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Assessment Practices at School Stage : The Case of the CCE – a School-based Assessment Implemented by the CBSE in its Affiliated Schools

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Abstract

The aim of education is to prepare citizens for a meaningful, productive life. Evaluation should provide credible feedback on the extent to which this objective is achieved as well as for effecting further improvement in the teaching and learning processes. Current evaluation practices are highly inadequate and do not provide a complete picture of the individual's abilities towards fulfilling the aim of education. In schools, the term evaluation is synonymous with examination which has long been the only measurement of student's achievement. The word examination is associated with stress and anxiety for learners. Thus, the examinations negatively influence the testing and assessment carried out in the schools. On the other hand, if evaluation is integrated with the teaching-learning process, it will be meaningful and lead to diagnosis, remedial action and improvement in learning. There is a need to have a shift in instruction and assessment strategies so that desirable changes can be achieved. Assessment must seek to present a complete picture of the targeted learning. The areas spanning around knowledge, skills and behaviour must be appropriately covered within the curriculum determined as per the actual importance accorded to them in the curricula. Moreover, assessment must be based on clear standards, expressed in terms of learning to be achieved. The purpose of assessment must not only be to measure and judge; it must also help to improve learning as an ongoing process in education.

The Central Board of Secondary Education introduced the scheme of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation in the year 2009 when

it was known that rote learning, memorization, one shot examination and assessment of isolated areas of learning did not yield the desired

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result. Also the emergence of a child-centred curriculum necessitated learner-centred assessment practices. Thus the school based CCE emerged. The scope of CCE was intended to include almost all the areas of a student's personality. It was meant to be comprehensive to include both the scholastic and the co-scholastic areas of assessment. Evaluation should also be continuous in nature to provide regular feedback on the nature of learning so that teachers can modify their teaching strategies and the learners may be provided with more opportunities to learn better and improve their performance.

Well-designed assessment and regular report cards provide learners with feedback and set standards for them to strive towards a better performance. They also serve to inform parents about the quality of learning, progress and the development of their wards.

Credible assessment provides a report or certification at the completion of a course of study providing other schools and educational institutions, the community with information regarding the quality and extent of learning. Any meaningful report on the quality and extent of a child's learning needs to be comprehensive.

While CCE has been cited as the only meaningful kind of evaluation, it places a great demand on teacher's time and ability to maintain meticulous records if it is to be meaningfully executed and reliability maintained as a mode of assessment.

Although CCE is much talked about, it has not been really understood by the stakeholders. In order to make it workable, teacher education must become more sensitive to the emerging demands of the school system, pre-service teacher education as well as in-service training must build the necessary orientation and capacities in teachers so that they can appreciate, understand and meet the challenges related to curricular reforms and evaluation in particular.

Implementation of new practices in assessment as in other areas require the strongest support from systems, States, Boards, Institutions, Heads and community. Encouraging and supporting teachers is the key to successful implementation of the programme.

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation and its function as a guide to the learner and teachers is an important part of curriculum syllabi. (Eash, 1974). A good evaluation and examination system can become an integral part of the learning process and benefit both the learners themselves and the educational system by giving credible feedback (NCF 2005).

The aim of education is to prepare citizens for a meaningful, productive life. Evaluation should provide credible feedback on the extent to which this objective is achieved as well as for effecting further improvement in the teaching and learning processes. Current processes of evaluation do not provide a complete picture of the

individual's abilities towards fulfilling the aim of education.

Evaluation in Schools

In schools, the term evaluation is synonymous with examination, which has long been the only measurement of student's achievement. The word examination is associated with stress and anxiety for learners. Thus, the examinations negatively influence the testing and assessment carried out in the schools. On the other hand, if evaluation is integrated with the teaching-learning process, it will be meaningful and lead to diagnosis, interventions and improvement in learning. There is a need to have a shift in instruction and assessment strategies so that desired changes can be achieved.

The objective of these changes should be to develop in students the skills, attitudes and behaviours that will enable them to flourish in today's constantly changing world. Conventional teaching methods are inadequate in this regard. Such methods must be replaced by a more dynamic teaching approach in which the learners are actively engaged with the process of building their own knowledge from experiences around. If the changes required in education are to produce the anticipated results, assessment practices must develop in the desired direction.

Role of Assessment in the Teaching-learning Situation

Assessment must seek to present a complete picture of the targeted

learning. The areas spanning around knowledge, skills and behaviour must be appropriately covered in accordance with the curriculum. Moreover, assessment must be based on clear standards, expressed in terms of learning outcomes.

Assessment scheme must include planning, among other things, identifying the responsibilities of the various stakeholders namely the organisation, school management, parents, teachers and students. Assessment planning must also equip stakeholders by giving them indications on the relative importance of curriculum content, appropriate means of assessing them and the criteria for doing so.

Children spend their best part of the young lives with teachers and it is through the teacher's assessment that we can better understand their capabilities. The teachers play a vital role in the assessment of learning among children which is built up over relatively long periods and requires ongoing monitoring as well as appropriate and timely interventions. Because of their close and constant presence, teachers are the best-placed education stakeholders to observe progress and judge the quality of such learning.

Students must be made aware of their responsibilities with regard to assessment. They must be informed of expectations and be able to refer to them at any time; they must be able to position themselves in relation to these expectations. Students who are

able to take stock of their progress are more likely to be benefited in their learning. Assessment by students contributes to a better understanding of the subject and develops tolerance for the views of the others. Training students to engage in self-assessment, to reflect upon the quality of their work and seek to improve upon it constitutes one of the best learning that the school can provide. Assessment must contribute to enhancing students' commitment to their studies and developing positive attitudes, such as self-confidence and the desire to learn. Accordingly, assessment tasks must be stimulating, present a certain challenge to the student, and correspond to the student's tastes and interests. Such tasks must also be authentic and lead to useful results, raise new questions, offer a wealth of possibilities, and permit divergence, diversity, innovation and excellence.

Assessment results must be drawn from a variety of specialised sources. These include formal and informal observation, questioning, interviewing, complex productions ranging from open questions to sophisticated projects, the logbook and the portfolio. These methods, which are more difficult to apply but are also better tailored than conventional methods to the new approach to evaluation, will come into widespread use.

The purpose of assessment must not be only to measure and judge; it

must also help to improve learning. Assessment must be an ongoing concern in education. This does not mean that it should take up all of one's time, but rather that one must remain alert in order to detect opportunities for and signs of progress in students. Formal assessment periods can even constitute excellent learning situations. Among the reference frameworks for judging learning, it is important to choose those that are most favourable to progress. Assessment reports and results must be expressed in concrete terms that are understandable to students and to others concerned. A report of the progress made by the student in the form of a profile is more likely to be useful for the subsequent monitoring of his/her performance than an overall numerical marking presented without any other form of explanation.

Assessment has to be learner-friendly in the context of the child-centered curriculum. Assessment tasks must have scope for nurturing creativity, curiosity, inquisitiveness and must focus on the child's experiences.

Use of technology has a vital role in assessment management. The day is not far away when parents will be able to consult their child's academic record through the internet. This record will be an animated version of the present descriptive report card and, among other things, will include annotated samples of the child's work as well as short-filmed

sequences of the child's behaviour and performance in class.

The Introduction of CCE in Kendriya Vidyalayas

CCE was introduced in the Kendriya Vidyalayas since the beginning. The continuous and the comprehensive part was well addressed as the child's progress in both the curricular areas and co-curricular areas was assessed regularly through a variety of modes and tools lending a holistic approach to the assessment of the child's personality. The curricular areas were assessed by giving numerical marking and the co-curricular areas were assessed by way of grading and descriptive indicators. Personality traits were recorded. Assessment was conducted through a variety of methods such as quiz, debates, seminars, discussions, etc. Project work was carried out by giving topics related to the subject areas.

A host of activities to rouse the creativity of the children are conducted throughout the year which formed the basis for the child's participation to various levels of experiences. *Yoga*, physical education, work experience, value education, art education formed an integral part of the curriculum. NCC, adventures activities, Scout and Guiding gave opportunities for inculcation of life skills among students. Gifted and slow learners are identified and teachers adopt appropriate strategies to teach and assess them. Assessment tasks and tools catered to all levels of

learners. Teacher empowerment has been integral and vital aspect of the system. Teachers are oriented to various methods and tools of teaching and testing. Parent Teacher meeting has been an important aspect in which parents are familiarized with the progress made by the children in the schools. Thus the KVS model of assessment has been a precursor for the CCE introduced by CBSE.

The CCE in CBSE-affiliated Schools

The Central Board of Secondary Education introduced the scheme of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation in the year 2009 when it was realised that rote learning, memorization, one shot examination and assessment of isolated areas of learning did not yield the desired result. Also the emergence of a child-centred curriculum necessitated learner-centred assessment practices. Thus the school-based CCE emerged as it was expected to be most suited for the learner-centred curriculum. The scope of CCE was intended to include assessment of almost all the areas concerned with development of the student's personality. It was meant to be comprehensive to include both the scholastic and the co-scholastic areas of assessment. Evaluation should also be continuous in nature to provide regular feedback on the nature of learning so that teachers can modify their teaching strategies and the learners may be provided with more opportunities to learn better and improve their performance.

Features of the CCE Introduced in CBSE

The 'continuous' aspect of CCE takes care of 'continual' and 'periodicity' aspect of evaluation.

- Continual means assessment of students in the beginning of instructions (placement evaluation) and assessment during the instructional process (formative evaluation) done informally using multiple techniques of evaluation.
- Periodicity means assessment of performance done frequently at the end of unit/term (summative evaluation).
- The 'comprehensive' component of CCE takes care of assessment of all-round development of the child's personality. It includes assessment in scholastic as well as co-scholastic aspects of the pupil's growth.
- Scholastic aspects include subject-specific areas, whereas co-scholastic aspects include life skills, co-curricular activities, attitudes and values.
- Assessment in scholastic areas is done informally and formally using multiple techniques of evaluation continually and periodically. The diagnostic evaluation takes place at the end of a unit/term as a test. The causes of poor performance in some units are diagnosed using diagnostic tests. These are followed with appropriate interventions followed by retesting.

- Assessment in co-scholastic areas is done using multiple techniques on the basis of identified criteria, while assessment in life skills is done on the basis of indicators of assessment and checklists.

Scholastic and Co-scholastic Assessment

In order to implement Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation, both scholastic and co-scholastic aspects need to be given due recognition. Such a holistic assessment requires maintaining an ongoing and comprehensive profile for each learner that is honest, encouraging and discreet. While teachers frequently reflect, plan and implement remedial strategies, the child's ability to retain and articulate what has been learned over a period of time also requires periodic assessment. These assessments can take many forms but all of them should be as comprehensive and discreet as possible. Weekly, fortnightly or quarterly reviews (depending on the learning area), that do not openly compare one learner with another are generally recommended to promote and enhance not just learning and retention among children, but their soft skills as well.

Formative and Summative Assessment

Formative assessment is a tool used by the teacher to continuously monitor student progress in a non-threatening, supportive environment.

It involves regular descriptive feedback, a chance for the student to reflect on the performance, take advice and improve upon it. It involves the students being an essential part of assessment from designing criteria to assessing self or peers. If used effectively, it can improve student performance tremendously while raising the self-esteem of the child and reducing the work load of the teacher. Formative Assessment is carried out during a course of instruction for providing continuous feedback to both the teachers and the learners. It is also carried out for taking decisions regarding appropriate modifications in the transactional procedures and learning activities.

Summative Assessment is carried out at the end of a course of learning. It measures or 'sums-up' how much a student has learned from the course. It is usually a graded test, i.e., it is marked according to a scale or a set of grades. Assessment, that is predominantly of summative nature will not by itself be able to yield a valid measure of the growth and development of the student. It can only certify the level of achievement at a given point of time. The paper-pencil tests are basically a one-time mode of assessment and to exclusively rely on it to decide about the development of a student is not only unfair but also unscientific. Over-emphasis on examination marks focussing on only scholastic aspects makes children assume that assessment is different

from learning, resulting in the 'learn and forget' syndrome. Besides encouraging unhealthy competition, the over-emphasis on Summative Assessment system also produces enormous stress and anxiety among the learners.

Evaluation of Scholastic Aspect

Part 1: Scholastic Areas

Evaluation of academic subjects in Classes IX and X.

Six assessments are proposed:

Total Formative Assessments

(FA) = FA1+ FA2 + FA3 +FA4 = 40%

Summative Assessments

(SA) = SA1+ SA2 = 60%

All across the schools, the most commonly used tools/techniques are those developed by teachers themselves. Among these are paper-pencil tests and tasks, written and oral tests, questions on pictures, simulated activities and discussion with students. Short class tests are used by most teachers as a quick and easy way of assessing the learning progress of children. As these are generally conducted at the end of a unit/month covering the specified content taught during that period, these are no doubt useful but they need to be used effectively.

Similarly, tests can be formal, informal, written or oral, based on specified content desired to be tested. They are diagnostic in nature as they enable the teacher to identify or reveal the strength and weaknesses of students. A test should not create any fear amongst students and

it should be administered in an informal way.

Grading Scale

The nine point grading scale for measuring scholastic achievements is given below:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Marks Range</i>	<i>Grade point</i>
A1	91 - 100	10.0
A2	81 - 90	9.0
B1	71 - 80	8.0
B2	61 - 70	7.0
C1	51 - 60	6.0
C2	41 - 50	5.0
D	33 - 40	4.0
E1	21 - 32	3.0
E2	00 - 20	2.0

Minimum qualifying grade in all the subjects under scholastic domain is D. All assessments with regard to the academic status of the students shall be done in marks and the assessment will be given in grades.

Evaluation of Co-scholastic Areas

In addition to the scholastic areas, co-scholastic areas like life skills; attitudes and values; participation and achievement in activities involving literary and creative skills, scientific skills, aesthetic skills and performing arts and clubs; and health and physical education will also be evaluated. Most of the schools are already implementing activities involving these areas. The schools have been trained under Adolescence Education Programme (AEP), emphasising upon life skills.

The grading is as follows:

A	4.1- 5.0
B	3.1- 4.0
C	2.1- 3.0
D	1.1 - 2.0
E	0 - 1.0

Minimum qualifying grade in co-scholastic domain is D.

Benefits of CCE

- Well-designed assessment and regular report cards provide learners with feedback and set standards for them to strive towards a better performance.
- They also serve to inform parents about the quality of learning and the development and progress of their wards.
- Credible assessment provides a report or certification at the completion of a course of study providing other schools and educational institutions, the community with information regarding the quality and extent of learning. Any meaningful report on the quality and extent of a child's learning needs to be comprehensive. CCE is non-threatening to children, hence helps them grow in a fearless child-friendly environment.
- Preparing report cards is a way for the teachers to think about each individual child and review what he/she has learnt during the term and what she/he needs to work on and improve.
- Maintaining a daily diary based on

observation helps in continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

- Keeping samples and notes of the child's work at different stages provides both the teachers and the learner herself/himself with systematic record of his/her learning progress.
- CCE provides teacher and parents information about each child's interest and aptitude to help the child to make appropriate choices for future learning.

Concerns Regarding CCE

While CCE has been cited as the only meaningful kind of evaluation, CCE places a great demand on teachers time and ability to maintain meticulous records if it is to be meaningfully executed and reliability maintained as a mode of assessment.

It increases stress on children by reducing all their activities into items for assessment; thus, the purpose of evaluation is defeated. Unless the system is adequately geared for such assessment, it is better for teachers to engage in limited forms of evaluation by incorporating those features that will make the assessment a meaningful record of learning.

Since the implementation of CCE in its affiliated schools, CBSE has conducted a number of orientation programmes on CCE as well as monitoring undertaken by training groups of experts to act as mentors. Furthermore, through a series of circulars and website information,

CBSE has created a number of ready reference materials online and offline. But to state that these efforts in training the teachers is just a drop in the ocean may not be an exaggeration. The problem areas are as follows:

- Teachers do not have a grasp of the various areas to be assessed other than their subject areas which they had been assessing thus far.
- Teachers are not able to exercise the various tools for assessment proposed other than the conventional means of testing through question-answering.
- The sheer number of students in the class defeats the very objective of assessment directed towards individual learner's needs.
- Constraint on time is yet another problem to be grappled with. A plethora of activities and over-loaded syllabus leaves the teachers with less time for devoting to individual assessment.
- Teachers are often confused about the grades to be awarded to different co-scholastic areas, attitudes and behaviour patterns.
- Due to frequent change of staff due to various reasons, teachers seldom get to know the students, their needs, their styles and capacities of learning and hence are not in a position to engage in assessment of certain co-scholastic areas.
- CCE is the latest concern among educationists, institutions teachers, parents and students.

Although it is much talked about it has not been really understood by the stakeholders in letter and spirit.

Road Map for Effective Implementation of CCE

To make CCE workable and meaningful, the following aspects may be taken serious note of:

Teacher education must become more sensitive to the emerging demands of the school system. Pre-service teacher education as well as in-service training must build the necessary knowledge, skills and capacities in teachers so that they can appreciate, understand and meet the challenges related to curricular reforms and evaluation in particular. No educational scheme can succeed unless the teachers are adequately prepared for executing it and have faith in its worth. This preparation will resume the visualization of a realistic scheme and the development of comprehensive procedures for its operational implementation. Teachers need to be provided with orientation about the scheme. The development of improved evaluation tools and their appropriate use, is an important aspect of these courses. With respect to the scholastic areas, it would require the preparation of objective based questions, balanced question papers, scoring of scripts, analysis and declaration of results. Regarding the co-scholastic areas, it would mean the preparation and use of rating scales, inventories,

checklists, schedules and the procedures of assessing different skill areas. Training in methods of collecting, recording, compiling and interpreting evidences of learners' growth will be other crucial aspects of these training programmes.

Teacher empowerment should be augmented on a continuous basis reaching out to even those teaching in the remote parts of the country has to undertaken aggressively. In-service training in particular, must be situated within the context of the classroom experience of teachers and may be undertaken regularly. Teachers are to be trained to observe student's activities and behaviour and describe them through appropriate indicators for recording performance.

Teachers are to be oriented to collect, analyse and interpret data related to the performances on various measures of assessment so as to have an understanding of the extent and nature of the students learning in different domains. Teacher development groups to be encouraged to guide and share assessment practices among teachers. Training in the use of technology for assessment management to be undertaken on a war footing.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of new practices in assessment, as in other areas, require the strongest support from systems, State Boards, Institutions, Heads and Community. Encouraging

and supporting teachers is the key to successful implementation of the programme. Since we are in an era when schools and teaching programmes are subjected to criticisms for failing to meet societal expectations, we need to rigorously employ ways and methods to internalise the reforms made in assessment to make it workable. It is said that all teachers begin with the values implicit in their personal experiences of school and in the

systems they have come out of, hence new practices must be mediated in terms of the existing methods adopted through deliberations amongst teaching communities within the schools and amongst groups of schools. Such a community of experienced teachers should lead to observe and guide the beginners. It is through these partnerships, the development of improved practices in assessment could be carried forward successfully.

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