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Reimagining assessments

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Why assessments are central to learning

Assessment seems to drive the logic and practice of the learning and education ecosystem in India. The general populace judges schools based on how their students perform in Board examinations. Public debates rate the success of governmental initiatives in education by their ability to produce higher pass rates in similar exams. In this context, what we often do not do, is try and honestly answer the question – ‘What assessments are for?’ – for ourselves.

What are assessments for? In our education system, assessments seem to primarily have the functions of ranking students and institutional gatekeeping. This is very clearly not fair on the students, nor is it conducive in facilitating their learning. Such a situation is also not reflective of the needs of contemporary society.

Assessments can and must fulfil multiple roles. But their primary use in an educational system must be to facilitate learning. Over the last couple of decades, the increasing adoption of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) framework, as a part of the assessment process, is sometimes seen as being an important step forward in this regard. However, the adoption of CCE has been patchy. Sometimes, what it has meant on the ground is simply the proliferation of the number of tests that students must take.

The adoption of assessment reforms, such as CCE, often miss out on a core aspect of this process. It is this – frameworks such as CCE that try to make assessments a part of learning operate with the assumption that each unit of learning must be a unit of assessment, and each unit of assessment must be a unit of learning as well. However, this understanding is rarely, if ever, translated into practice in classrooms.

Thus, we need to reimagine assessment as a pedagogic tool. Practically what this means for classrooms is that students must not be assessed only to gauge their learning levels. Learning and assessment must happen in a virtuous cycle of iteration. Assessments should feed into learning. More importantly, they must become acts and spaces of learning in and of themselves.

This does not mean that we cannot have largescale summative assessments. There is an important role and space for these. But the primary use of assessment at the classroom level must have the aim of fostering student learning. Assessments and their outcomes, when scientifically studied and creatively used, can also be used as important guides for reforming and finetuning teaching practices and systemic support.

However, this will require a great deal of freedom for the teachers and trust in their abilities and agency. For students to learn, teachers must be free. Assessments then can cease to be a source of fear and become spaces for fun-filled learning, for students, teachers, and for everyone else in the system.



Project work used as a tool of instruction and assessment in arts education

Tracing the contours of educational assessment

Lessons from the past and directions for the future

Aanchal Chomal

One of my earliest projects at Azim Premji Foundation (APF), when I joined in 2006, was to assess students under the organization's flagship program called the Learning Guarantee Program. Among its many objectives, a key one was to ensure 'competency-based' education and learning in schools, and ascertain the extent to which schools were doing it. I was assigned to a remote block called Gadarpur in the district of Udham Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand. My task was to administer an EVS (Environmental Studies) tool orally with students of classes 3 and 5. The tool was aligned to the state syllabus. It had a marking scheme with suggestive responses to the questions.

The assessment was administered with one child at a time. So, I sat with this child, a young girl of roughly 6-7 years of age. After a few informal conversations began the administration of the tool. The first question was about the child and her family. The next one was on plants and animals. The third one was on sense organs.

I showed the flashcard of various sense organs to the student. My task was to ask the simple question, "What is this used for?" So, I showed the picture of a pair of eyes to the child and asked her - "ye kis kaam aati hai" ("What is this used for?"). The suggestive responses in my marking scheme were - to see; to read; to draw; to write; and so on.

When I asked the child this question, she looked at me for a while and then said, "Didi aankhein rone ke kaam aati hai" ("Eyes are

used for crying"). I looked at the child for some time. I was not able to figure out why she had given me such a response. I was, of course, left speechless.

There were several thoughts going on in my mind. What may have been the childhood of this 6-7-year-old child to respond to this question in this way? Did she need help? Why did she not think of the obvious responses? What sort of family did she belong to? Did her teachers give adequate attention to her in the class? The list was endless.

What I do remember is that I could not ask her any further questions from the EVS tool that day. But yes, I did spend the next one hour talking to the child to know her as a person and not just a respondent of my survey tool. That day I came back realizing a fundamental characteristic of assessment - every assessment reveals to you something about the child which you did not already know of. And that helps and directs you as a teacher, as a mentor, and as a guide to the child. The realization that assessment plays one of the most pivotal roles in student learning was as clear as it could be.

However, in our country, the assessments being practiced currently across various stages and diverse kinds of educational institutions are far from this. There is a predominance of tests and exams as a sieve to filter and rank the students. This process is coupled with the fear, anxiety and stress it causes among students, teachers, and even parents. In the past few decades, one has also heard policies and programs such as

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and other forms of assessment that are informal and less stressful.

One often wonders why is there such a massive dichotomy in the usage and purpose of assessment? On the one hand it is used as a sharp, high-stakes measure of achievement that leads to far-reaching life choices. On the other hand, it is also supposed to play a developmental and constructive role in students' lives. We often refer to these as the evaluative and formative function of assessment. How do these two seemingly dichotomous conceptualizations of assessment co-exist?

The evolution of educational assessments

There have been several attempts to trace the history of education and in doing so the history of examinations and assessments. It will be important to mention at the outset that this history is rather irregular and unsystematic. One of the oldest traditions of assessment was the oral examinations characteristic of medieval education, that was primarily being imparted in monasteries and convents.

To know something was to know it by heart and recite it as the proof of learning. The medieval monk was expected to learn Latin grammar to learn Latin texts. The study of grammar meant learning by heart famous grammars dating from the Roman Empire, or simpler textbooks aimed at beginners. These grammars were written in the style of questions-and-answers. Reproducing them in their exact form was expected. (Wilbrink, 1997)

Another very popular form of assessment was that of written examinations. Imperial Chinese examinations conducted for selection in civil services are one of the oldest documented written exams conducted periodically in designated centers. In colleges, as an outcome of various reforms, faculties of both Oxford and Cambridge

decided to improve their curriculum and introduced frequent examinations in a variety of topics. The first clear indication that written examinations were used for admissions and graduation is found for the year 1702. The exams of this era were almost exclusively essay questions emphasizing factual recall; one extant example shows eight questions each in history and geography, and six in grammar, primarily Latin and Greek (Arthur, 1987).



Azim Premji Foundation photo archives

In the school systems in Europe, as textbooks for the grammar schools became grade specific, exams became more regularized. The Jesuits found this system of examinations quite appropriate to their needs and it rapidly spread across Europe. Examinations were seen as the best way to focus the students' academic efforts, and to set criteria.

In the United States, somewhere around 1845, following Horace Mann's recommendations of written examinations, testing was incorporated in primary and secondary schools. The first examination was administered in Boston that year. Within thirty-five years, promotion from grade to grade was judged as success or failure. This was based on scores calculated as a percentage, based on performance on a written exam (Arthur, 1987).

While formal systems of examinations were mushrooming, the system of examinations was also being criticized. It is documented that students at Yale rebelled against exams as early as 1762, as it perpetuated 'cramming' and came at the cost of scholarship. Faculty

at universities struggled to develop tests that balanced content, memory and skills. In 1881, the superintendent of schools in Chicago expressed strong objections against testing for grade-level advancements and suggested that teachers and principals were better suited for doing this. By the end of the nineteenth century, in some parts of the world, testing had gained a bad name. Where testing was still used, teachers were 'teaching to the test,' with a lot of drills and practice.

Besides systems of assessments being adopted in schools and universities, one of the major developments around assessments came with advancements in the theory of measurement and testing with the introduction of intelligence tests. The science of educational testing and measurement was getting more and more sophisticated, with rigorous statistical methods and tools. Advancements in psychometrics added more rigorous methodological procedures in standardized test designing and its analysis.

Classical test theory, and in more recent times Item Response Theory (IRT), came to be the accepted gold standards of standardization and test quality. It was recognized that in high-stakes tests, where data generated is used for far reaching policy changes, rigorous standards of quality in test design must be followed. Mathematical models and theories such as IRT and several more began to be used to generate information that provides better understanding of the test instruments and student achievements.

Particularly in the context of schools and how one sees the process of education, assessment inside the classrooms underwent changes with paradigm shifts in learning theories. From the behavioristic paradigm of teaching being viewed as transmission of knowledge to the constructivist paradigms of children constructing their knowledge using their experiences in real life contexts, there

were several pedagogical transformations that were being suggested to make classrooms meaningful spaces to learn.

It comes to us as no surprise that assessment and evaluation processes that teachers used in classrooms were also being analyzed for their efficacy in the teaching-learning process. In the seminal work 'Inside the Black Box,' for the very first time, there was compelling evidence to indicate that classrooms where teachers were integrating assessments in the day-to-day teaching learning process, using a host of formal and informal methods, were showing better student learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

We, thus, entered the era of 'formative assessments' being thrust upon as a policy reform across several countries of the world including India. Approaches of assessment 'for learning' and 'as learning' began to take shape. A wide range of 'authentic assessments' such as projects, role plays, demonstrations, experiments, portfolios, etc., came into the picture.

The preceding discussion clearly suggests that there is a field of educational assessment, which is fundamentally multidisciplinary and the contours of which are still evolving. The field is being enriched by advancements in education, psychology, statistics and psychometrics.

It is also very clear that the clout of examinations weighs heavily upon this field. Therefore, disproportionate weightage is often given to various stages of test paper designing and methods to make the test instruments valid and reliable.

It is also evident that the evaluative function of assessment (assessment being used for ranking, promotions, measuring achievement, and so on) and the formative function (assessments being used for understanding student learning, identifying their misconceptions, and modifying the teachers'

strategies) of assessment are both equally prevalent. Very often, the former is prioritized over the latter.

Scoping the field of educational assessments for practitioners

It is very important to scope the field of educational assessment for practitioners, primarily the teachers. One of the interpretations of the word assessment, which resonates with its formative purpose, is its association with the Latin word ‘assidere’ which means to sit beside. For all practical purposes, the practice of assessment is to sit beside the learners to help them learn.

‘Educational assessment’ can be said to broadly include the collection and interpretation of data or evidence which provides understanding about learner needs and effectiveness of teaching process and classroom practices. Eliciting evidence of student learning, analyzing and interpreting this evidence, and acting upon it, are fundamental processes in assessment. Teachers and students are both key actors in these processes.

The definition provided above makes assessment essentially a cyclical and iterative process, which is quite organic in nature. What are some of the pre-requisites to enable this process in a classroom?

Deep understanding of learning standards: This includes a comprehensive picture of the curricular goals, competencies, and learning outcomes across the stages of schooling.

Understanding the learners and how children learn: Fundamental to this process is the familiarity and appreciation of the learner’s context, their academic and non-academic needs, and pedagogical knowledge. Understanding the ways in which diverse learners engage with a concept in a subject is also important. For instance, how do children learn to count, or learn to read? Which pedagogical strategies work? Which don’t?

Capacitating teachers to design and use quality assessments: One of the essential pre-requisites for good quality assessments is to capacitate teachers to design and use their own assessments. To enable this, teachers can be provided with professional development opportunities or meaningful integration of assessment practices in teacher preparation programs.

Landscape of assessment in India

If we look at the current landscape of assessment in India, there are at least four distinct purposes for which assessments are being used. These are assessments for certification purposes like the Board exams. There are assessments that are being used for selection, such as IIT-JEE, CLAT, CAT, CUET and NEET. Then there are the assessments for measuring systemic health, such as NAS, ASER, large-scale state level assessments like Gunotsav (Gujarat), Pratibha Parva (Madhya Pradesh), C-SAS (Census State Achievement Survey-Karnataka), and so on. Finally, there are the assessments that support student learning in the classroom, e.g., processes like CCE and other formative assessments.

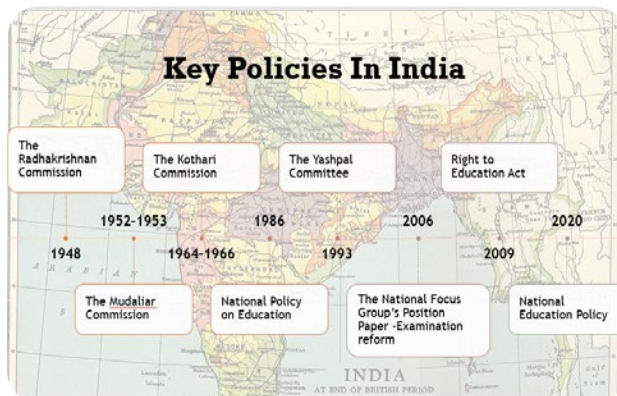
If we look at the history of assessment reforms in India, it is worthwhile to revisit some important policies and programs in the post-independence period, which discussed the matter of education and specifically examination reforms in India. This will help us understand the current priorities in assessments and their historical antecedents.

Radhakrishnan Commission Report: This is also popularly called as the Report of the University Education Commission. This Commission was set up in post-independence India (1948-49). It made various recommendations for examinations that are relevant even today. The report stressed the need for making examinations better aligned to educational aims (the matter of validity), and introducing scientific

processes to increase the validity and reliability of exams.

Recognizing the evils that surrounded examination systems, the report states, “In our visits to universities we heard, from teachers and students alike, the endless tale of how examinations have become the aim and end of education, how all instruction is subordinated to them, how they kill all initiative in the teacher and the students, how capricious, invalid, unreliable and inadequate they are, and how they tend to corrupt the moral standards of university life.”

In defining the quality of a good examination, the report suggested five essential conditions: Validity - it should measure what it intends to measure; Reliable - it should efficiently measure what it does measure; Adequate - represent the content sufficiently so that the scores indicate performance in the areas measured; Objective - minimize opinions, bias, and other subjectivities; Easy to administer, mark and interpret.



Among the above five conditions, the commission's report elaborated on the importance of objective testing and the need for eliminating bias and subjectivity, improving time and efficiency in the testing process. Yet another interesting suggestion of this commission was to give adequate credit to performance in classwork. It recommended allotting nearly 1/3rd of the marks of each subject to work done during the academic year. This aimed to reduce the stress of too much dependency on a one-time summative exam. Though the report did not discourage

essay type of question, the reasons for sustaining it was more operational – easy to design and administer, rather than its value to assess certain disciplinary areas that may not be comprehensively assessed using objective tests.

Mudaliar Commission Report: This is also known as the Report of Secondary Education Commission (1952-53). It stressed on the holistic development of students and the need to look at social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of children, along with the academic abilities. It recommended the need for examinations in all these areas and reduce dependency on single exams. The idea of multiple assessments that are ongoing and comprehensive came into the discourse.

Maintaining records of students' work, giving adequate importance to internal examinations, and making it a part of the public exams were some of the key ideas proposed in this policy. It stated that such records would provide inputs for “growth of his interests, aptitudes, and personality traits, his social adjustments, the practical and social activities in which he takes part. In other words, it will give a complete career.” The nature of such a record was quite like what we currently call a ‘portfolio.’

The policy also criticized the system of marking using percentiles or scores out of 100. It raised very pertinent questions on any exact measurement among a student who scores a 45 vis-à-vis someone who scores a 47! The policy recommended replacing such marks with a 5-point grade scale with A being excellent, B for good, C for fair or average, D for poor and E for very poor. In specific cases, where a distinction had to be made for the purpose of scholarships or prizes, the scale could be sharpened further.

On the matter of public examinations, the report was way ahead of its time. It recommended that students should take only

one public examination. Even the final public examination need not be compulsory for all students. It could be replaced by a school certificate that comprehensively provides the students' cumulative progress. Yet another striking feature of this commission was the trust it placed in teachers and their ability to judge the student.

The report acknowledged that, "The only way to make a teacher's judgement reliable is to rely on them! In the beginning there may be stray cases of wrong judgements but in the long run they will become more reliable and trustworthy". The report also cautioned against the trend of evaluating a teacher's success based on their students' performances. Calling this as 'unfortunate,' the report quite sharply observed that the practice of headmasters presenting their school's results of examinations was quite like 'profit and loss account being presented to shareholders of an industrial concern!' Extending this criticism to the work of the teacher, the report observes that, 'to judge the work of a teacher by the percentage of passes of his pupils in the examination is to keep alive the old and exploded system of payment by results.'

Kothari Commission and NPE 1968:
The year 1968 saw the first National Policy of Education (NPE), based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964-66). NPE 1968 was one of the first and most comprehensive policies discussing education across all stages from primary to secondary. Echoing the ideas of the two earlier commission reports, and particularly the Mudaliar Commission Report, the policy stressed that evaluation is a continuous process and should involve more than just certifying students.

The report reiterated the conditions of good assessment, as stated in the Mudaliar commission report, adding 'practicability' as an additional one. Critiquing the over-dependence on 'written exams,' it suggested

improving their quality to make them more valid and reliable. It also emphasized the need to improve the technical competence of paper setters. This was envisaged to help question papers test for certain important learnings apart from knowledge acquisition. These include the capacity to apply knowledge and problem-solving abilities. The report observed that there are several aspects of students' growth that cannot be measured by written exams, and that other methods such as observation, oral tests and practical, were useful and essential. The need for improvement and better reliability in these methods was also emphasized.

On the matter of external examinations, the report suggested attaching internal assessment results of students along with their external exam results. Students were to be given the choice of either attending an external examination for certification or take the school level certification. It recommended the first external examination to be held at the end of the 10th standard and the second to be held at the end of the 12th standard.

NEP 1986 and POA (Programme of Action) 1992: Within less than two decades, there was yet another National Policy in 1986. Based on the review of NEP 1986 by the Ramamurthi Commission, the 1992 POA was suggested. One of the interesting observations made by the committee was that the idea of detention versus no-detention suggested in the NEP 1986 has led to a negative framework.

To avoid that, it recommended a positive concept of continuous, disaggregated and comprehensive evaluation. The report also suggested the need for engaging with teachers on the ways of doing such a continuous evaluation for quality improvement. Such a continuous and comprehensive evaluation was suggested for both scholastic and non-scholastic aspects. This policy also emphasized the need for grades instead of marks.

On the matter of public examinations, the policy laid out that Boards should suggest expected levels of attainment at classes V, VIII, X & XII, and prescribe learning objectives corresponding to them. It suggested detailing out design parameters such as content area, weightage, question types and objectives of teaching-learning, prior to setting question papers. A modular pattern of offering courses with the provision for clearing board exams in parts, in conformity with the modular pattern of courses, was recommended.

At the systemic level, the idea of establishing a National Testing Agency for organizing and quality control in nation-wide tests was made. Soon after the POA, the Yashpal Committee Report, 1993, popularly known as 'Learning Without Burden,' also raised concerns about the prevailing examination system. It recommended modifications in the types of questions in the 10th and 12th Board examinations, to relieve students of unnecessary stress and anxiety.

National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, and the Position Paper on Exam Reforms: NCF 2005 brought about several long-term principles that were much needed in visualizing assessments differently. Stating the purpose of assessment, the document rightly stated that, "Education is concerned with preparing citizens for a meaningful and productive life, and evaluation should be a way of providing credible feedback on the extent to which we have been successful in imparting such an education."

To do this, it suggested the need to orient teachers on a host of areas, including parameters for assessing and techniques to assess. The idea of using assessment during the teaching, such as learning activities that aid in ongoing observational and qualitative assessments of children, was suggested. In areas such as sports, arts, yoga, etc., which cannot be assessed using marks, the NCF suggested markers such as participation, interest, and level of involvement, and the

extent to which abilities and skills have been honed. These were expected to help teachers gauge the benefits of what children learn and gain through such activities. Asking children to self-report on their learning was also suggested.

NCF 2005 also made specific suggestions on the types of questions that are set for assessment. Open-ended and challenging questions that go beyond the textbook were suggested. It also stated that adequate attention should be paid to teachers' capacity building in this area.

The consequent 'Position Paper on Examination Reforms' lamented the issues of present-day examinations. It foregrounded the need to make specific changes in the quality of question papers. It suggested defining competencies, setting difficulty levels, using good quality MCQs, and detailed marking schemes, etc.

The paper also echoed the recommendations of earlier committees and suggested the use of multiple modes of assessment. Making board exams optional was yet another important recommendation along with greater choice of subjects and a 3-year window to pass the exam. CCE was defined as a school-based system of evaluation, which is continual or periodic (before and during instructions) and comprehensive (including scholastics and co-scholastics areas), using multiple modes of assessment.

RTE, CCE and No-Detention Policy: After the recommendations of NCF 2005, yet another landmark was the passing of the RTE Act in 2009. CCE became a reality as a policy reform, along with its twin policy of No-Detention. Across the various states that APF has worked in, there was an echoing sentiment that CCE was 'old wine in new bottle,' and that we have been doing CCE forever. Yet another common reaction was the load of documentation and filling up of formats, which was quite overwhelming for the teachers.

One of the most significant lacunae in CCE was that it was seen as an ‘implementable program’ or ‘scheme’ of the government that is associated with a series of routinized processes. There was inadequate conceptualization of the kind of reforms in pedagogy and assessment that it demanded. In most cases, it were the class 10 CCE guidelines issued by CBSE, which were used to frame models for CCE, and for state-level guidelines for the elementary classes.

‘Continuous’ was often misconstrued as periodic tests. It was operationalized as a series of shorter tests, adding stress and burden to the learners. One of the biggest confusions that CCE implementation created was the misunderstanding that formative and summative assessments can be segregated based on the type of tool being used by the teacher. In making a distinction between formative and summative assessments, it was the mode of assessment rather than the objective that was the basis of the division.

Consequently ‘activity-based’ assessments such as projects, role plays, and portfolios became tools of formative assessment. The bulk of summative assessments continued to be paper-pencil test, with very little change in the nature and type of questions asked. The term ‘comprehensive’ was also subject to multiple interpretations - co-curricular, co-scholastics, personal and social qualities, with inadequate preparation on how to assess these. Therefore, what we have seen over the last two decades are various models of formative assessments that are nothing short of summative. The ideas of FA 1-FA 4 and SA 1 and 2 came into vogue. Even students were found saying that they had their ‘FA- 2 exam!’

While school systems, teachers, parents and students were grappling with all this, there was also an ongoing debate whether the No-detention policy (NDP) was doing more harm than good to the students. There were sentiments on the ground that

no exam meant no learning, and that both students and teachers were becoming non-serious about learning. There was a recurring debate on whether fear and punishment are necessary for learning. It comes to us as no surprise that in 2017, after recommendations from a CABE committee set up to measure the implementation of CCE and other consultations, the NDP provision of the CCE was rolled back. States were allowed to detain students at the elementary level, after a couple of re-attempts.

NEP 2020: It is in this backdrop that the most recent education policy has come into existence. At the outset, the policy acknowledges the issues with present day assessment practices. The policy highlights the roadmap for transforming the culture of assessment towards learning and development. The overarching focus is be on regular, formative, and competency-



Teacher at Agarahra School, Bangalore

based assessment, testing higher-order skills, such as “analysis, critical thinking and conceptual clarity,” and their application in real-life situations. By focusing on competency development instead of content memorization, it promotes testing core competencies and foundational skills to lighten academic pressure, making assessment stress-free and non-threatening, and curtailing the mushrooming of coaching

classes. The policy also suggests a 360-degree holistic progress card, in line with the comprehensive development suggested by earlier policies.

NEP 2020 also suggests introducing standardized/large-scale assessments in the critical stages of transition, i.e., grades 3, 5 and 8 to avert the pressure from board examinations and track progress at various levels of the school. It encourages the results of these large-scale assessments to be used only for developmental purposes and for continuous monitoring and improvement of the schooling system.

At the institutional level, the policy suggests setting up a National Assessment Centre as a standard-setting body under the Ministry of Education (MoE). It has been named as PARAKH - Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development. It is supposed to encourage and help all the school Boards in India to shift their assessment patterns to meet the skill requirements of the 21st century.

On the matter of certification exams, the policy suggests continuing with Grade 10 and 12 Board examinations. It recommends redesigning the Board exams to eliminate the 'high stakes' element and distribute the burden. The objective is to make them less stressful and distribute their currently high stakes across the secondary stage. It recommends giving students greater flexibility and choice to choose many of the subjects in which they can take the Board exams. It proposes to make the Board exams meaningful in the sense that they will primarily test the core capacities and competencies instead of rote learning.

Over the last 75 years, there have been much needed policy reforms in the conceptualization and direction of assessment. However, the implementation of many of these recommendations on the ground has been uneven and very often with

inadequate preparation and groundwork. CCE was clearly one of them. Also, in the absence of a broader conceptual framework of the different assessments being carried in our country, practitioners often struggle to understand the kind of inferences that can be drawn from each of these assessments.

A classic example of this involves the results of National Achievement Survey (NAS). A policy maker may use the NAS results to understand the broad trends of learning in their districts, allocate funds or initiate specific programs in particular districts. However, a District Education Officer (DEO) is not expected to target schools and penalize teachers in his district for falling short in the NAS survey. Since results of NAS are reported at the state and district levels, there is no disaggregation of the data at the levels of blocks, clusters and schools.

Therefore, the survey will not give any school-specific and student-specific information that a teacher can use to take decisions for her class and her students. Even for the schools that are part of NAS, there will be no school-specific data available. Such clarity is much needed on the ground to remove the unnecessary stress caused when these surveys occur and after the results are declared.

Assessments: directions for the future

Based on the history of assessment in general, and its evolution in India in particular, there are few key lessons to keep in mind. These will be useful in efforts to transform assessment practices on the ground.

There needs to be an understanding among practitioners about the various purposes of assessment. Clarity is required on what an assessment can and cannot do, the kinds of insights it can generate, and the ways in which we can use the insights to improve practice.

Equally important is to situate assessments in the context of learning. While there may be assessment practices that we have borrowed from the past, it is extremely critical to evaluate their efficacy considering how we would like education to be for the future. Assessment must become a part of the teacher's pedagogy. It must not function as a mechanism to assign grades, marks or ranks only.

We also need to strengthen teacher-led, classroom-based assessments. Assessments in our classrooms should become more purposive in nature. There may be the need for regular and periodic assessments, as per the school schedule and board requirements. However, it is important to ask the question whether the assessment is focusing on key competencies and outcomes or involves just memorizing inert facts? We must try and make the assessments helpful for the teachers to understand children better and self-evaluate teaching practices. Assessments' focus must remain on the learner and not only on the product of learning.

Assessments must also become developmental and constructive. This is easier said than done, given the long history of examinations, and the kind of purpose it has served over the centuries. However, for all practical purposes, assessments should assist in student learning, not just implicitly but also explicitly. For e.g., as a teacher, one must be able to design assessments that are differentiated and target diverse learners and learning trajectories of students in their class. It should be centered around development of core competencies and dispositions that are vital outcomes of education.

Assessments can also be used to provide feedback to students. This process can help them identify their strengths and the areas that need improvement.

Classroom-based assessments should not ape large-scale assessments in design and purpose. Written exams are the order of the day. Multiple-choice questions have become popular in various competitive exams. However, it is important to realize that in a classroom, a teacher need not be restricted to only these choices. One would want students to use their own language in explaining a concept, a procedure, or any experience for that matter.

Similarly, all assessments need not be only written in their form. In the last few decades, we have learnt about various methods of assessments that are beyond the traditional paper and pencil tests. Such diverse assessments help teachers to assess a wide range of competencies and dispositions. These are otherwise impossible to assess in a written paper, or for that matter in an MCQ-based written paper.

Adequate time should be given to implement the reforms and use the emergent insights. The pressure of assigning marks or grades to every assessment task should be questioned. The focus should be on gaining reliable evidence of student learning, rather than just the progress against set criteria.

In conclusion, any system of assessment that is counter-productive to learning must be re-examined and in the long run weeded out. Educational assessment is an evolving field of study. It will continue to get more sophisticated in the years to come. Advancements in measurement techniques will progress to build frontiers of knowledge and testing procedures. However, the 'what' of knowledge/learning will continue to remain relevant.

These new advances that are useful for the teacher to help students learn better must be carefully curated. The teachers' role and the assessments that they carry out in the classrooms cannot be underestimated. One of the most effective and sustainable

forms of assessments will continue to be teacher-led formative assessments of their students' learning. As practitioners working in education, it is our collective responsibility to support teachers and other practitioners in this journey.

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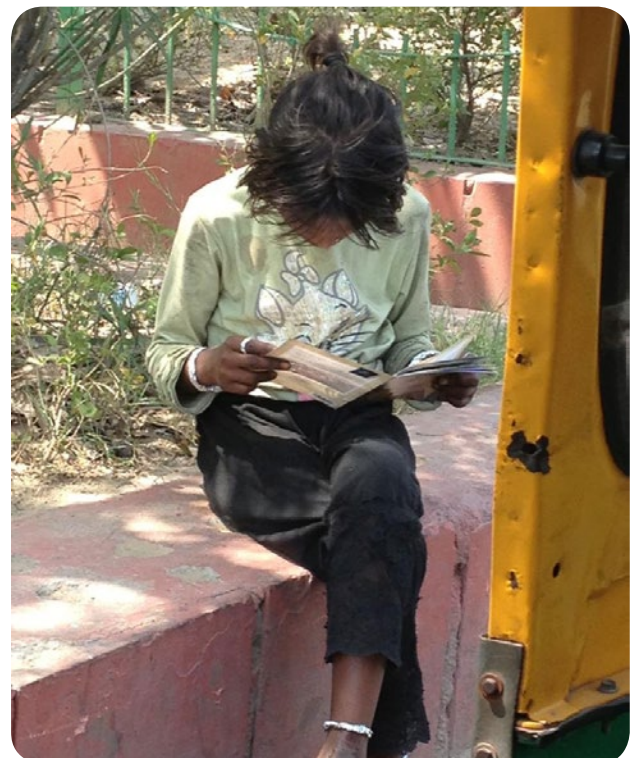
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Aanchal Chomal is a faculty at Azim Premji University (APU) and heads the work in Assessment. She teaches a course on 'Educational assessment' to students of the MA Education program. She has also designed and offered continuing education programs for teachers, teacher educators, senior functionaries, and NGO professionals across India. She has worked with various state governments, examination boards and NGOs in designing frameworks, tools and processes for large scale assessments, CCE, socio-emotional assessments, TLM development, and reforms in Board exams TET, and curriculum and pedagogy.

Website: azimpremjifoundation.org

Email: aanchal@azimpremjifoundation.org

Connect On:   



Aanchal Chomal

दिगंतर विद्यालय में आकलन

सीखने-सिखाने के अहम हिस्से के तौर पर आकलन: एक सैद्धांतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में

प्रज्ञा श्रीवास्तव एवं हेमंत शर्मा

आकलन – सैद्धांतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में

शिक्षा, इन्सानों में वांछित मूल्यों, अभिवृत्तियों और दक्षताओं के विकास की एक सायास प्रक्रिया है। चूंकि यह विकास केवल 'सीखने' के माध्यम से हो सकता है; अतः शिक्षा में आवश्यक रूप से सिखाने और सीखने के लिए 'प्रयास' किया जाता है। 'प्रयास' बिना उद्देश्य के नहीं होता, अतः शिक्षा के आवश्यक रूप से कुछ निश्चित उद्देश्य होते हैं, जो यह बताते हैं कि किन क्षमताओं को 'विकसित करना' है, और इस क्रम में क्या सिखाया और सीखा जाना 'चाहिए', ताकि वांछित क्षमताओं को अर्जित किया जा सके। अतः शिक्षा के उद्देश्यों की अभिव्यक्ति में जो निहित है, वह है - जिस दुनिया में हम रहते हैं उस दुनिया के बारे में कुछ समझ विकसित करना और साथ ही वांछित समाज में रहने के लिए मानव में कुछ विशेष प्रकार के कौशल और क्षमताओं का विकास करना। कक्षाओं में सीखने और सिखाने की प्रक्रियाएं दरअसल इन्हीं उद्देश्यों की पूर्ति के लिए होती हैं। तो फिर यह सवाल उठना लाजिमी है कि यह कैसे सुनिश्चित हो कि ये शैक्षिक उद्देश्य वाकई पूरे हो रहे हैं?

सीखने सिखाने के अंतर्गत किसी भी सोची समझी (विचार-शील) गतिविधि के कुछ उद्देश्य होंगे, और उन उद्देश्यों की प्राप्ति में गतिविधि की सफलता या विफलता को देखने के लिए कुछ मानदंड और प्रक्रियाएं आवश्यक हैं। विंच (Winch), फ़्लू (Flew) का उल्लेख करते हुए कहते हैं कि " शिक्षा की प्रकृति में 'शिक्षण' और 'सीखना' अनिवार्य रूप से शामिल है और इसमें निहित है कि जो सिखाया जा रहा है, जिसे ज्ञान कहा जा सकता है, उस के कुछ हिस्से में सीखने वाला महारत हासिल करे"। "लेकिन अगर कोई ईमानदारी से कुछ सीखने की कोशिश कर रहा है या कोई किसी को कुछ सिखाने की कोशिश कर रहा है, तो जरूरी है कि वे यह देखें कि इन उद्देश्यों में वे कितना और किस हद तक सफल हो रहे हैं। और जब तक वे इन सवालों के ज़वाब जानने के लिए कदम नहीं उठाते, वे यह दावा नहीं कर सकते कि वे अपने सीखने- सिखाने के प्रयासों में सफल या असफल होने के प्रति चिंतित या सचेत हैं"। इस तरह के प्रयास और प्रक्रियाएं आकलन के संदर्भ में अमूमन देखी जाती हैं। विभिन्न नीतिगत दस्तावेजों और शैक्षिक विमर्शों में इन प्रक्रियाओं को आकलन या मूल्यांकन के नाम से अलग-अलग तरह से देखा और समझा गया है। कुछ बुनियादी आधारों, खासकर दार्शनिक और नैतिक आधार पर आकलन के विभिन्न तौर तरीकों की आलोचनाएँ और फिर

उपयुक्त बदलाव भी हुए हैं, जो कि आज तक जारी हैं। आकलन की ज़रूरत और महत्व को एक सैद्धांतिक ढाँचे के अंतर्गत देखने की कोशिश करें तो हम यह जान पाते हैं कि 'आकलन' से हमारा क्या तात्पर्य है और आकलन के उद्देश्य क्या होते हैं और क्या होने चाहिए।

आकलन या मूल्यांकन के हालांकि विविध उद्देश्य हो सकते हैं - 'सतत मूल्यांकन' जो कि शिक्षण प्रक्रिया में ही निहित होता है, और जो प्रत्येक सतर्क शिक्षक लगातार और हमेशा अपने शिक्षण के साथ करता रहता है, 'ग्रेडिंग' जिससे यह पता लगता है कि क्या और कितना सीखा गया है, 'प्रमाण पत्र' देना जो कि ग्रेडिंग की सार्वजनिक घोषणा है अभिभावकों आदि के लिए, बड़े पैमाने पर 'मानकीकृत आकलन' जिसका उद्देश्य यह समझना होता है कि सम्पूर्ण शिक्षा प्रणाली या विद्यालय बेहतर तरीके से काम कर रहे हैं या नहीं। मूल्यांकन के तरीके, सटीकता, वैधता और विश्वसनीयता मूल्यांकन के उद्देश्य के आधार पर बदल जाते हैं। इसलिए, शैक्षिक प्रयासों के संदर्भ में इसकी सीमाओं के साथ-साथ उपयोगिता को समझना महत्वपूर्ण है।

यह आलेख दिगंतर विद्यालय की शैक्षिक दृष्टि और उसमें निहित आकलन की समझ और तौर-तरीकों के बारे में है।

दिगंतर विद्यालय की शुरुआत

दिगंतर विद्यालय की शुरुआत के पीछे एक ऐसे विद्यालय की संकल्पना थी जहां बच्चों को स्वतन्त्रता के साथ स्वयं सीखने के अवसर हों, और जहां किसी भी प्रकार का दंड या भय न हो। बच्चे अपने आप सीखना सीखें और ज्ञान के निर्माण की प्रक्रिया को जान सकें। साथ ही एक ऐसी जगह जो बच्चों को एक ऐसे स्वतंत्र व्यक्ति के रूप में विकसित होने में मदद करे जो जीवन पर्यंत सीखने के प्रति उत्सुक हो व स्वतंत्रचेता बन सकें। इसी संदर्भ में इस विद्यालय के पहले दो शिक्षकों द्वारा कर्नाटक राज्य में डेविड आसबॅरा के नीलबाग स्कूल में प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त किया गया – पहले शिक्षक ने लगभग 1 साल का प्रशिक्षण विद्यालय शुरू होने से पहले प्राप्त किया और दूसरे ने 6 महीने का प्रशिक्षण विद्यालय शुरू होने के बाद लिया। डेविड से प्रशिक्षण लेने के बाद जयपुर जिले में 1978 में दिगंतर विद्यालय की शुरुआत की गई।

डेविड के दर्शन पर आरंभ किए गए इस विद्यालय ने समय के साथ शैक्षिक गतिविधियों और बच्चों के साथ अपने अनुभवों से एक शैक्षिक दृष्टि विकसित की और इस तरह एक व्यवस्थित



Digantar

और स्पष्ट सैद्धांतिक ढांचा भी आकार लेता गया। विद्यालय की शुरुआत के साथ ही आरंभिक शिक्षा में गुणवत्ता की तलाश के सवाल ने शैक्षिक विमर्शों में अहमियत हासिल की। इस तलाश ने शिक्षा के दर्शन के मूल सिद्धांतों जैसे लक्ष्य निर्धारण, शिक्षाक्रम, शिक्षण के तौर-तरीकों सहित स्कूल के संगठन, माता-पिता और समुदाय को शैक्षिक प्रक्रिया में भागीदारों के रूप में देखने की दिशा में उन्मुख किया।

दिगंतर विद्यालय की शैक्षिक दृष्टि

शैक्षिक उद्देश्य मानव प्रकृति के बारे में हमारे विचार, अच्छे मानवीय जीवन और वांछनीय समाज की हमारी संकल्पना को दर्शाते हैं। इसी सैद्धांतिक ढांचे को ध्यान में रखते हुए तार्किक रूप से किसी विद्यालय का स्वरूप निर्धारित होता है। किसी भी विद्यालय का संचालन और उसकी व्यवस्थाएं इसी 'स्वरूप' पर निर्भर करती हैं, स्वरूप तय होने में तमाम अन्य बातों के साथ दो मुख्य बातों का उल्लेख जरूरी है - 1. हम कैसा समाज चाहते हैं या किस तरह के समाज की संकल्पना हमारे मन में है? 2. शिक्षा व सीखने को लेकर हमारी धारणाएं क्या हैं?

एक इंसान (या बच्चे) के बारे में हमारी जो मान्यताएँ होती हैं, उनसे ऊपर के सवालों को दिशा मिलती है, और उनका असर विभिन्न स्तरों पर होने वाले शैक्षिक प्रयासों पर पड़ता है और इसमें आकलन भी अनिवार्य रूप से शामिल है। इस महत्वपूर्ण बात को ध्यान में रखते हुए, दिगंतर विद्यालय, बच्चे और

बचपन के बारे में अपनी धारणाओं को उचित और स्पष्ट ढंग से व्यक्त करने पर विशेष जोर देता है। विद्यालय मानता है कि हर बच्चा, स्वाभाविक रूप से समाज का एक मूल्यवान सदस्य है, और उसकी अपनी पहचान, गरिमा और स्वाभिमान है जो उसे विशिष्ट बनाती है। सभी मानते हैं कि हर बच्चे में अपनी गति से सीखने की नैसर्गिक क्षमता होती है। साथ ही यह भी कि बच्चे की सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमि, उसके दृष्टिकोण और व्यक्तिगत अनुभवों के प्रति सम्मान सीखने और उसके सम्पूर्ण विकास के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है। बच्चों को एक सुरक्षित और स्नेहपूर्ण वातावरण की आवश्यकता होती है, खासकर प्राथमिक स्तर पर।

कुछ सामान्य शिक्षण शास्त्रीय मान्यताएँ भी हैं जो इस प्रकार हैं:

1. शिक्षण विधियाँ ऐसी होनी चाहिए जो बच्चों के अनुभवों के आधार को बढ़ाएँ। यह तभी हो सकता है जब वे नए अनुभव प्रदान करने के लिए बनाई गई परिस्थितियों व की जाने वाली गतिविधियों में स्वेच्छा से हिस्सा ले सकें।
2. बच्चों की अर्जित समझ को आधार बना कर ही आगे बढ़ा जा सकता है। उससे कट कर, हट कर या उसे नकार कर आगे बढ़ना संभव नहीं है।
3. शिक्षण विधियाँ ऐसी होनी चाहिए जो बच्चों को सीखने की गति में स्वतन्त्रता दें।

4. बच्चों में अपने आप काम करने की क्षमताओं तथा अभिवृत्तियों का विकास करना आवश्यक है। क्योंकि कुछ आरंभिक मदद करने और तरीके बताने के बाद उन्हें 'अपने आप सीखना' सिखाना एक महत्वपूर्ण उद्देश्य है।

ये मूलभूत मान्यताएँ विद्यालय में सभी प्रकार की गतिविधियों के लिए मार्गदर्शिका के रूप में काम में ली जाती हैं। लोकतान्त्रिक दृष्टिकोण से संगत इन मान्यताओं के अंतर्गत विद्यालय में सहयोग, जिम्मेदारी, न्याय और समानता जैसे लोकतान्त्रिक मूल्यों को बढ़ावा दिया जाता है। प्रत्येक बच्चे के मूल्यवान होने की बात को स्वीकार करते हुए विद्यालय में ऐसी प्रक्रियाएँ मौजूद हैं जिनमें बच्चों के चिंतनशील संवाद के माध्यम से विवादों के समाधान को प्रोत्साहित किया जाता है। बच्चों को निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रियाओं में भागीदारी देने से उन्हें अपने विचारों को प्रकट करने का अवसर देना भी इसमें शामिल है।

दिगंतर विद्यालय में सीखने-सिखाने की व्यवस्था

विद्यालय में सभी का यह मानना है कि प्रत्येक बच्चे की सीखने की गति अलग-अलग होती है क्योंकि प्रत्येक बच्चे की क्षमताएँ एवं रुचियाँ भिन्न-भिन्न होती हैं। इसके अलावा किये जा रहे कार्य से प्रत्येक बच्चे का जुड़ाव भी हमेशा एक सा नहीं होता है। इन सभी चीजों का प्रभाव बच्चे के सीखने पर पड़ता है। इसके साथ ही एक बच्चे की सीखने की गति भी हमेशा समान नहीं रहती है। इस भिन्नता को स्वीकार करते हुये विद्यालय में प्रत्येक बच्चे को अपनी गति से सीखने की स्वतंत्रता है। अब यदि बच्चों और सीखने के प्रति यह दृष्टिकोण है तो फिर यह जानने के लिए कि बच्चे और शिक्षक अपने-अपने प्रयासों में कितना सफल हुए हैं, उसके लिए आकलन के पारंपरिक तरीके तो प्रभावी नहीं होंगे। दोनों में विरोधाभास होगा, मसलन – 1. शिक्षण प्रक्रिया तो 'अपनी गति से सीखने' पर आधारित है, लेकिन क्या सीखा, इसके लिए साल के अंत में परीक्षा या ऐसा तरीका काम में लाया जा रहा है, जिसमें सभी बच्चों से एक ही प्रकार के प्रश्न पूछे जा रहे हैं। 2. 'सीखने की गति की स्वतंत्रता' की बात तो विद्यालय के दर्शन में शामिल है, लेकिन शिक्षण की व्यवस्था 'कक्षा आधारित' है। मतलब, एक बच्चे के पास एक साल का ही समय है तयशुदा पाठ्यक्रम 'सीखने' के लिए। यदि नहीं सीखा तो फिर उसी कक्षा में एक साल और। सीख लिया तो अगली कक्षा में। वैसे इस मुद्दे पर भी बहुत विमर्श होते हैं कि बच्चे द्वारा किसी प्रश्न के सही जवाब दे देने भर से यह नहीं कहा जा सकता है कि अमुक बात या अवधारणा बच्चे ने 'सीख' या 'समझ' ली है। गणित के प्रश्नों में इसकी संभावना ज्यादा होती है। 3. शिक्षण तो इस मान्यता पर आधारित है कि बच्चे की अर्जित समझ को आधार बना कर ही आगे बढ़ा जा सकता है, मतलब पहले क्या सीख लिया, इसकी जानकारी और विश्लेषण से आगे क्या करना है, ये तय होगा। लेकिन यदि आकलन इस तरह का है कि ऐसी कोई प्रक्रियाएँ ही नहीं हैं जिनसे रोजाना या लगातार पता लगता रहे कि कौन सा बच्चा सीखने के किस स्तर पर है, तो आगे का रास्ता कैसे तय हो? 4. मान्यता तो यह है कि शिक्षण की पूरी प्रक्रिया में बच्चे के

सम्मान, दृष्टिकोण, गरिमा और उसके अनुभवों को जगह दी जाए और उसे अपने आप में एक मूल्यवान व्यक्ति के रूप में देखा जाए लेकिन आकलन ऐसा जिसमें उसके विचारों/अनुभवों को जगह ही न दी जाए, जिसमें जो प्रश्न पूछे गए हैं, उनके आप के चाहे गए जवाब 'न दे सकने' या 'न सीखने' के कारण बच्चा फेल करार दे दिया जाए।

यहाँ इस मुद्दे पर भी ध्यान दिलाने की कोशिश है कि आकलन के तौर-तरीके बच्चों, शिक्षण और सीखने के बारे में हमारी या कहे कि हर स्तर पर शिक्षा व्यवस्था में निहित मान्यताओं को परिलक्षित करते हैं। भले ही वे मान्यताएँ उजागर न हों या स्पष्ट तौर पर व्यक्त न की गई हों, आकलन के तौर-तरीकों से इनका संबंध तो है ही। तो फिर सवाल उठता है कि यदि शिक्षण शास्त्रीय मान्यताएँ वे हैं जो ऊपर वर्णित हैं, तो फिर तर्कसंगत और उससे सामंजस्य बैठाने वाले आकलन के तौर-तरीके क्या हों? दिगंतर विद्यालय में आकलन उक्त सैद्धांतिक पृष्ठभूमि में देखते हुए जो व्यवस्था लगभग 40 सालों से सफलतापूर्वक चल रही है, उसे समझने के लिए विद्यालय व्यवस्था की कुछ बातें जानना भी आवश्यक है— जैसे यह कि 'कक्षाओं' के बजाए यहाँ शिक्षण की व्यवस्था 'समूह आधारित' है। जब बच्चे विद्यालय में दाखिला लेते हैं तो उनका दाखिला पहले से बने समूहों में से किसी एक समूह में होता है, समूह में पहले से शामिल बच्चों की संख्या और प्रवेश सूची के आधार पर। प्राथमिक स्तर पर सामान्यतः एक समूह में बच्चों की उम्र में ज्यादा अंतर नहीं होता है।

एक समूह में एक शिक्षक के पास अधिकतम 30 बच्चे होते हैं, जिनके सीखने-सिखाने की पूरी जिम्मेदारी उस शिक्षक की होती है। प्राथमिक स्तर पर एक ही शिक्षक पूरे समय बच्चों के साथ उसी समूह में रहकर सभी विषयों पर काम करने में बच्चों की मदद करता है। दिगन्तर में काफी समय से किये जा रहे काम के अनुभव के आधार पर कहा जा सकता है कि बच्चों की संख्या यदि 30 तक हो तो शिक्षक हर बच्चे पर अलग-अलग ध्यान दे सकता है तथा वे अपनी गति से सीखते हुये आगे बढ़ सकते हैं। सब सीखें, इस बात का ध्यान तो रखा ही जाता है लेकिन सब एक साथ एक जैसा सीख जाएँ, इस पर जोर नहीं है। सीखने की गति की स्वतंत्रता को स्वीकार करते ही कुछ ही समय में बच्चे अलग-अलग स्तरों पर काम करने लगते हैं। अतः एक समूह में बच्चे सीखने के अलग-अलग स्तर पर होते हैं और इस आधार पर एक समूह में कई उपसमूह बना दिये जाते हैं। इन उपसमूहों में बच्चों की संख्या घटती-बढ़ती रहती है और ये समूह बच्चों की क्षमताओं एवं उनके द्वारा सीखी गई विषयवस्तु के आधार पर बनते-बिगड़ते रहते हैं। अर्थात् एक बच्चा पहले किसी एक समूह में हो सकता है कुछ समय बाद किसी दूसरे समूह में। इसे इस प्रकार समझ सकते हैं - माना किसी समूह में 30 बच्चे हैं और उनके साथ गणित में कुछ सिखाने, जैसे 25 तक गिनने पर काम शुरू किया गया है। कुछ काम करने के बाद, हो सकता है कि 12 बच्चे 15 तक गिनना सीख पाये। और 10 बच्चे 25 तक गिनना सीख पाये। और 8 बच्चे संख्या पढ़ने-लिखने का काम आरंभ कर चुके हैं। अतः इस तरह इस समूह में 3 उपसमूह बन गये। प्रत्येक बच्चे

को उनके स्तरानुसार कार्य मिले इसकी पूर्ण रूप से जिम्मेदारी शिक्षक की होती है। संबन्धित विषयवस्तु सीखे जाने तक बच्चे उसी उपसमूह में रहेंगे। 25 तक गिनना जिन्होंने सीख लिया, वे अब दूसरे उपसमूह में जाएंगे जिसमें बच्चे संख्याओं को पढ़ना-लिखना सीख रहे हैं।

इस प्रकार प्रतिदिन के काम के आधार पर समूह बनते-बिगड़ते रहते हैं। कभी-कभी ऐसा भी होता है प्रत्येक बच्चा अलग-अलग काम कर रहा है। लेकिन यह जरूरी नहीं है कि समूह बनाये बिना शिक्षण कार्य नहीं कराया जा सकता। यह शिक्षक की सुविधा, काम व सामग्री की व्यवस्था पर निर्भर करता है।

ऊपर दी गई व्यवस्था जिसमें बच्चे अपनी गति से सीखते हुये आगे बढ़ रहे हैं, इसमें शिक्षक को सभी बच्चों पर अलग-अलग ध्यान देना पड़ेगा। यदि समूह में बच्चों की संख्या 30 से ज्यादा हो तो इसमें समस्या आती है। अतः सीखने में गति की स्वतंत्रता को स्वीकार करते हुए समूह का आकार इतना ही रखा जाता है।

विद्यालय स्तर पर वर्ष में एक बार शिक्षकों द्वारा अपने-अपने समूहों की वर्तमान स्थिति का विश्लेषण किया जाता है और समूहों का पुनर्गठन किया जाता है। अतः हर वर्ष नए शिक्षण-समूह बनते हैं। शिक्षक द्वारा बच्चों के साथ काम करते हुये कई बार ऐसा होता है कि समूह में बच्चों के स्तर में अंतर ज्यादा हो जाता है, जैसे 30 में से कुछ बच्चे ऐसे हैं जो आरंभिक स्तर पर ही हैं और कुछ ऐसे हो सकते हैं जो प्राथमिक स्तर की क्षमताओं को पूरी करने के आस-पास हों। बच्चों के सीखने के स्तर में इतना व्यापक अंतर हो जाने पर शिक्षक को सभी बच्चों के लिये योजना तैयार करके काम करने में काफी मेहनत करनी पड़ती है। अतः शिक्षकों द्वारा स्तर के इस अंतर को कम करने के लिये अलग-अलग बड़े समूहों से सीखने के आस-पास के स्तर के बच्चों को एक समूह में कर लिया जाता है जिसे विद्यालय में समूहों का पुनर्गठन कहते हैं। उदाहरण के लिए सभी समूहों से विद्यालय में कुल 300 बच्चे हैं उनमें 90 बच्चे ऐसे हैं जो पढ़ना-लिखना सीख गये हैं (अलग-अलग समूहों में), उन बच्चों के तीन अलग समूह बना लिये जाते हैं। यह बड़ा समूह होता है, इसी प्रकार अन्य समूह भी बच्चों के विभिन्न स्तरों को ध्यान में रखकर बना लिये जाते हैं जिनमें सीखने के स्तरों में अंतर कम हों। लेकिन यह सब शिक्षक की सुविधा और उसकी इच्छा पर निर्भर है। यदि कोई शिक्षक यह निर्णय ले कि वह अपने समूह का पुनर्गठन नहीं करना चाहता तथा अपने ही समूह में अलग-अलग स्तरों के बच्चों के साथ स्वयं ही कार्य करना पसंद करेगा तो इसके लिये वह स्वतंत्र होता है। कई बार बच्चे भी किसी और समूह में नहीं जाना चाहते और उनके इस निर्णय का भी सम्मान किया जाता है।

समूह में सीखने की इस व्यवस्था में बच्चों में स्वयं सीखने पर अधिक जोर दिया जाता है, इसके लिये समूह में ऐसा माहौल तैयार किया जाता है जिसमें बच्चे स्वयं के प्रयासों से व अपने साथी बच्चों की मदद से सीखते हैं। सामग्री भी इसी प्रकार की काम में ली जाती है जो बच्चों को स्वतंत्र रूप से सीखने के अवसर दे।

क्या सीखा? – आकलन (योजना और अंकन)

किसी भी विद्यालय की जवाबदेही होती है यह जानना कि बच्चे क्या, कितना और कैसे सीख रहे हैं। नहीं सीखे तो इसके कारण क्या हैं? इसके विस्तार में जाएँ तो सवाल कुछ इस तरह के होंगे : 1. यह कैसे पता चले कि जो सिखाने की कोशिश की गई है, वह बच्चा सीखा या नहीं ताकि आगे सिखाने की योजना बनाई जा सके। 2. यह कैसे पता चले कि बच्चा सीखने के किस स्तर पर है और इसके प्रमाण क्या हैं? 3. अभिभावकों, स्कूल प्रशासन और अन्य लोगों को कैसे पता चले कि बच्चे सीख रहे हैं और शिक्षा के उद्देश्य पूरे हो रहे हैं? 4. कैसे और किन आधारों पर कहा जाए कि विद्यालय ठीक काम कर रहा है या नहीं? शिक्षा के कर्म में इस तरह के सवाल आकलन के संदर्भ में उठना लाजिमी है, चाहे आकलन का स्वरूप और व्यवस्था जिस भी तरह की हो। दिगंतर विद्यालय में आकलन के तौर तरीके जानने के लिए समूहों में होने वाली शिक्षण प्रक्रिया को पूरी तरह जानना जरूरी है, क्योंकि यहाँ आकलन अलग से की जाने वाली प्रक्रिया नहीं बल्कि शिक्षण में ही निहित है, और शिक्षण प्रक्रिया का एक सहज, स्वाभाविक और अहम हिस्सा है।

जैसा कि ऊपर बताया गया है कि समूह आधारित व्यवस्था में सीखने की गति की स्वतन्त्रता के साथ एक समूह में सभी बच्चे विभिन्न स्तरों पर काम कर रहे हो सकते हैं। अतः शिक्षक को प्रतिदिन अपने बच्चों की गति एवं स्तर के अनुसार उनके लिये काम पहले से सोचना पड़ता है। यदि समूह में काम करते हुए इस बारे में सोचा जाए तो अन्य बच्चे खाली बैठे रह सकते हैं, समूह की व्यवस्था बिगड़ सकती है। साथ ही काम के लिए यदि किसी सामग्री की आवश्यकता हो तो तुरंत उसे उपलब्ध करवाना संभव नहीं भी हो सकता है। अतः शिक्षक द्वारा प्रतिदिन समूह में जाने से पहले प्रत्येक बच्चे के काम की योजना तैयार की जाती है जिसमें कुछ बातों का ध्यान रखा जाता है, जैसे: बच्चे क्या काम करेंगे? किस प्रकार करेंगे? काम से बच्चे क्या सीखेंगे? काम के दौरान कौन सी सामग्री लगेगी? समय नियोजन कैसे होगा? कार्य के दौरान कौन सा बच्चा अकेले काम कर सकता है और किसे मदद की जरूरत होगी? इस तैयारी से शिक्षक को यह भी जानने में मदद मिलती है कि अगले दिन किस उपसमूह में शिक्षक की मदद/उपस्थिति की ज्यादा जरूरत होगी और कहाँ बच्चे अकेले और एक-दूसरे की मदद से काम कर पाएँगे। यह शायद बहुत छोटी बात लगे लेकिन 30 बच्चों के समूह के व्यवस्थित और प्रभावी संचालन के लिए योजना बनाने में यह जानकारी आव-श्यक है। शिक्षक को बच्चों के साथ कब और कहाँ होना है, कहाँ नहीं, यह शिक्षण शास्त्र और आकलन का एक अहम हिस्सा है और विद्यालय की शिक्षण शास्त्रीय मान्यता के संगत भी क्योंकि बच्चों को 'स्वयं सीखना' सिखाना भी एक उद्देश्य है। नीचे दिया प्रारूप इस प्रक्रिया को समझने में मदद कर सकता है:

प्रतिदिन की योजना बनाने के लिये शिक्षक के पास कुछ जानकारी-रियाँ होना जरूरी हैं जैसे - बच्चों का स्तर क्या है? किस बच्चे ने क्या और कितना सीखा? इस जानकारी को प्राप्त करने के लिये शिक्षकों द्वारा प्रतिदिन प्रत्येक बच्चे का समूह कार्य के दौरान अव-

शिक्षक: सरोज विषय: हिन्दी समूह: तितली तिथि : 03/07/2023

उपसमूह	काम	उद्देश्य	सामग्री	योजना
1	बच्चे भाषा विकास शृंखला 1-7 की पुस्तकों में दी गई कहानियों को पढ़ने व समझने का काम करेंगे और इन पर आधारित प्रश्नों के उत्तर खुद लिखेंगे।	कहानियों को पढ़कर समझना व इनके बारे में लिखकर अभिव्यक्त कर पाना। अधूरी कहानी पूरी करना।	भाषा विकास शृंखला 1-7, कॉपियाँ	सभी बच्चे खुद ही कार्य करेंगे। आवश्यकतानुसार मदद की जाएगी।
2	बच्चे पोथी 3 व 4 पर काम करेंगे – आ,इ, ई, ऐ की मात्रा पहचान कर ब्लैक बोर्ड पर अभ्यास करेंगे, शब्द-चित्र कार्ड से शब्द पढ़ने व वर्णों में मात्रा लगाकर कॉपी में लिखने और पढ़कर सुनाने का काम करेंगे।	पढ़ना लिखना सीखने के क्रम में वर्ण व मात्राओं की पहचान पर अभ्यास	पोथी 3 व 4, ब्लैक बोर्ड, कॉपियाँ	सौरभ, शीतल, आसिफ और सीमा की मात्रा पहचान पर अभ्यास में मदद, बाकी बच्चे खुद काम करेंगे।
3	आरंभिक क्षमता व पोथी 1 में स्तरानुसार प्रथम ध्वनि अलग करने, शब्दों की ध्वनियों को एक साथ बोलना, व अंतराल के साथ बोलने पर कार्य करेंगे। झ, र, म, ड, अ,ब, ख, ग, न, थ, व, या – वर्णों की पहचान, दिये गए वर्णों पर पेंसिल घुमाने व समान आकृतियों का मिलान करने व रंग भरने पर कार्य करना, इन वर्णों से बने शब्दों को पढ़ने का काम	पढ़ना लिखना सीखने के क्रम में वर्ण की पहचान पर अभ्यास करना, हाथ संतुलन कर पाना।	पोथी 1, ब्लैक बोर्ड, कॉपियाँ	प्रत्येक बच्चे की आवश्यकतानुसार मदद करना, सैयद, लावण्या की प्रथम ध्वनि पहचान में और स्नेहा, मनमीत की वर्ण पहचान में मदद।
व्यवस्था एवं समय का बंटवारा : 5 मिनट योजना साझा करना बच्चों से, सामग्री वितरण, व्यवस्था				
5 मिनट - उपसमूह 1 में शिक्षक की उपस्थिति				
20 मिनट - उपसमूह 2 में शिक्षक द्वारा मदद				
25 मिनट - उपसमूह 3 में शिक्षक द्वारा मदद				
दिन भर के काम पर टिप्पणी – हिन्दी पर कार्य आज ठीक चला योजना के अनुसार। उपसमूह 1 में बच्चों ने एक दूसरे की मदद से काम को किया और समझा।				
नोट: 1. प्रत्येक उपसमूह संख्या के साथ उस उपसमूह में शामिल बच्चों के नाम भी शिक्षक इस प्रारूप में लिखते हैं।				
1. यहाँ शिक्षक और बच्चों के नाम बदल दिये गए हैं।				

लोकन और उसके द्वारा किए जा रहे कार्यों को देखा और समझा जाता है। बाद में इस अवलोकन को व्यवस्थित तरीके से अपनी डायरी में दर्ज किया जाता है। दर्ज या अंकन करना इसलिए जरूरी है क्योंकि 30 बच्चों के प्रतिदिन के काम को याद रख पाना बहुत ही मुश्किल काम है। शिक्षक द्वारा प्रतिदिन का अंकन कुछ बिन्दुओं के आधार पर होता है – किसी बच्चे ने क्या और कितना काम किया? कार्य करने के दौरान क्या उसे कुछ समस्या आई, यदि हाँ तो उसका कारण क्या रहा? किस अवधारणा को सीखने में बच्चे को दिक्कत आ रही है? किए जा रहे कार्यों के प्रति बच्चे की रुचि थी या नहीं? बच्चे ने स्वयं कार्य किया या अन्य साथियों की मदद ली? बच्चे का व्यवहार कैसा था? आदि।

इस प्रकार प्रतिदिन प्रत्येक बच्चे के बारे में लिखित रिकार्ड होता है जिसमें बच्चे की सीखने की गति, कितना सीख चुका है इत्यादि का विस्तार से पता चलता है। इस प्रकार से किया गया अंकन बच्चों की सीखने की प्रक्रिया को सुचारु रूप से जारी रखने में मददगार होता है। इस प्रकार से सतत् व नियमित आकलन बिना किसी दबाव के किसी भी समय बच्चे की प्रगति को जानने में मदद करता है। इसके साथ ही बच्चों को सीखने में आ रही कठिनाई को पहचान कर ठीक समय पर मदद कर पाने में भी

उपयोगी होता है। संक्षेप में कहा जाए तो दिगंतर विद्यालय में आकलन कोई अलग से की जाने वाली चीज नहीं है बल्कि वह शिक्षण प्रक्रिया का ही अभिन्न और जरूरी हिस्सा है।

शिक्षा व्यवस्था में जहां कई सालों से परीक्षा आधारित आकलन का बोलबाला है, जहां इसमें बच्चों को मिलने वाले अंकों और पास-फेल के परिणाम को जोरों शोरों से उजागर करने का रिवाज है, वहाँ दिगंतर विद्यालय में परीक्षा का और सीखने के परिणाम-स्वरूप अंक आदि देने की प्रथा का न होना, थोड़ा अजीब लग सकता है। कम ही सही, लेकिन जिन जगहों पर आकलन को शिक्षण की प्रक्रिया के एक जरूरी और स्वाभाविक हिस्से के तौर पर देखा जाता है, वहीं इसके महत्व और आनंद को समझा जा सकता है। दिगंतर विद्यालय में साल के अंत में या बीच में होने वाली परीक्षाओं की कोई जरूरत और जगह नहीं है। लेकिन यह तो जरूरी है कि हर बच्चे के सीखने की प्रगति का विवरण रखा जाए और उसे बच्चों और उनके अभिभावकों से भी साझा किया जाए। इसके लिए वर्ष में दो बार, 6 माह के अंतराल से, प्रत्येक बच्चे के बारे में एक लिखित प्रगति रिपोर्ट तैयार की जाती है जिसमें कुछ बातों के बारे में विस्तार से लिखा जाता है मसलन – बच्चों ने पिछले 6 माह की अवधि में किस विषय में क्या सीखा

है? उपस्थिति, समय पालन आदि कैसा रहा है। इसमें बच्चे के व्यवहार, रुचियों और आदतों का ब्यौरा भी रखा जाता है। विद्यालय में लगातार हो रही विभिन्न गतिविधियों और कार्यक्रमों के दौरान हुए अवलोकन और ऊपर वर्णित अंकन इस ब्यौरे का आधार होते हैं।

प्रत्येक दिन बच्चों के साथ समूह में काम खत्म करके बच्चों के जाने के बाद, शिक्षक कुछ समय पूरे दिन की गतिविधियों का विश्लेषण करते हैं और अपनी डायरी में नीचे दिये गए प्रारूप में हर बच्चे के बारे में अपने अवलोकन दर्ज करते हैं:

दिगंतर विद्यालय में सीखना सिर्फ किताबों और विषयों की विषय-वस्तु तक ही सीमित नहीं है। ऐसे बहुत से अवसर हर विद्यालयों में लाजिमी हैं जहां बच्चों के बीच लड़ाई झगड़े होते हैं, एक-दूसरे की शिकायतें आदि भी शिक्षकों से की जाती हैं। दिगंतर विद्यालय में ऐसे मौकों और मुद्दों का भरपूर लाभ उठाया जाता है शिक्षकों और बच्चों द्वारा भी। एक लोकतान्त्रिक संस्कृति और वातावरण होने के कारण, शुरू से ही बच्चे आपस में और शिक्षकों के साथ बहुत ही सहज होते हैं। कई मुद्दों पर शिक्षकों की किसी बात/विचार या व्यवहार से असहमति या आपत्ति जताने से बच्चे

कतराते नहीं हैं। बात यदि किसी नियम को मानने की है तो फिर वह सब पर लागू है जैसे समय पर आना, या फिर विद्यालय के प्रांगण की सफाई, या सभी को (शिक्षक सहित) नाम से बुलाना। लड़ाई झगड़े के मुद्दे जब बतौर शिकायत शिक्षक के सामने लाये जाते हैं तो हर पक्ष की बात सुनी जाती है और शिक्षक द्वारा कई बार कुछ सवालों द्वारा प्रयास होते हैं कि बच्चे एक दूसरे पर आरोप लगाने के दौरान भी तर्क करना सीखें। और बहुत बार इन मौकों पर भी शिक्षक बच्चों के व्यवहारों और अभिव्यक्ति के कौशलों, भाषा पर समझ आदि के बारे में अवलोकन कर रहे होते हैं। बहुत व्यवस्थित तो नहीं फिर भी इस तरह की बातचीत से भी बच्चों के व्यवहारों, अभिरुचियों, मूल्यों आदि के बारे में अंदाज़ा लग पता है और शिक्षक की डायरी में ये भी दर्ज हो पाते हैं। बहुत बार कुछ सिखाना मकसद न भी हो लेकिन बातचीत और तर्कपूर्ण बहस के मौके प्रदान करना और दूसरे को सुनते हुए अपनी बात आराम से रखने का मौका देना बच्चे को यह संप्रेषित करता है कि हर बच्चा और उसका विचार सुनने योग्य हैं, अपने आप में सार्थक और महत्वपूर्ण हैं। इस प्रकार के आकलन के परिणामों के रूप में शिक्षकों को बच्चों में बहुत आत्म विश्वास नज़र आता है। कभी कार्य ठीक नहीं होने पर वे हताश नहीं होते हैं, बल्कि इसे वे

शिक्षक: ओमप्रकाश विषय: हिन्दी समूह: रंग तिथि: 3 से 5 जुलाई 2023 तक

क्र. सं	बच्चे का नाम	03/07/2023	04/07/2023	05/07/2023
1	नसीम	‘आदिवासी नेता’ कहानी पढ़कर सुनाई। फिलहाल पढ़ना धारा प्रवाह नहीं है। लेकिन कहानी की बातें समझकर उससे संबन्धित पूछे गए प्रश्नों के जवाब दे पाई। कुछ शब्दों को पढ़ने में अब भी दिक्कत है।	गाँव के दृश्य चित्र पर समूह में हुई चर्चा को अपनी कॉपी में लिखा। अपनी तरफ से भी कुछ नई बातें जोड़ी जो कि चर्चा के दौरान नहीं आयी थीं। अन्य बच्चों की मदद भी की।	अधूरी कहानी पूरी करने का कार्य बढ़िया था। वाक्यों में तारतम्य और स्पष्टता है। पहले की तुलना में शब्दों और मात्राओं में गड़बड़ियाँ कम हैं। कल्पनाशक्ति प्रयोग ठीक किया है।
2	पवनदीप	‘आदिवासी नेता’ कहानी पढ़कर सुनाई। अब धारा प्रवाह पढ़ रहा है। लेकिन कहानी को समग्रता से समझने में दिक्कत आ रही है। कहानी की बातें समझकर उससे संबन्धित पूछे गए प्रश्नों के जवाब ठीक से नहीं दे पाया। ‘सुनने और सुनकर समझने’ की दक्षता पर और काम करने की जरूरत है।	गाँव के दृश्य चित्र पर हुई चर्चा को अपनी कॉपी में लिखा। अपनी तरफ से कुछ नया नहीं जोड़ा। खुलकर ज्यादा नहीं बोलता। इस पर काम करना है। अन्य बच्चों की मदद भी की।	अधूरी कहानी पूरी करने का कार्य बेहतर हो सकता था। वाक्यों कहीं तो जुड़ते हैं लेकिन ज्यादातर अलग बातें हैं, तारतम्य नहीं है। पहले की तुलना में शब्दों और मात्राओं में गड़बड़ियाँ कम हैं। कल्पनाशक्ति का प्रयोग करने की कोशिश की है।
3	जाह्नवी	पाठ 3 के तीन वर्ण वाले शब्द पढ़ने का कार्य किया। खुद से नहीं पढ़ पा रही है, मात्राओं को पहचानने में दिक्कत है। मदद की जरूरत है।	पाठ 3 के शब्द पढ़े। कल से बेहतर पढ़ पा रही है। आज कुछ और शब्द भी पढ़े।	कल पढ़े शब्दों को लिखने का अभ्यास किया। बोल-बोल कर लिख रही है। आज अकेले ही कार्य किया। उच्चारण ठीक है।
4	फुरकान	शब्द चित्र कार्ड सेट 1 के शब्द पहचान व प्रथम अक्षर की ध्वनि पर काम किया।	सेट 1 के सारे शब्दों की पहचान पर अकेले कार्य किया आज। मटका शब्द की पहली ध्वनि पर ज्यादा काम किया। म, प और व ध्वनियों के अंतर को पहचानने में थोड़ा दिक्कत है। म को कभी प, कभी व कह देता है।	कल किए काम को दोहराया सेट 1 के साथ। कल से बेहतर था काम। म वर्ण लेखन व आकृति पहचान पर कार्य किया।
नोट: यहाँ शिक्षक और बच्चों के नाम बदल दिये गए हैं।				



Digantar

एक चुनौती मान कर उस पर पार पाने में लग जाते हैं। और इस प्रक्रिया के दौरान सीखने का सही मायने में आनंद प्राप्त करते हैं। शुरुआत से ही सीखने के लिए शिक्षक पर पूरी तरह निर्भरता न होने के कारण बच्चे स्वयं सीखने की जिम्मेदारी लेते हैं और कई बार शिक्षक के न होने पर मिल कर व्यवस्था बना कर समूह संचालन का कार्य भी करते हैं।

यदि हम यह मानते हैं कि शिक्षा के द्वारा समाज में लोकतान्त्रिक मूल्यों का विकास किया जा सकता है जिसके अंतर्गत प्रतिस्पर्धा और आपसी द्वेष के बजाय सहयोग और सहानुभूति जैसे मूल्यों को बढ़ावा देना है तो फिर विद्यालयों की संस्कृति में इसे समाहित करते हुए, प्रयत्न करने होंगे कि सीखने-सिखाने की प्रक्रियाओं में भय या तनाव जैसे मौकों की कोई जगह न हो, क्योंकि भय के माहौल में सीखना तो बाधित होता ही है, साथ ही किसी इंसान को भयभीत करके कुछ करवाना नैतिक रूप से अस्वीकार्य भी है। यदि आकलन को सीखने की प्रक्रिया का सहज हिस्सा बनाया जाए तो सीखना स्वस्थ परिस्थितियों में होता है।

आकलन के संदर्भ में इस सम्पूर्ण प्रक्रिया को आप चाहें तो सतत और समग्र मूल्यांकन का एक प्रकार कह सकते हैं। लेकिन दिगंतर विद्यालय ने कोई नाम देने की खास परवाह किए बिना इसे सीखने-सिखाने की प्रक्रिया का अहम हिस्सा मानते हुए आरंभ से ही यह तरीका अपनाया है और कुछ चुनौतियों के बावजूद नतीजे अच्छे भी रहे हैं।

संदर्भ:

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3. शिक्षक की पुस्तक - भाषा, रोहित धनकर
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6. शिक्षा विमर्श, मई-जून, 2015



(इस लेख को लिखने के लिए दिगंतर विद्यालय के शिक्षकों द्वारा लिखे प्रपत्रों सहित दिगंतर संस्था के दस्तावेजों की मदद ली गई है।)

प्रज्ञा श्रीवास्तव पिछले 12 वर्षों से शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में कार्यरत हैं। शिक्षकों और बच्चों के साथ विज्ञान सिखाने-सिखाने के काम से जुड़ी रही हैं। वर्तमान में दिगंतर की अकादमिक संदर्भ ईकाई को देख रही हैं और शिक्षा के परिप्रेक्ष्य पर आधारित कार्यशालाओं आदि को देख रही हैं।

हेमंत शर्मा पिछले 20 वर्षों से दिगंतर विद्यालय में बच्चों और शिक्षकों के साथ शिक्षा के विभिन्न पहलुओं को लेकर सीखने-सिखाने के काम में संलग्न हैं। वर्तमान में दिगंतर विद्यालय में कार्यक्रम समन्वयक के पद पर कार्यरत हैं।

Website: www.digantar.org

Email Address: pragya.digantar@gmail.com

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Reconsidering assessment in the arts: dismantling the veil of ambiguity

Nisha Nair

Conversations around assessments—both formative and summative—are a mainstay of education discourse. Education policy documents and mandates are replete with references to the need for clear and comprehensive assessments. Educational institutions, whether schools or NGOs administering educational programming, driven by obligations to prove the efficacy of their interventions to themselves and to higher governing bodies, clamor to institute these assessments. Assessments, after all, are intended to reveal where students are at in relation to set educational and learning objectives. They are also expected to reveal the gaps in students' learning to be filled thoughtfully.

Despite the importance accorded to assessments, when it comes to the arts, conversations around assessments are either conspicuously absent, the arts being deemed as too subjective to be assessed, or, they tend

to be enmeshed in archaic and exclusionary notions of 'creative' talent. The former is evidenced in the execution of a plethora of ad hoc art activities that lack a clear roadmap for deep and purposeful learning, with prompts that suggest a do-whatever-you-want attitude.

The latter often takes the form of didactic and constraining art activities, evidenced in prompts such as, "We will be making a painting of Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night*," which presume and celebrate some students' 'innate' ability to replicate works of art regarded as 'masterful.'

The consequences of such misplaced (yet, assumed to be benign) notions surrounding assessments in the arts are dire. These justify art as an unnecessary frill in relation to the more 'serious' task of educating students. They also perpetuate an art-for-some versus art-for-all narrative. We do not have to look too far to witness their widespread impact.



ArtSparks Foundation

Over the course of my work in education in and through the arts, as teacher, teacher trainer, curriculum developer, and education and nonprofit administrator, my desire has been to create inclusive learning environments within which all children with diverse learning capabilities can thrive.

Combined with my desire to elevate the position of the arts in education and to increase access to meaningful arts instruction for all children, this has quite instinctively driven me to (re)consider notions of assessment—how they are conceived of and administered.

Moreover, as an education researcher, my work in exploring sociocultural values, beliefs and ideologies inherent to education policy recommendations and pedagogical practices employed, leads me to consider how these values, beliefs and ideologies, impinge upon enduring (albeit problematic) notions of assessment in general, and arts assessment in specific.

In this article, I pose two essential questions and share some reflections for further contemplation to help reimagine arts assessment as a means to improve arts teaching, enhance students' arts learning and motivation, and offer tangible evidence of arts' impact.

Implications may be drawn for the field of education in general as well. Examples, where relevant, are drawn from the work of ArtSparks Foundation—an arts-based educational nonprofit organization—and its use of assessment to support students' learning in and through the visual arts.

How are conversations around assessment tied to notions of student learning?

There is a historical precedent of thinking about assessment in terms of assessment *of* student learning rather than assessment *for* student learning. This is not just a matter of semantics. Instead, it reflects a certain set

of assumptions about the role of students in relation to the teacher and the broader educational enterprise.

In the former instance, conversations surrounding the assessment *of* student learning conceive of students as passive recipients of the process. Assessments are done to students, after the completion of a learning task, by the assessing body.

The latter has sole access to the criteria for learning that determine students' grasp of a concept or gaps in their learning. Assessments viewed from this lens tend towards practices that deny students agency in the process. Instead, these expose them to the judgement of others.

In the realm of arts instruction, we may conceive of a number of alternative scenarios that result from such a notion of assessment *of* student learning. For example, on the one hand it can lead to judgment-filled practices that promote conversations around good and bad art, right and wrong technique, those with talent and those without.

On the other, it can lead those opposed to the practice of passing judgment on children's art to renounce 'instruction' and assessments altogether, opting instead for a more unstructured, unguided approach to art-making.

Additionally, in an effort to ensure that all students succeed, albeit superficially, it can also result in formulaic instructional practices that offer step-by-step procedures for students to follow, often blindly, with 40 students in a class creating 40 near identical works of art.

As an alternative, assessment *for*, or in service of, student learning conceives of students as active participants in the assessment process. It makes transparent to students the criteria for assessment. These are articulated through clear learning objectives.

They are also reflected in checklists and/or rubrics to which students are provided access. Learners can then reference these to self-assess and guide the progress of their own learning. This is supplemented by multiple opportunities for students to give and receive feedback and revise their work.

To offer a concrete example, at ArtSparks, for a given multi-session sculptural project spanning approximately eight sessions, students were asked to create a free-standing sculpture.

Criteria for learning included the following. The sculpture must be at least two (2) feet tall. It must be able to balance despite its height. And it must be visually distinct from all sides showing high-levels of experimentation with the materials (in this case, cardboard and paper).

These criteria were conveyed to the students, each armed with a rubric in hand to reference as they worked on their sculptures. Furthermore, the rubric also articulated the levels associated with each criteria. In other words, what would students need to consider in order to *exceed* each of the three criteria, versus just *meet* them?

Exceeding the criteria of balance, for instance, was defined as, creating a sculpture that is structurally sound and balanced, resistant to any force exerted upon it. This is in comparison with what it meant to simply *meet* the criteria: creating a sculpture that appears to be balanced, but does not withstand force applied to it.

Throughout the process, students were given multiple opportunities to pair up with their peers. They were also encouraged to use the rubric to give and receive concrete, constructive feedback on one another's sculptures-in-progress.

Most importantly, students had the opportunity to apply the feedback received as they made revisions to their sculptures.



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What percentage of students in this class, do you think, exceeded the criteria set for demonstrating balance?

How are conversations around assessment tied to notions of teaching and the role of teachers?

The role of a teacher is well established in the institutional structure of Indian society. And, there exists a broad consensus in the culture about what this role entails—teacher as knowledge bearer; teacher as instructor, guide, facilitator—particularly in relation to students.

Operating from this standpoint, assessments are often viewed as a means for the all-knowing teacher to gauge student learning, identify gaps in learning, and act in accordance to remedy students' learning deficits.

Rarely are assessments used by teachers as tools for self-reflection, to contemplate their own teaching practices from one lesson to the next, identify and ameliorate gaps in facilitation that may compromise

fulfilment of articulated curricular goals and student learning objectives, and design more coherent instruction.

So, how would this manifest in a learning environment, or, more specifically, in an arts-based learning environment? Let us stay with the example of the multi-session sculptural project at ArtSparks. It is not unusual for our facilitators to, in the course of the project cycle, miss out on providing students with essential opportunities to understand more deeply, and test out for themselves the nuances associated with the concept of balance, which is critical for building their sculptures. As a result, at some stage of the building process, it becomes evident that a number of students have structurally weak, tentatively balanced sculptures, which conflict with their ability to more fully realize that specific learning objective.

Awareness of the gap in their facilitation, by referencing the assessment rubric and associated criteria for learning, enable the facilitators to introduce a bridge lesson. This provides students with crucial opportunities to experiment, in a more targeted manner, with building techniques related to concepts of balance and structural integrity. Additionally, in order to further support their students, the facilitators introduce a wide variety of image samples from sculpture to architecture and more, which demonstrate these concepts in more visible ways.

It is important to reconceptualize the role of assessment not only as a tool for assessing student learning, but also a tool for teachers to reference in relation to their facilitation practices. This is, of course, predicated on the notion of teacher-as-learner.

They have to be encouraged to learn from any missteps taken without the fear of judgement from administrators. They also need to be empowered with prerequisite knowledge and agency to take action of their own volition, and course-correct in the ongoing cycle of teaching and learning.


And, finally, a few parting thoughts and considerations

- *Designing coherent curriculum and instruction in the arts involves asking the question - What types of art-making activities would best reveal the learnings embedded in the arts, as well as high levels of thinking, in engaging and age-appropriate ways?*
- *Designing coherent assessments in the arts involves asking the question - How can I identify and clearly articulate key criteria for learning that are readily and visibly demonstrable, as my students make artworks, highlighting for me, the teacher, students' understanding, or lack thereof, of a concept, while the project is ongoing?*
- *Following impactful assessment practices that help both teachers and students involve answering questions such as - How am I doing? Where am I going with this task, project, etc.? Where am I now? How do I get to where I want to be?*

Nisha Nair is an educator, education researcher and designer, who is committed to elevating the position of art and design as both mediums for pedagogy, and for facilitating individual and social transformation. Her nearly two decade tenure in education, both in the US and India, has involved advancing the role of visual art and design in developing the whole child, building more inclusive learning environments that promote the development of 21st century learning capabilities and life skills, and investing in the transformative development of teachers. It is these experiences and passions that led her to start ArtSparks Foundation where she serves as Executive Director.

Website: www.art-sparks.org

Email: nnair@art-sparks.org

Connect On:  

Understanding assessments and using them to drive educational transformation

Sridhar Rajagopalan

It has become a cliché that assessments are an integral part of the education system. However, it is often missed that assessments serve varied functions in education and many of these functions, while superficially similar, are actually very different from each other. Much of the confusion and controversy around assessments stems from these differences not being clearly understood, sometimes even in national policy documents.

Different roles of assessments

The varied functions of assessments include:

a) telling us how students are learning; b) helping select students for certain courses or programs; c) making funding or other

resource allocation decisions; d) measuring the effectiveness of the education system; e) telling what approach or program works; f) evaluating teacher effectiveness; and g) improving education and education systems.

In all the above cases, the assessment involves some students – often children – taking a written test. But this highly visible aspect is where the similarities end. How those results are analysed, who they are presented to, and the expected next steps, differ widely among these different functions of assessments.

Further, even a single objective like – “Telling us how students are learning” – is far more complicated than it may seem at first sight.



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The results of a test are presented differently to a student, to her teachers, to the school principal and the education authorities. Further, each of these stakeholders may see these results as a judgment of *their own* performance, while also having expectations from others based on those results – making the process emotionally charged at multiple levels.

Classification of assessments

Some classifications of assessments are useful to understand. Assessments can be *high-stakes* or *low-stakes*, *formative* or *summative*, and *teacher-prepared* or *centrally-prepared*.

Low-stakes tests do not impact a student's scores and prospects, which high-stakes tests do. They are often, though not always, administered only to a sample of students. Low-stakes tests are not common in India, but tests like ASER¹, ASSET² and PISA³ are examples. These tests are meant to be used purely to obtain feedback on learning, whether at a class, school, state or national level.

Formative assessments are used during the process of teaching, so the teacher can obtain immediate feedback on what students have learnt. They usually cover only a few topics that have just been taught. A summative assessment, on the other hand, is administered at the end of a term or year and includes more topics – possibly the entire year's content.

Teacher-prepared assessments are created by the teacher, while centrally-prepared ones may be made at a school, district or higher levels. A school final exam is high-stakes, summative, and often centrally prepared at the level of the school or the state. Formative exams are low-stakes and ideally teacher-prepared. However, some Indian states have started using centrally-prepared formative exams, which can be expensive, and can disempower teachers.

Different types of assessments are important in their own way

Further, the above distinctions are not pairs of good and bad, but simply pairs of different types of assessments. For example, a good system must have both low-stake and high-stake assessments, both formative and summative assessments, and both teacher-prepared and centrally-prepared assessments. It should be understood that these pairs of assessments have different strengths and play complimentary roles.

Much of the criticism of assessments stems from an improper understanding of the above distinctions. For example, some people feel that tests like PISA and ASER are unfair as they compare students from very different backgrounds and resources. *But PISA and ASER are low-stakes tests, which merely provide feedback and do not compare students.*

Only high-stakes tests, which may select some students to join a course while disallowing others, can compare. Indeed, to reject tests like PISA or ASER because they show low learning levels, is no different from rejecting a blood sugar test because it shows that an individual has extremely high sugar levels (possibly higher than 90% of the adult population)!

Assessments: not a final judgment, but the first step to a treatment

Why is it that we are able to treat a medical result as a call for treatment, yet see educational feedback as a commentary on a student's (or teacher's) ability and object to it? A doctor may say that they would not bother about the high sugar levels of a patient who has recently undergone surgery, and is being treated with steroids, which elevate sugar levels. Similarly, we need to treat feedback from low-stake assessments as providing us with a number of data points, of which we pick what we see as most important or relevant, and make a plan to improve those.

Such misunderstanding is not limited to individuals. The National Education Policy 2020 says, “The very aim of assessment in the culture of our schooling system must shift from one that primarily tests rote memorization skills to one that is more formative, promotes learning and development for our students, and tests higher-order skills.”

While many aspects of this statement are laudable and exactly what is needed, the suggestion that we must move from a system that tests ‘rote memorization’ to one that is ‘more formative’ mistakenly seems to suggest that ‘formative’ is good, and presumably that summative is bad. Yet, formative and summative assessments are complimentary. Both of them are essential. Formative and summative assessments, if badly designed, can both test rote memorization, which should be avoided.

This is related to the idea of CCE (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation) introduced some years ago as a potential alternative to Board Exams. The idea of CCE itself is good. It demands that teachers must continually monitor student learning through both formal assessments (like, class tests) and informally (like, by calling upon students at random to check if they have learnt a concept). But limiting CCE to only formal assessments at fixed intervals almost defeats its principle. Secondly, as discussed earlier, the notion that CCE, or any formative assessment, can *replace* summative assessments is flawed.

Assessments and stress

Summative assessments are mistakenly seen as bad by many people because they are associated with stress. This is clearly simplistic and flawed. First, good exams are an opportunity for students to prove themselves, and many students and parents value them. Second, *exams* do not create stress. The stress is created by the high-stakes involved. This is because of the number of seats available being far fewer

than the number of aspirants, and high societal and parental expectations.

These factors, and not the assessments, lead to stress, which would remain even if the assessments were replaced by a draw of lots! This essential high-stakes nature of examinations cannot be changed (just like employee appraisals in companies or elections for politicians), simply because there is stress involved.

Yet, there are ways of *reducing* stress, like making the assessments *high-quality* and fair. This reduces stress, because results are highly correlated to student efforts, and that makes them more in control. Another way to reduce stress is by allowing multiple attempts for critical tests.

High-quality assessments and questions

How does one make assessments high-quality? As the NCF 2005’s Focus Paper on Examination Reforms⁴ said, “The core of the exam system is the exam paper. This may seem almost a tautological assertion but, given the lack of attention paid by most boards to the quality of the actual exam paper, it is necessary to make it. While actual exam administration and security and release of results have improved in recent years – the question papers themselves remain seriously problematic... Indian school board exams are rarely valid tests of desired competencies and broader curricular objectives, even within the cognitive domain.”

The problems with the exam paper relate both to the quality of individual questions and the balance of questions provided. Analysis of student performance shows that overall paper difficulty tends to be low and questions are not spread across the range of difficulties.

What is a high-quality question? It may be defined as one that requires a student to use a skill that is likely to be needed in her life. It, thus, both tests for such skills, and also, to some extent, helps develop them. Most



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questions in our tests today are suitable for a world where most jobs require routine cognitive skills, like a human bank teller who may spend most of his day counting notes and making manual register entries. As we know, the world has moved away from that.

Assessing core concepts and skills related to critical thinking

Questions today need to test a student's ability to know core concepts and ideas, understand deeply and think critically, be able to tackle problems in unfamiliar forms or contexts, extract relevant information from a variety of sources, critically evaluate it, and communicate effectively⁵.

This is not a comprehensive list. However, it is not difficult to see that our typical school and Board exams do not meet these criteria, while modern tests including PISA and ASSET include more such questions. The power of assessments, and specifically the questions

used in assessments, to drive what happens in classrooms should not be underestimated.

Can our students and teachers handle and manage this change? Change is never easy, and today's pace of breathtaking change is scary. A concern we hear repeatedly is that while this may work in elite schools and urban centres, students from underserved communities will not be able to tackle these kinds of questions. Our experience is that students are both highly adaptable and capable and will develop the skills *if they are covered in the classrooms*, which in turn are driven by the skills emphasized in the assessments. Often it is us adults as parents, teachers and educational leaders who find this change daunting, not students.

Building capacities of teachers related to assessment

The concern on teacher preparedness is a more valid one. Teachers need to specifically

and strongly be supported in this process. Consider the extent of support doctors get while they treat their patients compared to teachers. Teachers need to be supported through access to a body of knowledge, teaching resource material, and regular in-classroom support.

Teacher support related to assessments would need to be of three types: a) training to create high quality questions; b) training to interpret and use assessment results for modifying instruction; and c) teaching students to answer the new types of questions. While the first may be focussed only on a few teachers, the second and third are important for all.

Assessments are an invaluable tool for teachers to obtain feedback on how well their students have learnt what they have taught. When questions are well-designed, they distinguish between students who have understood a concept, and others who may make commonly observed mistakes.

While individual responses indicate which students have learnt the concept, the aggregation is even more powerful, as it tells a teacher if a particular topic has to be taught again. For example, many students harbour the intuitive but incorrect notion that the earth is closer to the sun in summer and further away in winter.

If a teacher finds that a particular question is answered incorrectly by a large number of students, it is recommended that he discusses how he teaches related concepts with a senior teacher or subject expert and use those inputs to improve his teaching. Often an open discussion in the class, where students will discuss the concerned topic, for example, the causes of seasons, can help teachers remedy the problem highlighted by the assessment data.

The best resource for teachers to learn from is the question-wise performance data generated from an exam. Many of the best

Examination Boards internationally share an analysis after a public exam highlighting average performance and typical errors question by question. The Council for Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) does the same in India too.

Teachers must examine each question, predict how students would have answered (in writing) and then compare their responses with what such an analysis shows. Teachers will not only come to know of the errors children make, they will know which of those errors were not known to them.

Assessments as a tool for systemic reform

Assessments are often described as ‘the tail that wags the dog,’ alluding to something important or powerful being controlled by something less so. Though often meant pejoratively, it can also be seen positively. Assessments, clearly less important, can be the lever to positively change the larger education system, which is what we truly care about.

‘Exams’ are such a strong focus for all stakeholders that a change in assessments has a powerful influence. Multiple actors and processes self-align to a change in assessments. Our current focus on rote started with recall-based assessments and change can also be initiated in a similar way.

The assessment results of a particular student should definitely be seen as her privately owned data. However, anonymized details of how all students have performed in a test are an extremely valuable resource, not just for the student community but the teacher community as well.

Very few exams, either at the school, state or country level share summary data on how students have performed question-by-question. But this data can be used by students to pay attention to concepts their predecessors found confusing, while teachers can make sure they cover the challenging concepts more carefully.

Technology and assessments

Technology will play multiple roles in the changed assessments. First, students need to develop computational thinking skills. This is a skill needed not only by those who will actually use coding in their work, but indeed by anyone who will use computational technology in their work. In the future, this will be almost everyone.

Second, technology will be used to create better assessments. For example, students will not just be asked to select an option from the choices given. They may be asked to actually draw the reflected ray or plot a graph or complete a passage. Not only will this lead to more real-life and interesting assessments, it will also lead to much richer diagnostics, which can be used to more accurately identify what the student needs to improve.

And finally, technology, including AI, will be used to evaluate student work, correcting and providing feedback in a way that only teachers could, even just a few months ago. Efficiency improvements like immediate feedback or results obtained faster will seem minor compared to qualitative richness that will become available to a vast number of students.

All these examples of technology use will dramatically change assessments, which will, therefore, look very different 10-15 years from now. Again, our students and teachers need to be provided access and training to be able to fit in and do well in this changing world.

The power of assessments

Assessments, if done well, can be extremely powerful and revolutionize how students learn. Good assessments are eventually about making education ‘not less of an art, but more of a science.’ ‘Science of learning’ refers to systematically studying student performance and errors, including the extent of their prevalence, and using this to help

teachers focus on the areas where students have misconceptions or make errors. Eventually, there is only one test for good assessments, and that is better learning.

Endnotes

1. Annual Status of Education Report (<https://asercentre.org>)
2. Assessment of Scholastic Skills through Educational Testing (<https://ei.study/ei-asset/>)
3. Programme for International Student Assessment (<https://www.oecd.org/pisa/>)
4. https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/focus-group/examination_reforms.pdf
5. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/key-principles-creating-high-quality-assessments-eistudy>

Sridhar Rajagopalan is the co-founder and Chief Learning Officer of Educational Initiatives Pvt Ltd (EI). EI is an educational research company that offers assessment and learning products to revolutionize how children learn.

Website: www.ei.study

Email: sridhar@ei.study

Connect On:     



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A historical survey of assessment models in India: potential and challenges

Jacob Tharu

Editorial Note: This piece was originally published as a part of the Proceedings of 13th Wipro Partners' Forum (that took place during December 19-21, 2012, at Centre for Learning, Bengaluru) titled 'What did you learn at school today? Conversations on Assessment and Education.'

Having been a teacher of assessment, addressing teachers for a long time, I will try and clarify one or two concepts in assessment. Examination is the big bad thing we've got under control because CCE isn't coming and CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) has abolished the board. I'd like to clarify one or two points in relation to that – what assessment is, or what measurement is, or what testing is, which I think we don't pay much attention to because we take it for granted.

As has been said rightly, we have an examination system in this country, not an educational system. Now an educational system is slowly coming out of the crevices and asserting itself. We are in that transition. All of us, as students in high school, and some of us who studied English, have written character sketches based on stories and novels. What happens there? We take what a character or person does – or says, if it is drama. Shakespearean drama is only what a person says. They don't do things, they talk about things. From that we make an inference about them – about a certain enduring personal quality. So we have the character of Lady Macbeth, of Hamlet and Lothario and so on.

This is very important. We are looking at performance and making an inference about a personal quality which causes that performance or underlies it. This is exactly what we are doing in testing. We've got to be very, very clear about this, because the fact that there is something called behaviourism – a big, bad evil – and we want to get it out of the way, is a wonderful thought. But if you want to use the word 'assessment', you've got to remember that this is what we are doing. The test is basically a means of eliciting a performance. So the question paper is the means of obtaining an answer script. It is what the assessor does with the evidence of performance in the answer script that constitutes evaluation. We keep on talking about paper setting and books and so on. For many, many years, we have encountered that, but we never really paid enough attention to the whole process of how assessment was done.

There is this indirectness in terms of what we observe. We can't observe what is inside, directly, so we have to find what is called an observable indicator. This is nothing to apologise for because even a physicist can't do anything better. Body temperature is measured by putting a thermometer in a child's mouth and then looking at a column of mercury. It is this column of mercury which allows us to make an inference.

If we are using the mode of assessment, which is an empirical process, we are finding an index of it – and that index is performance. If you don't like the word behaviourism, don't

call it behaviour. But this is something that we have to be very careful about.

In the field that I have been working, I have always argued that there are two traditions. One is that of psychological testing, which is actually the parent discipline, psychometrics, in which I had my basic training. Psychological testing relates to enduring personal qualities – intelligence, attitude and so on – and this is where the notion of reliability comes in. Because we see a test applied to somebody, an inference is made and a score is given to the person. It shouldn't be very different two weeks later, or three weeks later. Then if someone else comes along and gives the person a test, it should be pretty much the same. What we are assuming is that there is something fixed. That is a big statement.

The whole theory of reliability in psychological assessments is based on this – laughable – assumption that human personal qualities are stable. How deeply we believe in this, of course, is evident every day. Because every time anybody opens his or her mouth and says something about merit,

what are we talking about – some sections of our society which have merit and some sections of society which don't have merit, right? So we have to be very careful about this assumption.

That is about psychological theory. In education, there is a difference. Broadly, our primary focus is on learning – and the problem is that learning, by definition, is something changing, something elusive, emerging. So what is a test of learning? This is a fundamental dilemma in educational measurement, which has never really been answered.

What are our examinations? We observe high school students between the 21st and the 28th of March and we make some inferences. And for the rest of his or her life, this is a caste mark – third class matriculate. Assessment, if it becomes recorded and personal and stabilized, is like giving an attribute to a person. This is really a fundamental problem in the assessment of learning – that we have to find something that we have to rate. We observe learning at a particular time, yes. But what are the



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inferences and what are the categorizations that we can make of it? That is another fundamental issue that we have to work with.

We also need to reflect on what we do operationally. The term 'psychological evaluation' doesn't come in any textbook. Many of you, I think, have worked in education so you have psychological testing, only, with the prefix 'education' – educational measurement and evaluation. Psychological evaluation is something which may be done for a particular purpose by a set of specialists, but normally we don't talk about psychological evaluation. So I would say that psychometrics is basically a descriptive discipline. We use its findings to say some people are intelligent, some races are intelligent, or unintelligent... The basic operation is one of description.

In educational testing, it seems to me, right from the beginning, we are making judgements of adequacy. Have you learnt what you were supposed to learn? Whether we call them marks or whether we call them grades, the whole activity in education is that intervention for which we expect some outcomes, and the responsibility is on the learner to demonstrate that. How intensively, how forcibly or how unkindly we do it is a matter of choice. But we need to reflect on this. So when you say objectives – learning outcomes – we don't have to buy Benjamin Bloom but we are thinking in terms of expected outcomes. That is another dilemma that we have in the field of assessment.

In a pedagogic theory, we are saying we believe that these things are desirable for children as we – at least in modern education – draw them into society. It could bring them to be able to contribute to society, to change society, to live a meaningful life and so on. We are also saying that these are the mechanisms, the means, by which we will provoke that learning. That is the best we can do and we get new theories, new understanding and new equations. But as soon as the term assessment/evaluation/testing /measurement comes into the picture,

we are safe. We want you to demonstrate this outcome. So what is a hope, a theory, an expectation, becomes a demand. By evaluation, we are applying a criterion to value this performance and, of course, draw inferences about a person's ability or qualities or whatever else. This objective to value the criterion is something that appears to me to be inescapable, but that is where we need to reflect.

This is very important in our country because we say we have an examination system. We have to go back to the history of examinations here. Right from the beginning, examinations have been external. The British left us with a system that they don't have – at least not at the same level. I was looking through some early history of education and found that even in the universities of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, the effective power of the examination in the early stages stayed with London. And of course, we see it now in our educational boards and in our affiliated universities.

A great deal of what we talk about in terms of teacher growth and the rest of it do not make any sense. College teachers in this country are teaching somebody else's syllabus and trying to guess somebody else's question paper. This is what a college teacher does during a career of 30 years. So we have academic staff colleges and we have teacher development, but this is the fundamental fact. The honest thing for a college teacher to do would be to get a guide book and help a student pass the exam!

I had the privilege of working at IIT Kanpur and CIEFL [Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, now renamed as EFLU (English and Foreign Languages University)] which are fully autonomous. Like in American universities, you set every question paper yourself, you mark it and type it yourself. But we have this external examination system that runs through our degrees. So paper setting is something that somebody does remote from the field of assessment.

With all good intentions, even from DPEP (District Primary Education Program) times and this sort of thing, the idea of cluster-level, mandal level, block-level paper setting is a good means of quality control. But it is not located where the teacher is. It is not located where the classroom is. That is another deep-set tradition we have which, now with internal assessment and school based assessment, we are moving away from. We have a long way to go.

But there is another factor that again goes back to our history, starting with the introduction of modern education in colonial times. That education was to prepare a small group of people to function as the lower levels of administration in the British Raj. It was for a very small number, which means that education was basically selective – examinations had this filtration factor, and examinations subsequently have always had this.

Long before the special entrance tests came, the IIT-JEE was the most prominent and the first one, and then the CAT for management school admission. Then various states brought in their tests – the EAMCET for engineering, agriculture and medicine and the state professional courses and all that. But prior to that, what was the matriculation exam? It sorted out those who could go further from those who couldn't, like the now infamous 11+ examination of the British, which was introduced in 1944 to separate people – those who could go to Grammar School and those who couldn't.

Certification for the purpose of some sort of categorization is not bad in itself, if you have a qualifying test. So if you want to get into the Services Selection Board or the National Defence Academy and so on, you have to pass a certain level of medical fitness and other things. But that is a yes/no description of categorization – not of ranking. The problem with ranking is that we are in a society where there is a scarcity. The truly savage selection

ratios that we have – one out of a thousand is actually higher than the average that we have. That means, in the jargon that you are familiar with, we are making distinctions within the 99th percentile.

When I was in IIT a few years later, I used to write recommendation letters for students who, unfortunately, after studying engineering wanted to do management in the US. And in the recommendation letters they would ask you, “Would you place the student in the top five per cent of comparable students? If not, would you place the student in the top ten per cent?” In our tradition, I see recommendation letters: “This is the most brilliant student who has ever lighted my classroom” and so on. Or, in the IIT if you get – I forget the numbers – 593 marks, you can get into Electrical Engineering in Bombay or Madras, which is prestigious. If you get 590, you can only get Mechanical engineering in Kharagpur!

The consequence is that every exam is seen as competitive. I have worked with teachers for over 30 years. I talk about classroom testing and I say to the teachers, how do you organize a class? Their main concern is that everybody must start at the same time, they should sit apart, they shouldn't cheat... This is an ordinary class test, and we are talking about continuous assessment. We have to help teachers unlearn this idea. It does not have to be equal treatment. Equal treatment becomes important when you have a competitive outcome – because I can't give you three marks more and I can't give you five minutes more, etc. This again is something that runs through our system, which I think we have to overcome – the basic assumption that if we have a test, everybody has to test at the same time.

The challenge now is that I don't think we can work within the system and change it. We have to find some ideas from outside, and I think they are there. What are some of the things that the NCF (National Curriculum Framework) gave us? It gave us

a new definition, or a new conception of the knowledge or the learning to be gained.

The exam system traditionally follows the syllabus. The structure of the question paper and the structure of the syllabus have to be exactly the same – if the syllabus has four parts, so does the question paper, and weightage is based on that. In other words, we are operating with knowledge that is static, fixed, and therefore it is predictable – which is why guide books are so useful. This is what our assessment system, or evaluation system gets at – something that is knowledge and predictable.

The NCF talks about the child being a co-constructor of knowledge. I carefully avoid the word ‘constructivism’ because a lot of people get upset with it at various points. It talks about going beyond the textbook and relating it to life outside the school. What does this mean? That the knowledge to be gained is not already determined, not already spelt out, in the syllabus. If that is what we are trying to assess, then my trade – that of testing – can be of help in illuminating and clarifying that.

I have argued that what we call Continuous Comprehensive Assessment became possible only after NCF, or the re-thinking of NCF. The CCE was mentioned in 1986, in the national policy on education. But when we had fixed knowledge to be handed over as it was and to be reproduced as it was, where was the scope for Continuous Comprehensive Assessment? Unit test plus unit test plus unit test... adding up to the total was what was required. It was logically not possible to have continuous assessment of the flexible way we are talking of.

We also say that children learn at their own pace, that we have diversity, and want to value and promote it. Then we have a context of this process of learning where assessment will claim my specialization – assessment adds something to pedagogy. I



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will just say this: any purposive, goal directed, autonomous activity, is actually moving in a somewhat unpredictable path. We have goals. But the whole definition of a goal, target or a destination is that I am not there now. This means that, having accepted something as a goal, we are saying that we would like to work to reach it. If that path is open-ended, then we need something called monitoring, or reflection, or analysis, to check that we are moving in the right direction. So if we say learning is open-ended, then learning won't happen in the way we would like it to happen. We need to monitor it. I am using the word ‘monitor’ in the best sense of the term, as a way of a small cycle of feedback and so on.

This monitoring evaluation has to be autonomous, has to be local. This is really the problem in our country, in the education angle. We have to move to giving precedence and priority to the local. Continuous Comprehensive Assessment, even at the common sense level, requires this. There are no ifs and buts about it. Continuous assessment can only be done by a teacher on the fly, in the classroom.

We can come up to the gate of a school with our advice and our manuals. The rest we have to leave to the teacher if we want CCE to happen. If we want to do paper setting and make the teacher administrate in class, which we have always done, that will work very well. So the role of assessment, reflection and monitoring becomes useful to pedagogy only if it is kept autonomous. Which is why CCE has to be seen as an extension of the principle of internal assessment, but with a break.

Internal assessment, which said 15-20 marks internal and 80 marks external – I am a little more familiar with the university system – what does it mean? Even if we say that internal assessment can use other methods, can look at other qualities that the written final cannot, etc., the two things have to be added. You can't add apples and oranges. So this also has to become an orange – internal assessment also has to be according to a scale of high and low unit differentials.

A comprehensive assessment of multiple things cannot be something that can be added. It has to be an autonomous sector on its own. So this autonomy of assessment should be in the hands of the teacher, but of course with support. We need a curricular understanding, we need sourcebooks, materials and teacher orientation. But in the actual act, we have to let go, which will be something extremely new as far as the tradition of our country is concerned.

There was an exercise undertaken in the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) called 'Sourcebook of Assessment'. In the first round it was so heavy, it ran into 800 pages. My colleagues in the Department of Elementary Education reduced it to a manageable 100 pages or so for different subject groups. It was initially prepared for trialling. At a workshop that UNICEF funded, ten states were identified and there was this huge operation of sending these out for trialling in large numbers of

schools over a period of a few months. I remember saying then that this is the first time in our lives – in the history of India, as far as I know – where a resource which has so much of wisdom going into it is being taken to the teacher, not to implement but to tell us if it works.

That is my dream. I don't think it really happened that way because a lot of the officials who came were used to getting teachers to implement. Now, there is a whole body of experience, but I don't think that has been recorded. What were the things that a few thousand teachers in ten states said about the workability of the system? That is what we, as a system, need to learn from them. It is that commentary that is important.

If we are going to have assessment as a part of pedagogy in order to improve, what is it that assessment telling us, which we use in order to improve? This is not a part of our culture, our whole system, of all the work that we have done on education. When you talk about moving from the small to the large, you try it out in one taluka, then you try it out in two talukas, and then it goes vertically. There is very little literature that we have of a preliminary form of using – let's say, objective tests, or group work in classes – which we can reflect on and then say, here is a more powerful version of it.

In CCE, we have to start with something that is manageable – not this 800-page multi-dimensional form that every teacher, including those who have been recently recruited and are yet to receive induction training, is supposed to be filling for every child, three to four times a year. We know it doesn't work. Let us start with something that is manageable and gradually extend it – not only quantitatively, but by learning. This is what assessment is. This is what the tradition of assessment is, where you see what the change is that needs to be made, what is the mid-course correction that you might want. That has to be a very rich part of our discussion.

The basic tasks for measurement – for language, for EVS – we have those. But how can we improve them to make learning more meaningful, wholesome in nature, as envisaged by NCF? This is where I have some different perspectives about the value of what is called large-scale assessment. I will take external examinations and large-scale assessments in the same category because they are external. They belong to the managerial uses of assessment data – not the pedagogic uses. Pedagogic uses can only be for the teacher, or for people who are sitting down with a unit and trying to improve it by looking at answer scripts, by looking at what children say if you ask them. That is what curriculum development specialists do.

But that does not require 10,000 students. Five students of different levels of ability interacting with a unit is enough if it is going to be used for the improvement of the core pedagogic process, if you want to use it for a larger system – for deployment of teachers, teacher training, etc. But I make a distinction between pedagogic purposes and managerial purposes which are necessary. We have to certify students, select students, give some of them scholarships, put some of them into advanced classes – all this has to happen. I am not disputing that. But that is a managerial use of the technology of assessment.

For the pedagogic, we have to go back to what the dream of CCE is. The teacher can, as she goes along, observe certain children doing certain things on Monday, some other children on Tuesday, some of them while they are talking, some of them while they are working together, and gradually get a sense of where they are, how they are progressing and so on.

A last word about measurement. When you are looking at a child's response – even if it is an essay of 15 pages, 1500 words – I don't think you can make more than about four meaningful distinctions. I have fought the

illusion that you can have 20 marks. I have worked with English teachers a great deal, and they know exactly what seven-and-a-half marks is. When you give seven marks, what are you saying? That you know exactly what eight marks is worth, you know exactly what six marks is worth and you are sure this merits seven marks?

There are many personality dimensions that have come into the CCE formats. At the forum that the NCERT organizes, every state has this and they are on a four-point scale, a five-point scale and so on. What are the things about children's sensitivity that you can put on a five-point scale? What we do see is maybe a broad high and low. So we have to forget a lot of the measurement.

We moved from the marks system to the grading system. But we keep going back to the marks system because again there is this delusion that if it's there and we've observed it, we must assign a mark to it. We have to unlearn this. We have to move into what, in measurement, we call the nominal scale, because when we use numbers 1-2-3-4-5, they are like grid numbers or room numbers. One only means 'not two' – not 'better than one'. If there is a ranking then, of course, a scaling has to be done. But we need to think about qualitative categories.

Even when you are doing measurement of human qualities, qualitative categories would fall into a mark of three or two before you give a grade of A or B to somebody. You are making a qualitative distinction. You are perceiving a qualitative difference, which is coded as a mark or grade. We have always talked about these things as happening indirectly. This is where we have to focus. As children are growing and developing and learning in the new context, what are the ways in which they are changing, and which of those changes do we want to capture? Once identified, for convenience we call them satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

The external tests, survey tests with a standardized measure, have this limitation. A standardized measure can rate every child if you are a part of an amorphous mass from which we can sample. That needs to be done, but we need to be very clear about what the purposes are for which it can be done. If a child in a particular school in a rural area or in a fancy school, at a certain stage does not know the answer to a question which comes, what does that tell us? If we use a standardized measure, would it tell us something about the child, the curriculum, or the teaching?

A great deal can be done with data – the survey data, the national assessment and other things that you and I are familiar with. But they have all gone into the managerial resources, and very little into curriculum pedagogies.

You will find two propositions, two premises that we have. One is, we are saying that if you give students this sort of experience, we believe that many of them will learn what they are supposed to learn. Conventional examinations work with that system – this is in the syllabus, we have reached March and the syllabus has been covered, and therefore it is fair to test. But we are also making the assumption that this experience has been delivered.

Our examination system is being blind. So children from schools where teachers were never posted in the first place also write the exam, and they are marked by the same standard. The content validity of the educational test comes from the fact that it matches the syllabus. This runs through our thinking too – that it is appropriate to give this test to a child at this point because it is there in the syllabus. It shouldn't happen. We need to keep asking: Has it happened? And further, we need to ask: Even if it did happen, are we sure that this is the learning that will take place? Now that we have granted unpredictability in learning, this whole

business of assessment becomes very, very problematic.

Jacob Tharu taught psychology at IIT Kanpur (1967-73) before setting up the Evaluation Department of the English and Foreign Languages University (formerly CIEFL), Hyderabad till 2003. His areas of work included teaching courses on testing and research methods at P-G Diploma and assisting national recruitment agencies and secondary education boards with test design. Post retirement he has been associated with National Assessment Surveys (NCERT) as well as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) review missions. He has also served as resource person for Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and for NGOs working in the field of education. Some of his current concerns include Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), bridge courses in English for college entrants and teachers' professional development. Jacob presents an introduction to the historical context of assessment in Indian education and the trajectory of assessment reforms in the country and examined the key conceptual aspects involved in assessment.



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Assessment: unpacking the holy grail

Chitra Ravi and Balasubrahmanian S.

Those 3 marks are important!

A teacher once narrated the following incident to me. “At the end of last year, a parent had a grievance. Her son had scored a C Grade in one of the ‘formatives.’ She was convinced that this was not possible, and that the teacher must have overlooked something, because he was otherwise consistently scoring A Grades. The irony is, this was a 5-mark test, in the First Term. The boy must have scored 2, which translates to a C Grade. She was seeking evidence for her son’s performance almost eight months later, at the end of the year.” This incident led me to reflect on the following questions. What is the place of assessment in primary schooling and beyond? What exactly is formative assessment? How do educators and parents understand it? Has formative assessment become high stake? Why?

A friend of mine, who has worked in assessment for several decades, once remarked that, “Assessment is the holy grail of Indian education system. And, nobody likes to meddle with it.” Indeed, despite several decades of reforms, the area of assessment remains challenging. It is not hard to see that educators do not sufficiently understand the different purposes of assessment, and the means to achieve these purposes. This flawed understanding is inadvertently communicated to students, parents and the community alike. Assessment of any and every kind is viewed as a high-stakes process. Invariably this results in the phenomenon called ‘teaching to the test.’ This, in our opinion, may be the crux of the issue.

Assessment reform in India

The Report of the Secondary Education Commission (also known as the Mudaliar

Commission Report) calls out the challenges as early as in 1953. In Chapter XI, titled ‘A New Approach to Evaluation and Examination,’ the report describes ‘internal examinations’ as those conducted by schools and ‘external examinations’ as something that come generally at the end of the school stage and the purpose of which is “selecting those who have successfully completed a course and qualifying them from among many for the next higher stage.”

The issues pointed out are the following. The narrow scope – confining to students’ intellectual achievement and ignoring emotional, social and physical development of children. The methods – since examinations consisted largely of essay-type questions, it leaves “much scope for subjectivity of the examiner that it cannot be relied upon to any great extent.” The effects – “they (examinations) have so pervaded the entire atmosphere of school life that they have become the main motivating force of all efforts on the part of pupil as well as teacher.”

While making critical remarks on the scope, methods and effects of educational evaluation, the report notes that “external examination cannot be altogether be done away with.” To “minimise its undesirable effects,” the report suggests, among other things, that “the final assessment of the pupil should not be based entirely on the results of external examination; other things such as internal tests and school records maintained by teachers should be taken into consideration and due credit given to them.” This last point, while well-meaning, may lead to other issues that we will later come to.

The Kothari Commission Report (1966) notes that “A major goal of examination

reforms should be to improve the reliability and validity of examinations and to make evaluation a continuous process aimed at helping the student improve his level of achievement rather than certifying the quality of his performance at any given point of time.” While the intent here is laudable, the emphasis still seems to be on examinations.

The NCF Position Paper on Examination Reform (2005) proposes that there should be “more varied modes of assessment, including oral testing & group work evaluation.” It even goes on to suggest that since students learn at different paces, they should be given the flexibility of taking exams at different points in time, mentioning that “there is no reason, other than administrative convenience, to test them after two years of higher secondary course in all subjects simultaneously.”

The Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system launched by CBSE may perhaps be a significant milestone in this long list of reforms. It went ahead to put in place a system that would help practice some of the long pending recommendations mentioned earlier. The CCE Manual for Teachers for Classes VI to VIII (2010) suggests that that evaluation be seen as “an integral part built into the teaching learning process,”

and further that this will “lead to diagnosis, remedial action and enhancement of learning.” This is the ‘continuous’ aspect. The manual recommends that evaluation should include “both scholastic and co-scholastic areas, i.e., it should be comprehensive in nature.” The manual also describes formative assessment as “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 performance, taken advice and improve upon it.”

However, as lofty as these ideals may be, further on in the document, we encounter some potentially problematic areas. Continuous, by definition, means something that happens without interruption or set periodicity. The document, however, proposes ‘six assessments’ and further a way to collate the results of these six assessments, as shown in the excerpt below (reproduced from page 26 of the Manual)

Remembering the need for examination reform described earlier in this document, we must understand that the above scheme, when applied to Grade 10 and 12, certainly offers greater flexibility of using multiple

Evaluation of Academic Subjects in Classes VI to VIII

Type of assessment	Percentage of weighting in academic session	Month	Term-wise weighting
	First Term		
Formative Assessment-1	10%	April-May	FA1+FA2=20%
Formative Assessment-2	10%	July-August	SA1=30%
Summative Assessment-1	30%	September	
	Second Term		
Formative Assessment-3	10%	October-November	FA3+FA4 20%
Formative Assessment-4	10%	January-February	SA2=30%
Summative Assessment-2	30%	March	

Total: Formative Assessments (FA) = FA1+FA2+ FA3+FA4 = 40%; Summative Assessments (SA) = SA1+SA2= 60%

Empathy		
Sl. No.	Descriptors	Score out of 5
1.	Demonstrates ability to respect others	
2.	Is concerned about the problems in the society/ community	
3.	Is able to reach out to the friends who are in need of extra help	
4.	Is tolerant with diversity	
5.	Is sensitive towards the environment	
Total		
Average/Grade		

assessments. It also empowers the teacher to assess students and not rely entirely on the school-leaving / Board examinations. However, when this is applied to the lower grades, this effectively meant that all assessments were essentially being collated into one 'score' and ran into the potential risk of unintentionally becoming high-stakes assessments, as they were reported to parents and others as well.

Another problematic area has to do with the comprehensive aspect of evaluation. The document elaborates this idea and recommends evaluation of "life skills, work education, visual & performing arts, attitudes & values, and co-curricular activities." It also recommends identifying qualities, specifying behaviors or indicators, recording and analyzing evidence. While all this is laudable in intent, the problem arises when subsequent recommendations go to the extent of grading or marking these areas, as shown in the following extract from page 48 of the Manual. Expanding the scope of assessment to areas beyond the cognitive domain may be desirable. But how these scores can be awarded remains a question. It is also not clear why scoring may be necessary in the first place.

A survey of around 750 teachers from CBSE affiliated schools conducted by Chrysalis, and supported by Wipro, in the year 2016, shows the following. Only around 5% of the teachers said that the purpose of assessment was to "understand the effectiveness of teaching and if teaching methods have to be altered." In other words, most teachers looked at assessment primarily as a means to ascertain where students stood at any given point in time. This, despite the sweeping reforms suggested by CBSE as part of CCE, a few years prior to this study.

Toward a solution

The first step in educational assessment should be to recognize at least two different purposes of assessment. These are briefly described below.

Administrative: This is usually to ascertain and possibly certify the achievement of educational objectives, and therefore the attainment or non-attainment of benchmarked 'levels of learning,' like school leaving, etc.

Pedagogic: This is usually when the results of the assessment are used to make inferences, and therefore, course corrections, either by way of altering pedagogic methods, or providing feedback for improvement to specific students, or both. With detention being done away with, assessment, at least until Grade 9, can afford to focus on the pedagogic aspects. This is not to be confused with passing or promotion to subsequent grades.

Assessment which is done specifically to fulfill mainly the pedagogic purpose, that is to make meaningful course corrections and improve the teaching-learning process, is called formative assessment. Given that this is a necessary condition for formative assessment, by implication, it must be done at frequencies that enable course correction to actually occur. In other words, if a large section of learning has been completed, there

may be very little scope for the teacher to affect any course correction.

A point to caution against is that this does not imply a higher frequency of ‘tests’ being conducted. Some characteristics of formative assessment are the following. It is usually informal in the sense that it’s not binding that the same method or instrument of assessment be used for all students.

Neither is it essential that all students be assessed at the same point in time, or all aspects of learning be assessed at the same time. It is centered on efforts to elicit behavior (this could be in the form of the spoken word, written word, drawings, and so on) in natural classroom settings, which would help the teacher make inferences about student learning and performance.

Formative assessment must provide opportunities for a teacher to understand non-performance in a student and the reasons for it. In that sense, formative assessment has a close linkage with the curriculum, specifically with designing ways to elicit behaviors that form the evidence of attainment of educational objectives, and these being incorporated into the everyday teaching-learning process.

In other words, we imply that we are creating opportunities to observe, interpret and cultivate ‘behaviors,’ which is usually considered part of ‘teaching.’ Designing appropriate methods to observe and interpret student behavior and learning is thus driven by and rests with the teacher in a classroom setting.

Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

It is evident that formative assessment as described above, cannot be implemented without first ensuring a pedagogy that requires students to play an active role in the learning process, rather than be mere listeners or consumers of knowledge. Such a kind of assessment necessitates

that the pedagogy incorporates designed opportunities for students to express their understanding.

This is done by asking questions and allowing students to express their understanding in multiple ways, as a part of the learning, as opposed to a separate test. Therefore, this entire process is carried out in a low-stakes classroom environment.

Let’s illustrate this with an example. Say we want to teach children of Grade 3/4 about animal classification based on habitats, food habits, skin covering, group/solitary and movement. Even before we start the lesson, let’s imagine asking them to solve a puzzle –

Puzzle

Unscramble the animal names and match them to the pictures.



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The puzzle is a fun activity for children. It allows them to get warmed up. It also informs the teacher whether or not her students know the names of some common animals. She could extend this to a conversation to elicit a few more. Having assessed the pre-knowledge, she can move forward confidently to the content of the lesson that the students are supposed to learn.

Then, suppose after teaching them about animal habitats (as forests, grasslands, ocean, snow and so on) we ask them the following question –

Look Around

Most wildlife cannot survive well in cities and buildings. But there are a few species that are comfortable in an urban habitat.

Name five animals that live in or around your home.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



The above question would allow children to explore and observe their immediate environment and apply what they have just learnt. This can be an interesting home-activity. However, it allows the teacher to gather evidences of understanding. Evidently, this question has been designed for urban school-goers. It may have to be modified appropriately in other contexts.

When we talk about body covering, imagine we also teach children about the idea of camouflage. And then we ask them the following question –

Look Deep

Observe the spider in two different surroundings.



Image 1

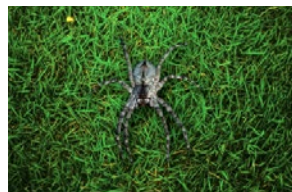


Image 2

Which one of these spiders do you think has a higher chance of survival? Why?

In the above case, more than one answer is possible, and students need to justify their response. This can lead to mini debates.

However, all the while, for the teachers, these provide opportunities to observe how their kids are performing. Further on, the lesson mentions group animals like monkeys and solitary ones like bears. And as kids are learning this, they can be asked to imagine the possible answers to the following question.

Look Within

Imagine you are an animal living in a forest. Would you rather be solitary or gregarious? Why?

In the above questions, interesting responses are possible. A child once told us that she would prefer to be a solitary animal. This is because she could then be free of her big brother who bullies her. The bonus in such a question is that the response can also give the teacher a peek into other facets of the child. It can be a great means to understand children better and promote socio-emotional learning.

The important thing to remember is that each of the examples described above share the following characteristics. The questions are meant to elicit behavior (spoken, written, drawings, etc.) which when observed can serve as 'assessment.' All these questions serve as part of the pedagogy. Learning happens through these discussions, debates and exploration as far as the child is concerned. The assessment, therefore, is informal and happens as a part of the teaching-learning process. It is completely low stakes as opposed to conducting more and more tests.

Remember, each of the questions increases the possibility of engaging with the topic in the first place. It allows students and teachers together to dwell on interesting conversations which are woven around the topic. We think that such opportunities constitute formative assessment in the truest sense. Teachers may then be encouraged to ask these questions, observe students' responses and decide on a future course of action. Are most students able

to demonstrate evidence of learning? If not, should we revisit any topic? In such a scenario, it must be remembered that not all students can (or for that matter need to be assessed) at the same time using the same questions, simply given the paucity of time. There may also be no need to do it. The teacher, who is closest to her students, already has a sense and is able to prioritize which students she wants to focus on, from past performance in her classrooms. This kind of assessment offers greater flexibility and emphasizes on greater agency on the part of the teacher.

Role of technology

In such a setting as described above, a large amount of data is likely to be generated. It could be written evidences, photographs of group work, and videos of conversations. The possibilities are endless. It is here that technology may come in handy in terms of helping the teacher store, tag and archive various artefacts for future reference. Let's say, we want to assess speaking skills. One way of doing it could be to record a child's speech and repeat the same at a future point in time. Such artefacts allow assessment in real time and the capturing of evidence. They can also give the teacher insights into areas where she may need to improve her pedagogy.

With newer tools emerging, one only needs to explore. Plickers is one such example. All the teacher needs are a set of cards that she hands out to each student. Each card looks like a QR code. It can be held in four different orientations, each of which can be uniquely captured by the teacher using a camera app. This tool has been demonstrated to allow for quick multiple choice question type assessment. It is fun, engaging and gives teachers immediate feedback on which she can act upon.

The need for professional development

While this features towards the end of this article, the need for teacher professional development is critical. The teacher needs to reorient herself to the need and purpose of assessment. She needs to look at formative assessment as something which primarily

informs her on what to do next, rather than as certifying the student. And this change in mindset must begin with the teacher and slowly move outward through her, to the parents and the communities.

The professional development process must also equip the teacher to redesign her pedagogy in ways that offer students opportunities to express, and these expressions become evidence of learning, as described above. This is easier said than done. It may be tempting to 'tell' students the facts, compared with the more longwinded process of asking them meaningful questions and guiding them in the process of drawing their conclusions. Patience in teachers' abilities to learn and trust in their intent are paramount.

In summary, strong professional development and support circles for teachers, along with curricular reforms and technology can pave the way for true and meaningful assessment, the role of which is primarily to inform educators on how they can further guide their students to achieve their fullest potential. It may sound utopian. However, it is very achievable, if we are willing to let go of the burden of examinations.

Founder and CEO of Chrysalis, **Chitra Ravi** may be called the organization's 'vision custodian.' She ensures that her penchant for innovation in education always keeps the child at the centre of all endeavours. She currently works on organizational strategy and growth. She may be contacted at chitra@chrysalis.world

Balasubrahmanian S. is the Head of Learning Transformation at Chrysalis. Bala leads a team of consultants who are responsible for directly working with teachers and school leaders in transforming teaching-learning processes, leading to better student learning outcomes. He may be contacted at bala@chrysalis.world

Website: www.chrysalis.world

Connect On:     

Toward inclusive assessment

Deepti Gubbi and Akanksha Rajgulati

Assessment is a key part of any efficient educational system. When designed effectively, assessments help provide feedback to students on their learning progress. They can also serve as evidence for external stakeholders to evaluate the efficacy of a particular course of study and about what students are gaining (Azim Premji Foundation, 2015).

Assessment can be seen as (a comprehensive process involving self-assessment) comprising of all those activities undertaken by teachers and by their students assessing themselves, which provides information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (Black and William, 1998)

The paradigm shift from ‘assessment of learning’ to ‘assessment for learning’

Assessment of learning is summative in nature because it is intended to measure learning outcomes and report those outcomes to students, parents and administrators and other stakeholders. It compares students’ achievement with standards. It occurs at the end of the learning unit, and it is teacher centered. Assessment of learning indicates the level of learning of a student, but after the process of learning is over. This does not allow for any scope of immediate feedback to teachers or any chance of remediation. (Olutola, *et al.*, 2016)

Assessment for learning is defined as an ongoing process of gathering and interpreting evidence about student learning. The purpose is to determine where students are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there. It occurs when teachers use inferences about students’ progress to inform their teaching. Assessment for learning is, therefore, formative in nature (*ibid*, 2016).

The shift from ‘assessment of learning’ to ‘assessment for learning’ has been a huge one. However, the landscape of disability has not seen much movement, due to the complexity of the issues involved.

Let us introduce you to I. B. She is 15 years old. She is a happy and cheerful child, who has a profound grade of intellectual disability. This means an IQ of less than 25 (‘normal’ IQ being 90-100). She has not yet spoken a word in all her 15 years. She cannot eat without assistance. She is carried by her mother to school. She needs full support in using the washroom and is unable to express even her most basic needs.

But she loves people and her eyes shine on seeing familiar faces. Each child with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) is unique and has specific needs. No standardized assessments can do justice to the individual requirements of each of them. IDD impacts one’s cognitive functioning, such as learning, problem solving and judgment. It also affects the person’s adaptive functioning related to activities of daily life, such as communication and independent living.

The biopsychosocial model suggests that to understand a person’s medical condition, it is not enough to simply consider the biological factors. We need to take into account the psychological and social factors as well. Therefore, it is imperative that we assess each of these domains to attempt to measure any significant impact with our interventions.

For children with IDD, the challenges with assessments are multifold. Children with IDD may not follow the neurotypical trajectory of milestone development. Therefore, it is important to assess each child’s learning levels and then ascertain appropriate

learning pathways by selecting goals for each. Moreover, IDD being a spectrum disorder, each child operates at a different level. This varies according to the severity of the condition. Individualized Educational Plans (IEP's) need to be formulated for each child.

Assessing for transformative learning: the journey of Jai Vakeel Foundation

Jai Vakeel Foundation (JVF) has been working with children and adults with IDD since 1944. In this journey of more than 78 years, we have closely worked and collaborated with many other organizations and specialists to gain sector-specific understanding of the challenges faced by various stakeholders. It has provided us with a unique opportunity to step back and look at the larger picture, wearing the hat of the ecosystem. From this vantage point, we have observed the need for collaborative efforts and interconnections among organizations, educators, parents and other stakeholders involved in supporting individuals with IDD.

Recognizing the importance of a collective approach, in 2019, JVF entered into a partnership with the Department of Social Justice and Special Assistance, Government of Maharashtra, and the Commissionerate of PwD. The goal of this collaboration has been to make JVF's curriculum available to all the IDD schools across the state of Maharashtra. Through this scaling initiative called 'Disha Abhiyan,' we have access to over 436 schools for children with intellectual disabilities in Maharashtra. This has provided us with rich, on-ground experience of the realities in both urban and rural areas. One important gap that we have identified across institutions is the lack of a uniform method of assessment of students.

The requirement for detailed assessment in our sector has been felt for some time now. Checklists such as Functional Assessment Checklist for Programming (FACP), Behavioral

Assessment Scale for Indian Children with Mental Retardation (BASIC-MR) and a few others have been available. However, upon deep assessment of these checklists, discussions with teachers, and seeing the on-ground reality at JVF, we realized that although these assessment checklists were exhaustive in what they were assessing, the user experience was marred by either jargonistic terminology, complicated scoring parameters or cumbersome documentation.

It is at this juncture that we decided to develop an assessment checklist for IEP (Individualized Assessment Plan). Instead of reinventing the wheel, we collated what was already existent. We researched extensively and worked on certain key areas for making the checklist comprehensive. We tried to ensure that all the domains requiring intervention for holistic development were included. We ascertained that the necessary modifications were made, so as to ensure that the checklist was applicable to all students across the spectrum. We also kept the scoring simple and easy to gauge.



Our Assessment Checklist for IEP is a set of 200 (3-14 years) and 250 (14-18 years) skill-based items across developmental domains. These are to be used for assessment with the primary objectives of ascertaining the current level of functioning of the child and to help in designing effective IEPs.

The checklist aims at assessing the child across domains. The goal is to understand their strengths and the areas in which support is needed. This can equip the teacher with a comprehensive understanding of the learner's abilities. They can then plan to ensure the best learning outcomes.

The domains of assessment include 'Activities of Daily Living' (ADL), communication, educational activities, recreational activities, social behavior, and life skills (14-18 years). The Assessment Checklist for IEP is certified by NIEPID (National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities). It has been found to be appropriate and beneficial for all children with IDD in the age group of 3-18 years of age.

Toward inclusive assessment

In the realm of education, assessment serves as a vital component of effective instructional practices. While traditionally focused on evaluating learning outcomes, a paradigm shift towards inclusive assessment has emerged.

Inclusive assessment aims to go beyond mere evaluation. It fosters an understanding of students' progress in the learning objectives. The following aspects contribute towards developing an inclusive assessment.

Promotes individualized intervention: Our assessment checklist for IEP serves as a powerful resource aligned with the principles of inclusive assessment. This comprehensive tool facilitates personalized and equitable assessments, by considering the individual needs of students with intellectual disabilities.

Follows a collaborative approach: Goepel (2009) points out that the IEP process is most beneficial when there is a mutual exchange of information between parents, children and educators. Our assessment checklist for IEP fosters collaborations among teachers, parents and other stakeholders involved in a student's development across domains.

It establishes a common language and framework for discussing students' progress, learning outcomes, and areas of focus. By promoting collaboration, the checklist ensures that all stakeholders work in unison to support students' holistic development.

Allows flexibility in implementation: Inclusive assessment promotes adaptability and flexibility in assessment formats to cater to a wide range of learning styles, communication preferences, and abilities.

The assessment checklist for IEP offers a comprehensive collection of skill-based items that can be customized to meet the specific requirements of each student. This adaptability allows students to showcase their learning outcomes through approaches that align with their distinct strengths and individual needs.

Enhancing systemic efficiencies with Disha web portal

In 2020, the Disha web portal was introduced to all the IDD schools enrolled in Disha Abhiyan. This portal serves as a tool for inclusive assessment and holistic educational management. It has been designed while keeping in mind the ease of user interface, and accessibility on different devices.

The intended users range from teachers, school administrators, district heads and state heads. Teachers can record assessment observations of each student online, select school goals to teach over the year, and categorize certain goals as 'home goals' for parents to work at home. They can also



generate automated report cards depicting the overall progress made by the child. Headmasters can review the assessments made by teachers.

This facilitates its widespread adoption in various schools. Now it is possible to monitor students' progress online, monitor the long-term impact of the project, and give access to real-time data at different levels such as that of the schools, the districts and the state. This also enables schools to conduct mid-term and annual assessments based on unique goals per student.

These features of the Disha portal, available in three languages (Hindi, Marathi and English), have enabled its seamless integration into different educational settings. One of its advantages is the reduction of time and burden of documentation for teachers. With its user-friendly interface and accessible features, the portal simplifies the assessment process and minimizes educators' administrative tasks.

In the last academic year, 360 IDD schools in Maharashtra have implemented the Assessment for Individualized Education Plans (IEP). They have also conducted assessments for over 17,000 students with IDD and documented their progress.

DISHA Abhiyan has been able to contribute to effective assessment practices. Over 2,000 special educators have been trained to implement assessment strategies effectively. These training sessions have provided educators with the knowledge to

select relevant and appropriate goals, use of curriculum, classroom management, and using the DISHA web portal.

The implementation of IEPs ensures personalized assessment and instruction, benefiting numerous students. The successful integration of a multisensory curriculum, supported by teacher manuals and student workbooks, has enhanced student engagement and achievement.

In a space where each of the stakeholders were working in silos, this initiative has provided a collective language to all, and brought about much-needed uniformity.

The success of these initiatives is evident in the positive feedback received from partner schools, such as the one from Dhule.

“First of all, I would like to thank the Disha team and Jai Vakeel Foundation on behalf of all the special teachers. During the training, I got very good and useful information. Normal education has a uniform structure. But, in our field of education for the disabled, there was no uniformity. Teachers often get confused as to which scale to use, as each school uses a different checklist. But Disha Project has brought all schools and teachers into the same education stream and system. They have taught a very simple and straightforward method. Also, our most difficult task of writing and paperwork has reduced. And so, there will be more time to teach in a new way. Thank you so much to all the team and mentors for answering each of our questions satisfactorily and for explaining and teaching us how to work with this new technique.”

While at a glance, one gets the impression that so much has been accomplished, we understand that we still have a lot more to achieve. Disha's curriculum, its assessment process, and its portal are being used in most of the registered schools. However, now the spotlight needs to be moved toward the quality of the usage.

It is true that IEP assessment plays a vital role in our efforts to maximize a child's potential and promote inclusion. However, it is also essential to acknowledge that a child's progress extends beyond mere scores and parameters.

The growth and development of a child with IDD encompasses a much broader spectrum of experiences, achievements, and even challenges. By using a comprehensive approach to their education, we can nurture their unique strengths, interests, and aspirations. This can potentially pave the way for their holistic and meaningful development.

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Deepti Gubbi is the Head of Content and Training at Jai Vakeel Foundation, Mumbai. She is a Child Development Specialist and Autism Interventionist. She has been working for and with children with specific learning difficulties for the past 20 years. She is also a trainer in Diversity and Inclusion.

Deepti's education and expertise in curriculum development for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) has led to her work with her team to build a uniform curriculum and assessment checklist for students with IDD. Her current role entails enabling JVF to become a center of excellence and strengthening the dissemination of Disha Abhiyaan, JVF's scaling initiative.

Akanksha Rajgulati is an experienced professional in Education and Psychology. With a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Delhi University and an MSc degree in Clinical Health Psychology from the University of Strathclyde, Scotland, she began her career as an educator in a remote Uttarakhand village. Later, as a Child Psychologist, she specialized in supporting children with developmental disorders.

Akanksha's commitment to social impact led her to work at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), contributing to research toward poverty reduction in tribal villages. Passionate about promoting mental health in education, she joined Sunbird Trust as an Education Program Manager, implementing a Peace Curriculum and driving socio-emotional learning initiatives in tribal communities. Currently, as Manager of Content and Training at Jai Vakeel Foundation, she plays a vital role in developing curriculum and providing training.

Website: www.jaivakeel.org

Email: jvfcurricularcontent@jaivakeel.org

Connect On:



Designing and conducting assessments: resources for thinking and practice

Samuhik Pahal Team

Assessment is often seen as a technical issue mired in many esoteric considerations. However, since it is an integral part of learning, all stakeholders in the education system must develop an understanding of assessment as a key aspect of processes related to teaching and learning. In this piece, we share a few resources that can support you in your journey in developing a robust understanding of this domain.

Videos from the 13th Partners' Forum

Wipro Foundation has been hosting Partners' Forum - an annual three-day long event for its education partners - since the early 2000s. The Forum is designed to serve as a platform for partners to share knowledge, build relationships, and collaborate with one another. The 13th Partner's Forum that took place during December 19-21, 2012, at Center for Learning, Bengaluru, focussed on the theme of assessments.

The sessions at this Forum focussed on sub-themes such as CCE, Teacher Assessment, Large-scale Assessments, Conceptual Issues in Assessment, and SEL. Some of the sessions also tried to capture the experience of schools in this area. You can access the proceedings as videos on this [playlist](#).

The videos are relatively short, and packed with learnings from practice, information and a diverse set of perspectives.

Online resources on assessment

Azim Premji University (APU) has been working on many aspects of assessment for



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quite some time now. Based on field-level insights and experiences, it has created various resources on/for assessment. These include handbooks, manuals and articles. [This webpage](#) houses the resources created by the university in this field.

These include sub-themes as diverse as “Guidelines for question paper development,” “Learning outcomes - secondary stage,” “Teacher recruitment framework,” “Principles for effective classroom assessment,” “A guide to read, interpret and use large-scale assessment data,” “Doing formative assessments in classrooms,” and “Unleashing the power of open book examinations for summative assessments.” Some of these

documents are available in Hindi as well. You may find perusing through, and using, some of these resources as helpful aids in your own assessment practices.

Courses on assessment

APU's Postgraduate Diploma in "Education - Educational Assessment"

This diploma program's objective is to build capabilities in assessment among key stakeholders in education. The intended learning outcomes for participants include understanding concepts, principles and approaches related to assessments, the ability to design assessment tools such as test papers, projects, portfolios, rubrics and checklists, the competence to facilitate students' learning through assessments, and felicity in designing large-scale assessments.

The program is delivered in a blended mode (with webinars and on-campus contact classes), and is intended for working professionals such as teachers, academic

coordinators, head teachers, teacher educators, curriculum designers, test paper developers and textbook writers. The diploma program consists of four (4) certificate courses of six (6) credits each. Completing all the certificates is mandatory for awarding the PG Diploma. More details about eligibility, duration and program structure, etc. may be found [here](#).

APU's certificate program in "Student assessment in practice"

This program offered by APU deals with assessment of, for and as learning. Its goal is to build the perspectives and capacities of teachers, teacher educators and assessment practitioners to help them better design and conduct assessment as a tool for improving teaching and learning.

The program focuses on assessment of students' learning levels in elementary education. Additional details about eligibility, duration, and program structure, etc., may be perused [here](#).



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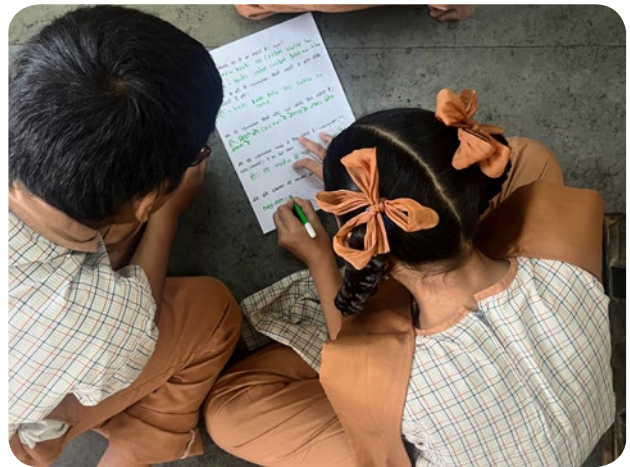
Reimagining assessments

Aastha Maggu

Assessments play a vital role within our education system, serving as a cornerstone for measuring the attainment of educational objectives. They enable us to determine the effectiveness of curricula, teaching materials, and pedagogical methods in achieving the intended goals. In this ground zero piece, we will delve into the perspectives of three organizations who share their insights on how they perceive assessments and incorporate them into their practice to cater to the unique contexts and needs of the children they engage with.

Apni Shala Foundation

Apni Shala Foundation (ASF) works with students from municipal schools and other diverse institutions to nurture emotional, interpersonal and thinking skills. Through their interventions, the team envisions opportunities for children to become reflective and inquiring individuals who are confident, able to build healthy relationships, and become great problem-solvers. The ASF team is resolute in their understanding that assessments' purpose is to understand the evolution of social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, rather than concentrating on assigning grades to students. Prior to the pandemic, facilitators conducted observational assessments for students in grades 1 to 7. Utilizing a straightforward template, these facilitators documented SEL competencies guided by behavioral indicators that they observed during a classroom session. For instance, these indicators would include students asking questions to clarify when they did not understand a concept, a student offering to help or collaborate with her peers, or a student helping to resolve a conflict.



Apni Shala

During the pandemic, since physical interaction was not possible, the team veered toward a self-assessment tool. Students' perceptions of themselves were mapped to five SEL competencies from the [CASEL framework](#) - self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. For grades 8-10, ASF administered [Rosenberg's self-esteem assessment](#).

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, over a span of two years, they administered a self-reported evaluation among students. Students were tasked with rating their frequency of exhibiting SEL competencies on a scale of 1 to 5. For instance, when presented with statements like, "I am capable of independently finishing tasks" or "I seek assistance when I encounter difficulties," students selected options such as 'rarely, a few times, sometimes, many times, and most of the time.'

The ASF team adheres to a collective reporting approach. They abstain from conducting assessments that furnish individual student data to school partners. Instead, facilitators employ individual student data to extrapolate insights about the overall school or specific grade-level trends.

Over the past year and a half, the team embarked on a process of reevaluating their comprehension of SEL. Saesha, an ASF team member, explained, “As the frameworks we adopted primarily originated in Western contexts and predominantly emphasized behavioral modification, we took the initiative to create our own toolkit. We embarked on a journey that began with defining what SEL signifies to us, leading us to determine the most efficient methods of measurement.”

The ASF team has initiated the pilot phase of an innovative assessment toolkit. Amrita from ASF, shares, “Recognizing the limitations of depending on a singular tool to gauge transformations solely from the perspectives of students or facilitators, we identified the necessity for a more comprehensive approach. This led to the development of a holistic toolkit. This toolkit encompasses multiple dimensions, including a self-reporting survey, a situational judgment test, meticulous observations documented by ASF’s facilitators, and engaging classroom dialogues that will help us understand tangible expressions of SEL within the learning environment.”

The ASF team acknowledges that apprehensions linked to assessments often stem from a student’s fear of judgment. Amrita recollects, “A particularly touching instance was when a student paused during the assessment and confided in the ASF facilitator, admitting that they were unsure

of how to answer a question. This remarkable incident reflects how children’s engagement with assessments facilitated by ASF isn’t primarily influenced by concerns about how teachers or caregivers might perceive their performance.”

In the deployment of their assessment tools, the ASF team consistently emphasizes their purpose: aiding students in comprehending their own learning on SEL competencies and reflecting on their feelings about it. For instance, if the children reflect on their feelings and actions such as when they say they are aware of the emotions that they go through or might say they have friends in classroom they deeply care about.

Another important aspect to consider is how educators or assessors interpret the data gleaned from assessments. As long as the data analysis aims to inform subsequent actions and decisions, it serves its purpose. However, should the data be employed to categorize students as high or low achievers, a reevaluation of the perception of assessments becomes imperative.

The ASF team comes together periodically to understand how the movement on SEL indicators and academics could guide the next set of interventions. Saesha from the ASF team adds that there could be children in a particular grade showing improvement in mathematics and helping their peers with concepts in the subject. Similarly, for other subjects, the team tries to draw comparable insights.

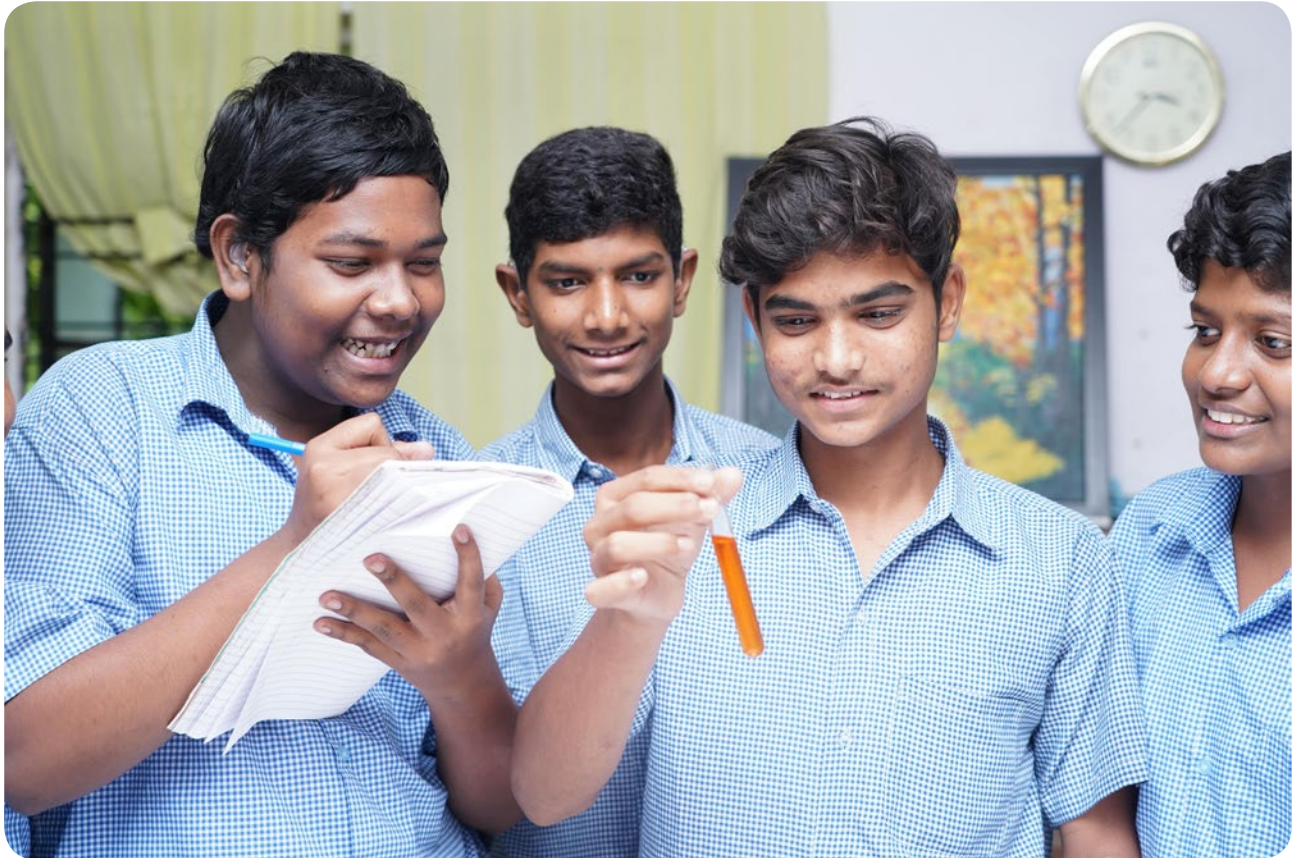
The team has admitted that they are yet to discover a method to evaluate the influence of their initiatives on stakeholders beyond the students within the educational ecosystem.

Ashray Akruti

Ashray Akruti (AA) operates special schools that cater to the education of over 500 children with hearing impairment across four locations in Telangana. These schools offer



Apni Shala



Ashray Akruti

free education and rehabilitation services for hearing-impaired children, starting from pre-nursery up to grade 10. One of the primary challenges faced by these children is the lack of speech and language skills, which significantly impacts their development and growth. To address this, the schools focus on equipping the students with the skills necessary to thrive in the mainstream world and provide academic training to prepare them for qualifying examinations.

The schools follow the syllabus and curriculum set by the Telangana State Board, but also adapt these to meet their students' specific needs. To ensure personalized attention, Ashray Akruti maintains a low teacher-student ratio, allowing each child to receive individualized support.

Recognizing that assessments for children with disabilities should differ from those for typical children due to varying learning abilities, the AA team tailors classroom teaching and implements flexible assessments. Understanding the impact of

hearing impairment on each child's learning is essential in this regard.

Surekha and Sasikala, educators at one of the Ashray Akruti schools, emphasized, "The Telangana state government offers concessions for children with special needs, including those with hearing impairments. These concessions involve reducing the pass marks from 35 to 20 across all subjects from classes 6 to 10. Additionally, children with hearing impairments are required to study one language out of three, while focusing on three other subjects: mathematics, science, and social sciences."

The instructors at AA adopt a holistic approach towards assessments, understanding that they are not the sole determinant of a student's abilities. When faced with students who might struggle with assessments, the teachers streamline the questions to encompass the core concepts of a topic. Surekha explained, "To illustrate, if there are 10 essay questions and a student is unable to tackle all of them, we provide

them with only three to five questions that are fundamental and pivotal for their comprehension. For instance, when covering a lesson about force, the assessment would involve explaining the concept of force and identifying various types of forces.”

When they admit a new child to their schools, the AA team also conducts assessments to determine the grade in which they should be enrolled. Sasikala explains, “In a mainstream school, children are enrolled according to age. At AA, the team conducts a comprehensive audiological evaluation, and an assessment of reading, writing and mathematical skills. Based on the findings, they see if the child can be admitted to a particular grade or needs a bridge course to be enrolled at an age-appropriate grade. For instance, an 11 years old child Karthika approached us in September 2022. In our first assessment, she was able to comprehend only vowel sounds, say very basic words like mom, dad, etc., read and write alphabets and only identify numbers till 10. We used that assessment to set learning goals under a bridge program that focused on increasing her understanding of all skills. We again conducted an assessment, and based on the findings it was found that she could be enrolled in grade 2.”

The team at Ashray Akruti strongly believes that assessments should not induce fear in children. Their purpose is to track learning outcomes and establish realistic learning goals to support each child’s development effectively. By fostering a positive learning environment and offering tailored support, the schools strive to empower hearing-impaired children and help them thrive in their educational journey.

Samait Shala

Samait Shala is an NGO, based in Ahmedabad, which collaborates with affordable private schools to foster inclusive classroom environments. Their mission aligns with the inclusive education initiatives set forth by NCERT and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.

They achieve this by empowering school teachers and leaders within mainstream educational institutions, enabling them to facilitate the growth and development of children with disabilities in parallel with their peers. The Samait Shala team believes that written and oral assessments should help us understand the strengths and gaps in a child’s ability to understand a concept.



Samait Shala

In their efforts to guide teachers in assessing children's learning levels, the Samait Shala team initiates the process by revisiting the predetermined learning objectives for each chapter. Subsequently, they craft assessments that align with these objectives. Recognizing the challenges teachers face in translating assessment observations into pedagogical adjustments or reflections on learning objectives, the Samait Shala team remains cognizant of this dilemma.

The conventional structure, essence and timing of assessments are seldom questioned, especially concerning children with learning disabilities. The Samait Shala team acknowledges that fostering inclusive classrooms mandates a departure from rigid assessment norms that disregard the diverse learning abilities and environments of children. The team asserts that flexible assessment approaches should accommodate alternative modes of expression, such as oral responses or individualized means of communication.

When designing numeracy and literacy assessments tailored for children exhibiting significant learning disabilities, the focus is on avoiding overwhelming tasks. The Samait Shala team advises educators to initiate numeracy assessments with activities such as identifying varying sizes of shapes or recognizing numbers. They recommend utilizing manipulatives and visual aids to enhance comprehension of assessment questions.

For literacy assessments, teachers are encouraged to commence with picture books and word-building exercises, gradually easing students into the assessment process. Facilitators actively cultivate learning environments that enable children with disabilities in understanding questions and formulating responses.

The team also endeavors to steer clear of assessments that solely revolve around the child. Kushal Dattani, co-founder of Samait

Shala, explains, "We maintain observational records for certain students whom we believe might require additional assistance. Our facilitators maintain these records, which encompass observations such as the child's engagement in active communication and displayed interests."

Kushal elaborates, "It's hardly surprising that paper-based assessments used by teachers include questions sourced from the prescribed NCERT books. To illustrate, if a chapter concludes with 6 questions, approximately 3 to 4 questions are directly derived from these sources. The focus is not solely on evaluating children's learning levels. Our emphasis lies in integrating formative assessments that entail ongoing evaluation and adapting teaching methodologies to suit the students' needs."

The Samait Shala team is also cautious not to enforce reforms too aggressively and potentially alienate school support. Kushal further explained that they proceed with prudence. They acknowledge that the assessment system can burden teachers. However, their goal is to guide teachers toward comprehending the advantages of formative assessments. Over time, the team aspires for teachers to gradually embrace its value and develop confidence in its integration within their teaching practices.

In conclusion

Assessments may evaluate learning, yet they do not guarantee it. True learning necessitates more than assessments; it relies on the presence of nurturing learning environments within schools, coupled with dedicated teachers who employ assessments as a means to consistently adapt their pedagogical methods and resources.

You may reach out to the organizations featured in this story at: contact@apnishala.org (Apni Shala Foundation); ashrayakruti@yahoo.com (Ashray Akruti); and kushal@samaitshala.org (Samait Shala).



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