

Doing away with exams

The new assessment system which was expected to be implemented in government schools from March this year is under review

By Awais Saleem

The education sector in Pakistan has been undergoing changes on the whims and concerns of the people at the helm of affairs during different tenures. The policies have seldom been made with an approach to solve the problems in the long-term which has created problems of its own that have plagued the education sector over the years.

The worst hit and the most talked about segment of education is the examination system because it is supposed to assess the capability of students on which they are promoted to next classes. The credibility or modus operandi has often been a subject of intense debates but no solution with ground. Recently it was learnt that the Punjab Education Department has formed a five-member committee to review and furnish its recommendations regarding the 'internal assessment examination system' for students of class 1 to 10 in government schools. The initiative to form a review committee has been taken on the directions of Chief Minister Pervez Elahi, who in the wake of growing criticism, had issued directions to review the assessment policy.

The education department, through a letter issued on

abolition of annual examination. The proposal was to assess student's ability by conducting class tests and monthly tests and practicals. Students were going to be promoted to the next class on the basis of these tests. The examination papers in class 9 and 10 would carry no marks, the system suggested. The teachers were instructed to conduct the practice of assessment on six separate occasions, spanning a week each, during the academic year.

Dr Habib Ullah said: "The annual examination system did not inculcate problem-solving approach amongst the students." About the abolition of marking system, he said that higher marks do not at all imply that the student is more capable than the one who has got less marks.

The proposers of the new system hoped to achieve more interaction between teachers and students as well as cutting through the enormous expenses incurred on conducting examinations.

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solid grounds in a matter of few days. Efforts should be made to remove the discrepancies instead of rejecting the whole system altogether. It has proved to be the best way to enhance the true capabilities of students, according to international standards," he said.

There are educationists who are very critical of this new assessment system and wide-ranging objections have been aired about its effectiveness. The teachers in particular stress the new assessment system is vague and a majority of the teachers and heads of institutions found it difficult to come to terms with it as they do not have the requisite training. They further say the model papers were published late as were the relevant course books which made it difficult to implement the assessment system.

The teachers think six weeks' duration was not sufficient for evaluation. The new system is incompatible with the curriculum of the textbook board, they maintain and regret that it is not possible to implement the new system in the available means and finances.

Another criticism of the new system is that it is being introduced in haste without first fixing the responsibilities of the head of educational institutions. While Dr Habib believes that the new system will weaken the tuition culture, many an educationist fear that it will weaken the educational development process of students and will perpetuate the menace of tuitions. Only publishers are cashing in on the existing confusion by bringing out books which, instead of helping the students, add to their woes, the