Examinations and External Assessment in Social Science in the Third World: The Case of Economics for Economic Development

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Introduction

Examinations constitute an important feature of university education, although they are only a part of the assessment procedure. The other part generally consists of some kind of course work or continuous assessment system. Apart from these internal devices, there is also some kind of external examination or assessment, which is intended to keep the internal assessment in line with some outside standard. As an essential part of the evaluation process, external assessment has two aims. First, it supplements the internal testing mechanism at three levels: it acts as a device for correcting possible mistakes or omissions in the internal assessment; it helps in improving upon the validity and reliability of the internal assessment; and it ensures the effectiveness of the internal testing mechanism. The second function flows on from the first: by ensuring their effectiveness, external assessment complements the internal assessment efforts.

Although frequently taken for granted and often regarded as merely a screening device, examinations actually serve a very useful curricular and pedagogic purpose. By focusing attention on the various objectives in teaching, they highlight the overall aims of the curricular offerings. Equally, by strengthening the evaluation mechanism as a whole, examinations and external assessment together help in extending the contribution made by the subject being examined both to the curriculum and to society at large. But their significance depends very much upon the effectiveness of the assessment procedure, and how far the evaluation process emphasises the importance of linking the activities of the university with the needs of the community. In the case of the social sciences in general and economics in particular, this significance is intensified by the extent to which the examination process reflects the
relationship between knowledge transmission and the societal goals and demands in the society in which it takes place.

Certainly, the pedagogic importance of this relationship lies in the need to relate what is taught to why it has to be taught and how the acquired knowledge is relevant or can be useful to the individual and society. If we ask what examinations and external assessment are meant to achieve, the answer highlights the function of the objective in teaching. This prompts further questions. What is the main objective of the process of examination and external assessment? What relation does this objective have to the pedagogic purpose of teaching the subject (for example, economics as a social science subject)? To what extent does it impinge on the main curricular aims? How far do these aims and objectives reflect the practical role of education or relate to the overall societal goal of development?

These questions raise very serious and pertinent issues that are the concern of this paper, which considers the function and significance of examinations and external assessment, especially in the social sciences in the less developed countries (LDCs). It examines critically the extent to which these evaluative mechanisms fulfil their important role by recognising the relationship between knowledge transmission and societal goals; and how far, in Third World societies including those of the South Pacific, the effectiveness of evaluation hinges on extending its social scientific contributions not only in the curriculum but also to the development requirements of the everyday community of teacher and taught. The paper also attempts to draw some pedagogic implications for social science curricula (with particular reference to economics) vis-à-vis development demands in the LDCs.

University Education and the Purpose of Evaluation

The starting point is the premise that the real test of the effectiveness of social science teaching does not lie in the ritualised process of education and the invitation to parrot-wise regurgitation that underpin the exam-bound curriculum. Rather, it lies in how effectively the end products of social science education, who are tomorrow’s development mandarins, will grapple with the development challenges that await them in their various capacities as accountants, managers, administrators, social
workers, sociologists, policy makers, planners, economists or development practitioners. In the Third World in particular, what distinguishes a university from any other institution is its developmental role. This role needs to be reflected in the entire curriculum offerings, as well as in the research, public service or provision of relevant high-level manpower in which the university is engaged. For this reason a Third World university is more of a developmental institution than is the case in the advanced countries (ACs). Accordingly, Third World universities should regard themselves as being singularly animated by and concerned with the quest for concrete solutions to societal problems.

To say this is to overstate neither the role of the university nor the significance of examinations. Much less is it intended to emphasise unduly the function of the exam-bound curriculum in university education, especially in the social sciences (which can, after all, be described either as 'soft' sciences or as culture-bound disciplines). Rather, it is to highlight two things: the need to recognise that evaluation has value; and the need to optimise such value in the social sciences in the Third World. Moreover, while evaluation remains an important part of the curriculum, it must be made as effective as possible in order to enhance the contribution education makes to development in these countries.

In one sense the quality of any education system is reflected in the evaluation mechanism by which it assesses the nature and content of its knowledge transmission. The reason for this is not far to seek: the variety and types of questions asked tell us, as perhaps nothing else can, not only the intellectual breadth and depth of the content the curriculum offers, but also, though perhaps to a lesser extent, the teaching form and style in which it is presented. This brings issues of teacher attitude and approach, proficiency and effectiveness very much into focus, so that they have a direct bearing on the teaching activity, which is itself then seen as a task that needs to be successful in achieving its objectives.

According to Beeby, four stages of teacher efficiency determine the levels of educational quality (1966, ch. 4). These range from the lowest level of the inefficient, to the formal (with trained but restricted and inefficient teachers), to the mechanical stage of transmission, and finally to the stage of meaning, when pedagogic efficiency is optimised and the curriculum is
community oriented. Obviously, Beeby's model can be criticised not only because it seems to assume a rigid and regular process, but also because the model itself is more concerned with primary and secondary than with university education. In the latter, teachers are usually far from being trained in any formal sense usually conveyed by the term 'teacher training'.

Nevertheless, the relevance of Beeby's model rests on the concept of efficiency, which can neither be restricted to primary and secondary education nor confined to conventional teacher training. But what is even more significant in the model is his emphasis on the relation of teacher proficiency to a community orientation of the curriculum that gives it real meaning and purpose. The process of university knowledge transmission and discovery needs equally to aim at encouraging a range of intellectual and practical skills, aptitudes and attitudes that will equip university graduates to seek relevant solutions to the development problems known to them. These would include, among other things: the ability to reason; critical thought; a sense of objectivity and of being involved in the pursuit of truth; insatiable curiosity; creativity; and the capacity for generating new ideas. At the same time, the importance in the social sciences, of developing students' awareness, empathy, attitudes to values, and other personal qualities can hardly be overemphasised. And while these cannot easily be reflected in the content of what is taught, they can readily be made to bear on how it is taught and, conceivably, on how it is examined. To that extent, the role and usefulness of evaluation also impinges significantly on the purpose and function of the teaching—learning process.

Ruth Beard points out that evaluation at higher education level has essentially two functions: the award of qualifications (degrees, diplomas, etc.) that serve as entry to other courses or to professions; and the provision of information (or feedback) with regard to the success (or failure ?) of teaching and learning (1974, 89). Until fairly recently, considerable attention has traditionally focused on the first of these functions, to the relative neglect of the latter. This neglect has created a demand for reform in university education, a demand that has resulted in a transition in the last two or three decades.

One area of research regarding such reform has tried to identify university teaching methods in which the quality of teaching and learning is now considered to be at least as important as the abilities and performance of
the students in examinations, if not more so. In fact, in stressing the need for improvement in the learning process, the research reflects shifts of emphasis that are occurring:

- Mere credentialism, (or ‘qualification disease’), is considered less important than the improvement of acquired knowledge.
- The examination-merit principle underlying the exam-bound curriculum is regarded less highly than a more practically relevant system.
- The examination selection structure of the teacher- or subject-oriented approach is yielding to the student-centred, participation-oriented approach.
- Passivity has given place to more active methods that seek to engage students actively in the learning process, encouraging them to think and to be both critical and creative.

In effect, teachers need to recognise the cardinal distinction between mere ‘certification’ and true education. It turns the role of the teacher as educator and examiner into that of a person who prepares students to understand real-life problems fully and to search for relevant solutions.

Evaluation, then, is clearly an important field of educational enquiry as regards both the objectives to be achieved and the teaching methods. Its relationship to both underlines the significance of effective internal and external assessment processes, and at the same time determines the function of assessment in the much wider context of the transmission of knowledge in higher education. Examinations derive significance from the wider educational debate on reform, particularly because this debate not only reflects on the social sciences as disciplines, but also relates to the development needs and societal demands of the teaching—learning environment.

The basic issue concerns the divergence between theory and practice. But it also overlaps with the distinction between, on the one hand, what can best be described as societal ‘meta-science’ through the encouragement of the ‘cobwebs of learning’ based on the abstractions of foreign models and theories; and on the other, the transmission of genuine and relevant social science knowledge that will lead to effective practice by Third World social science graduates in their search for relevant solutions to pressing and urgent domestic problems. The concern therefore is with the rationale behind examinations and external assessment, as well as with the
objectives and aims of education in countries in the South Pacific and elsewhere in the Third World.

The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake has characterised Western universities, especially in the early years of their historical evolution. But such pursuit, without concern for the usefulness and relevance of the knowledge, is obviously a luxury that Third World countries cannot afford. This is particularly true in the case of single-university countries, often too small and poor to afford more than one university. It is equally true in the case of the South Pacific, a region consisting of island nations that are not only small in size but also resource-scarce and relatively poor, and therefore not individually viable.

The Case of Economics

The basic problem

The root of the problem, in the social sciences in general and economics in particular, lies in the tendency of internal examiners and external assessors to emphasise the abstractions of essentially foreign-based theories and the esoterica of textbook models, with little or no regard to their practical usefulness and relevance to the students' social systems. The result is that there is hardly any reasonable attempt to accommodate the development demands and practical needs of the teaching — learning environment. Also, depending on their respective orientation, outlook or perspective vis-à-vis their own experiences, both the internal examiners and the external assessors largely tend to neglect current thinking in the field and the growing consensus emerging from recent arguments and new trends in teaching and practice.

Nowhere is this neglect more open to condemnation than in the case of economics, which once held pride of place as a subject, particularly in the Third World. Like the internal examiners, the external assessors approach the subject with a somewhat misguided view of 'excellence', which leads to what is in effect mere copying of foreign syllabuses used in Western universities. As long as this approach is based on blind adherence to foreign economic theories and texts, the concern, in most cases, is with the latest theoretical gadgetry. But the emphasis, in the name of rigour, on the
mere syntax of the higher reaches of theory and the mysteries of abstract models only encourages flight from the students’ domestic reality.

As Frances Stewart correctly points out, teachers of economics in Africa, having studied abroad, return home to each exactly the same brand of economics that they have been studying for three or four years (1969). Indeed, her observation is even more relevant to the situation in other LDCs outside Africa, such as in the South Pacific, where the debate on economics teaching has not yet begun.

As a result, most economics teachers in the Third World are merely square pegs in round holes. The reasons for this are as inextricably bound up with their own education as they are related to the norms, values and techniques of their discipline. Their own training abroad is such that, according to Court, ‘the irrelevant theory or overly quantitative orientation of the PhD courses’ produces overwhelming effects that are largely psychological and negative: those who do not lose motivation during their training, but plod on to triumph over the course, eventually become so ‘seduced by it all that they return home to perpetuate it’ (1976).

Svendsen emphasises a similar point by highlighting the theoretical trappings (1973, 67). He draws attention to the ‘fact that very little theory has as yet grown out of the developing countries themselves’. He also points out ‘that the teachers of economics, whether foreign or national, have received their often very recent training outside the economies in which they work’. His conclusion is that ‘a special sociology of knowledge is therefore required in order to liberate the minds from irrelevant ways of thinking’.

Probably more far-reaching than political liberation in the Third World is the liberation of the mind. It is more significant in dimension and scope because it is more profound in its psychological and practical effects. It makes it possible to gear educational and other efforts towards the realisation of desirable development goals, through politico-economic as well as psychological manipulation. Such manipulation is, however, virtually impossible in the case of any of the examination systems or internal assessment processes characterising the ‘colonial university’, which was once defined simply as ‘one which paid greater attention to its standing in the eyes of foreigners than to the relevance of its activities to the needs of its own country’ (cited in Hargreaves 1973, 26).
The significance of this definition lies in the reversed order of priority that it pinpoints: questions of relevance assume second place to those of standards. His point is therefore pertinent to the question of standards, which are frequently set in accordance with externally imposed criteria. For the domestic Third World university such criteria inevitably tend to assume some absolute, universal (though illusory) standing. This very assumption blurs the practical meaning of so-called standards, for it renders them quite relative and somewhat elusive. In fact, it can be argued that ‘a standard in education is high enough when it can adequately serve the needs of the community for which it is designed’ (cited in Ashby 1964, 47). Nor does this imply that a new institution keen on maintaining its reputation can afford either to lower its standards or to condone the award of degrees whose standing is hardly comparable with those elsewhere.

But the argument about standards in the social sciences in general and economics in particular assumes a slightly different twist in view of the limitations of universality (see Muma 1987 for a full discussion of this). Those who still subscribe to the outmoded view that economic theory, for instance, is universal are grossly misguided. Almost invariably they also tend to equate excellence with an accretion of esoteric irrelevancies. To base standards on false notions of excellence (which consists in teaching that which is allegedly sophisticated because it is inherently abstract and therefore rigorous, irrespective of its relevance to the problem situation) is as misleading as it is dangerous. The danger lies where, in Seers’s words, ‘excellence is believed to consist precisely in not being relevant’ (1973, 11).

While there is a case for achieving and maintaining standards, these standards must recognise the need for relevance; nor should the excellence on which they are based be taken to consist of ‘mastering and teaching the latest piece of theoretical gadgetry’, as Seers further points out. Particularly in the social sciences, both standards and excellence entail the far more demanding task of assessing critically the relevance of what is taught to the specific social context of the teaching — learning situation, and of specifying the historical and geographical aspects of the limitations of universality (Seers 1973, 10; also Muma 1983).

Curricular issues and pedagogic implications

Most examiners in economics are not closely acquainted with current
educational debate and new ideas on teaching the subject. For them, the exercise of setting examination questions becomes an attempt at demonstration of the extent of their own theoretical abstraction or sophistication, offered as evidence of effective teaching of a syllabus too often naively imported from the ACs. The framing of questions is all too frequently a bid to display the depth and scope of the course content, and the level of difficulty of areas covered. By implication, this is also intended to display the superiority of the teacher/examiner, so that it reduces to an exercise in one-upmanship.

In point of fact, this is but an aspect of the psychological tension arising from the teacher's/examiner's/external assessor's own education or training. More often than not this education was little more than indoctrination, for two reasons. First, the pressures of examinations both cramp and distort the educational process. Second, the exam-bound curriculum and the ritualised process of education inherited by many Third World countries from colonial times provide little scope for critical judgement, original thought or creative imagination. Unfortunately, Third World undergraduates have, from a very early age, been too "institutionalised" to think of a university as anything other than an institution built on the axiom that learning is the result of teaching. They are inclined to regard the university as a place where they just receive knowledge handed to them by teachers, who have themselves been conditioned into thinking that they are not teaching unless they are talking to the class for most of the time.

Moreover, the process seems to stress learning to qualify rather than learning to understand, and neglects the development of the initiative and inner resourcefulness that are necessary for tackling development problems. Education as a means of development has no meaning without a clear appreciation of the relevant societal objectives to be attained. Indeed, the distinction between 'education' and 'qualification' hinges on this appreciation, which in turn begs the question whether education should be conceived as a microcosm or a dimension of life.

This question raises issues about the aims of education in general, and of higher education in particular, vis-à-vis the needs and demands of society. Equally, it touches on the core of educational relevance in different societies. For example, an education system believed to be relevant to the needs and requirements of a technologically advanced society (X) cannot
be presumed to be readily relevant to another (Y) that is extremely under-developed, with an entirely different culture and set of technological requirements; nor even necessarily suitable for another (Z) at a similar technological stage but with a markedly different social system.

At another level, there is the closely related issue of the key position the teacher holds as educator controlling both the amount and, more importantly, the kind of knowledge disseminated. It is possible to apply C. P. Snow's basic thesis to the Third World, where the responsibility to develop both the cognitive and the affective skills is even more urgent than in the Western societies he was considering, and rests with all educators, including examiners. In the circumstances, the dilemma of how to educate is extended to embrace not only what to educate for, but also why to educate in the particular subject. Accordingly, it becomes a dilemma regarding the means by which education (and teaching methods) can meet the needs of all the students and people; and how such means can be stretched to encompass, as they must, the needs and requirements of the society at large. After all, the people, individually and as a societal group, require an education system that ensures them a productive yet rewarding part in their own society. The right to stand between Snow's two cultures, therefore, can be earned by educators only through recognising the needs of students as well as society's demands, and communicating both sets of demands to the students who will become tomorrow's leaders.

The magnitude of the dilemma can be viewed in terms of the distinction between the Deweyan approach of education of the 'whole' individual, and the 'education for life' approach of Prosser (as discussed in Schaefer 1971, xi). Both approaches suggest that there is more than one means to education; and more importantly, that it is necessary to adopt relevant means and techniques to achieve the specific educational objective. This requires educators to be clear of the goal relative to the needs and demands of society. This requirement, in turn, suggests the choice of the relevant means to achieve that goal, rather than permitting emphasis on what looks like the right means for the wrong reasons. To say that an excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher is merely to emphasise this point about the educational goal and the relevant means for attaining it. As Schaefer has sought to stress:

The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity
will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water (1971, xii).

The relation between the overall educational goals and the purpose and objectives of evaluation is a delicate, tangled problem. In pedagogic terms, this relation is underlined by the educational objective in both teaching and learning. It is pointless conducting any assessment exercise without being reasonably clear as to what it is that has to be assessed.

**Defining the objective**

A reasonable definition of the objective is therefore imperative. Although it may be difficult either to specify or to test for educational objectives, especially of a behavioural kind, it is incumbent upon educators to define their goals. There cannot otherwise be any real meaning attached to the success of failure either of teaching as a useful task or of examination as an effective device.

**B. S. Bloom** did much to focus attention on the significance in higher education of objectives, some of which have not always been considered (1956). That the consideration of objectives is absolutely fundamental in the educational process is only appreciated fully when it is realised that almost no appraisal can be made of the methods or equipment used, and the assessment mechanism deployed, if such consideration is absent. Judgement about these things can only be made in relation to the set objectives; and if the objectives are omitted from the equation, conclusions are bound to be superficial and sterile.

In the particular case of economics, Professor Philip Taylor (1967) draws on the traditionally stated functions of assessment (such as are also discussed by Beard 1974). He extends them to identify four objectives of testing and examining in economics: as predictors; as diagnostic; as a check on attainment; and as a tool for curriculum evaluation. These roles and objectives overlap somewhat, of course: although conceptually distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. The grounds for distinguishing them may be as different as are their implications, which are diverse and variable for both teaching and examining in social science. There are two categories of reasons for making the distinction: those referring to social and economic demands; and those referring to the educational demands of the teaching
— learning situation. Despite their potential incompatibility, these categories may nevertheless be quite consistent.

The first objective in testing assumes that examinations are predictors of success in future courses. But examinations must also have predictive value as regards the future competence of the candidates. Social science education, in the Third World context, should emphasise the development of understanding of the characteristics and workings of, and the existing constraints on and contradictions in, the students' society and culture. Since this is the case, the predictive element of testing should stress the effectiveness with which teaching has transmitted pertinent social science knowledge while simultaneously developing the ability to provide practicable solutions to the domestic problems.

The other three objectives derive their importance from this longer term perspective of the first, so that the relationship between them also determines the starting point of social science knowledge transmission. The crucial question that flows from this is also quite a simple one. What exactly are we trying to assess as teachers and examiners? In other words, what do examiners expect the examinees to be able to do at the end of the period of study regarding which they are being examined?

This question again puts the spotlight on the educational objective. Teachers and examiners must be able to test more effectively, not just more efficiently. They must know what they are trying to assess, rather than seeming to regard the examination exercise as mere intellectual gymnastics that ought to be performed with theoretical vigour, intellectual precision, and no practical certainty. Emphasis on what is being assessed implies that the process of education has been based on the need to transmit genuine and relevant social science knowledge. To stress the intellectual gymnastics suggests that the whole teaching exercise has drawn essentially on the abstractions of the social science discipline, without regard to either the usefulness or the local relevance of the gained knowledge. Thus, while the first relates sound economic theory to the domestic conditions of the students' learning situation, the second confines the teaching function to the four walls of the classroom and tends to provide students with a one-way ticket to the no-man's-land of unreality.

With particular reference to economics, all the foregoing suggests a range of issues with an essentially three-fold caveat. The first concerns the need
to recognise, in both teaching and examining, the gap between textbook theories and abstract models on the one hand, and the domestic realities of the students’ environment and economy on the other. The issues centre on the limitations of special case models relative to foreign theories and foreign texts (as highlighted by Seers 1963).

The second relates to the importance of socio-institutional realism regarding relevant and effective application of textbook theoretical knowledge to the domestic situation of the students’ society. In this case, the prime pre-requisite is to accommodate the reality of the learning environment and the problem situation of the students.

The third impinges on the attitude of both internal examiners (as teachers) and external examiners or assessors to the convoluted and dehydrated world of theoretical abstraction. While its importance stems from the demand it makes on the teacher to develop relevant classification and framing of textbook models, it also calls for effective treatment of theoretical tools, relevant choice of concepts, and selection of suitable teaching materials.

Examination questions

The evaluation mechanism should to a large extent also reflect these dimensions. The type and nature of the examination questions set should provide sufficient scope both for eliciting the needed variety of answers and for catering for different types of students. Questions aimed at encouraging different competencies or nurturing various qualities can be very wide ranging. But because of this their classification is difficult since they cannot also be grouped into rigid, mutually exclusive compartments relative to their intended functions. Nevertheless, a broad classification would embrace questions that require answers based on both knowing how and knowing why types of knowledge, as well as those demanding knowing that knowledge. These broad categories can be identified according to whether the aim is respectively to elicit facts; to emphasise reasoning or ability to think; or to go even beyond the latter and stress creative and imaginative thought.
Although there are several types of questions, they can broadly be designed either:

- to assess the broad scope of general knowledge in the subject, to test the ability to distil the essential facts, or to ascertain the grasp of fundamental concepts, principles, theorems or basic models;
- to require students to demonstrate their grasp of the knowledge in the area, or their ability to apply such knowledge in tackling a particular problem; or
- to elicit original ideas or draw on the students' critical and creative judgement and imagination in solving a problem.

The first type can range from objective tests to questions requiring students to explain briefly or write short notes. The second would need to test whether students, while learning, have gained skills in applying the acquired knowledge to tackle a problem, but it would also call for a degree of critical judgement and some original imagination. ‘Critically discuss’ or essay questions fall into this category, although the extent of critical application that is required will depend on the actual framing of the question. The third type of question, by emphasising a greater degree of critical and independent judgement than the second, also calls for original thought. But because questions of this type should also aim at providing a much broader scope for the exercise of independent judgement and creative imagination, they could be structured to assume as well the pattern of problem solving.

Data response questions can also be drawn upon to fulfil some of the functions spelt out under the first, and in some cases the third, categories. This is probably why such questions have recently become popular (e.g. in Britain), although they are rarely used in Third World countries. In fact, they could be used to correct biases that derive from the use of abstract models in economics, since such models are a far cry from the students' actual environment. Normally such questions are based on extracts from daily newspapers or current magazines familiar to the students, and contain data and discussion of issues or aspects of problems known to them. The questions set are intended to test the students' ability in interpreting data or actual events, in exercising reasoning and critical thought, and/or in producing creative opinion or judgement.

While such questions require critical application, they also provide some
scope for the encouragement of the affective skills, by drawing on some level of induction (instead of deduction), and perhaps intuition, in arriving at a judgement. A given set of facts can, after all, be explained in a number of alternative ways, some of which may call for an emotional appreciation of the culture, aspirations and spirit of the people of the students' own society. Although this may deviate from the supra-cultural techniques inherent in economic methodology, it may nevertheless be more relevant to the social phenomena of the students' known environment; even economic relations are part of variable social milieus and cannot merely be regarded as data.

But because data response questions encourage manipulation and interpretation of data, they can also provide scope for the examination to be flexible. They can do this by the use of data that is too involved for objective test questions, and by the use of quotations too long for an essay or discussion question (Livesey 1977).

It is obvious that certain types of course content, or perhaps even some subject areas, may not be amenable to all the question types or the functions they are intended to fulfil. This means that a good deal more time will need to be devoted to setting questions, and that teachers themselves, as examiners, will have to be imaginative in framing their questions.

It is also necessary that the students, as potential examinees, should be made aware of the type and range of questions they may expect. There is need to familiarise them, however subtly or indirectly, with both the format to expect from papers and the nature of the questions to be set. This can be done, for instance, through in-semester tests or term papers. Not the least reason for this may be to demonstrate that what is expected from them is not the mere memorisation of facts, but the development of ability and skill in using concepts and intellectual tools to analyse actual events and tackle real-life problems.

There is the further need not only to cater for the different types of students or abilities, but also to take account of the nature and type of answers to be expected and even how these are to be marked, and so on. All these in turn mean considering several things:

- the variety and balance of the different questions that are asked (e.g. short notes vs 'critically discuss' questions);
- the level and extent of critical thought or reasoning required (e.g. quick on-the-spot thinking and reasoning vs creative thought in interpreting concepts and applying analytical tools); and
- the scope provided to cater for students with different types of abilities or orientations (e.g. the numerate vs the non-numerate or non-initiate).

Provided in the appendix by way of demonstration is a sample of examination question types. It is not possible to present the full range of possibilities, nor would it be desirable to restrict the experimentation teachers can explore in setting questions. The sample thus consists of only some types, grouped as far as possible according to the types of answers to be elicited from them vis-à-vis the abilities and qualities emphasised in teaching. The sample cannot be regarded as exhaustive. As in most things offered in curricula, there can be no authoritative blueprint for action, only a guide to help point attention in the right direction in both teaching and examining economics.

A Summing Up

The main thread running through the various issues discussed here derives from the fact that as educators we should be clear about our objectives. The practice of starting with objectives in teaching is useful not only in guiding us in our teaching task, but also in ensuring a more effective evaluation than would otherwise be the case. The conceptual essence of effectiveness is intrinsically related to its practical significance. This relationship is three-fold:

- We are able to diagnose whether our students' performance is of the right standard.
- We can check whether the acquired knowledge is relevant, and thus form judgement about the appropriateness of the (e.g. economic) 'technology' and skills they have acquired.
- We can also justify the examination exercise as a useful curricular tool in the transmission of relevant and practically useful knowledge.

The significance of these three inter-related facets of effectiveness raises a
fundamental question about evaluation in economics (or other social sciences), the question of whether we can confidently predict from the students' performance whether they will be equal to their future task. For the whole idea of university education in the Third World has no meaning unless it is considered in the social and political context of the teaching-learning environment. This is particularly true in the case of economics, which has no other purpose, as Ann Seidman has observed, than to serve 'as a guide to economic development' (1969).

Although made with reference only to economics, her observation comes into even sharper focus in the words of Ronald Dore, writing in the more general context of education, on the apt theme of the 'diploma disease' (1976). He also observes:

_The effect of schooling, the way it alters a man's capacity and will to do things depends not only on what he learns, or the way he learns it, but also on why he learns it_ (italics mine).

Perhaps it is possible to teach without any substantial increase in effective learning, just as it is perfectly possible to learn adequately without a teacher. This seemingly silly two-pronged paradox is intended to highlight the pedagogic problem. It makes Dore's observation (coming as it does in the context of his thorough analysis and discussion of this problem in the Third World) touch on the core of the profound issues raised about teaching, and examining what has been learnt, especially in the Third World. For Third World social science teachers and examiners, the observation therefore provides a guiding frame of reference that might well be pinned on the social science bulletin boards of all universities.
Appendix

A Sample of Types of Examination Questions

Types of examination questions are wide ranging, as they vary from objective tests to those that emphasise different intellectual abilities, technical skills or qualities. The following are but examples, based on the kinds of demands made on the students in the particular case of International Economics.

A ‘Short answer’ questions

Questions requiring short notes or brief answers may be designed
- to assess a broad scope of general knowledge in an area;
- to test students' ability to distil the essential significance of, or distinguish between, certain concepts, theorems, models or principles;
- to ascertain the general grasp of these; and/or
- to assess the ability to discuss these briefly.

Examples

Briefly explain the meaning and significance of . . .; Write short notes on . . .; or Define and explain . . .

- Hecksher-Ohlin theorem
- Law of comparative advantage
- Protectionism
- Mercantilism
- Purchasing power
- The Bretton Woods Agreement

2 Distinguish clearly between the following:
- fixed and flexible exchange rates
- tariffs and quotas
- import substitution and export promotion
- trade creation and trade diversion
- terms of trade and balance of trade
B Questions requiring application of knowledge and critical discussion

Such questions (and to a large extent others under C below) suggest a teaching approach or strategy that is designed
- to sharpen the students’ focus and widen their perspective beyond a single school or narrow approach;
- to encourage critical thinking, original and independent thought and imaginative reasoning; and
- to provide the basis for critical judgement and creative choice, leading to the search for relevant solutions to their own local problems.

Examples

1 ‘When we contemplate using a model to answer a question, we need to know not only that it has given the right answer to a similar question, but also that the scene of its success matched that where we would now apply it.’
How far can you justify the extent of validity of this statement? Critically discuss with reference to the application of the classical and neo-classical models of international trade theory to the island economies of the South Pacific.

2 Far from acting as an ‘engine of growth’, the foreign trade sector of most Third World countries has neither relieved the Foreign Exchange constraint of these countries nor facilitated their development efforts.
Do you agree? Explain why or why not with reference to the development situation of the South Pacific.

3 ‘The case for regional integration in the South Pacific is a matter of necessity rather than of choice.’
Explain whether or not you agree with this proposition and critically discuss the development implications of your answer.

C Questions requiring application of skills, and ability in the use of concepts and tools

Such questions demand skills in the use of concepts, theorems, principles or models. They also
- emphasise to varying extent the ability to apply the discipline’s concepts and tools critically in solving problems; and
call for original application, critical judgement and creative choice in discussing the issues or tackling the problems.

**Examples**

1. a) Be it given: Two countries, X (an AC) and Y (a LDC).
   b) Also assume:
      - that X and Y have different factor endowments, X with capital abundance and Y with surplus labour;
      - that other international trade assumptions hold; and
      - that they both produce cloth and sugar, with cloth more capital intensive and sugar more labour intensive.
   c) Required:
      i) With the use of numerical examples
         - Explain whether and why trade should take place between them.
         - Discuss the development implications of your answer with reference to your domestic economy.
      ii) On the basis of your discussion, briefly explain the basic difference between the classical and neo-classical models of international trade, with some reference to the South Pacific.

2. a) Suppose that:
   - You have just been appointed an economic adviser to the Minister for Trade and Economic Development.
   - You are troubled by the declining terms of trade in your country's exports and the impact of this on the F/E and B/P position of your domestic economy.
   b) Required:
      i) Consider and explain the possible effects of such impact on the development situation of your local economy.
      ii) Critically discuss the various criteria or reasons you would use in advising the Minister on ways to address the problem effectively.
Validity and reliability are the two concepts fundamental to the efficiency of assessment. Validity measures the knowledge and skills specified in the objectives, the course, or the curriculum. Reliability refers to the degree of consistency of the results in varied circumstances, or how far the assessment will produce the same patterns of scores with similar 'populations' of students on two different occasions.


3 Although the definition of social science may be open to debate, for the purposes of this article the term 'social sciences' should be taken to include those implied by this list of career roles.

4 Arguably, for university teachers, the most appropriate training needs to include elements of their disciplinary specialisation, and experience in academic research, rather than the skills taught in conventional teacher training.

5 Part of the problem lies in the habits of thought engendered in economic method, as discussed in Muma (1981).

6 The need for 'therapy' to grapple with such limitations is discussed in Muma (1981).

7 See Muma (1982) for a full discussion of classification and framing.

8 A discussion of the distinction between the three types of knowledge content, and a classification of questions based on them, is contained in Muma (1982).

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