



Policy contradictions in school education

Education is the first sector to have been paralysed since the start of the pandemic as social distancing was not at all a possibility on campuses.

THE CRISIS CAUSED by the Covid-19 has been beyond the imagination of humankind. While 'lock-down' has been a strategy followed by policymakers to prevent the onslaught of the disease, the world is simultaneously engaged in finding solutions to eliminate it once for all. The pandemic has eliminated the privileges once enjoyed only by those who are economically, socially and politically advantaged. Education is the first sector to have been paralysed since the start of the pandemic as social distancing was not at all a possibility on campuses.

ONLINE EDUCATION...

People at the helm of affairs of the state have been voicing for continued teaching and learning through the internet while the students and teachers are being locked down at home. Learning online is a welcome idea

provided it does not discriminate between the haves and have-nots, rural and urban, privileged and under-privileged. Online learning mechanism is not a full complete solution that would replace the real physical learning process. Even well before this crisis, a survey of leaders of prominent global universities from 45 countries, in 2018, revealed that online higher education would never match the real thing.

CLASS X BOARD EXAMINATION...

The school education minister of Tamil Nadu said that Class X board examinations be conducted from 1 to 12 June and evaluation of Class XII answer scripts would begin on 27 May. It surprised and shocked teachers, parents and students. Officials of the school education department raised concerns about evaluating (Class XII answer sheets) and conducting Class X board exams together and following social distancing norms.

ECONOMIST COMMUNICATIONS LTD

SUB No.

 (in case of renewal)

'Economist House', S-15, First Cross Road, Industrial Estate,
 Guindy 600 032 Tel: 22501235, 42120018
 Email: indecom1968@gmail.com

FROM DATE

 TO DATE

 D D M M Y Y

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

NAME

DESIGNATION/PROFESSION

ORGANISATION

ADDRESS

STATE

PIN

PHONE

EMAIL

1 year Rs.200 3 years Rs 500
 Institutional (1 year - 12 subscriptions - Rs 2000)
 (Rs 50 extra for outstation cheques)
 Draft/Cheque/MO should favour
ECONOMIST COMMUNICATIONS LTD

REMOTE LEARNING: THOUGHTS OF AN ELEVEN YEAR OLD



REMOTE LEARNING IS a plan not to one's liking. But it seems to be the only option now. Over the last few weeks suddenly the words 'Zoom, Google meets'... have become very familiar. But a question still lingers: how much of the syllabus you are able to do online? How will learning suffer in the following year?

School days have been shortened due to connectivity issues and more. Some kids do not have access to a computer; lessons going for these kids are difficult. Some schools use google applications or packets to print. How effective can such learning be?

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES ...

An advantage is definitely the relaxed schedule. In a normal school day you would be rushing to get a class work done and then running to your next class. Once you come home it is homework, dinner and bed. And some kids even have an after school activity in between. This schedule allows no time for what a kid wants best - have fun!

Another advantage is that remote learning can save money! On an average some parents spend annually around \$8000 on gas (transport). In some schools parents have to pay

for the school bus which is another expense saved. Some kids have to pay for school supplies.

Remote learning can cause a lot of anxiety and stress on the kids. Without a teacher to remind and guide them on upcoming projects,, their grades can easily slip, especially if both their parents are too busy to help. Remote School can have stressful time missing a lesson when the internet is down or the screen just keeps on loading!

Another disadvantage lies in missing a bunch of hands for doing projects together like painting a volcano or an experiment in science. Many kids and teachers are concerned about a corona slide when kids will have learned hardly half of what they need to.

MY THOUGHTS

Our world is going to look very different. We need to adapt to these new ways of life.

About the author: Dhwani Jambunathan is a Class 6 student in New Jersey, USA



A total of 3825 centres have been earmarked for conducting Class X exam. Following concerns raised about how students living in areas earmarked as containment zones would appear for Class 10 public exams, the Minister said such students will be allotted exam centres within their containment areas.

More than 20,000 teachers are needed for answer sheet evaluation and 9.45 lakh students would appear for exams. One principal said: "we were expecting Class X exams in July. Conducting exams in June would create stress among parents and many of them may not send their wards to write the exam fearing infection." He said that students may have also forgotten whatever they learnt in schools due to the long break and their memory needs to be refreshed.

Former Vice-Chancellor V Vasanthi Devi, moved the Madras High Court against the state government's decision to conduct board examinations for Class X from 15 June. Senior counsel R Vaigai, representing Vasanthi Devi, said that out of 9.44 lakh students who were slated to write the exams this year, 4.07 lakh were from government schools, 1.38 lakh from fully aided schools and 91,918 from partially aided private schools. "Thus, 6.38 lakh students are from State-funded schools having only basic minimum infrastructure with no fancy trappings for their education," she said.



Further, many students, residing in Adi-Dravidar hostels, went to their homes before lock-down began and students residing in hilly areas may find it difficult to write examinations from 15 June.

Following the observations of the High Court, the State government announced cancellation of Class-X board examinations for this academic year. Both government and private school managements have now decided to use the semester and internal examination scores to evaluate students' performance. The decision has been welcomed by most stakeholders.

ONLINE EXAMINATION...

The minister for school education warned that severe action will be taken on private schools if they conducted online ex-

amination and education since there is limited access to computers and internet. It was also unclear which curriculum would be followed for online education. Surprisingly in June the Minister categorically stated that online education will be the only choice since opening of schools is uncertain.

It is high time that the government avoids confusion and comes out with a clear policy on school education at this juncture. ■

The author, a renowned educationist, was a former vice chancellor, Anna University and former chairman IIT-Kanpur.