questions in open-book exam must take advantage of the format, and give more weightage to the application of knowledge, critical thinking*

*and use of resources.*<sup>2</sup> So, this system should be used to assess the application of knowledge, interpretation and comprehension of students on particular topic via digital mode. One powerful web tool for this is Google Classroom where along with MCQ tests short answer and long answer tests can be created and given to students through their e mail id or WhatsApp group. Also the Google classroom can be used for this.

## 2. Internal Exam System

The institutions and university departments have to think on internal testing system. Some innovative thoughts for this are developing Question Bank in digital form and creating all in one software for examination and assessment as well as certification. The teachers can generate question bank which can be accessible to prepare questions papers including Objective type and short answer types questions can be added. This question bank will include many papers which can be used randomly in digital internal test. Enough stock of question papers should be kept for future use. The Report of the Committee on Evaluation Reforms recommended that *UGC can take initiative for preparation of basic Question Bank in major courses/subjects. These can then be adapted by the HEIs. This will ensure some minimum uniformity, quality and standard.*<sup>3</sup> The tests should be conducted via web tools like Google form, Eklavya, testbook etc. and at the same time proper assessment and grading system should be created which can give fast and reliable results to the students. They should also be allowed to check their papers online to improve their mistakes and do better next time. The Principal or the exam coordinator of the institute should manage all these systems.

## 3. Final Examination and Assessment

In the contemporary India, the scenario of education is completely changed or we can say an alternative way of teaching and learning has been initiated by

teachers as well as students. *In the UK, sixth-year medical school students have just taken their exams online for the first time. The students had three hours to answer 150 questions.... In Germany, secondary school leaving exams will take place under strict hygiene and distance regulations.*<sup>4</sup> Various online platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, Cisco, Byju's, Facebook Live, Khan Academy and so on are used for this purpose. These are the teaching and learning tools. Some of the important tools for examination and assessment include – Eklavya, Exam Makers, Yoctel, GiS Online Test Software, iExam, Testbook, Ways MCQ Online Exam Desktop Application and so on. However, there are certain setbacks regarding the reliability of tests, no internet connection in remote areas, inability of some students while operating online web tools, students with some disabilities, security of test papers, etc. All these things should be considered while creating online examination system. So the software for examination and assessment should be constructed keeping in minds all these matters. The national level bodies of education like NCERT, NCTE, UGC should take initiative in preparation of such software. *UGC can take initiative in preparation of required software for use by HEIs (especially in the areas of registration, seating arrangement, issues of personalized hall tickets, integration of results of internal and external assessment, preparation of final results, calculation of grades etc.). These can be made available to the HEIs to expedite proper implementation of the reforms.*<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the alternatives for conducting examination should be utilized. Open book exam, Question Bank, Online web tools for taking exams and grading students should be used. UGC also allowed to use the scheme of “Carry Forward” (for those subjects in which the student has failed) to promote the student to next semester; but he has to clear the exam for the course whenever it is held in future. So, there

are many ways to walk on and for now all of us have to follow these guidelines given by UGC. Further it is important to refer here the idea of setting up of a new National Educational Technology Forum as stated in the Draft of National Policy of Education 2019. It will be *the autonomous body created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology to improve learning, assessment, planning, administration and so on.*<sup>6</sup>

### **Discussion, Suggestions and Recommendations**

Some distinct suggestions and recommendations are outlined here from the discussion above regarding policy reforms on examination and assessment in present scenario as well as for readiness in future. The educational institutions and universities are expected to initiate these steps for establishing online examination and grading system.

- (1) The examination system should be reviewed and reformed where ICT should play a major role in each aspect of examination and assessment.
- (2) The appropriate training including orientation programs and workshops for how to use online platforms for examination and grading the students should be provided to school and college teachers every year.
- (3) A new subject paper related to ICT enabled teaching-learning should be included in the syllabus of teachers' training institutions.
- (4) ICT based submissions and assignments should be given to B.Ed. trainees where they can develop their skills of using online platform for exams and assessment. Such submission should be implemented in the internship programs in schools where they can utilize their web skills on online test tools.
- (5) Weekly, one lecture or session should be arranged for unit test through online

platform such as Google classroom or Google form.

- (6) Multiple Choice tests including more comprehensive and knowledge application based questions should be asked in online tests.
- (7) Online Mock tests should be conducted for the college students where they can practice their knowledge and understanding in order to be ready for online university exams.
- (8) A Question Bank system should be developed from which certain set of questions can be drawn on the time of examination. The teachers of schools and colleges should work on this getting ICT base training and orientation.
- (9) Digitalization of answer sheets and onscreen evaluation should be initiated at college level. Marks submission, viewing of results, reevaluation of answer sheets, tracking students' performance and getting digital certificates should be implemented in an efficient manner.
- (10) Inter-connection of colleges and institutes should be strengthened more in order to upgrade the standards.
- (11) The Internal examination should include continuous comprehensive evaluation through ICT for college students. At the end of the year, this evaluation will decide their results. So, the focus on traditional system of examination should be lessened.
- (12) The government should develop more secure online platform for examination which can be used by all the institutions and universities of the state. So, only one platform can be used to maintain validity and reliability in results on the part of the students.
- (13) The institutions, the universities and the education authorities of the government

should establish this new form of examination and assessment as a strong alternative of the conventional exams. All of them have to understand their role and work on it persistently and vigorously.

### Conclusion

So, it is absolutely remarkable that everything on this earth has its alternative; the only need is to find it and develop it in an appropriate way. This is the time when the revolution can be brought to change the system head to feet. As Dr APJ Abdul Kalam pointed out, *Change is crucial. It brings new thoughts; new thought leads to innovative actions.*<sup>7</sup> Innovative System for examination and assessment will also arise interest in students as they like technology. Online platforms for teaching, learning, examination and assessment as well as grading will become significant as innovative ways in future education. The teachers have to upgrade their skills and ability in technological terms and lead the students to do the same. Thus, technology will be the first and foremost part of educational services in India in near future; for this the new policy reforms should be implemented in education.

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