**Recommendations for assessment and examination**

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I believe this is a good time to generate a discourse on the education policy so that the educational standards of the country can be improved. In this regard, being a Secretary Inter Board Committee of Chairmen, I want to highlight very important points by suggesting some recommendations specifically those concerned with examination and assessment.

First of all, let us understand and have a look at our country’s education system, which is comprehensively reviewed by renowned education & assessment expert Dr Shehzad Jeeva, Chairman IBCC and Director Aga Khan Examination Board, and then we can comprehend the matter properly.

The current education system of Pakistan is functioning under the following education formula—5+3+2+2.

Primary level has grades 1-5 for ages 6-10. Middle level has grades 6-8 for ages 11-13. Secondary level has grades 9-10 for ages 14-15. Higher Secondary level has grades 11-12 for ages 16-17

[Russia to hold conference on counter-terrorism this year](https://nation.com.pk/09-Feb-2021/russia-to-hold-conference-on-counter-terrorism-this-year)

I want to recommend the following education system in line with the prevailing system mentioned above. My proposed education system for National Education Policy Pakistan is a 5+3+3+4 system.

The foundational stage will have Pre-Primary (3 years) and 1-2 grades for ages 3-7. The primary level will have grades 3, 4, 5 for ages 8-10. The middle level will have grades 6, 7, 8 for ages 11-13. The secondary level will have grades 9, 10, 11, 12 for ages 14-17.

The other issue that the education system of Pakistan faces is student dropout, which poses a big challenge to our education system in increasing the literacy rate in the country. Out of 53 million school-going children, only 4 million children (less than 8 percent of total school-going children) are in secondary and higher secondary schools collectively (there is around a 50 percent student dropout from secondary to higher secondary level). The student dropout issue can be addressed with a two-pronged approach.

[UN is ready to support relief to India's deadly flash floods](https://nation.com.pk/09-Feb-2021/un-is-ready-to-support-relief-to-india-s-deadly-flash-floods)

Pakistan has two years secondary level and two years higher secondary levels. To encourage students to continue till 12th grade, instead of a two-year secondary level (grades 9 and 10) and two-year higher secondary level (grades 11 and 12). It is suggested to club the two qualifications as a four-year Secondary School Qualification. Further bifurcation could be made by introducing ordinary level and advanced level.

The online school at the secondary level onwards should be introduced (both at public and private sector); that will help decrease student dropouts and provide standard high-quality uniform teaching and learning resources that will support the students to prepare to complete the high-stake secondary level and beyond qualifications. The issue of the lack of colleges to provide secondary and especially higher secondary education will also be addressed.

Another and one of the major issues with regards to the assessment and examination matters, is rote learning, and some other problems also pose serious challenges to the desired education standards of our country. Regarding such issues, the following policy recommendations can be helpful to rectify the problem.

[COAS Bajwa praises military officers for their professionalism](https://nation.com.pk/09-Feb-2021/coas-bajwa-praises-military-officers-for-their-professionalism)

Pakistan’s modes of evaluation are currently deep-rooted with the issue of rote learning. There is a complete lack of conceptual learning and its applications. Assessment reforms must take place. NEP (Pakistan) should aim to bring new modes of evaluation to overcome the deep-rooted issue of rote learning, where assimilation of concepts and their applications are emphasised. A uniform assessment framework that includes exam syllabi, exam specifications, etc. must be made compulsory for all boards/commission. Continuous assessment (low stakes) should be introduced. The aim is to lead the students to test their strengths.

The assessment system from grades 1-8 in the public sector is non-existent at the government level. In the private sector, continuous assessment is practiced but not following a uniform standard. Some have monthly, quarterly, biannually, or annual exams. There is no uniform test specification in schools (grade 1-8). Across Pakistan, the formative assessment is either non-existent or weak. Assessment commissions should be established similar to the Punjab Examination Commission and the Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission to take assessments—or boards could take the responsibility.

[Show cause notices issued to three members over NA commotion](https://nation.com.pk/08-Feb-2021/show-cause-notices-issued-to-three-members-over-na-commotion)

School-based assessment should be introduced. Test items, test specifications, etc. should be provided by assessment commissions or boards. Scores should be provided to assessment commissions or boards for reporting. The stake of examination should be low. Sample-based large-scale assessment for diagnostic purposes should be introduced. These sample-based large-scale assessments should be carried out by assessment commissions or boards. Feedback should be provided to relevant departments. Formative assessment should be introduced. Formative assessment of skills should be introduced through project-based learning.

To reduce the level of difficulty during high stake exams, instead of a two-year secondary level (grades 9 and 10) and two-year higher secondary level (grades 11 and 12), it is suggested to club the two qualifications as a four-year secondary school qualification. While assessment and examination at this level should remain high stake, good practices in assessment (high-stake) should be introduced and the difficulty and board exam pressure should be lowered by having four-years of Secondary School Qualification (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th). The grading system should be revamped and improved.

[21 cases registered against lawyers for storming IHC](https://nation.com.pk/08-Feb-2021/21-cases-registered-against-lawyers-for-storming-ihc)

In Pakistan, in board examination, the approach is much better as compared to other countries as it is an annual system of evaluation, thus representing continuous assessment which is a recommended best practice in assessment. To further improve, the boards should be encouraged to take a continuous assessment in the form of annual or modular, or semester-based examination to reduce exam pressure. Assessment or exams should be taken once a certain (limited content) syllabus is completed. Thus, the difficulty and pressure of board exams can be lowered.

Pakistan’s education system restricts subjects by creating groups. Therefore, Pakistan has a narrow stream of subjects offering to students. The structure (scheme of studies) needs to be changed by eradicating the assessment of a narrow stream of subjects. Instead of two years of the secondary level, where students choose specialisation areas and subjects like science, commerce or arts subjects, and two years of the higher secondary level where students choose specialisation areas of pre-medical and pre-engineering, a four-year Secondary education stage contains compulsory subjects and elective subjects. The students will have the freedom to choose subjects outside and across their area of study, which will encourage holistic development.

[Incumbent government will change the destiny of the people: Punjab CM](https://nation.com.pk/08-Feb-2021/incumbent-government-will-change-the-destiny-of-the-people-punjab-cm)

Students should be free to retake the exam if they felt they could do better. Also, students should be free to choose whenever they want to take the exam. The choice to appear for examinations based on students’ readiness is a good student-centred approach. For example, an assessment of compulsory subjects in the first two years (minimum one attempt by the second year of secondary education) would be a good idea. Assessment of elective subjects throughout four years (minimum two attempts every alternate year during the four-year secondary education) would help.

The paper pattern of board exams of certain subjects could be redesigned to have two parts such as multiple-choice questions and descriptive questions. Multiple-choice questions should have more weightage as compared to descriptive. This will ensure lowering subjectivity in marking which creates inaccuracy in evaluating students’ true ability, potential and performance. Further improvement in the boards is also required.

[PM Imran's satisfaction over Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme](https://nation.com.pk/08-Feb-2021/pm-imran-s-satisfaction-over-ten-billion-tree-tsunami-programme)

Report cards in Pakistan do not provide meaningful information/feedback/student potential and their ability/stakeholders. Only marks are given. Feedback/report cards should be revamped. It will inform students about their progress in the area of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. All boards/commission should provide comprehensive feedback. Research should be encouraged or made mandatory by all boards/commission.

A project-based approach assessment should be introduced in secondary/higher secondary level as an alternative to practice with a focus on the assessment of skills such as observation skills, information-gathering skills, inference skills, communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving thinking, etc.

Language skills assessment should be mandatory by all boards/commission (reading, writing, and listening). Speaking skills should be mandatory as a part of the school-based assessment and private boards should be encouraged to affiliate with public sector schools.

[PPP to challenge Senate open ballot ordinance: Bilawal](https://nation.com.pk/08-Feb-2021/ppp-to-challenge-senate-open-ballot-ordinance-bilawal)

It is my firm belief that if the aforementioned recommendations are incorporated into the education policy of our country, a rapid improvement in the education system can occur. Therefore, I hope the relevant authorities will consider these recommendations.

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