CHAPTER XVI

EXAMINATIONS
Gauhati University took over the responsibility of conducting various examinations from Calcutta University in 1948. In that year 6,371 candidates appeared in the various examinations, Matriculation 4,703, Intermediate 1,483, B.A., B.Sc., B.Com. 434, Law 24 and B.T. 45. The number of candidates increased to 60,746 in 1963, Matriculation 34,840, P.U. and Intermediate, 16,987, Degree and others 8,919. This indicates that in fifteen years the number of candidates of all examinations increased by more than ten times, the increase in the Matriculation examination being more than seven times, that in Intermediate and P.U. more than 11 times and in degree examination almost 17 times. The Matriculation examination was transferred to the Boards of Secondary Education in 1964. Since that year the Universities have been conducting the examinations from the Pre-University/Pre-Degree examination to the highest level. In the year 1975 the total number of students examined by Gauhati University was 41,622, by Dibrugarh 23,200 and by NEHU 8,865, total of 73,687 as shown below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Gauhati</th>
<th>Dibrugarh</th>
<th>NEHU</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.U.</td>
<td>17,351</td>
<td>9,070</td>
<td>3,013</td>
<td>29,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A., B.Sc.</td>
<td>16,526</td>
<td>10,344</td>
<td>5,043</td>
<td>31,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Com.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A., M.Sc.</td>
<td>2,838</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>3,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Com.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>2,302</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>3,460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>1,321</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>1,690</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>1,977</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41,622</td>
<td>25,200</td>
<td>8,865</td>
<td>73,687</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examinations of Law, Engineering and Medical colleges were held twice a year. The other examinations were held once between April and September of every year.

Since the establishment of universities in 1857, their main function was the conduct of examinations for...

various degrees and diplomas till the end of the 19th century. More and more emphasis was laid on examinations. It was only after Independence that the reform of examination system was contemplated. Since the publication of the Report on Examination Reform: A Plan of Action prepared by a working group constituted by the Union Ministry of Education and Social Welfare and approved by the U.G.C., the movement towards examination reform in the Indian Universities has shifted from the idealistic to the practical plane (2). Some of the Universities are implementing the recommendations of the Report in phases. One such reform is the institution of Question Bank. A more appropriate term could have been 'Question Library, or Model Questions'.

In North East India only one university, Gauhati University has instituted the Question Bank. About twenty-five more Universities in the Country are making preparations for the institution of Question Banks. In all these places question Banks have been instituted for the undergraduate classes only. Question Banks exist in the United

The theoretical foundation of the question bank is that the student is not exposed to the game of chance. He knows what types of questions will be set for the public examinations so that he may prepare answers to them with reference to books prescribed by the university.

The second assumption is that the question bank system will improve the standards of education and the quality of the students. The final assumption is that it would bring into existence earnest and diligent students.

The operation of the scheme has not proved these assumptions. First, every question bank contains not less than one hundred questions. Every student has to prepare answers for questions included in the Question Bank within a period of ten months. This is practically impossible. He may therefore find it easier to read ready made or he may pick up some questions which are likely to be set and prepare answers for them.

Second, questions included in the Question Bank are memory dominated. They are not of the type which would
attempt to judge the candidates' capacity to analyse the facts, to grasp ideas and concepts and present them logically and lucidly.

Third, those who prepare the question bank follow the beaten track and fear to deviate from the traditional pattern.

Fourth, some of the questions in the question bank are vague and will require review on the basis of performance tests.

Fifthly, they do not reflect the objectives of the syllabus. Further, the question bank is not a balanced one. A balanced question bank must contain three classes of questions, essay type, short answers type and multiple choice type.

Sixth, since the question banks are established the teacher may not teach the entire course. He may pick some important questions or topics and give answers to them.

Seventh, after the establishment of the question banks, even verbal changes are not permitted. The questions
must be lifted from the banks.

Eighth, since all questions are set from the question bank there is no element of surprise which is necessary to test the ability of the student to meet the challenge. In other words, the question bank system annihilates the intellectual abilities of the students.

Ninth, the question bank system lays emphasis on the acquisition of marks and not of knowledge. It deals with the strategy of the examinations. A student can acquire knowledge only by studying the entire course prescribed for the purpose. If the Question Bank exists he will not read the entire course but only those portions which he considers as important from the point of examinations.

Tenth, the question bank system leads to the publication of answer banks. This may lead to the adoption of unfair means in the examination hall because answer banks can easily be smuggled and the answers can easily be located.

The answer banks do not contain model answers which would fetch cent percent marks. In theory papers there is
a possibility for alternate answers. The existence of answer banks may induce some teachers not to take teaching seriously and with a sense of responsibility.

Finally, the emergence of question banks and answer banks may ultimately lead to the demand for the abolition of compulsory attendance at lectures and the emergence of academic anarchy. Thus, higher education is exposed to the danger of being destroyed by the question bank. There is no need for question bank because it is already there in the mind of every student. He knows how to formulate a question and how to answer it. This exercise generates the faculty of thinking and works for the improvement of the intellectual standards of the students. It ought to be remembered that examination is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. It is devised to find out whether the student has attained the desired intellectual standard.

**Internal Assessment:**

The replacement of external examinations by internal assessment by a teacher who teaches the course is not contemplated by internal assessment. It really means that evaluation should become a continuous process. The purpose
of internal assessment is not to increase the frequency of examinations or to supplement the final examination by mid-term examinations. The main purpose is to integrate teaching and evaluation and to test those skills and abilities which cannot be tested through a written examination at the end of a term or course. For this purpose internal assessment should be properly diversified so that through it the writing ability of the student, his capacity to do field work or project work or laboratory practicals, his participation in seminars, tutorials etc., his grasp of the subject through his ability to write synopsis of articles in learned journals, review reference books and use source materials etc., can be tested. It is not meant to endorse discipline. Its purpose is entirely academic, to encourage students to apply themselves assiduously to their studies.

What are the modes of internal assessment? There can be no one answer as to the most suitable form or forms of internal assessment for a given course and each teacher has to work this schedule out to test suit the purposes of the course. Yet some forms are suggested. First, short answer tests, objective tests, both announced and unannounced are ideal for use in the weekly schedule for testing
knowledge of terms, concepts etc.

Second, written tutorial work based on assigned readings. A sub-topic from the syllabus which will not be dealt with in the class may be selected and the student asked to make a full presentation of the subject, based on assigned readings.

Third, participation in group discussions, seminars etc.

Fourth, independent study project and so on.

Internal assessment was introduced as a tool for continuous evaluation at the post-graduate level in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Commerce with effect from the Previous Examination of 1976 in Gauhati, Dibrugarh and North Eastern Hill Universities. The percentage of marks fixed for internal assessment varied from university to university. It was 20 percent in Gauhati, 25 percent in Dibrugarh and 25 percent in the North Eastern Hill University. The tools of assessment were seminars, tutorials, periodical examinations, home assignments, laboratory and library work. The private candidates of the Gauhati university and Dibrugarh University in the Faculty of Arts in-
cluding Mathematics were examined in an additional paper covering the entire syllabus. The system was found to be very sound from the academic point of view. The marks in the internal assessment helped in improving the final results in the previous examination of 1977 in almost all the subjects.

Although internal assessment had its own merits, it was opposed both by teachers and students. The factors that induced some teachers to oppose internal assessment were several. Internal assessment might strain the relations between students and teachers. The students bargained for marks and brought about pressure on teachers for the award of more marks. Teachers have to work continuously with a high work load as the teacher student ratio in many Arts departments was very low and facilities were inadequate. But the main reason why the teachers were opposed to internal assessment was that their relationship with students was likely to be strained.

The students were also opposed to internal assessment. First, internal assessment would involve continuous application to studies. They must appear in at least two tests per semester. They must attend tutorials. They must participate
in at least two seminars and must undertake at least two home assignments. Many of them found that they had no time left for extra-curricular activities. Second, some students had the feeling that evaluation was not impartial; there was over marking in the case of students who were liked by the teacher and under marking in the case of those not so liked. Third, the scripts after marking should be returned to the students. The students have a right to discuss the marking with the teacher and request him to reconsider the mark. It happened that the student could not be considered by the teacher for the low mark obtained by him. Fourth, if a student obtained more marks than others even on the basis of merit he could be marked out as the favourite of the teacher. In Gauhati University there was provision for review by the departmental Advisory Committee consisting of all the teachers of the department of the marks given by the internal examiner. This also did not prove effective.

The greatest defect of internal assessment is that it gives scope for the free play of personal prejudices and predilections. Therefore there was agitation and the students demanded the abolition of internal assessment. It has been abolished in Dibrugarh and Gauhati though it is still retained in Shillong.
Introduction of Grading:

The Universities in North East India decided to implement the system of seven point grading in the place of marking at the post-graduate level, in all the Faculties from the Previous Examination of 1977 and Final Examination of 1978 in the manner prescribed in the Operational Scheme approved by the Academic Councils in the light of the recommendations of the U.G.C.

The respective grades will be 0, A, B, C, D, E, F. Under the scheme of grading a candidate must obtain at least D grade in the Previous Examination to be eligible for appearing at the final examination. He must also obtain at least C grade in the combined assessment of the Previous and Final Examinations to qualify for the Master's Degree according to the distribution for each subject. The operational scheme for grading as approved by the Academic Council is shown in Appendix A.

For the purpose of grading, the distribution table for different subjects were prepared by the following procedure. The highest mark awarded during the last five years (1971 to 1975) in a subject was found out. It was
observed that there was conformity in the range of highest marks in certain subjects. Accordingly, it was decided to classify the subjects into three groups:

Group - I - Assamese, Bengali and English


The averages of the highest marks of the subjects in a group were calculated. For example, the average highest marks of group I was 60. 0 grade is allotted to 60 marks and above. Taking 36 as the pass mark and awarding E and F to the fail marks, the difference between the pass mark and the highest mark is divided into four equal parts. For Group I this difference is $24/4 = 6$ and the six marks is distributed among the different grades. The same procedure is followed for the subjects in Group II and Group III. The distribution is as follows:
Group I 0 B C D E
60 and above 54-59 48-53 42-47 36-41
F
25 and below

Group II 64 and above 57-63 50-56 43-49 36-42 26-35
25 and below

Group III 72 and above 63-71 54-62 45-53 36-44 26-35
25 and below

The operation of the system of grades has been postponed by Gauhati University with a view to further examine the scheme.

Scaling:

One of the most difficult problems in the present system of examinations is the subjectivity involved in the marking of scripts. In an examination where a large number of examiners are involved the subjective element plays a dominant part in the assessment of the scripts. Close observation revealed that different examiners marks at different standards. Further the same script examined
by different examiners obtains different marks. We may even go to the same extent of saying that the same script examined by the same examiner at different times obtains different marks. It is thus evident that it is not possible to secure scientifically accurate marking. To get over the subjective element various devices have been adopted. The examiners were given detailed instructions. Head examiners were appointed to check erratic marking. 'Scaling' has been adopted by only one University in North East India, the Gauhati University. It is claimed that scaling helps to eliminate the variability of the individual examiners to some extent. Since 1963, the Gauhati University has adopted scaling for the major examinations like the Matriculation, Pre-University and Degree Examinations. The scaling method was devised by Dr. H.J. Taylor, the Vice-Chancellor of the Gauhati University, 1962-65.

By scaling we mean the adjustment of examination marks to common norms. The norms for different subjects are obtained by taking the average of all the medians of the examiners' marks within a zone. This is done because scaling is done zonewise within the subject. Therefore, it is sometimes termed as intra-subject scaling. The median of each marksheet is calculated as usual.
Scaling is based on the assumption that every examiner has read the script thoroughly and carefully and marked the script. But if the scripts are not properly and carefully examined the question of how to deal with the situation will arise. The scaling system does not answer the question.