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Evaluation of Examination System in Higher Education: Problems and Solutions

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Abstract

Examinations and evaluation in the higher education system are considered important tools for measuring students' academic achievements as well as their intellectual development. The quality of any educational system can be assessed largely through its evaluation mechanism, as the examination system determines the extent to which students have understood the subject matter and how effectively they can apply the acquired knowledge in practical life situations. In the present context, the examination system in most universities and colleges is largely confined to written examinations, mark-oriented assessment, and question papers based on prescribed syllabi. Such a system mainly tests the memory and recall ability of students, but it fails to adequately assess their analytical ability, creative thinking, problem-solving skills, and practical competencies. In the existing examination framework, students tend to focus more on securing high marks in examinations rather than developing a deeper understanding of the subject. As a result, the process of learning often becomes an exercise aimed at passing examinations instead of acquiring meaningful knowledge. In many cases, students succeed in examinations by memorizing expected questions, while their exposure to the broader and practical aspects of the subject remains limited. Under such circumstances, the fundamental objectives of higher education—namely independent thinking, scientific outlook, and intellectual development—are not fully achieved. The examination system in Indian higher education is also affected by several structural and functional challenges. The growing tendency of rote learning, lack of uniformity in evaluation practices, delay in the declaration of results, concerns regarding transparency in examinations, and inadequate technological infrastructure are some of the major issues that reduce the effectiveness of the examination system. Moreover, an examination-oriented education system often creates psychological pressure among students, which may negatively influence their overall personality development. Although the use of digital technologies in examinations and evaluation has increased in recent years, online and digital assessment systems continue to face challenges related to reliability, security, and the availability of adequate technological resources. Considering these circumstances, the present research paper attempts to analyze the existing examination system in higher education. It discusses the major shortcomings of the examination system, their educational and psychological implications, and the need for reforms. The study recommends adopting continuous, skill-based, digital, project-oriented, and multidimensional assessments to make the examination system more effective and fair.

Keywords: Higher Education, Examination System, Evaluation, Continuous Assessment, Reforms.

Introduction

The primary objective of higher education is not only to provide theoretical knowledge but also to promote intellectual development, practical skills, analytical ability, independent thinking, and a well-balanced personality among students. Institutions of higher education have the responsibility to equip learners with

such knowledge and competencies that enable them to contribute effectively at social, national, and global levels. In this context, the system of examination and evaluation plays a highly significant role, as it determines what students have learned during the process of study and how effectively they are able to apply their knowledge in real-life situations. Thus, the

examination system becomes an important basis for assessing the quality of education.

Traditionally, students' academic achievements in higher education have been evaluated mainly through annual or semester examinations. In these examinations, students' knowledge is generally assessed through written question papers, and marks are awarded accordingly. Although such a system is relatively simple and well-organized, it does not adequately measure the complete range of students' abilities. In many cases, a time-bound examination fails to represent the entire year's learning and effort of the students, which limits the accurate assessment of their true potential.

In the Indian higher education system, examinations have gradually become the central focus of the educational process. As a result, students tend to concentrate more on strategies for passing examinations rather than on developing a deeper understanding of their subjects. Students often spend more time memorizing probable questions, preparing short notes, and searching for ways to secure higher marks. This tendency makes the learning process examination-oriented rather than knowledge-oriented, which hinders the fulfillment of the real objectives of education. Under such conditions, students' creativity, originality of thought, and problem-solving abilities do not develop to the desired extent.

In the present changing social and technological environment, it has become essential to consider the examination system not merely as a tool for determining final results but as an integral part of the teaching-learning process. Evaluation methods should be developed in such a way that they measure the continuous progress of students and motivate them to learn more effectively. Approaches such as continuous assessment, practical work, project-based learning, presentations, and skill-based testing can make the examination system more meaningful and effective. Therefore, a balanced and multidimensional examination system is necessary to make higher education more relevant, useful, and qualitatively sound.

Concept of Examination System in Higher Education:

The examination system is an organized process through which students' knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes, and practical competencies are systematically evaluated. It is not only a means of measuring students' academic performance but also an important method of assessing the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. In the context of higher education, the examination system aims to evaluate students' subject understanding, analytical ability, problem-solving skills, and practical competence in a comprehensive manner. An effective examination system motivates students toward regular study and provides teachers with opportunities to improve their teaching methods. In higher education, the examination system is implemented in different forms with the objective of ensuring multidimensional assessment of students'

achievements. The major examination systems are as follows:

- **Annual Examination System**

The annual examination system is a traditional method that has been in practice in higher education for a long time. Under this system, students are evaluated on the basis of their learning throughout the academic year through a main examination conducted at the end of the year. In this type of examination, students are required to prepare the entire syllabus at once, and marks are awarded accordingly. The main advantage of the annual examination system is that it is relatively simple to administer and requires fewer administrative resources. However, this system also has certain limitations. Evaluating the entire year's performance through a single examination places considerable mental pressure on students. If a student fails to perform well in the examination for any reason, the effort of the entire year may be adversely affected. Moreover, this system does not sufficiently encourage regular study habits, and many students tend to prepare only at the last moment.

- **Semester Examination System**

The semester examination system is widely adopted in modern higher education. Under this system, an academic year is generally divided into two parts or semesters, and examinations are conducted at the end of each semester. In this way, students are evaluated at regular intervals and are encouraged to study throughout the year. One of the major advantages of the semester system is that the syllabus is divided into smaller units, which allows students to understand the subject in greater depth. In addition, internal assessment is usually included in this system, making it possible to evaluate students' continuous progress. Although the semester system is considered more effective, its successful implementation requires proper planning, adequate resources, and efficient time management.

- **Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation**

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) is a system in which students are assessed continuously throughout the teaching period. Instead of relying only on final examinations, students' progress is evaluated through various academic activities. This type of evaluation includes classroom participation, assignments, project work, presentations, seminars, and practical work. The main objective of continuous evaluation is to assess the overall intellectual, social, and practical development of students. It helps develop regular study habits and reduces examination-related stress. This system is more effective in identifying students' real abilities because it does not depend solely on written examinations.

- **Internal Assessment**

Internal assessment is an important component of the higher education examination system in which students are evaluated by their teachers during the teaching

period. It includes class tests, assignments, projects, oral examinations, attendance, and classroom activities as the basis of evaluation. Internal assessment helps in monitoring students' regular progress and provides opportunities for timely guidance and improvement. An important advantage of internal assessment is that it encourages students to study regularly. Teachers can also identify the individual weaknesses of students and help them improve. If conducted in a fair and transparent manner, internal assessment can make the examination system more effective and reliable.

- **Online Examination System**

With the advancement of modern technology, the use of online examination systems in higher education has increased rapidly. In this system, examinations are conducted through computers or the internet, and in many cases, evaluation is performed automatically. Online examination systems save time and resources and also allow faster declaration of results. One of the major advantages of online examinations is the immediate evaluation of objective-type questions, which reduces the chances of errors. In addition, digital records can be securely stored, which enhances transparency. However, this system also faces challenges such as internet connectivity, technical knowledge, cyber security issues, and technical failures, which need to be addressed.

Role of the University Grants Commission (UGC):

To make the examination system in higher education more effective and meaningful, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has emphasized various reforms from time to time. In particular, it has recommended the adoption of the semester system and continuous evaluation methods so that students' progress can be assessed regularly. The main objective of UGC guidelines is to make the examination system more transparent, reliable, and student-centered, thereby improving the overall quality of higher education.

Objectives of Examination System in Higher Education

The purpose of the examination system in higher education is not limited to awarding marks or declaring students as pass or fail; rather, its broader objective is to evaluate students' intellectual growth, subject understanding, and practical competencies in a comprehensive manner. A well-organized examination system helps students, teachers, and educational institutions understand the extent to which the teaching-learning process has been successful. The major objectives of the examination system in higher education are as follows:

- **Measurement of Academic Achievement:**

One of the primary objectives of the examination system is to assess the academic achievement of students. Through examinations, it becomes possible to determine the extent to which students have understood and mastered the prescribed syllabus. Examination results

reflect the level of students' learning and provide an indication of their academic progress. The measurement of academic achievement also helps in identifying the areas in which students perform well and the areas where improvement is needed. This enables teachers to modify their teaching methods according to students' needs and encourages students to recognize and overcome their weaknesses.

- **Evaluation of Knowledge and Skills:**

Higher education aims not only to impart theoretical knowledge but also to develop various types of skills among students. The examination system serves as a means of evaluating students' knowledge along with their intellectual, analytical, and practical abilities. Besides written examinations, practical tests, project work, presentations, and oral examinations help in assessing the diverse competencies of students. Balanced evaluation of knowledge and skills ensures that students do not remain limited to acquiring information alone but become capable of applying their learning in practical situations. In this way, the examination system encourages active and practical learning among students.

- **Assessment of the Effectiveness of Teaching:**

The examination system is an important tool for assessing the quality and effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. Students' examination results indicate how effective the teaching methods have been and the extent to which students have understood the subject matter. If a large number of students fail to achieve the expected level of performance, it suggests the need for improvement in teaching methods or curriculum design. Thus, the examination system provides an opportunity for self-evaluation to teachers and educational institutions. Necessary improvements can be made in teaching materials, teaching strategies, and evaluation methods, which ultimately enhance the quality of education.

- **Motivation of Students:**

The examination system acts as an effective means of motivating students toward regular study. When students are aware that their performance will be evaluated at specific intervals, they tend to become more serious and responsible toward their studies. During examination preparation, students make efforts to understand and revise the subject matter, which strengthens their knowledge. Moreover, good results and academic success increase students' confidence and encourage them to achieve higher goals in education and life. In this way, the examination system helps in developing qualities such as discipline, hard work, and goal orientation among students.

- **Selection on the Basis of Merit:**

Another important objective of the examination system is to select students on the basis of their merit and ability. Examination results are often used for admission

to higher studies, award of scholarships, entry into professional courses, and employment opportunities. Thus, the examination system plays an important role in identifying capable and talented students. Merit-based selection promotes healthy competition in academic and professional fields. If the examination system is fair and transparent, it can serve as an effective means of ensuring equal opportunities in society. Therefore, the examination system is not only an essential part of the educational process but also an important foundation of the social and professional structure.

Evaluation of the Higher Education Examination System

The quality of the examination system in higher education can be assessed on the basis of certain important criteria. These criteria help in understanding to what extent the present examination system reflects the actual academic abilities of students. The major criteria are as follows:

- **Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which an examination actually measures the knowledge, skills, or competencies for which it is designed. If the purpose of an examination is to assess students' understanding of a subject, analytical ability, and creative thinking, then the question paper should be designed accordingly. In the present higher education examination system, most questions are based on memorization of textbook content. As a result, students tend to focus more on rote learning rather than developing a deeper understanding of the subject. Consequently, examinations often fail to measure real intellectual ability, analytical thinking, and practical knowledge. Therefore, the validity of the examination system becomes limited. In addition, sometimes important portions of the syllabus are not adequately represented in the question papers, while comparatively less important topics receive more emphasis. In such situations, the examination results do not accurately represent the actual competence of students.

- **Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency of examination results. If the same answer script of a student is evaluated by different examiners, the scores obtained should be nearly similar. A reliable examination system is one in which the process of evaluation remains stable and consistent. In the present higher education examination system, differences in marking often occur due to variations in examiners' perspectives, experience, and evaluation styles. The same answer may be assessed differently by different examiners, which affects the consistency of results. Sometimes, after re-evaluation, there are significant changes in marks, which raises doubts about the reliability of the examination system. Moreover, due to limited time for evaluation and a large number of answer scripts, examiners often have to work

under pressure, which increases the chances of errors in marking.

- **Objectivity**

Objectivity refers to fairness and impartiality in the evaluation process. Students should receive marks strictly on the basis of the quality of their answers rather than the personal preferences or opinions of the examiner. In higher education, essay-type questions are commonly used in examinations. Such questions allow variation in interpretation and presentation of answers. As a result, examiners' personal judgments, preferences for language style, or writing patterns may influence the marking process. This reduces the level of objectivity in the examination system. If a clear marking scheme and well-defined evaluation criteria are not established, it becomes difficult to ensure fair assessment. Therefore, the present examination system in higher education cannot always be considered fully objective.

- **Practicality**

Practicality refers to the feasibility and efficiency of the examination system in terms of time, effort, and cost. An effective examination system is one that can be implemented efficiently with reasonable use of available resources. In the present higher education system, considerable time and financial resources are required for question paper preparation, printing, distribution, examination management, supervision, and evaluation of answer scripts. Particularly in large universities, conducting examinations for thousands or even lakhs of students becomes a complex and expensive process. Furthermore, there is often a significant delay in the declaration of examination results, which affects students' plans for further education and employment. From this perspective, the practicality of the current examination system appears limited and requires improvement.

Problems of the Higher Education Examination System:

The examination system in higher education is an important mechanism for determining the quality of education. However, the present system is affected by several academic and administrative problems. Due to these limitations, the examination process often fails to assess the actual abilities and competencies of students in a comprehensive manner. The major problems of the higher education examination system are discussed below:

- **Rote Learning System**

One of the most significant problems of the present examination system is the dominance of rote learning. Many examinations are designed in such a way that students can answer questions simply by memorizing textbook content. As a result, students focus more on memorizing facts and definitions rather than understanding the subject in depth. This tendency to rely on memorization restricts the development of creativity,

analytical ability, and logical thinking among students. Consequently, students may obtain good marks in examinations but often face difficulties in applying their knowledge in practical situations. Thus, the examination system tends to emphasize formal achievement rather than meaningful learning.

- **Examination-Oriented Education**

In recent times, the entire education system has become examination-oriented. In colleges and universities, teaching is often directed mainly toward preparing students for examinations, whereas the true purpose of education is the overall development of personality and intellectual growth. Students often aim only to secure high marks, and therefore they limit their studies to important questions and expected answers instead of developing a deeper understanding of the subject. This approach weakens independent thinking, research aptitude, and innovative capacity. Hence, examination-oriented education restricts the broader development of knowledge and intellectual growth.

- **Dependence on a Single Examination**

In the present system of higher education, the performance of students for the entire academic year is often evaluated on the basis of a single final examination. A test conducted on one particular day determines the academic success or failure of a student. This arrangement is not always fair, because a student's performance on the examination day may be influenced by health issues, stress, anxiety, or other personal circumstances. If a student fails to perform well on that particular day, the efforts of the entire year may be negatively affected. Therefore, a system based solely on a single examination cannot be considered balanced and effective.

- **Cheating and Unfair Practices**

The problem of cheating and the use of unfair means still persists in many examinations. Some students attempt to secure higher marks through dishonest methods, which affects the fairness of the examination process. Cheating creates injustice for honest and hardworking students and reduces the credibility of the education system. Moreover, the use of modern technological devices such as mobile phones and electronic gadgets has made cheating easier in some cases. Therefore, strict measures are necessary to maintain transparency and reliability in examinations.

- **Delay in Declaration of Results**

In many universities and colleges, examination results are declared after a long delay. The evaluation of answer scripts, compilation of marks, and administrative procedures often consume considerable time. Delayed results affect students' plans for further education, competitive examinations, and employment opportunities. In some cases, students face difficulties in securing admission for the next academic session. Thus,

delays in the declaration of results result in the loss of valuable time and opportunities for students.

- **Errors in Evaluation**

Human errors frequently occur during the evaluation of answer scripts. Mistakes such as incorrect totaling of marks, incomplete evaluation, or omission of marks for certain answers are sometimes observed. In such situations, students are required to apply for re-evaluation or re-checking, which involves additional time and expense. In recent years, many universities have recognized the need for digital evaluation and re-evaluation systems to make the process more transparent and error-free. This indicates the necessity of improving the present evaluation system.

- **Lack of Practical Knowledge Assessment**

Most examinations in higher education are based primarily on theoretical knowledge. Question papers usually emphasize definitions, theories, and descriptive answers, while practical skills and applied knowledge receive limited attention. As a result, students may become familiar with theoretical aspects of a subject but often face difficulties in applying their knowledge in real-life or professional situations. This problem is particularly evident in professional and technical education. Therefore, greater emphasis on practical evaluation is essential in the examination system.

- **Mental Stress**

Students often experience significant psychological pressure during examinations. Competition for high marks, fear of failure and expectations from family and society contribute to increased stress levels. Excessive stress may affect students' concentration and self-confidence, which in turn influences their performance. In some cases, examination pressure also negatively affects students' mental well-being. Therefore, the examination system should be designed in such a way that unnecessary stress on students is minimized.

- **Technological Challenges**

With the advancement of digital technology, many universities have adopted online examination systems. However, several technical problems have emerged along with this transition. Issues such as poor internet connectivity, server failures, technical errors, and cyber security risks may affect the reliability of online examinations. Preventing cheating in online examinations is also a major challenge. Moreover, not all students have equal access to technological resources, which may create inequality. Therefore, online examination systems need to be made more secure, accessible, and reliable.

- **Administrative Problems in the Evaluation System**

Various administrative difficulties are also observed in the higher education examination system. Processes related to question paper preparation, examination

management, distribution of answer scripts, and evaluation is not always completed on time. Delays in evaluation and accreditation processes affect the efficiency of educational institutions and create unnecessary waiting periods for students. Inadequate coordination and ineffective administrative management reduce the overall quality of the examination system. Therefore, administrative reforms are essential for improving the effectiveness of the examination process.

Need for Reforms in the Higher Education Examination System:

The examination system in higher education must evolve in accordance with changing social, economic, and technological demands. The existing examination framework suffers from several limitations, due to which it often fails to assess the real abilities and academic potential of students. Therefore, reforming the examination system is not only desirable but essential. The need for reform can be understood through the following points:

- **For Quality Education**

The purpose of higher education is not merely to award degrees but to ensure high standards of academic quality. If the examination system is ineffective, the overall quality of education is adversely affected. A well-designed and scientific examination system encourages students to study in depth and makes the teaching-learning process more meaningful. For quality education, it is essential that the examination system evaluates students' understanding, analytical ability, and practical knowledge. This would ensure that education becomes a meaningful process of knowledge acquisition rather than a formal academic requirement.

- **For Assessment of Real Knowledge**

The present examination system is largely based on memorization, which prevents the proper evaluation of students' real knowledge and understanding. The examination system should be improved in such a way that students focus on understanding concepts and applying knowledge instead of merely memorizing information. When examinations emphasize comprehension, analysis, and application, students develop deeper and more useful knowledge. Thus, reform in the examination system is necessary to promote genuine learning.

- **For the Holistic Development of Students**

Higher education aims not only at intellectual development but also at the development of personality, social skills, and practical abilities. The present examination system, which mainly depends on written tests, does not adequately assess the overall development of students. If examination methods include project work, presentations, group discussions, practical activities, and research-based tasks, the holistic development of students can be ensured. Therefore,

reforms in the examination system are essential for the multidimensional development of learners.

- **For Global Competitiveness**

The modern world is characterized by globalization, where students must be prepared to compete at the international level. An examination system based solely on theoretical knowledge cannot adequately prepare students for global competition. Modern examination practices should emphasize skill development, innovation, problem-solving ability, and practical experience. This will enable students to demonstrate their competence not only at the national level but also internationally. Hence, modernization of the examination system is a major necessity of the present time.

Reforms and Suggestions for the Higher Education Examination System:

In order to make the higher education examination system more effective, transparent, and student-centered, several reform measures can be adopted. The following suggestions can help in making the examination system more balanced and meaningful:

- **Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation**

Students should be evaluated continuously throughout the academic year rather than relying solely on final examinations. Continuous evaluation helps in monitoring students' progress regularly and encourages consistent study habits. This system may include assignments, seminars, presentations, project work, classroom participation, and practical activities. Such methods enable the proper assessment of various student abilities and also reduce examination-related stress.

- **Expansion of the Semester System**

The semester system is an effective method of regular student evaluation. Under this system, the syllabus is divided into smaller units and examinations are conducted at the end of each semester.

This approach encourages students to study regularly throughout the year and helps in balancing the academic workload. The semester system also allows step-by-step evaluation of students' progress and should be implemented more widely.

- **Use of Objective-Type Questions**

Objective-type questions such as multiple-choice questions (MCQs), fill-in-the-blanks, and true-false questions should be included in the examination system. Objective questions help in making evaluation more fair and error-free. Such questions minimize the influence of examiner bias and ensure uniform marking. Moreover, objective questions are well suited for digital evaluation systems.

- **Internal Assessment**

A certain percentage of total marks should be allotted to internal assessment. Generally, 30–40 percent of marks

may be assigned through internal evaluation. Internal assessment may include class tests, assignments, projects, viva voce, and attendance. This approach helps in monitoring students' regular progress and motivates them to study continuously.

- **(5) Digital Evaluation System**

Digital technology should be used in the evaluation of answer scripts. Scanning answer sheets and evaluating them online reduces the chances of errors and helps in faster declaration of results.

Digital evaluation increases transparency and simplifies the re-evaluation process. It also ensures better record management and data security.

- **Skill-Based Assessment**

Student evaluation should not depend solely on written examinations; practical skills and performance abilities should also be assessed. This can be achieved by including fieldwork, internships, practical assignments, case studies, and experimental activities in the examination system. Skill-based assessment prepares students for real-life situations and professional challenges.

- **Open Book Examination**

The open book examination system encourages understanding-based learning. In this system, students are allowed to use textbooks and reference materials during examinations, which shift the focus from memorization to comprehension. Open book examinations are particularly suitable for analytical and application-based questions and can better measure students' intellectual abilities.

- **Improvement in Question Paper Design**

Question papers should be designed in a way that tests students' understanding and thinking abilities. Instead of focusing mainly on memory-based questions, analytical, application-oriented, and problem-solving questions should be emphasized. Such questions encourage deeper learning and allow better evaluation of intellectual capabilities.

- **Timely Declaration of Results**

Examination results should be declared on time so that students' further education and employment plans are not affected. For this purpose, evaluation processes should be time-bound and supported by digital technology. Timely results also increase students' trust in the education system.

- **Use of Technology in the Examination System**

Modern examination systems should incorporate extensive use of technology. Online examinations, digital evaluation, and digital storage of academic records can make the examination process more transparent and reliable. Digital certificate systems and academic depositories can help in securely storing certificates and reducing the problem of fake credentials.

Technology can also simplify and speed up administrative processes.

National Education Policy 2020 and Examination Reforms

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes comprehensive reforms in the examination system. The policy aims to make the examination process more flexible, student-centered, and skill-oriented. The major examination reforms suggested under the policy include the following:

- **Skill-Based Education**

The policy gives special importance to skill-based education. Student evaluation should include not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills, creativity, and innovation. This approach will help students acquire employment-oriented education and enable them to solve real-life problems effectively.

- **Continuous Assessment**

The policy emphasizes continuous assessment of students. Instead of depending only on final examinations, student progress should be evaluated throughout the learning period. Continuous assessment reduces examination stress and promotes regular study habits.

- **Multiple Assessment Methods**

According to the policy, students should be evaluated through various methods such as written examinations, practical work, projects, presentations, and oral tests. This approach allows comprehensive evaluation of different abilities and makes the examination system more balanced.

- **Flexible Examination System**

The policy proposes a flexible examination system in which students may be given multiple opportunities to appear for examinations. This system allows students to learn at their own pace and makes the examination process more humane and student-friendly.

Conclusion

The examination system in higher education is a major means of assessing students' academic achievement and intellectual abilities. The quality of any educational system largely depends on the effectiveness of its examination and evaluation processes. The examination system is not merely a tool for awarding marks or declaring students as pass or fail; rather, it serves as an important instrument for evaluating their knowledge, understanding, analytical ability, and practical competence. Therefore, a sound and scientifically designed examination system is essential for the success of higher education. An analysis of the present examination system in higher education reveals several structural and functional weaknesses. Most examinations still rely heavily on memory-based questions, which encourage students to focus on passing examinations rather than developing a deeper understanding of the subject. This tendency restricts the development of creativity, analytical thinking, and independent

reasoning. As a result, students may obtain degrees, but their level of knowledge and skills often does not meet the expected standards.

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