CBSE Syllabus Cuts - COVID-19 Impact

What is the issue?

- The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has announced a reduction in the curriculum for the year 2020-2021 for Classes IX to XII.
- The reductions and deletions suggested by the CBSE violates the cohesiveness and holistic nature of the planned curriculum.

What is the decision taken?

- The CBSE syllabus for classes 9 to 12 has been reduced by 30%.
- However, core concepts is said to be retained.
- The CBSE circular says that the move has been finalised by the respective Course Committees.
- The Curriculum Committee and Governing Body of the Board have approved the same.
- The CBSE circular instructs the Heads of Schools and Teachers to ensure that the topics that have been reduced are also explained.
- But this is only to the extent required to connect different topics that are retained.
- However, the reduced syllabus will not be part of the topics for internal assessment and year-end board exams.
- The move comes in view of the reduced number of class hours available in 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What are the key deleted portions?

- For Class 11 students of political science, 'federalism in the Constitution' is removed.
- Political theory sections on citizenship, secularism and nationalism have also been removed.
- The core English course will not include exercises to write a letter to the editor, or apply for a job with a resume.
- In Class 12, the topic of India's relations with its neighbours has been deleted.
- Also, sections on social movements, regional aspirations, the changing nature of India's economic development, and the Planning Commission have been removed.

- Business Studies students will not study the concepts of demonetization, and GST.
- The impact of government policy changes on business with special reference to liberalization, privatization and globalization in India has also been removed.
- In History classes, students will not study chapters on understanding partition, or on peasants, zamindars and the State.
- For Class 10 students, the social science chapter on forests and wildlife in contemporary India has been deleted.
- Also, chapters on democracy and diversity; gender, religion and caste; popular struggles and movements; and, challenges to democracy are deleted.
- In science, the chapter on the functioning of the human eye has been removed, along with a section on the basic concepts of evolution.
- A number of practical experiments have been removed.
- These will be harder to conduct when students are able to spend limited time in the laboratory.

What are the contentious aspects?

- **Basic Science** - In basic science topics, it is much better to retain the fundamentals.
- If need be, the advanced topics or the higher application levels could be removed.
- But the steps taken by the CBSE are in the opposite direction.
- For instance, in physics, many basic topics such as Newton's laws, motion along a straight line and basic concepts of heat are removed.
- But more advanced topics corresponding to these have been retained, such as -

i. the topics on work, power and energy, which uses the concepts of Newton's laws
ii. motion in a plane, which expands on linear motion
iii. kinetic theory of gases, which builds on heat

- So, teachers will have to teach the deleted portions anyway, in order to build the next level of concepts.
- So, the deletions remain only nominal, and thus add an invisible burden on teachers.
- **Ecology and evolution** - In biology syllabus, higher-level topics such as ecology, environmental science and evolution have been arbitrarily removed.
- Topics like these, notably, connect the student to real-life situations.

- Importantly, it is ironic that such topics are removed at the time of the pandemic.
- The pandemic has highlighted the consequences of the neglect of evolution and ecology in school and higher education in India.
- Understanding practically every aspect of a zoonotic pandemic requires a thorough grounding in diverse areas of ecology and evolution.
- These include ideas like species interactions, population dynamics, co-evolutionary dynamics, evolution of host range expansions, and the transmission dynamics of pathogens.
- A direct consequence of neglect of ecology and evolution is the relative scarcity of epidemiologists in India.

What is to be done?

- It is fair to take into account the views of all stakeholders in the area of education and do a careful job of trimming the syllabus.
- Another option to consider would be to better allow the students a gap year to pursue their own interests.

Source: The Hindu

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering