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Role of Instructions to Sub-examiners for Marking the Scripts

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Abstract:

Examination is the burning issue of the Educationists. Many researches have been conducted to explore different aspects of Examination. But 'Role of Instructions' issued by the Head Examiners for Sub-examiners to mark the scripts still demands the attention of the experts. For this purpose, the authorities of BISE Multan granted permission to look into the matter. It was allowed to overview the Question paper, its concerned Instructions for the Sub-examiners, and 2768 marked scripts by 14 sub-examiners in the subject of Biology at SSC level in the security room of Board's premises. Item-wise, and Question wise data were transferred from the scripts to the proforma designed under the instructions of the Head Examiner. It was found that sub-examiners did not care the 'Instructions' and sometimes Head Examiners commit blunders due to which students suffer a lot, but they are unaware of such sufferings.

Keywords: Examinations, Assessment, Marking Scripts, Measurement, Evaluation

I. Introduction

The concept of measurement was related to the Bible by Sax (1980, p. 5), he quoted the historic event of Noah, who was commanded to build an ark of 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. If this measurement would not have been followed, the survival of the mankind might have been a question. It has proved the importance of accuracy and quality of measurement (Hopkins and Stanley, 1981, p.5). More accurate the measured information better would be the decisions (Gay, 1991, p. 6). Furthermore, Mehrens and Lehmann (1984, p.5) extended the link of the useful information with decision making and Evaluation in these words: "Evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives."

Such process of judging decision alternatives can help a teacher to identify an educational problem of a student or an institution; and can determine operations to solve any particular problem by applying an appropriate tool (Shah, 2002, p.7). An appropriate tool for collecting organized information about a student is the Test (Ebel and Frisbie, 1986. p.8). Examination is a wider term, used to denote the process of making decisions on the basis of measures obtained through the tests (Mathews, 1985, p.12). Examination is a well established formal assessment (Rowntree, 1981, p. 57) of a student's learning. According to Aggarwal (1997, p. 7), "To close down examinations, would be to give the signal for educational saturnalia". Our examinations have lost their validity and credibility to the extent that they have lowered the standard of education and brought a bad name not only for the system, but also for the country as well (Shirazi, 1994, p.19).

Hedwick, Mavies, Madugwe, and Mandiudza (2013) described background of examination in an expressive way. The expressed that origins of examinations were found in the era of Great Shun, emperor of ancient China whose reign ended in 2205 B. C. He assesses his army officers regularly after three years to promote them or issuing termination orders based on their services. Hedwick and et. al., continued explaining the history of examination that in India, examinations started in 4^{th} century BC when the great grammarian Panini graded his students based on errors made in recitation of texts of scriptures. But from Islamic point of view, we can say that Allah started examining Hazrat Adam and His wife in Heaven when the time counters don't exists. So, we can say that every step of human life is being observed and examined by Allah and will be rewarded latterly.

Examination system is core element of an education system in any country. Basically it reflects the standards of education of that country. In all over the world, examinations are conducted to measure students' academic achievement. This is the only standard way of ensuring teacher accountability. There are so many irregularities in our examinations like poor coverage of content in the examination papers (Shah and Tariq, 1989, p. 46), late declaration of results, secrecy problems with respect to the leakage of Question Papers, and Script Evaluation, etc. A long list of marking flaws were pointed out by Shah (2002, pp. 273 – 282), e.g. awarding fractional marks in objective type items, mistakes in sub-totals and grand totals, awarding more than the allocated marks, Not Following the Instructions for marking the scripts as Given by the Head Examiners; etc.

Major objective of the study was to determine the importance of the 'Head Examiners' Instructions' given to the sub-examiners for marking the answer scripts of candidates appearing in the Secondary School Certificate Examination in the subject of Biology.

II. Methodology

Authorities of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Multan were contacted and were asked to provide the following:

- Biology Question Paper
- Instructions of the Head Examiner to the sub-examiners; and
- Few bundles of marked scripts in the said subject.

The researcher was allowed to scrutinise the marked answer scripts of Biology for the First Annual Examination 1993, in the secrecy room at the Board premises. The relevant Question Paper and its 'Instructions for the Sub-Examiners' were analysed. A proforma was developed to record the data from 2768 scripts, assessed by 14 sub-examiners. In the proforma Question-wise columns were drawn with respect to the subdivision of the marks allocated for every part of the Question as per instructions for marking.

The marks awarded by the sub-examiners on the 2768 answer scripts were transferred to the proforma. If the examiner had awarded part-wise marks, the same was recorded as per distribution; otherwise, 'as a whole' Question-wise marks were entered in the last column of the proforma. Sub-totals for 'Objective Type' Items and 'Essay Type' Questions were recorded separately and then transferred to the Grand Total.

Different indicators were applied to record the 100% implementation of the head examiner's instructions for marking the scripts. As an example, if definition was given, it was denoted by 'D' along-with the marks recorded in the relevant column. Similarly, 'L' symbol was applied for 'Labelled Diagram', and 'L' on 'Unlabelled Diagram'.

III. Results

Analysis of the Answer Scripts in the light of the Instructions for the sub-examiners follows:

A. General Instruction

Score of any candidate obtaining Twenty Two (22) marks may be raised to Twenty Five (25) marks, if possible. Thus enabling him to pass in the paper.
Consequence: About 7% (195) of the students benefited from this instruction.

B. Question-wise/item-wise instructions and their analyses

Question No. 1. (a) Fill in the Blanks type item: 5 Marks
Instruction: ONE mark for each correct response of the Five Fill in the Blanks items. In order to avoid any confusion, correct response for each Blank was also provided in the "instructions".
Findings: There was No significant point for Analysis.
Question No. 1. (b). **True/False type item:** Identify whether the given statement was 'Right' or 'Wrong'. In case the given statement was 'Wrong', the candidate was advised to rewrite correct statement: 5 Marks
Instruction: Award full credit on proper differentiation of 'Right/Wrong'. It was further advised to award HALF (1/2) mark for properly identifying the 'Wrong'. If the candidate revised the statement in **any** Correct Form, the other HALF (1/2) mark was to be awarded.
Findings: Five sub-examiners (35.7%) awarded full marks to every format, whether correct or in-correct, on the basis of differentiation between Right/Wrong only. 1069 (38.70%) of the students did not produce properly corrected statements, even then they were awarded full credit.
Question No. 1. (c) Multiple-choice type item: Encircle the correct response out of the four responses given at the end of each statement: 4 Marks
Instruction: All Four Key responses were enlisted. No confusion at all.
Findings: The items were straightforward and do not merit any critical remarks.
Question No. 1. (d). Matching type item: Match Column A by selecting Correct Answer from Column B, and write the same at the space provided for in front of Column A:
Instruction: All Five Correct sequences were matched and given in the instruction. Therefore, there was No confusion at all.

Findings: The items were straightforward and do not merit any critical remarks.

Questions 2-9: Extended response (Essay type) type questions:

Question No. 2. What is Tissue? Describe Animal Tissues. 2, 12 marks

Instruction: Award TWO marks for the definition of the Tissue. Award HALF mark to **any sort of diagram** related to Tissues. 2 ½ marks were allocated for description of each Type of Tissue, and it was delimited to Four Types only.

Findings: There was No limitation of Maximum Marks allocated for diagrams. It was not mentioned that FOUR diagrams of each type should be given. **Not a single student drew FOUR diagrams of Tissues.** 2186 (78.97%) students attempted this question, 1090 (49.86%) students drew Two diagrams of Tissues but only 178 (16.33%) were awarded Two marks separately for the diagrams otherwise marks were awarded 'As a Whole'. The nomenclature for FOUR types of Tissues was also not indicated. Only Two sub-examiners (14.29%) awarded section-wise allocated marks.

Question No. 3 (a). Describe Arterial System of Frog. 9 marks

Instruction: THREE marks were allocated for a labelled diagram and SIX marks for the description of Arterial System.

Findings: There were no instructions for unlabelled diagrams. 1620 (77.33%) students gave description of the Arterial System of Frog **without any diagram.** Only 388 (18.52%) students drew labelled diagram and 87 (4.15%) had drawn unlabelled diagram. **No separate marks for the diagram were indicated in the question paper.** Not a single examiner awarded separate marks for diagrams in any case.

Question 3(b). Write Note on Algae. 5 marks

Instruction: ONE mark for example and FOUR marks for description of Algae.

Findings: Only 57 (2.84%) students gave example of Algae, while 1948 (97.16%) did not do so, they were awarded marks out of FIVE 'As a Whole'. It means 97% of the students who attempted this question were deprived off from ONE mark.

Question No. 4 (a). What are Vitamins? How many types of Vitamins are there? and what Functions are performed by these Vitamins? 2, 8 marks

Instruction: Award TWO marks for the definition of Vitamins; TWO marks each for description of any Four Types of Vitamins.

Findings: Out of 990 (35.77%) students, **not a single student gave any definition** only the concept of Vitamins as given in the textbook was reproduced. **Not a single examiner awarded separate marks for the definition of Vitamins.** There was no allocation of any mark for 'How many types of Vitamins?'

Question No.4 (b). Write note on Transportation of Materials in Animals.4marks.

Instruction: FOUR marks for the content produced **as per the bookish content.**

Findings: Twelve (85.71%) sub-examiners did not award marks part-wise; usually 'As a Whole' marks were allocated to 958 (34.61%) students.

Question No. 5(a). What are Mammals? Describe Types of Mammals.10 marks

Instruction: Award ONE mark for a definition of the Mammals and award ONE marks each for any nine types of the Mammals.

Findings: Not a single student gave any definition; the concept of Mammals, as given in the textbook was reproduced. **Not a single examiner awarded separate marks for the definition of Mammals.** No marks were allocated for any description of any type of Mammals, as mentioned in the Question. 925 (33.42%) students attempted the Question with maximum description about the characteristics of Mammals, though the given description was not to be credited, even then the sub-examiners considered a lot about the description and awarded nine marks to those students who did not write Nine Types of Mammals.

Question No. 5(b): Write a Note on 'Carbohydrate Test'. 4 marks

Instruction: FOUR marks for the description of the Test were allocated.

Findings: 119 (12.86%) of the students did not write note on Carbohydrate Test, though they attempted Part 'a'. 806 (29.12%) were awarded marks 'As a Whole'.

Question No. 6. (a); Write a Note on Functioning of Human Kidney. 6 marks

Instruction: Award ONE mark each for any three diagrams. SIX marks were allocated for the description.

Findings: Not a single student drew any diagram to describe the functions of the kidney. Therefore, 2311 (83.49%) students were deprived off from THREE marks allocated for diagrams. Although 6 marks were allocated for the said part in the Question Paper, but 9 marks were assigned in the instructions!

Question No. 6. (b): Describe 'Migration' in Animals.

Instruction: Although 8 marks were allocated for the said part in the Question Paper, but 5 marks were assigned in the instructions! ONE mark each was allocated for **any five types of Locomotion in Animals.**

Findings: It is to note that **Migration** and **Locomotion** are different topics. Only 85 (3.85%)out of 2208 students attempted **Migration**, but they were awarded **Zero** by three sub-examiners (21.43%) because the head examiner instructed to award one mark each for any Five Types and there were no Types of Migration.

Question No. 7. (a): Describe <u>Longitudinal Section</u> of Ovule. 7 marks

Instruction: Allocated TWO marks to the drawing of **'Transverse Section'** of Ovule, and FIVE marks for the description of Transverse Section.

Findings: 653 (23.59%) of the students attempted this Question, 281 (43.03%) students were awarded **Zero to 2** marks because students described Longitudinal Section and in the instructions it was demanded to write Transverse Section. **Not a single student drew Transverse Section** of the Ovule. Five Examiners (35.71%) awarded marks by ticking **Right** to the diagram without any distinction between Longitudinal and Transverse Section. It is to note that Longitudinal and Transverse Sections are the different views of the Ovule.

Question No. 7. (b): Describe Sexual Reproduction in Amoeba. 7 marks

Instruction: Although 7 marks were allocated for the said part in the Question Paper, but 8 marks were assigned in the instructions! It was instructed to award "Binary Fission in Amoeba, 3, 5" and/or "Spore Formation/Multiple Fission in Amoeba, 3, 5"marks. In the instruction it was mentioned as typographical mistake for omitting '**A'** with sexual reproduction, both having different content. It was further elaborated to award marks to very type of answer either it is attempted as **Sexual** or **Asexual** Reproduction.

Findings: There was no detail about THREE marks for drawing and FIVE for description. "Binary Fission/ Multiple Fission" belong to **Asexual Reproduction**, 698 (25.22%) of the students attempted this part of the Question, out of which only **five** students (0.72%) tried to write about Sexual Reproduction and they were awarded only **One to Two** marks, all other students (99.28%) wrote about reproduction of Amoeba without any diagram related either to Sexual or Asexual Reproduction and they were awarded maximum marks out of **eight.**

Question No. 8. (a): Write Note on 'Natural Selection' and 'Mutation'. 8 marks

Instruction: FOUR marks each for 'Natural Selection' and 'Mutation'.

Findings: There was No significant point for critical Analysis.

Question No. 8. (b): Describe about a Community. 6 marks

Instruction: SIX marks were allocated for the description of 'Community'

Findings: There was No significant point for critical Analysis.

Question No. 9. (a): Write beneficial effects of Bacteria. 7 marks
Instruction: ONE mark each was allocated for enlisting any seven beneficial effects of Bacteria.
Findings: There was No significant point for critical Analysis.
Question No. 9. (a): Describe about Kawashiorkor and Goitre. 7 marks
Instruction: FOUR marks for Kawashiorkor and THREE marks for Goitre.
Findings: There was No significant point for critical Analysis.

IV. Discussions

The instructions issued for the Question No. 1. a, c, d; 8 a, b, and 9 a, b were so straightforward that **not a single examiner could deviate from the instructions**, to award the marks as per his/her own discretion, which raised the objectivity of marking. On the other hand, if instructions for Question No. 2 would have included a list of the 'Types' of Tissue, and similarly a list of 'Types' of Mammals in Q. No. 5 a, might have been useful for marking. If definition is the requirement of the examiner, the word 'Definition' must be included in the stem of the Question to enforce the student to write definition(s) and then marks allocation for definition deserve credit, otherwise it is a definite loss of marks with respect to the students. Only appropriate 'Instructions' can eliminate such deficiencies in determining the 'Merit' of the students. The 'Blunders' like conversion of '**Migration'** into **'Locomotion'** as in Q. No. 6 b; **'Longitudinal Section'** into **'Transverse Section'** in Q. No. 7 a; and **'Sexual Reproduction'** into **'Asexual Reproduction'** in Q. No. 7 b can only be rectified, when 'Instructions' are finalized in a group Discussion after the administration of the Question Paper. Similarly, allocation of marks for diagrams and content could be justified only after diagnosing the answer scripts of randomly selected candidates by a panel of the experts after the administration of the Question Paper.

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