

PASSAGE 5

1. The first written public examinations were introduced over 2,000 years ago with the establishment of the imperial examination system in 606 AD in China. By the middle of the 19th century, competitive examinations had been introduced in Britain and India to select government officials. Public examination in schools have a shorter; but still considerable, history.
2. At present, the examination system in India is characterised by heterogeneity. They differ in their vintage, organisational design, financial stability, autonomy, organisational culture and credibility. For instance, the National Institute of Open Schooling is unique in conducting exams through the distance mode; the Indian School Certificate Examination confines itself to only private schools; and the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education is for Islamic educational institutions only. In a situation where public funds are involved, the equity, efficiency and transparency of this expenditure need to be assessed to ensure that the taxpayers' money is being spent with due care and concern. The Amrik Singh report (1997) on reorganising boards wondered, "Can there also be a system whereby it becomes possible to grade and categorise the boards in respect of how efficiently and honestly examination are organised?"
3. To do so, a set of parameters were chosen to measure effectiveness, equity, transparency and economic efficiency of the functioning of these organisations. These include indicators like cost incurred per students, fee charged per student, number of examinees per employee and number of affiliated schools per employee. An analysis was made of the boards chosen on the basis of these parameters. The functioning of a total of 20 boards was analysed in terms of 18 performance indicators in 2005.
4. The data collected from the states shows that most boards have an operating surplus. However, the boards seem to be more sensitive to the needs of the disabled. All of them have some special provisions for such candidates. While these provisions vary widely in scope, most provide for a longer duration of examination, concessions in the examination of languages. The CBSE, along with the Maharashtra board, seem to fare the best.
5. Another important measure of effectiveness of the functioning of the boards is the time taken for declaration of examination results. It was found that this ranged from a mere 26 days in the case of Karnataka Secondary Education Examination Board in 2005 to 48 days for class X in neighbouring

Maharashtra. The Supreme Court has recently issued directions that results should be declared within 45 days from the end of examinations. In 2005, 10 of the 20 boards, which provided this information, could not declare results within 45 days.

6. The reason for such a wide variation in performance in such a vital parameter was the processes utilised. Boards, which have adopted a centralised system of assessment in comparison to the earlier system of sending answer sheets to examiners, have an obvious edge. Similarly many boards have outsourced the work of compilation of results faster and used technology extensively. These boards are also able to declare results. In addition, agencies, which have consciously designed question papers with a high proportion of multiple-choice responses, do not need much time for evaluation. In fact, the Karnataka board has 60 percent of all the questions as objective type.
 7. The quality of assessments is measured by the reliability of results. Even minor errors serve to destroy confidence in exams. Considerable variation was found between boards on this measure. The criteria was the number of applications made for scrutiny of marks after results had been declared, and the number of corrections made subsequently by the board. Of the 18 boards for which such figures were available, over 40 per cent had more than 10 per cent such corrections. The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations reported the lowest number; the highest number of mistakes found in the results declared was by the Bihar Intermediate Education Council at a shocking 60.36 percent. Surprisingly, the Bihar School Examination Board fared much better. It would be interesting to explore the reasons for such a vast difference between the functioning of two similar organisation in the same state.
 8. A similar discrepancy was noticed in Assam where the Higher Secondary Education Council reported an error level of 19.14 per cent while the Board of Secondary Education had only 7.27 per cent errors. The third such case was in West Bengal where the West Bengal Board of madrasa Education had an error rate of 8.81 per cent while the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education reported a much higher rate of corrections made in the results declared of only 24.92 per cent.
 9. The Karnataka Secondary Education Examination Board exhibited interest in results. It has the lowest cost per examinee and also manages to declare results the fastest.
- A.** On the basis of your reading of the above passage answer the following:
- (a) How have the Chinese played an important role in enhancing the education system?

- (c) What are the basic parameters to measure effectiveness in functioning of an organization? 2
- (d) What is the time limit fixed by Supreme Court for declaring the results? 1
- (e) What efforts are being made by different Boards to declare the results at the earliest? 1
- (f) What factors make Karnataka secondary school examination Board superior to the other Boards? 1

B. Find out the words which mean the same as the following : (1×3) = 3

- (a) keep on hold/restrict (para 2)
- (b) easily seen / clear (para 6)
- (c) thorough and detailed examination (para 7)