

National Talent Search Examination

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As teachers, you may be aware of the National Talent Search Examination (NTSE) with student scholarships awarded by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). When it first came into existence in 1963, it had a different name — National Science Talent Search Scheme (NSTSS).

Initially, the NTSSS was meant only for Class XI science students of Delhi, with 10 scholarships. Then, in 1964, this scheme was implemented in all States and Union Territories. The number of scholarships increased to 350 for Class XI science students. Scholarships were awarded on the basis of a written examination, a project report and an interview. In 1976, the scheme was renamed National Talent Search Scheme (NTSS) and was also open to students of social sciences, engineering and medicine. Students from Classes X, XI and XII were included in this scheme. The number of scholarships was also increased from 350 to 500. Besides, Mental Ability Test (MAT) and Scholastic Ability Test (SAT) were introduced. In 1981, the number

of scholarships was further increased to 550. In 1983, it became 750. In 2000, the number of scholarships was increased from 750 to 1000.

The NTSE is one such competitive exam in India, which gives students financial support and academic recognition for their career in academics. Only Class X students are eligible to appear in this exam. Class X students, pursuing education from open distance learning, and Indian students studying abroad are also eligible to apply for NTSE. Those who qualify this exam get scholarships right up to PhD.

The students have to take this exam in two stages. The selection procedure is divided into two levels. The students first have to appear for NTSE at the state level, which will be conducted by the State Education Board. After passing NTSE at the state level, the students are eligible to appear at the national level. The NCERT conducts NTSE at the national level.

After the application process, the students need to prepare for

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Mental Ability Test (MAT), language test and Scholastic Ability Test (SAT). They need to prepare logical reasoning, questions related to analogies, classification, series, coding–decoding, etc. MAT has 50 questions carrying one mark each. SAT has 50 questions of language test and 100 of science, social science and mathematics. The students get 180 minutes (three hours) to complete the exam. All are Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs).

These test the reasoning ability, subject knowledge and language comprehension skills of the students. The qualifying mark in each paper for General category students is 40 per cent, while it is 32 per cent for students from SC and ST categories. The NTSE has 15 per cent reservation for SC category students, 7 per cent for STs and 4 per cent for the Physically Challenged.

Those who pass the NTSE receive a scholarship of ₹1,250 per month for Class XI and XII, and ₹2,000 per month up to graduation and post-graduation. PhD students are awarded the scholarship as per the norms of the University Grants Commission (UGC). For students coming from poor families, NTSE is a significant step towards obtaining education, leading to career advancement.

India has introduced a number of laudable initiatives in the field of education, such as the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) and the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, which have greatly contributed towards the Universalisation of Elementary

Education (UEE). Statistics indicate that the dropout rate in India is decreasing every year. The handbook *Educational Statistics at Glance* (2016) prepared by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) shows the data of all categories of students at the primary level, with the dropout rate coming down from 5.62 per cent (2011–12) to 4.34 per cent (2013–14).

Since the terminal stages of education are Classes V and VIII, with the major cause being poverty or low income, it is important that the students know about NTSE much ahead of reaching Class X. Teachers need to ensure that students of Class V are made aware of NTSE, and more importantly, of its financial benefits. Students from the upper primary stage may also be encouraged to prepare for this exam. The teachers may introduce age-appropriate questions related to classification, logic and analogy through assignments, projects or holiday homework. The students securing NTSE scholarships must be applauded by the Principal in the Morning Assembly and younger students must be encouraged to prepare for the NTSE as well.

Thus, NTSE is an important examination for the students. Not only does it provide financial support to the students but also boosts their confidence, improves their learning abilities and fosters a healthy competition among them. Besides, it can encourage students, particularly, girls, to aim for higher education.