

Policy consistency is crucial in primary education

There is no alternative to continuous assessment

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The decision to reintroduce examinations in classes one and two, barely two years after they were scrapped under the new curriculum, once again exposes the lack of coherence and long-term thinking in our education policymaking. At a time when the focus should be on improving learning outcomes and strengthening classroom practices, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education has chosen to reverse its assessment policy, which will significantly impact young children.

Under the revised guidelines, exams will make up half of the assessment in class one and two for textbook-based subjects, alongside continuous assessment. This directly contradicts the reasoning behind scrapping exams in 2023, when policymakers acknowledged that exam-based learning places undue pressure on six- and seven-year-old children and does little to support meaningful learning. Changing that decision so quickly reflects the government's policy instability, which is an enduring problem in our education sector.



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Educationists believe that there is no alternative to continuous assessment in primary education. Recent data on the quality of primary education reinforces their view. The National Student Assessment 2022 found that over 60 percent of third graders and 70 percent of fifth graders lack grade-level proficiency in mathematics. In Bangla, around half of the students in these grades are similarly behind. Experts attribute this to overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching methods, poor student-teacher interaction, and a shortage of resources. The findings emphasise that reintroducing examinations will not improve learning unless the fundamental weaknesses in teaching and classroom support are addressed.

At present, children are not being properly taught in classrooms, and continuous assessment is not being implemented effectively, according to experts. Many teachers are also unaware of how continuous assessment should be carried out. Yet, this failure is now being passed on to students in the name of

terminal exams. Educationists argue that learning should be based on each child's ability, with a much stronger emphasis on continuous assessment.

Reintroducing exams in the earliest grades, without addressing systemic flaws, will only create confusion and undermine trust in reform efforts. What the sector needs is sustained investment in teacher training, smaller class sizes to allow meaningful student-teacher interaction, stronger classroom support, and careful monitoring of learning processes. Remedial assistance must be made available for struggling students, and assessment policies must be stable and evidence-based, focusing on foundational skills. Only with consistency, investment, and child-centred policies can we hope to improve our primary education.