

# ***THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES***

## **Examination System in Higher Education: A Critical Analysis in Indian Perspective**

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### ***Abstract:***

*Higher Education is undergoing rapid changes in the world and India also. Of the various dimensions of changes in higher education, examination system is also modified and it defines the main direction of transformation. Since examination is the central part of any education system and written examination is the most important aspect of examination system written examination. In this discussion focus has been given on the current ways of conducting written examination and the reforms that are required in the current aspect of Globalization.*

**Keywords:** 1. Higher Education, 2. Examination, 3. India, 4. Reforms

### **1. Introduction**

Education remains the primary engine of upward economic mobility in any nation, including India. The Higher Education sector in India has witnessed a tremendous growth in institutional capacity since Independence. When there were only 20 universities and 500 colleges in the country in 1947, with 210000 students enrolled in higher education, in the academic year 2011-2012 the number has been increased to 659 universities, 33023 colleges and 25.9 million students. India now ranks second highest in the world in terms of enrollment of students after China and third being USA. There are another 700 higher education institutions from all over the world are on the queue to set up their office shops in India. This indicates a tremendous competition among the institutes for their sustenance in higher education which again depends on one important factor like how students are evaluated.

The method of written examinations was first time adapted in Cambridge University in 1702. Though the tool of written examination proved to be highly beneficial in mass assessment but it seems handicapped to assess comprehensive development of students. Since independence various educational commissions and committees have been formed in India like University Education Commission (1948), Kothari Education Commission (1964), Iswarbhai Patel Committee (1977), National Commission (1983), Acharya Ramamurthi Committee (1990) and others. Though they all have expressed their concern over existing examination system and suggested to bring reforms in examination but it still remained mostly futile. The university education commission in 1948 said 'if there were to suggest a single reform in education system it would be of examination'.

Contrary to expectations of early state-planners, it was the service industry rather than manufacturing one that grew steadily to dominate the Indian economy. India can boast of an exponential growth of engineering institutions in the recent past but NASSCOM estimates only 10% of the engineering graduates are employable. In a recent interview, S.A. Deshpande, head of training and recruitment at one India's leading software company apprehends "19 out of 20 graduate applicants and 6 out of 7 post-graduate applicants are unemployable, as most of the engineers do not have the right skill". If a country of over 100 crore is struggling to produce one lakh youth a year with proper skill all is clear that faults are there with our education system. So the curriculum needs to be designed properly, the new teaching methodologies; lecture mode, seminar method, continuous evaluation grading system, group discussion method, workshop method, tutorial method, role playing and simulation method to grow some interpersonal skill and global mind set to be adopted. If the existing higher education institutions do not consider the matter seriously the sick educational institutions may have to close down their operations. Today more than 50% of universities follow semester pattern and more than 30% follows internal assessment system, still lacunae exists. Based on a 'one-size-fits-all' principle, they make no choice for different type of learners and learning environments. The present examination system provides grades and certification but little feedback methods. Many students with high grade (9 and above out of 10) still cannot give answer to very basic questions of their subjects. Therefore it is necessary to bring over reforms in written examination system in different ways.

### **2. Annual Examination System**

Many institutes still follow the annual examination system that actually measures rote memory of students than their skill. Here examination appears like Damocles Sword above the students' head. The students inculcate a feeling of fear instead of love and understanding for the subject; they induce an inordinate level of anxiety and stress. In addition to widespread trauma, mass media

and psychological counselors report a growing number of exam-induced suicides, year lack and nervous breakdowns among the students of higher education.

### 3. Question Paper

Sometimes quality of question papers is low, questions are vague or ambiguous, sometimes the same question appeared differently in two different languages or quite lengthy questions, allowing little time for actual thought, fail to test higher-order skills like reasoning and analysis.

### 4. Answer Key

If the answers in the answer key are wrong or vague, then assessment goes in the wrong direction.

### 5. Examiner

Sometimes the entire future of students depends on mood of the examiner. Some examiners view paper checking as a duty imposed on them, whereas some perform the task for earning purpose. When some become very strict while assessing papers; some are liberal in giving marks. Again it may happen that even though the student has written answer as per the answer key some examiners do not give full marks; to avoid such discrepancies some orientation of examiners may be done. The teachers should be motivated to examine the answer scripts, better remuneration to be provided, if they still deny, they have to be forced or brought to book within the statutes of the institution like increment or promotion to be stopped.

### 6. Examining Body

Each examining body claims superiority over the other. Not only that it conducts further new entrance tests to its own students for admission in higher classes, meaning thereby it does not trust its own examination procedure which its students had already passed. Even after being awarded Ph.D. through any examination or selection process, candidates still have to appear in UGC-National Eligibility Tests. Ph.D. Degree does not suffice one's eligibility for teaching at college level. Thus entrance tests or examination go on endlessly.

### 7. Infrastructure

The infrastructures of many institutions in India are not up to the mark. Unless the institutes lack a very basic infrastructure, students should take the examination in their home institutes in order to reduce stress caused by additional travel for examination purpose and unfamiliar environments; the invigilation team should however be appointed largely from other institute.

### 8. Examination Reforms

As Socrates noted, "Education is not the filling of a vessel but the kindling of a flame". The trick is to kindle the flame and the student will remain motivated. Today Internet has provided information revolution for self learning but sometimes this huge information result overwhelming situations. What needed are skilled processors of this information—people who can access it and evaluate it, sort it, and analyze it. Skilled workforce is needed to identify or deduce relationships among scattered and unrelated data to find their applications to real-life problems. Continuous and comprehensive evaluation system to be established in order to (i) reduce stress on children, (ii) make evaluation comprehensive and regular, (iii) provide space for the teacher for creative teaching, (iv) provide a tool for diagnosis and for producing learners with greater skills.

This system will entrust class teacher to be the primary evaluator of any student, not by a one-shot measure but a continuous process; careful and rigorous validation of teacher-conducted, assessment. If any direct testing to be needed, it would be of a very different type— optional, open-book, and on-demand. Implementing this vision will require a lot of education of all stakeholders and definitely political will. The focus should shift from paper setting to question setting. Multiple-choice questions have the following advantages over 'short answers':

- They can be machine-marked and hence, are entirely reliable
- Very quick results are possible
- Copying by students can largely be eliminated by shuffling of question numbers
- Extensive syllabus coverage is possible due to the brief time needed per question
- Lower student anxiety levels, higher pass percentages, and lower urban-rural score disparities as reported by Department of State Education and Research Training, Karnataka, where MCQs have been tried extensively in recent years for 60% of many subject exams.

MCQs work best in conjunction with some open-ended essay questions in the second part of the paper, which tests expression, and the ability to formulate an argument using relevant facts. Examination system needs to be more flexible. We should ensure that they do not discriminate against particular kinds of learners as different learners learn differently, and hence to test all learners through a written test of the same type in all subjects is unfair to those whose verbal proficiency is superior to their writing skills, those who work more slowly but with deeper insight, or those who work better in groups than individually. There should be more varied modes of assessment, including oral testing and group work evaluation. After the examination is over the complete answer of the question paper needs to put up in the website if possible or the completed answer books to be finally handed over to the students along with their final result that would be fruitful for them to know their short comings. This will definitely enhance their knowledge and show better performance in next examinations. Even if any student fails in any examination he should not be stopped from promotion to the next year, since year loss to any student ultimately leads to slow down the progress of the nation. There should be system of supplementary and re-supplementary examination.

**9. Conclusion**

If major reform is not made in our education system in near future the result is many fold; first, one has to pass examinations after examinations till he or she reaches 30 or more years of age to find a job; that may not be very encouraging or matching his or her line of interest. This creates psychological, economic and social problems. Secondly certificates or degrees awarded by different Boards or Universities stand devalued. There is yet another implication; market of coaching institutions will go on rising. No wonder if big corporate houses turn to this profit-making industry. So our education think tankers need to sit together to newly formulate our education system in present context of globalization.

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