

Higher Education in India: A Case Study of Examination System at Punjabi University Patiala

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Abstract: In India, exams are conducted to measure the knowledge gained by student, who are undertaking various courses. At Public university, courses from various lengths and breadths are offered to students which results in higher enrollment in under-graduate courses. Examination process is a crucial process for any higher education institute and it should be transparent, reliable and error free. But the manual exam system followed in Public universities from many decades is uncertain. A comprehensive study was conducted to get an information about the manual examination process followed at majority of the State Universities. One on one interviews were conducted with staff members to learn the entire process. Problems faced by employees and students under this system have been highlighted and probable solutions are discussed.

Keywords: Education system, Limitation of manual system, Manual Exam Process, Phases of examination.

I. INTRODUCTION

Examination system have been integral part of education system from a very long time period. Exams are used as an instrument to measure learning outcomes of a student and teacher. It clearly shows how much a student have retained from the syllabus and the overall result of the course depicts to what extend teacher have been successful in imparting knowledge to pupils. For various courses exams are conducted annually whereas for some others semester system is followed. In reality end semester exams are the multiple milestones that student aims to achieve in order to get the qualification.

Now, coming down to university exams, which are generally held twice the year, mostly in November/December and then after in May/June in each academic year. These two months are the part of the phase when papers are actually conducted, whereas the activities prior as well as post the examination phase are carried out round the year. The entire examination process of setting question papers to declaration of result and dispatch of DMC/Degree is cumbersome and tedious task. The extended working hours cause physical as well as mental stress to the staff of related cell. There is hardly any day when the staff of university examination cell is free.

In public university, exams are conducted for regular, correspondence (CC) and private students of main university campus, neighborhood campuses, and students from affiliated colleges which are spread across the geographical area.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Agasisti, T. & Bianco, A.D. (2009) [2] in their paper, 'Reforming the University Sector: Effects on Teaching Efficiency-Evidence from Italy' analyzed the effects change of teaching efficiency in Italy. Change in teaching facilities lead rapid increase in overall productivity of University. Tremendous improvement was made in inputs namely student enrollment with higher scores in secondary studies, full academic staff and library and laboratories. As a result, it was found that teaching was improved as a whole from period of 1998 to 2004.

Bhardwaj, M and Singh, A. (2011) [4] explained the dire need of using Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in the higher education field. Research focused on automating the Examination process at University Level. Majority of Universities in India are managing examination system manually, resulting in delayed results and breach in security at various levels. Whereas using ICT will keep secrecy intact along with more reliable and transparent system. A fully automated Integrated Examination System have been proposed in paper to curb the problems related to examination. However, lack of proper ICT infrastructure and reluctance to adapt technology at employees end were mentioned as huge hindrance.

Halai, N. (2013) [5] analyzed the ranking given to Pakistani universities by Higher Education Commission in 2012. This ranking was based on Teaching Quality, Quality assurance and research. Researcher also raised the concern about comparing highly diverse institutes which might give misleading outputs. Stress was laid to consider geographical reach, enrollment, affiliated institutes, functions etc. Author coined these private universities as "degree mills" which

motivate its students to get through the exams by cramming and injustice is alone to intellectual growth and job skills.

Joseph, M. and Joseph, B. (1997) [6]evaluated service quality perception of employers in the field of Higher Education. Students perception and administrators perception both were studied. Authors felt the need to focus on employers part because this part of Higher Education was always missed in past. Values were plotted on IPA Grid showing all four in the 'Concentrate Here' quadrant. It was suggested that students should be made aware about demand of industrial employers. As well as the universities should also try to reach out the industry to evaluate the employment needs and interact in market.

Maharana, B. and Panda, K.C. (2001) [8] in research paper, 'Planning Business Process Reengineering (BPR) in academic Libraries' discussed the need of present scenario to examine the process and redesign them to improve speed and productivity.. Case studies of two academic libraries: Stanford University Library and Library of university of Illinois, Chicago; were discussed . Along with this five-step model of BPR given by Davenport and Short (1990) have been elaborated from libraries perspective. Researchers concluded that both general and academic libraries need to work on process and adopt Information Technology based changes. This will increase users satisfaction and make process more productive.

Bakar A. & Sulaiman R. (2014) [3] in their paper "Academic Quality Assurance Process: A case study of examination process at college of Information technology Universiti Tenga Nasional (UNITEN) " conducted a thorough research to study the quality assurance of examination process of university. A research was conducted with students in three different semesters to ensure if university examination followed the ISO 9001: 2008 standards for preparing the end semester examinations.

Akbar S. & Qureshi A. (2014) [1] worked in the field of higher education in Pakistan. Both the authors analyzed the examination system prevailing in the Universities. In an addition they discussed the role of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in improving the examination process. Authors emphasized on automated examination process to reduce the cycle time and cut down the clerical errors. At the same time centralized data base of relevant data will help various departments to synchronize with each other for tasks such as electronic exam forms, Permanent Identity Card (PIN), DMC & Degree in portal etc. This system can also abolish the duplicity.

Khodayari, F. and Khodayari, B. (2011) [7] explored the Service Quality factors in the Islamic Azad University of Iran. Two separate sets of 22 statements, one each for importance and perception were used to analyze students' perceived Service Quality. Researchers bought to notice that extensive studies in past focus solely on students part in

Higher education, while keeping aside the role of administrators and academicians.

III. PHASES OF EXAMINATION PROCESS

The entire process of examination can be broadly categorized in three phases: pre-conduct phase, conduct phase and post-conduct phase.

i) **Pre-conduct phase:** It includes the activities such as collection examination forms and fees from students (either through online or in manual form), issue Roll numbers, preparing centre statement, preparing question papers and preparing schedule for theory and practical exams.

ii) **Conduct Phase:** This phase is the when the action happens. It involves the activities such as appointing staff on duty as observer and flying squads, providing answer sheets & question paper to all the examination centers and finally bringing back the answer sheets to secrecy branch of university for the further action.

iii) **Post-conduct Phase:** Activities such as packet making, table marking , receiving awards , result declaration, re-evaluation, generating and dispatching DMC & Degree.

The Examination Cell operates under the supervision of Controller of Examination (CoE).The examination process begins with the students filling their examination forms(regular & reappear) and submitting the same with relevant departments or colleges along with the prescribed fee. Once the forms are received by Examination Branch, Center statement is prepared which carries the details of number of students who have to appear and the subjects. After this the Date-sheet (schedule) of exams is prepared for theory as well as for practical. Parallel to this roll number are issued to students, which are mandatory to carry with them in examination hall at the schedules time of paper. Confidential branch looks after the task of getting question papers prepared from the teachers.

Conduct branch is responsible for carrying out the process of delivering the answer sheets and question paper (provided by Confidential Branch) along with other necessary stationary to the exam centre on the day of paper. In case of far flung places conduct teams reach the destination a night before. After the exam is over, answer sheets are bought back to secrecy branch in university campus.

Secrecy branch prepares the big packet of answer sheets according to the subjects and looks after the table marking (evaluation). Various evaluation centers are made where sheets are marked by the faculty and scores are awarded. There after answer sheets are bought back to secrecy branch and scores are uploaded in system. Once all the subjects of a stream are uploaded the result is prepared using the internal scores and finally result is declared. In case student is suspicious about the scoring the facility of re-evaluation is also available. Student have to fill a nominal fee for re-

evaluation within 14 days of result declaration, beyond this late fee is charged. Again the answer sheets are retrieved from the secrecy stores and send to faculty members for

marking again. Detailed Marks Card (DMC) as well as Degrees of passing out students are prepared by Degree Section and send to relevant department/college.

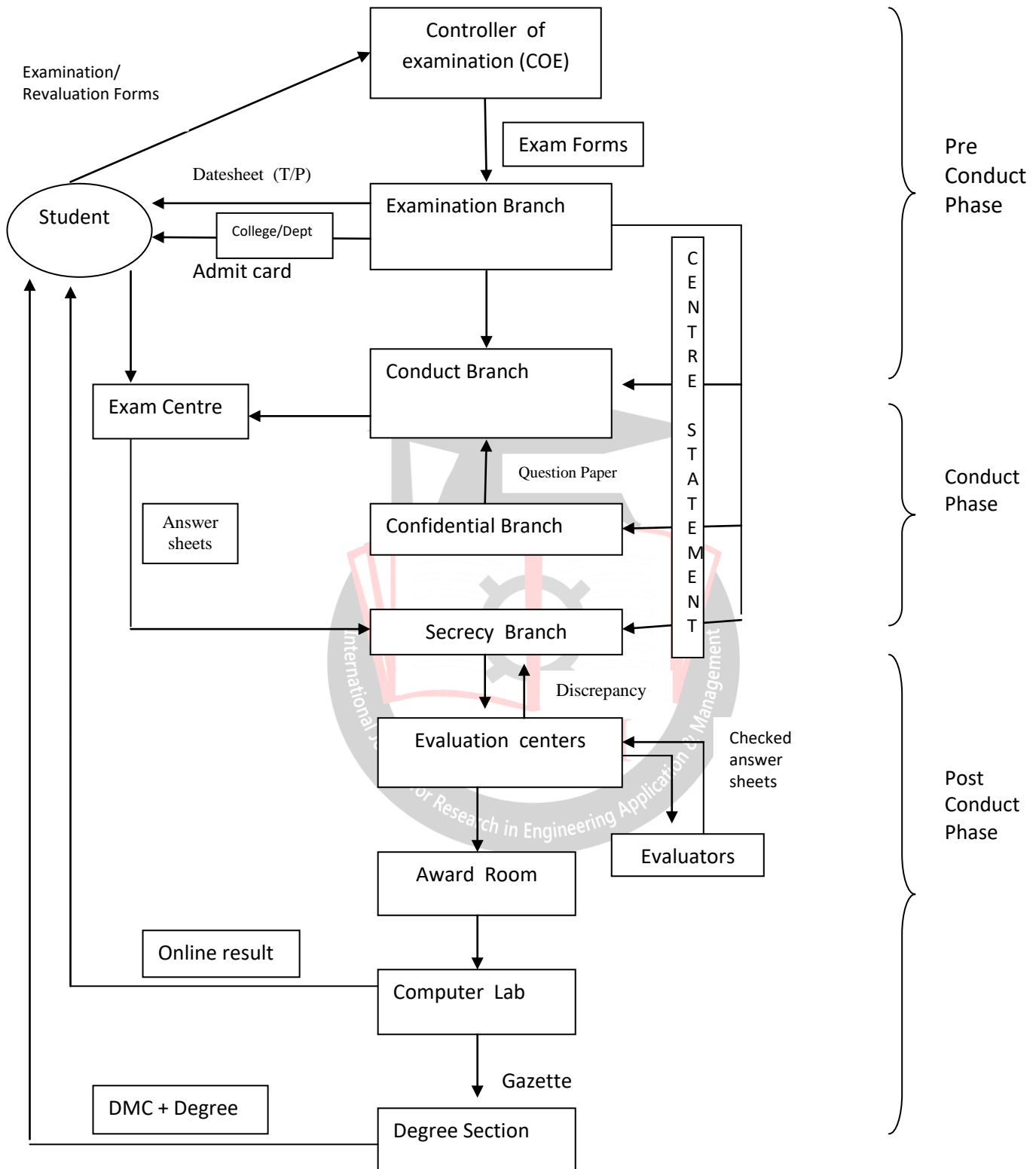


Figure: Examination Process

Source : Developed by Researchers

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IV. LIMITATIONS OF MANUAL EXAMINATION SYSTEM

Though the examination process is structured in a very well manner as well as role of computers have been increased, but still the entire process is slow due to allot of technical titts and bits that are required to be fulfilled.

- A lot of doubling of work is done while handling the same set of data across various departments.
- Due to manual handling there are high chances are errors at crucial stages like preparing results etc
- There is lot of chance of tempering by any person at any stage.
- Physical delivery of question paper is directly posed to the threat of malicious act
- In addition to this manual delivery of papers involves a lot of time and cost
- Table marking is not time bound which ultimately delays the result and a pressure situation for the result staff.

- Students have been seen visiting university for correction of any error in their academic documents

V. SUGGESTIONS

- Centralized data systems can be helpful to stop the doubling work load
- Question paper should be released on a web portal accessible to center controllers just few minutes before the start time, hence reduce the risk of paper leaking
- Table marking should be time bound and it should be strongly enforced
- Students should be provided with unique login Id's at the time of admission and DMC and degrees should be available on their ID's before actually printing and therefore minimizing the errors
- Online request facility for errors in the documents should be initiated to save the time and energy of students and staff.

VI. CONCLUSION

Universities now have been teaching and awarding degrees in field of Information Technology for couple of decades, but still lack to properly implement these developments into the system. Universities have the necessary gadgets but these are under-utilized and are used for entering data manually or surfing the internet. Under the guidance of experts universities can fully utilize the available resources to overcome the limitations.

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