

A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS  
of the Failures at the Pre-Degree  
Examination of the Poona University, 1960

[ For Official Use Only ]

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## FOREWORD

Hardly any educational authority is ever satisfied with the prevailing system of testing the merit of its students. Where numbers are small, the testing personnel is itself largely the guiding personnel, and where the result of examination is dependent not on one or a few rigidly applied tests the cumulative assessment based on close and continuous mutual contact is found to be least unsatisfactory. Unfortunately almost none of our examining bodies in the field of higher education answer to this description. Starting from the post-graduate examinations as we approach the initial academic year at a college the obstacles of large numbers, lack of direct contact between teachers and the taught, different personnel for teaching and testing a candidate, and reliance on rigid tests become more and more insuperable. Especially when a whole barrier is created by the medium of instruction being for the first time a foreign language, as contrasted with the regional language which is the medium at the school leaving stage, the situation becomes almost insufferable. It is through this impasse that we expect our youngsters of 15 to 16 years of age to find a way to qualify for entrance to the University course.

Recently the situation in this respect assumed a stage at which it would have been thoroughly indefensible to allow the educational waste of over 60% of candidates to continue without undertaking a searching inquiry and adopting suitable measures. It was felt that as a first step towards a fuller understanding of the problem, investigations by a study-team composed of statistical as well as psychological and educational experts would be of indispensable value. Accordingly I requested Dr. V. M. Dandekar and Prof. A. R. Kamat of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, and Prof. V. K. Kothurkar of the University Department of Experimental Psychology to examine all the data bearing on a significant part of the latest Pre-Degree examination (April 1960) and to find out what appear to them to be meaning-

ful correlations. In addition to statistical data gathered from several sources, it was also possible to gather the reactions of a few persons who as teachers and examiners had first-hand experience of operating the system of instruction and examination. When the several authorities of the University apply their mind to an understanding and solution of the problem, the material so presented is bound to be very useful. It is hardly necessary to add that what is presented here are the findings of an objective study by experts each of whom bears full responsibility for his views, which do not necessarily represent the views of any University authority.

The problem of examination system is attracting the attention of educationists everywhere. The contents of this study will thus evoke wide academic interest.

I take this opportunity to convey to the authors the appreciation of the University for their valued assistance. I must also thank Principals and members of the staff of the colleges in Poona who placed their experiences and views at the disposal of the authors without any reserve.

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## INTRODUCTION

Until recently, the degree courses in Arts, Science and Commerce at the University of Poona like those at many other Indian universities, were spread over a period of four years after the Secondary School Certificate Examination. The courses led to the B.A., B.Sc. and B. Com degrees. They were divided into two stages of two years each. At the end of the first two years, the students appeared at a university examination called the Intermediate examination. The passing of this examination was obligatory for promotion to the third year of the course. At the end of the fourth year, was the Degree examination, again conducted by the University. The promotion from the first to the second year and also from the third year to the fourth year was done on the basis of an internal assessment by the College attended by a student. In particular, these promotions were not governed by any university examination.

With the adoption of the new Three-Year Degree course, the student still attends the college for four years. But the period is now divided unequally between two stages of one and three years respectively. The first year in the college is now called the Pre-degree year. This is followed by the Three-Year Degree course proper. At the end of the Pre-degree, year the student is required to appear for an examination held by the University and the admission to the Three-Year Degree course is governed by the results of this examination. The University of Poona recently adopted the Three-Year degree course and held its Pre-degree examination for the first time in 1959. The results of this examination were very poor. It was then reasonable to expect that those who had satisfied this severe test might show better results at the First Year examination of the new Three-Year degree course (corresponding to the old Intermediate examination). However, these hopes were for the most part belied when the First Year examination was held in 1960. Also, in the same

year, the Pre-degree examination was held for the second time and the results were almost as disappointing as in 1959. This series of unwelcome events naturally attracted much attention.

There existed naturally a large body of informed opinion, particularly among the college teachers, regarding the Pre-degree courses, teaching and examination. We therefore thought it appropriate as a first step to meet and hold discussions with Principals and teachers in the different colleges in Poona and secure their views on the subject. It was also thought to be desirable to scrutinize in some detail the examination results generally and, particularly, cases of failure. For the sake of convenience, we decided to divide the enquiry into these two parts, an opinion survey and a statistical analysis, and make a separate report on each. In the following pages are presented both these reports, Prof. Kothurkar and we are responsible for the former and Professors Kamat and Dandekar for the latter. As the whole purpose of the enquiry was exploratory no attempt has been made at this stage to put the two parts together.

For the sake of convenience the first stage of the enquiry was confined to the colleges in the Poona area and to the candidates appearing at the Poona City and Poona Camp centres of the Pre-degree examination. It is hoped that the results of this exploratory enquiry will indicate ways in which the study may be expanded so as to cover a wider area.

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