

Vol 4 Issue 12 Sept 2015

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2249-894X

Review Of Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EXAMINATION SYSTEM IN INDIA AND ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

There is no denying the fact that examinations have for reaching effects on the entire approach to education. Examination is an integral part of any teaching learning process. Examinations influence the contents of education as well as methods of teaching. They influence pupils, teachers, parents, administrators and infact the whole society. So it is essential that examination must assess all round developments of the students. Examination is necessary because it plays a significant role in the education system of country . The truth remains that examinations are closely related to the education systems prevailing all over the world that no county has been able to do away with examinations till to day. The main aim of the education system of every country is to develop the wholesome personality of the individual. The examination system aims at evaluating the level of development attained through the education system. In this article writer tries to reveal the historical development of examination system in India with special reference to Assam.

KEYWORDS : *Examination, Historical development.*



INTRODUCTION :

The beginning of examination system: The existing evaluation system as practiced in our educational system is confined to examination. Before going to discuss about the history of examination system in Assam the investigator wants to give a brief description of examination system of India. Examination which are operated in India today were started more than a century back with the establishment of the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Before going to discuss about modern examination system we have to be clear about ancient examination system prevailing in India.

Examination system during vedic period : There were no examination in the vedic age. The guru would not proceed further until the pupil had thoroughly understood his previous lesson. The teacher would satisfy himself by asking the pupil to repeat what he had learnt and then proceed further. Thus, the pupil was tested thoroughly on every lesson. But there was a tradition that after the Samavarta Ceremony the pupil presented himself before the gathering of learned people and answered the question asked by them. No degree or diploma was awarded to the pupil after the completion of education. The pupil was called a Snataka after the course was completed and the pupil performed

certain bathing ceremonies. The teacher never organised examinations for his pupils. He paid individual attention on each student. But this does not mean that the work or achievement of student were not evaluated. When the student was busy in different activities of the Gurukul, the teacher observed all his activities. The work done by the pupil was evaluated daily. The teacher showed no partiality to any pupil. If the teacher declared any student fit, he could come to him for further education, if he liked. It is said that Indra took some problem for research and he had to stay with his teacher for 101 years to solve it. It was only after 101 years that Indra was declared successful.

Examination system of post vedic education: After completing education and at the time when the students were to leave Gurukul for their homes to enter into family life. "Gurus" gave them final instruction and advised in order to guide them in their future life. These instruction are like the torch light guidance for the student to make him fully useful. It gives the light which might enlighten the social life of shisya R.K. Mukharji has rightly pointed out. "These words read almost like chancellor's convocation address of modern Universities".

Examination system during Buddhist period: During Buddhist period there was also no proper system of examination. The students had to prove their practical ability in the following arts:

(i) Medicine (ii) Vashikaran kam-tantra (iii) Tantra-Mantra (iv) Archery (v) Elephant taming (Hathi Sutra) (vi) Hunting (vii) Giving life to the dead (viii) The knowledge of the voice of various animals.

They had to prove before Royal Audience and at prominent places. This was regarded as the only form of examination at that time.

Examination system, during Muslim period : The system of examination as we find in the modern period, was not prevalent even in the muslim period. It mainly depended upon the will of the teacher to promote the pupils to the next higher class. Ofcourse, some oral tests and precise writings were taken during Mughals rule to conferred higher degrees. We have already seen that there were no annual or periodical examination in ancient India. The end of the education course was not marked by any lengthy and exhaustive examination; but by the pupil reciting and explaining the last lesson. Ancient examination system can hardly be compared to the modern system of examination. At the end of his education the scholar was presented to the local learned assembly, where occasionally some questions were asked. "Students in ancient India had not to pass through the fiery or deal of examination; armed with his irrevocable degree, the modern graduate can afford to forget all that he had learnt and no one can question his competence. The scholar in ancient India could not take shelter behind the buttress of a degree."

Modern Examination system : Now we are going to discuss about the Modern Educational system of India with special reference to examination system of Assam. Modern Educational structure of India was started with the entry of the East India company which was formed in 1600 A.D. Although the East India company was involved 'in the education of the people of India, it did not want to take any official responsibility for the education of the people of India as a whole. But when the charter Act was renewed in 1813, the education system was totally changed. In 1854 when Wood's Despatch was formed; it had recommended regarding examination system in the following way—"The Universities were to be modeled after the London University. The main functions of these newly created Universities will be to hold examinations and to confer degrees on the basis of the examination results." The Indian Education commission 1882 recommended that promotion from class to class

should not be made purely on the basis of fixed examination uniform throughout the province. Lord Curzon appointed University Commission in 1902. This commission recommended the need for University Examination. Examination are required only in order to determine how far teaching has been successful. A man becomes a graduate, not of a particular college, but of the University and it is not possible to contemplate his being examined for a degree by the staff of the college to which he belongs without the assistance of outside examiners.

General Scheme of examination according to TUC 1902 : "We think it desirable that there should be uniformity in the NOMENCLATURE (name or designation) of the examinations and degrees in Arts and Science at the different universities. We, therefore, suggest that the three examinations should be called the Matriculation Exam, the intermediate Exam and the Exams for the degree of B.A. or B.Sc. respectively".

Restriction of Private students regarding examination according to IUC 1902: "We desire to express the opinion that no private student should be admitted to the Intermediate Exam or to the exam for the degree of B.A. or B.Sc. unless by a special order of the senate, to be justified by the reasons to be recorded in each case at the time of making the order." • In 1904 Lord Curzon proposed his new scheme. Before 1904 students of unrecognized schools could appear at the Matriculation exam conducted by the Universities. After 1904, it was made compulsory for the schools to seek recognition from the University of their area. Students of unrecognized schools would not be allowed to appear at the exam. Thus, every school had to seek recognition from Education Department as well as from the university. The Calcutta University Commission 1917 (Sadler commission) recommended that for the establishment of a Board of Secondary and intermediate Examination in each Province the job of the Board was to define efficient curriculum, conduct the two examinations at the secondary stage and grant recognition to High Schools and intermediate Colleges. The Boards of Secondary Education were to be autonomous bodies, free from official interference. The Indian University Commission 1948 (Radhakrishnan Commission) has recommended that Objective tests along with Essay type examinations may be used with great advantage. All works should not be subjected to one type of examination only at the end of the course. On the other hand credit should be given for class work (one third of the marks allotted in each subject should be reserved for class work). Examiners should be experienced persons having several years of teaching experience in their respective subjects. In order to get a first class a student should secure 70 marks, for second class 55 marks, for a third class 40 marks. The secondary Education Commission 1952 observed that examinations in India test mainly the academic attainments of pupils and not allround development of his personality. Even as a test of the intellectual attainment of pupils, their validity and usefulness have been widely questioned. The examinations have affected badly the whole system of education. The commission has given the following recommendations for the improvement of the present system of examinations-

1. In order to reduce the element of subjectivity of the essay type tests, nature of tests and type of questions should be such as to discourage cramming and encourage intelligent understanding.
2. The final assessment of the pupil should not be based entirely on the results of the external examination; other things such as internal tests and the school records maintained by teachers should be taken into consideration and due credit should be given to them. State Department of Education should provide training in maintaining records to teachers. This training can be provided in training colleges.
3. State Bureau of Education should devise the forms of cumulative records and also prepare

tests of different kinds—

- i) Intelligence tests
- ii) Attainment tests
- iii) Aptitude tests

The training colleges should also organize short course of training in the use of these forms and tests.

4. A five points scale to which "A" Stands for the excellent "B" Stands for the good "C" Stands for the fair and average "D" Stands for the poor "E" Stands for the very poor can be used to evaluate and grade the work of pupils. For written examination, whether external or internal, D and F can be combined to indicate failure. Here "A" Will indicate "Distinction" "B" Will indicate "Credit" "C" will indicate "Pass" and "D" and "E" will indicate "Failure".

5. There should not be too may external examinations at the completion of the school course and no other public examination before it. The certificate to be awarded to indicate the completion of the middle school should be given by the school itself. Schools should also give certificates based on school record to every pupil who completes the school course. Every candidate should get a certificate, showing the school record and the public test record.

6. The system of compartmental examinations should be introduced at the final public examination in order to avoid wastage and stagnation at the secondary stage. Kothari commission had observed that if examination are necessary, a thorough reform of these is still more necessary. Prevailing examination system was in the following form according to this commission-

- 1. Examination are no real test of the real knowledge of students.
- 2. The system of examination had an adverse affect on the physical and mental health of students.
- 3. Examination system had an adverse affect on methods of teaching.
- 4. Examination were subjectively made, subjectively weighted and subjectively scored.
- 5. The Division system which was an integral part of examination system and evaluation process was full of many defects. Kothari Commission has observed that evaluation is a continuous process and it should be made an integral part of education. The Kothari commission (1964-66) expressed their views regarding examination system in the following way—

Final examination by some selected schools : Final examination by some selected schools i.e. some selected schools should be given the right of holding their own final examination and evaluating the performance of their students at the end of X class. The examination should be recognized equivalent to the external examination held by the state Board of school education.

Nature of certificate : The certificate should be issued by the state Board of Education on the basis of results of the external examinations.

Opportunities to the students to improve their performance : The students should be given opportunities to improve their performance. They should be permitted to re-appear for the entire examination for separate subject to improve their performance.

Internal assessment : Internal assessment of the students should be comprehensive. Every aspect of

students growth should be evaluated properly.

Improvement in Home examination : Improvement should be made in the written examination conducted by the schools and for this the teachers should be trained appropriately.

External examination: Till 12 years school is not introduced, higher secondary students will have to appear for two successive external examinations— at the end of class X and XI. But where the course in classes IX to XI is integrated, there the examination at the end of class X should not be insisted upon. The National Policy on Education 1986 has recommended the following measures regarding examination system. — The elimination of excessive element of chance or subjectivity. — To deemphasize memorization — Effective use of the evaluation process by teachers, students and parents. — Improvement in the conduct of examination. — Introduction to the semester system from the secondary stages in phased manner.¹³

Review committee— Report of Rammurti Committee (1990) : The committee justified the examination system of that time puts heavily in favour of the privileged who have access to certain facilities such as special teaching-learning material, special coaching etc. This should be rectified by reforming the examination system.

Revised National Policy of Education or Janardhan Reddy Committee Report (1992) : The committee has given the following suggestion to reform the examination system in the country—(a) The central and state Govt. Should make joint effort to bring necessary changes in order to reform the existing system of examination in the country. (b) All steps of reforms should be strictly followed by the educational institutions. From the above discussion we have formed an idea about the examination system, its pattern, type etc. from time to time in modern educational era of Indian Education.

Special reference to Assam regarding examination: In Assam, if we analyse the history of examination system we see that before the establishment of "Secondary Education Board of Assam" there was no systematic type of examination in Assam. In ancient Assam whole education system was confined in Tol, Pathsala or Ashram. All types of educational activities were conducted by "Guru". Before the advent of the British, the Ahom rulers patronized a system of education known as the "Gurukul System". Under this system the teacher or the "Guru" used to impart instruction free of cost to his pupils. Just before the British occupation another institution was in vogue called the "Tols". The indigenous institution of this period can be classified in the following types viz—

- i. "Pathsalas" for Hindus
2. "Madrassaha" for Muslims
3. "Tols" for Brahmins
4. "Satras" for Vaishnavas

In these above mentioned institutions "Guru" or "teacher" had provided all kinds of knowledge to his pupils by different ways. After completion of studies there were no annual or periodical examination in ancient Assam also. During the period MAHA PURUSH SRIMANTA SANKARDEVA the educational system of Assam was very organized. Basically "Satras" "Pathsalas" took important place for providing education to mass people. But the remarkable thing is that there was also no provision of

systematic examination procedure like modern examination system. At the end of the pupils education the scholar was presented to the local learned assembly. Then the scholar had to give answers of the various questions related with his studies which were being asked by the Learned Assembly. In case of "Madrassahs" we find that there was also no provision for examination. All power was confined in the hand of the teacher. If the teacher did wish he could send the pupil to the higher class or not. Assam came under the rule of the British Crown after the treaty of Yandabu in 1826. The first agent of the East India Company Mr. David Scott arrived in Assam in 1826 and soon after his arrival he took up measures for the promotion of indigenous system of education in our state. At that time except indigenous elementary education, there was no provision of higher education in Assam. Therefore there was no impact of examination as suggested by Woods despatch through the establishment of university Calcutta Bombay and Madras. The Hunter Commission of 1882 introduced the payment by— result system according to which schools received payment on the basis of the examination results. The examination system which was prevalent in Assam was very poor in all stages of education (Specially in Primary stage) .

Secondary Education in Assam was first started through the encouragement of Middle School Which corresponds to the Middle Vernacular Schools of to-day, with the starting of modern education. The question of examination was also come into forefront. Since 1962 the newly formed Secondary Education Board has taken charge of conducting and recognizing secondary education in Assam. After the formation of SEBA the first public examination of Assam which is known as High School Leaving Certificate Examination (H.S.L.C.) is being conducted by the board itself. Before the establishment of SEBA the H.S.L.C. examination was conducted by Calcutta University. Then it was called Matriculation examination. Since 1962-63 if we analyse clearly the pattern of examination prevailing in Assam was Essay type examination. It is needless to emphasise that the essay type questions, when planned carefully serve a useful function. Now, we are going to discuss some advantages of essay type examination.

- (1) Essay type test can provoke thought or require the higher mental processes for satisfactory answer.
- (2) It provides a qualitative evaluation which the protagonist of objective test are eliminating from the picture of individual testing. Literary style and logical presentation of ideas are possible only in essay type.
- (3) Essay type examinations are the only device for the measurement of originality. Originality combines many things such as aptitudes, stimulus and opportunity.
- (4) Essay type questions demand recall rather than mere recognition, the learning of facts in their relationships and application rather than in isolation and thinking on a higher level rather than rote learning.
- (5) They are easy to construct. A few simple questions can cover a broad field and keep students busy for a long time.

The Essay examination contains various type of questions : Much of the subjectivity of Essay type examinations is because students are informed about the meaning of important terms used therein. Important terms, therefore, are being explained below:

- (1) List, (2) Arrange, (3) Select or Name, (4) Describe, (5) Discuss, (6) Define, (7) Illustrate, (8) Explain, (9) Compare, (10) Brief review or summarise, (11) Outline, (12) Interpret, (13) Criticize.

At the beginning, the whole examination system of Assam was based on essay type examination. But gradually it was seen that this type of examination has lots of defects. Some of the chief shortcomings of essay-type examinations are as follows:

- (1) Distortion of Curriculum
- (2) Hinders Physical growth
- (3) Emphasis on Cramming
- (4) Little Incentive Value
- (5) Inadequate Sampling
- (6) Emphasis on Expression
- (7) Subjectivity of Marking
- (8) Little predictive value
- (9) Emphasis on memory only
- (10) Emphasis on writing and speed

Because of all these limitations of essay type examination, new type examinations are prepared to do away with some of these limitations. All examinations of Assam are affected by new type examination. Now we are going to discuss about the new type examinations. New type tests have great educative value for students. Some advantages of new examinations are—

- (1) Scoring of New type test is very objective.
- (2) It is easier to score New type tests in less time.
- (3) This type of tests are standardized and so uniformity can be maintained.
- (4) New type examination are very comprehensive.
- (5) A teacher cannot show favour to some students in new type tests.

New type examination took a very important place in the examination system of Assam. In spite of all these advantages this tests were not be able to exist properly, because of its various shortcomings. These shortcomings are—

- i) No opportunity to organize Material
- ii) High cost of standardization
- iii) Effect of guessing
- iv) Suggestive Effect of wrong response
- v) Elementaristic Tendency.

After that the examination pattern of Assam was affected by "Semester System" and "The credit scheme" and "Continuous Evaluation".

Semester System : It provides for more flexibility in the choice of course. It helps to ensure regularity in studies. The curriculum load is shed at the end of each semester and in the content of vocational course it facilitates horizontal and vertical mobility.

The Credit Scheme : The level of achievement and proficiency of a student in a particular area of the curriculum is to be indicated by grades for each semester course. The fulfilment of the requirements of the course is to be indicated through "Credits". Credits are proposed to be calculated on the basis of the

courses attended and completed by a student.

Continuous Evaluation : Evaluation is continuous in the sense that it does not end with test. It also helps in the interpretation of result. On the basis of interpretation steps can be taken to modify the educational objectives, curriculum, method of teaching and tools and techniques of evaluation itself. The process of evaluation continuous along with the educational process. Continuous evaluation is helpful in obtaining a good deal of information about the learners. Thus continuous evaluation can provide a solid basis for giving guidance to students to proceed in the right direction. From another angle educational evaluation is a continuous process. The growth and development of a learner is a continuous process, therefore, a single test or examination at the end of the academic year is not enough to give a clear picture about the changes of the learner. It is therefore, necessary to judge their progress from time to time through out the year.

CONCLUSION :

Emphasizing the importance of examination J.C. Mathur remarked, “Even in the idealized picture of society portrayed in H. G. well’s Utopia, examination find an important place”. The secondary education commission has also observed. “Nevertheless examination and especially external examinations have a proper place in any scheme of education. External examinations have stimulating effect both on the pupils and on the teachers by providing well defined goals and objective standards of evaluation. To the pupils the examination gives a goal towards which he should strive and a stimulus urging him to attain that goal in a given time, thereby demanding steady and constant effort. This makes the purpose clear and the method of approach definite. He is judged by external and objective test on which both he and other interested in him can depend. And finally it gives him a hallmark organized by all.

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