

Public Examination- Means or Ends of Evaluation

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Abstract: India with its long history of more than five thousand years has produced varied patterns of evaluation procedures that are as diverse as its geographic, socio-economic and cultural conditions. Oral evaluation in the form of questions and answers was given emphasis in student evaluation until the advent of British. At present, it has been largely held by the experts in the field of educational evaluation in India that examinations have become memory based and not much emphasis is given to higher mental abilities. It is felt that undue importance is given to Public Examinations, which are considered as one-stroke solution to the myriad purposes (problems). There are various aspects in the evaluation of students' performance in social sciences, which needed detailed analysis. The present study of quantitative and qualitative analysis of question papers (sequencing and appropriateness of test items, assessing difficulty levels, structure and usage of action verbs etc.,) has indicated that there are wide variations and major drawbacks in the setting of question papers, their design, blue print, marking scheme and question wise analysis etc. It also shows that there are inherent weaknesses in public examination leading to varied and low students performance for which more than students the paper setters and evaluators may be held responsible. In addition to this an analysis of attitude of students towards the examinations and the stress level also does not give a bright picture of the Public Examinations. Hence it is time to realize the importance of initiating measures for reducing stress from the minds of students by de-emphasizing on external/public examination. Some of the steps proposed but still that have not received public support such as grading, continuous and comprehensive evaluation and weightage to internal evaluation have to be given due attention in addition to making the system of examination foolproof.

Keywords: Public Examination, Evaluation, Social Sciences, Question paper, Examination stress

Ever since human civilization has started education has been considered as a necessary phase to initiate the child into mainstream of social life. The fragmented communities of ancient times had their own ways and means of inducting the child into the social, cultural, economic and religious etiquette and practices for their survival and progress. With the increased modernization, industrialization and globalization the informal systems have become highly formal, learning has become goal oriented rather than being for all-round development, mechanical processes have replaced human aspects and global priorities have isolated local needs. In the comatose system of education, which considers humans as cogs of a wheel, the public examinations are fabricating a rat race to endorse the success or failure of a student. The suicides of some desperate students who have failed in examinations or not delivered to the level of expectations of the parents and family, is an example of what ghastly shape these examinations have taken. In this context, it is necessary to study the public examinations, their history, relevance, how students perceive them, what imperfections it contains and what measures can alleviate the situation.

Assessment in the past

In the ancient India during Vedic Period 'Gurukul system' of education prevailed (Mukerjee, 1958) wherein the children would go and spend their formative years in the

hermitage of a teacher by living with him and participating in different chores. The Guru (teacher) provided instruction in different “disciplines” that were considered to be of importance in enabling a person to lead a full life. Knowledge was transmitted orally. During this evaluation was informal observation and correcting the child’s learning and behaviors and providing him/her the necessary feedback for desirable behavior. In addition to this emphasis was also given to the formation of character and the fulfillment of public and civic duties. There were no periodical and annual examinations under this system. On completion of the course of his studies a scholar was presented to the local learned assembly where occasionally some questions were asked. Students in ancient India did not have to pass through the ordeal of examinations (Altekar, 1957).

Later during 5th Century BC, Buddhists imparted education in Sanghas or collective groups (Mukerjee, 1958). Besides oral recitation, other methods were also employed for teaching such as exposition, question answers, use of stories and parables, debate, discussion etc. The teaching became more systematized during this period. This was followed by the medieval period of Muslim rulers in India. They established Maktabas (schools) and Madarsas (colleges) as educational institutions (Rawat, 1970). Emphasis was placed on memorization in addition to reading, writing and arithmetic. The most prevalent method of teaching was oral. The teacher had the privilege of examining the students. No external agency was involved in this process.

Introduction of Public Examinations

Even after the arrival of British, no formal system of evaluation had been introduced in schools and evaluation was school based and carried out by teachers informally. The Wood’s Dispatch was a monumental declaration since it laid the foundations of what might be called the modern system of Indian education. One of its important recommendations was the establishment of Universities in Presidency town of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. The first matriculation examination was held in 1857 as an admission test for entrance to these universities, and this had an everlasting impact on the secondary education in India. Matriculation certificate was considered important for admission to colleges and also for obtaining a job. Later, School Final Examinations were to be conducted by the Education Department and not by the University as a result of the recommendations of the University Commission, 1902. The Calcutta University Commission, (1917-1919) popularly known as Sadler Commission’s recommendations led for the establishment of Secondary and Intermediate Boards Education (Mukerjee, 1986).

Through the introduction of new constitutional reforms envisaged in the Government of India Act, 1919, in the year 1921 the control and responsibility of education was transferred from the Government of India to Provincial governments, which were empowered to act independently of the Central Government. In 1929 Hartog Committee reviewing the progress of education during 1917-1927 referred to the problem of a large number of candidates failing at the matriculation examination and suggested that teaching standards of earlier classes should be improved. During this period, only essay type questions were used and this it was thought was leading to subjectivity in marking.

Post-Independence developments

The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), looking at shortcomings of the system of education observed that if it was asked to suggest one simple reform in Indian education, it would be that of the examinations and examinations should be made valid, reliable and objective. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) felt that “the system of education

is very much examination ridden” and observed that there were too many public examinations such as ‘one at the end of the primary stage and another at the end of middle school stage apart from public examinations at the end of schooling’.

The Education Commission (1964-66) laid great emphasis on the need for comprehensive internal assessment of students by schools in order to evaluate all aspects of pupil growth including those not measured by public examinations. It recommended that the quality of external examinations may be improved by raising technical competence of paper setters, orienting question papers to objectives rather than the acquisition of knowledge, improving nature of questions and adopting scientific scoring procedures for optimum reliability in the assessment of student’s performance. The National Policy on Education, 1968 recommendations lead to shift in the focus of evaluation from certification to improvement of learning. The Central Advisory Board of Education Committee on Examinations (1970) made recommendations with regard to public examinations and emphasized on the use of grades subject wise and use of model answers to serve as guidelines for evaluation.

The first Curriculum (1975) for School Education focused on the problem of examination as it states, “In the present system either there is promotion for all students without examination or there is an annual examination covering all the courses inducing the child to cram a large mass of half-digested information in a short time and thereafter forget it conveniently”. To curtail the evils of Public Examination the Framework (1975) says, “As it takes root (internal assessment), and personal biases leading to the lowering of standards are brought under check, the external public examination even at the end of Class X will become redundant and should be abolished.”

The National Policy on Education, 1986 devoted an exclusive section on examination reform and suggested for elimination of excessive element of chance and subjectivity, de-emphasizing memorization and introduction in a phased manner of semester system from secondary stage. The Ramamurthy Committee (1990) also focused on introduction of grading and continuous and comprehensive evaluation to reduce the influence of external public examination. The public examinations taken after Classes X and XII have assumed the importance of major events, which have a set character, or culture of their own (National Advisory Committee, 1993). The awe they generate, the responses they trigger, and the kind of preparation they demand have all got so entrenched into the social lore that minor improvements in the style of question papers do not make difference to the dominant influence that the examination system has on the processes of learning and teaching.

The Curriculum Framework for School Education 2000, also echoes the same view that “the Class X public examination is held in such an awe by the society that its pattern percolates down even to the initial stages of schooling. As a result even small children are prepared along the lines of board examinations right from the beginning and the significant components like diagnosis and remediation seldom become a part of the system.

The NCFSE 2005 also expresses its concern on examinations as “Examination reforms constitutes the most important systemic measure to be taken for curricular renewal and to find a remedy for the growing problem of psychological pressure that children and their parents feel, especially in Classes X and XII. It has listed detailed measures for reducing stress and enhancing success in Class X and XII public examinations, such as permitting students to appear in as many subjects as they are prepared for, elimination of pass-fail system, re-examinations immediately after announcement of results, providing mathematics and English

at two levels and examination with flexible time limit etc. It says boards should consider, as a long-term measure, making the Class X examination optional, thus permitting students continuing in the same school (and who do not need a board certificate) to take an internal school exam instead. However the response to this suggestion was highly unenthusiastic from the Boards and general public.

Importance of Public Examinations

Examinations are organized to evaluate pupil's achievement and as such are an inherent part of any educational set up (Anand, 1985). They seek to collect information about how much and how well a pupil has learnt and what the gaps in his learning are. This information facilitates for effective and efficient system through which the school, the teacher, the pupil and the parents are enabled to understand the adequacy and suitability of learning processes and outcomes, strategies of teaching adopted, instructional material/situations used and study/learning habits formed.

Pragmatically speaking, it is difficult to anticipate a school without examinations. However examinations have aided economic rat race of a consumption-oriented society, vitiated the objectives and methods of education and have even affected our social life (Singha, 1984). Schooling has been converted into criterion earning through the use of public examinations. The examinations determine not only the contents of education but also methods of teaching – in fact, the entire approach to education. (Education Commission, 1952-53). As explained in the earlier section, Committees after Committees have criticized and condemned External Examinations. Some of them in the recent past have gone to the extent of scrapping them.

The Public Examinations dictate the curriculum instead of following it, prevent experimentation, hamper the proper treatment of subjects and sound methods of teaching, foster a dull uniformity rather than a sense of originality and encourage the average pupil to concentrate too rigidly upon too narrow a field (Singha, 1984). It is said that, examinations are used as a means to fail students, to reflect on teachers' efficiency and to judge the administrative efficiency of the headmasters (Pritam Singh, 1985).

The system of public examination have also created many malpractices like those of using unfair means, use of cheap substandard textbooks by students, misclassification of students and omnibus use of examination results have become quite rampant. It is also leading to stagnation and ultimate drop out of students, social prestige and recognition by examination results for high performance and even committing of suicides due to failure in examinations.

The undue importance attached to the Public Examinations may be delineated as follows:

1. Failure of the system to provide alternative measures, which could substitute or reduce the impact of examinations.
2. Lack of trust on the integrity of local teachers as true evaluators.
3. Concern about varying standards among schools without an external examination.
4. Faith in an external agency, such as Board of Education/Examination, which wields power over entire State/Union Territory and provides comparable performance of pupils and institutions.
5. Public Examinations facilitate transfer and promotion from one school to another.
6. The receipt of scholarships is mainly dependent on the performance in public examinations.

7. The importance attached to the Certificate issued by a common authority for admission into higher/professional institutions.
8. Public Examinations serve as passport to admission into most sought after courses and streams of choice.
9. The social prestige attached to the certification of External Agency and especially in availing employment opportunities.
10. Public Examinations enable to determine the performance of teachers and schools and their credibility.

However inspite of these assumptions, they do not answer some questions such as, have examinations improved or even maintained the standards of education? Have examinations motivated learning on the part of students? Have they been instrumental in reforming instructional practices and study habits of students? Have they resulted in updating the curriculum? All these issues require thorough research and they have not yet sufficiently been validated so far.

Content evaluated in public examination

It is said that Public Examinations have encouraged rote memorization of facts, selective learning and teaching by students and teachers respectively. The (National Advisory Committee, 1993) referring to the public examinations taken at the end of Grade X and XII viewed that they should be reviewed with a view to ensure replacement of the prevailing text based and 'quiz type' questioning by the concept based questioning. It further stressed that this single reform is sufficient to improve the quality of learning and save the children from the tyranny of rote memorization.

The quiz type questions are based on eliciting information. Information, according to some educationists is considered as mere acquisition of facts or rote memory and Knowledge as a mental process that takes shape in the mind or an intellectual process, which has very little or nothing to do with outside elements. Emphatically speaking the society is slowly drifting from knowledge-based society to information-based society and human beings have become transmitting agents of information rather than repositories of Knowledge. This is mainly because of the revolutionary development of Information, Communication and Technology (Sreekanth, 2006).

What is required is not only collection of information, but developing an understanding of it leading to further advancement through creation of knowledge. This cannot be attained under a system of public examination where the student is expected to be thorough with the textbook, and nothing more.

Evaluation of Social Sciences in public examination

In India several studies were made with regard to various aspects of evaluation, though no study has been made so far with regard to the comparison of the question papers of different Boards of examination with respect to various aspects of evaluation such as design, blue print, marking scheme and question wise analysis etc.,

There are various aspects in the evaluation of students' performance in social sciences, which need to be taken into consideration. But many a time they are either ignored or not understood thoroughly by the paper setters and evaluators. For example though many Boards have made it mandatory to use design, blue print, marking scheme and question wise analysis etc., in preparation of the question paper, they are hardly adhered to and as a result of this a question paper is set which is often not a balanced one covering the entire syllabus

(Sreekanth, 2006). Also the necessity to do proper justification to different forms of questions by selecting right items from the right areas is not done. The framing of the questions may also be very dubious, as they may not convey the message, which they should, and as a result of this the students cannot do proper justification. The questions are also set by using such action verbs, which are often not appropriate and this also leads to misunderstanding the questions. The marking scheme is also set many a time in a very vague manner and the evaluators do follow them too rigidly.

In the Country, there are in all 42 Boards of Education/Examination conducting publication examination. A study aimed at analysis of Social Science Question papers of Boards of Education of Manipur, Mizoram, Punjab and Karnataka was conducted. The selection of States was made on the basis of random sampling method.

Table 1: *Subject-wise distribution of marks in Public Examination-2005*

SL. No.	Subject (as % of total marks allotted)	Manipur	Mizoram	Punjab	Karnataka
1	History	33.3	35	30	No subject specific division of marks is done in Karnataka.
2	Geography	33.3	35	30	
3	Civics	16.7	20	20	
4	Economics	16.7	10	20	

Table No.1 shows that three states viz., Manipur Mizoram and Punjab have allocated marks for four different areas of social sciences i.e., History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, though in various percentages to the total marks. Manipur and Mizoram have same percentage of marks for History and Geography, which is more than the marks allocated for Civics and Economics. Punjab Board has equal percentage of marks allocated for History and Geography. The marks allocated for Civics and Economics are also the same. The least percentage of marks among these three Boards is given to Economics by the Mizoram Board. In the Board Examination of Karnataka though all these four areas are represented in the questions, they are not clearly demarcated in the question paper.

Table 2: *Allocation of marks/ questions/ minutes in Public Examination- 2005*

SL. No.	Marks/Questions/Minutes	Manipur	Mizoram	Punjab	Karnataka
1	Total No. of Questions	78	36	28	50
2	Total No. of Marks	150	100	100	100
3	Total No. of Minutes	360	180	180	180
4	Minutes per Question	4.6	5.0	6.4	3.6
5	Marks per Question	1.92	2.8	3.6	2.0
6	Minutes per mark	2.4	1.8	1.8	1.8

Among the four States, Manipur has largest number of questions in the question paper, while Punjab has the lowest. However the total marks, and the time allocated for answering the question paper is also more in Manipur in comparison with other States. Only in Manipur the total number of marks is 150, while in other states it is uniformly 100. Also the total amount of time for answering the question paper is 360 minutes in case of Manipur and for all others it is 180 minutes only. If we see the average amount of time allocated for each question, it is highest for Punjab with 6.4 minutes and lowest in Karnataka with 3.6 minutes.

In terms of allocation of marks per question Punjab is highest with 3.6 marks per question, while Manipur is lowest with 1.92 marks. In terms of minutes per mark Manipur is highest with 2.4 and all the remaining states have uniformly 1.8 minutes per mark.

Table 3: *Forms of Questions as percentage to the total number of questions*

Sl. No.	Form of Question	Manipur				Mizoram				Punjab				Karnataka			
		No. of Marks	No. of Questions	Total	In %	No. of Marks	No. of Questions	Total	In %	No. of Marks	No. of Questions	Total	In %	No. of marks	No. of Questions	Total	In %
1	Objective	1	12	12	8												
2	Very short Answer	1	24	24	16	1	9	9	9					1	20	20	20
3	Short Answer	2	32	64	42.7	2	7	14	50	2	14	68	68	2	15	60	60
4	Long Answer	5	10	50	33.3	4	3	12	41	6	2	32	32	4	5	20	20
	Total		78	150	100		36	100	100		28	100	100		50	100	100

The Table No.3 gives a description of the different forms of questions as a percentage to the total number of question in the question paper. Manipur is the only state, which has used the Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs or Objective type) in the Examination. While the percentage of marks allocation is highest to the short answer questions with 42.7 per cent, it is lowest to the MCQs with 8 percent only. Mizoram state has used very short answer, short answer and long answer type questions with highest percentage of marks allocated to short answer i.e. 50 percent and lowest to the very short answer i.e. 9 percent only. Punjab State has no objective type questions and very short answer type questions. Out of the total 68 percent marks are allocated to the short answer type questions and 32 percent marks are allocated for the long answer type questions. Karnataka has very short answer, short answer and long answer type questions. However the long answer type questions have maximum marks of four only. Out of the total, 60 percent marks are allocated for short answer type questions and 20 percent each for very short answer and long answer type question.

Major Findings of the study

The subject wise distribution of marks is not uniform among states. Karnataka has not shown the weightages given to different subject areas in the question paper and that is leading to unplanned and unorganized distribution of questions. There is wide variation in the number of questions that a student has to answer in different Boards. There is an indiscriminate usage of action verbs, which misleads the candidates many a time. For example the action verb justify is used for a two-marks short answer type question, where the student can hardly do justice.

An important factor which the Boards, evaluators and paper setters need to note is that while it is important to give an ideal answer in the marking scheme to serve as a guide for awarding marks, the evaluators should not strictly stick to it and permit for variation in expression in terms of presentation in language, style and content etc. Assessment of Student's performance may also go wrong due to innumerable reasons, which are beyond the control of a student. In a workshop conducted on Error analysis of Language and Social science Question papers of a State Board of Education the Author observed for a question as to "Why sangai deer does not get shelter during rainy season", a student wrote an answer as "Due to cutting and felling of the trees". As it did not match with the exact expected outline

answer “Deforestation” the student was not given any mark/point. This shows how stringent the evaluator is in adhering to the marking scheme and turning a blind eye to the variety of expression. This raises many questions some answered and some unanswered. The first and foremost is considering marking scheme as divine. 2. Lack of training in evaluation. 3. Lack of time to understand the contents written in varied forms. 4. Lack of analytical abilities. 5. Feeling of threat from Higher-ups for going beyond the prescribed etc. (Sreekanth, 2006)

It is clear from the above point that the much talked about “Rote memorization” is also encouraged by the teachers as they confine to the textbooks and do not want to go beyond. This makes the students not to think of anything else for developing “Knowledge”. The eagerness to score more to be successful makes them least interested in co-curricular/extracurricular activities. The NCFSE 2005 addresses these issues and views that types of questions that are set for assessment need to go beyond what is given in the book. Questions that are open-ended and challenging should also be used.

As described above, even the map pointing should not confine to routinely asking to draw the outline maps and simple location of places. This could be made interesting by interrelating several aspects as it is done in the Board of Manipur. The order of questions in the question paper needs due attention by all the Boards. The question paper should start with easy questions which can be attempted by all students and end with difficult questions. When internal choice is given in the question paper the two items asked should not differ in the competencies being tested (more so when different sets of question papers are used). The suitability of the content is also another important feature in preparation of questions as the expected length of the answers neither should be too large, nor too short.

In allotting marks to the questions also there is no fixed pattern among all the boards. There are large variations among them as for example Mizoram state has a maximum of 6 types of questions with marks ranging from 1 to 6. Manipur has the least number of types i.e., 1,2 and 5 marks questions. Also the Karnataka board awards a maximum of four marks only for essay type question. In fact there must be a set pattern for allotting marks to different forms of questions and this should ideally be one for MCQ and very short answer, 2 or 3 for short answer and 5 to 8 for long answer. The weightage given to short answer questions is also large in relation to other forms of questions by all boards of education. Punjab board has not included both objective and very short answer type question and hence the question paper is lop-sided, and skewed towards subjectivity.

The overall analysis gives an impression that there are significant variations in the social science question papers of different boards of education, in terms of typology and content of questions, the marks allotted, time limits, coverage of different areas of study etc and this gives an impression that public examinations are not fulfilling the role of being “Accurate Performance Indicators” of students attainment across the Country, and they need not be considered as all that sacrosanct. Hence they need to be further corroborated with other forms of assessment.

Students’ Attitude towards public examination

In a Questionnaire developed and administered on 50 students of Class X of Tagore International School, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi to find out the attitude towards Examinations it was observed that more than 80 per cent of the students believe that examinations are part of studies, they are sincere in appearing for Examinations and through Examinations students potential is tested. 92 per cent of the students feel that Examinations are indispensable and

64 per cent of the students feel that Examinations are worst feature of our Educational System and since they are part of the system they will have to manage with them. Also 68 per cent of them feel that failure in Examinations makes the life miserable.

76 per cent of the students have viewed that they wish to appear in Examinations as long as they get good marks, as marks are an incentive. 68 per cent of students feel that marks obtained in Examinations do not necessarily indicate the level of knowledge of students. Little over half of the students feel that because of Examinations students are forced to resort to malpractices such as copying, impersonation etc. In all, of the three-point scale on 40 items 56.8 per cent of the total scores of all students have positive responses, 38 per cent negative and 5.2 per cent undecided.

Stress of public Examination

On the same sample population, another questionnaire administered to elicit information on Examination stress that the students undergo, it was found that 80 per cent of the students feel that Examinations have to be taken seriously and they are not a child's play. 70 per cent of the students feel that to score marks one has to toil a lot. 90 per cent of the students feel that there is much relief after completion of Examination, which shows that Examinations are causing a lot of stress on students. 76 per cent of students feel that scoring in Examinations brings success in life.

76 per cent of the students feel that Examinations also lead to frustration. 62 per cent of the students feel that it is better to skip the Examinations and concentrate on studies, but as Examinations lead to better employment opportunities and standard of living one has to appear for them. Nevertheless the positive aspect of these Examinations is that, 72 per cent of the students feel that Examinations make them to study better, which otherwise they do not do. Only 50 per cent of the students however feel that Examinations should be made optional. Over the issue as to whether Examinations are means as well as ends, no clear picture emerged as they were equally divided.

Suggestive Measures for Improving the System

Grading

The present marking scheme in the public examination is based on 101-point scale. It is widely held that due to complexity of human nature, it becomes difficult to precisely measure the performance/achievement level of a student on 101-point scale. By reporting only marks, without the mention of grades, performance is only measured (quantative) and not assessed (qualitative). Measurement process involves only construction, administration and scoring of tests. While on the other hand, assessment in addition to all these, is based on providing useful inputs as to how far the raw scores are meaningful for a specific purpose. Raw scores have very little or no meaning unless they are made specific with letter grades (A,B,C,D) and performance descriptors (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor).

In a study conducted on the prevalence of grading in different Countries (Sreekanth, 2003), it was observed that only four Countries out of the 16 developed Countries are using the 101-point scale and even these Countries are converting the 101-point scale into smaller numerical scale and/or using performance descriptors. Even among 24 developing Countries under the survey, 13 Countries are using 101-point scale and all these Countries are converting marks/points into shorter numerical scales, and performance descriptors. All the remaining countries are using different shorter scales in recording and reporting the performance of students along with grades and performance descriptors. This research suggests that grading with alphanumeric system and performance descriptors will facilitate

smooth recording and reporting of the performance of the student and will reduce the stress of external public examination.

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation

The CCE emphasizes on continuity of assessment in broad range of instructional objectives. Continuity means assessment throughout the session, and making it an integral part of teaching learning process through formal and informal methods. Comprehensiveness means assessment of scholastic and co-scholastic aspects. This encompasses all aspects of pupils' growth such as intellectual, physical, social personal qualities, interests, attitudes and values. The term comprehensive also means variety of evaluation tools and techniques employed for scholastic and co-scholastic areas. The CCE is multi-dimensional as it involves multiple techniques and different persons like teacher, pupil, peer, parent and community.

CCE takes care of students pace of learning in all aspects of personality growth with regular periodicity and timely addressing of the problems. The essential principles for a planned scheme of CCE are flexibility, functionality, accountability, and economy. The learning environment such as conditions, persons, and resources, which throw light on pupil's learning, must also be taken into consideration in assessing the students.

Weightage to Internal Assessment

The CCE can be successfully implemented by making it an integral part of recording and reporting of the students' performance through annual certification process, along with evaluation in public examination. This will bring significance to internal assessment, as teachers, students, parents and all other concerned will consider internal assessment through CCE as equally important along with public examination.

The weightage given to internal assessment in annual certification may vary from time to time and subject to subject. However it is better to start with a small percentage and gradually increase the weightage for internal assessment, so that faith in this form of assessment is upheld over a period of time. Also some form of checks and balances will have to be made in giving weightage to internal assessment, as there is every possibility of making inflated assessment. This can be checked through the process of rationalization and scaling of the marks/grades obtained in internal assessment with that of public examinations. This is not to doubt the system of internal assessment but to make it more effective and a true substitute.

Semester System

Semester signifies the division of the academic year into two parts. It also implies that courses are designed to cover one semester (instead of a year), and that final examinations are held twice a year. However, in the examination for the second half of a two-semester course a student is not expected to have forgotten the first half, and questions asking for integration of the two are not considered out of order. Introduction of the semester system can improve teaching-learning processes through more individualized education, flexibility in course formulation and content and techniques of assessment.

Normally students do most of their serious learning in the three months before the final examination. If we have two final examinations in a year, and thus put two such three-months period into the academic year (instead of only one) it is obvious that nearly twice as much can be learned. If a one-year course is divided into two parts, it will lead to more intensive coverage of each part. Semesterization also facilitates for the better use of credit

system, greater reliance on home study, and internal assessment. The main advantage of organizing courses on the credit system is the flexibility it permits to students to study intensively as also to cover a wider range of subjects. The courses can also be adjusted to the needs and abilities of individual students.

In USA the semester system has facilitated for internal assessment and continuous evaluation. Examinations usually count the most, but the number of tests or examinations varies considerably depending on the teacher and the nature of the subject being taught. In some courses the final grades may be based almost entirely on the examination results but more frequently other grades or factors are also taken into account. Such factors include class discussion, term papers or projects, laboratory work, special short term papers or projects, and a variety of other things.

Conclusion

Over a period of time Examinations have built around them enough ritualism and have acquired a rigidity characteristic of institutions. The way they are planned and conducted and confined within the fetters of time and space speaks of their inflexibility. The way they have endured the onslaught of many commissions and committees speaks of their tenacity. The Education Commission of 1964-66 suggested for setting up of a few selected schools with the right to assess the students and holding their own final examination at the end of Class X, to reduce the domination of External Examinations. The implementation of this in two schools of Rajasthan State proved to be unsuccessful and general public was not enthusiastic about this arrangement. There is every need to revive this kind of attempt in different parts of the Country, as we should not be shattered by the failure to bring about reforms in education.

The Examinations also, as it has been outlined, instead of becoming means for determining the achievement of the processes and product of learning, have become ends in themselves of the teaching learning process. Also it is very clear from the attitude of students towards Examinations and the stress level, that the students feel it as a compulsion thrust upon them, and they are very much relieved once they complete Examinations. Introduction of Grading in internal and external examinations will certainly bring down the overemphasis attached to marks and examinations. Semesterization will also facilitate for the smooth progression of student without large burden accumulated before and at the time of annual examination.

The missing and weak link of the evaluation through public examinations is complete disregard of non-scholastic assessment of a student's personality (such as personal and social qualities or interest in subjects outside the curriculum, etc.), as it is conducted at the end of the academic session. The solution to this will be introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation, and providing weightage to it in report card, along with the Evaluation in Public Examination.

In addition to this, Examinations have to be conducted more professionally through the choice of appropriate personnel with their continued professional upgrading, the use of computers and management techniques, reliance on research, interaction with other Boards and different academic bodies at the state, national and even international levels.

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