



India Ends PISA Boycott

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India and **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** has signed an agreement to enable India's participation in **Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA)** to be held in 2021.

- India stayed away from PISA in 2012 and 2015 on account of its dismal performance in 2009, when it was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries.
- India criticized the method saying that questions were "out of context". Thus, India chose not to participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycle of PISA.

What is PISA?

- PISA is an international **survey held every three years**, coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- **First conducted in 2000**, the major domain of study rotates between **reading, mathematics, and science** in each cycle.
- It is a competency-based test designed to **assess the ability of the 15-year-old candidates** that measures their reading, mathematics, and science literacy every three years to apply their knowledge to real-life situations.

Important features of India's participation in PISA

- Schools run by **Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and schools in the UT of Chandigarh will participate.**
- PISA uses test items aligned with international benchmarks. OECD has agreed to contextualize the questions for Indian students.
- Learnings from participation in PISA will help to introduce competency-based examination reforms in the school system and help move away from rote learning. The CBSE and NCERT will be part of the process and activities leading to the actual test.
- It would lead to **recognition and acceptability of Indian students** and prepare them

for the global economy in the 21st century.

A Glance at Indian Education System

- **Education in schools is one dimensional**, with an obsessive focus on marks. Further, there is lack of availability of trained teachers at all levels. Quality teachers are the missing link in the Indian education system.
- **A majority of students in the university are unemployable because of their inability to apply their knowledge in real-life situations.** This is because of a poor foundation in schools, where the emphasis is more on rote learning, rather than testing a student's creative skills.
- **As per UNESCO data, India has one of the lowest public expenditure rates on education per student, especially compared to other Asian countries like China.**
- With a literacy rate of about 74 percent, India lags behind other BRICS nations, which have literacy rates above 90 percent.

Benefits of PISA

- **PISA data reveals common patterns among high performing school systems.** Likewise, the data also shows that school systems with the greatest improvement have used common tactics at different points in the reform process.
- The data is also used for benchmarking. Successful school systems have many internal measures but it is difficult to understand what the "best" really is. So an International benchmark like PISA can be a healthy driver for reform efforts worldwide.

Criticism of PISA

- Academicians raised concern about **PISA that it has contributed to an obsession with standardized testing relying heavily on quantitative measures** rather than qualitative aspects of education.
- It is criticized for **shifting focus from long-term and enduring solutions to temporary measures** which are being increasingly adopted by countries to improve their ranking.