

Perceptions of Teachers and Students on the Effectiveness of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation System

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Abstract : *Examinations have been proverbially described as the bane of our educational system. Commissions and committees on education have emphasized the need for examination reforms and have suggested specific measures towards this end. The National Policy on Education (1986) recommended “child centered education”. The policy provides a context to focus on a child friendly and pedagogically sound evaluation system. NCF-2005 and Right to Education Act, 2009 also seek improvement in assessment system at a legal footing by making Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation mandatory. In order to overcome the drawbacks in the prevalent system of evaluation, on the initiative of Ministry of Human Development, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system has been introduced by the Central Board of Secondary Education up to the secondary level with effect from 2009-2010. In this backdrop, a survey has been conducted to collect the perception of teachers and students regarding the effectiveness of the CCE in realizing its goals.*

Keywords: *Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), NCF-2005, Pedagogy.*

Introduction

The education system of a country is a reflector of educational ideology of that country. Our school education system is facing multitude of challenges ranging from lack of excellence to the lack of basic facilities in schools. However, there is one area of school education which is subject of constant criticism and that is examinations. In an examination, a candidate is weighed as if in a balance and is compared with some standards. For every examination the standards are set by the examining authorities and then through these examinations, the examining bodies compare the students with those standards (Kalhotra, 2011). Mascarenhas (1991) states that the concept of examination arose out of the need of a teacher to give a public manifestation of the effectiveness of his teaching through an appearance of the talent of the students, or it arose from the compulsions of the student to win fame through public debates. According to Aggarwal (1997), the concept of examination involves “a test of knowledge acquired, or more generally, a means of assessing intellectual capacity or ability” (cited in Kiani, 2011). So much of the stress and anxiety is associated with the examinations that they have been proverbially described as the bane of our educational system. Many commissions and committees on education have also emphasized the need for examination reform and suggested specific measures towards this end.

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Examination Reforms: A Retrospect

As early as in 1902, the Indian Universities Commission set up by Lord Curzon remarked that it was beyond doubt that teaching in India is subordinate to examination. Hartog Committee (1929) also expresses concern about the dominance of examination over the entire system of education. The University Education Commission (1948) went so far as to say: “We are convinced that if we are to suggest any single reform in university education, it would be that of examinations.” The Mudaliar Commission on Secondary Education (1952-53) also recognized the lack of validity, reliability and objectivity in examinations. With the establishment of the National Council of Educational Research and Training, the Central Examination Unit along with the All-India Council for Secondary Education became its part and has, ever since, been working vigorously to refine and improve examinations. The Education Commission (1964-66), the National Policy on Education (1986) and many other commissions and committees also recommended to bring about change in the examination system. The National Policy of Education (1986) recommended “child centered education”. This progressive policy, in addition to the Programme of Action (1992) followed by the CABE Committee Report on curricular load on the school going children titled “Learning without Burden” provided a context to focus on a child friendly and pedagogically sound evaluation system (MHRD, 2011: 38). NCF 2005 also emphasized the need for reforms in the examination system by making them child friendly and stress free. As per NCF-2005, examination reforms constitute the most important systemic measure to be taken for curricular renewal and to find a remedy for the growing problem of psychological pressure that children and their parents feel, especially in Classes X and XII. It recommended that specific measures include changing the typology of the question paper so that reasoning and creative abilities replace memorization as the basis of evaluation, and integration of examinations with classroom life by encouraging transparency and internal assessment. The stress on pre-board examinations must be reversed, and strategies enabling children to opt for different levels of attainment should be encouraged to overcome the present system of generalized classification into ‘pass’ and ‘fail’ categories (NCERT, 2005: xi).

All these observations were rooted in the assumption that the traditional school examination system was associated with stress, anxiety and fear. Failure in an examination sometimes forces students to take extreme steps like suicide. Lots of questions are raised pertaining to reliability and validity of examinations. As in examinations, undue emphasis is on the measurement of cognitive aspects of behaviour and non-cognitive aspects of personality are completely ignored. The irony is that the fear of examinations begins from the primary stage in many parts of the country and from that onwards every child receives the message that the only thing which matters here is one’s performance in the examination. So, right from the primary classes, children start memorizing lot of information from the text books and guide-books. In order to overcome all these drawbacks in the prevalent system of evaluation, on the initiative of Ministry of Human Development, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system has been introduced by the Central Board of Secondary Education up to the secondary level with effect from 2009-2010. This system has also been adopted by different state boards of education across the country. Right to Education Act, 2009 (Section 29) also emphasized improvement in assessment system by making Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation mandatory.

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) refers to a system of school based evaluation of a student that covers all aspects of a student’s development. It is a developmental process of student

which emphasizes on two fold objectives: (i) continuity in evaluation; and (ii) assessment of broad based learning and behavioral outcomes. Further the term 'continuous' is meant to emphasize that evaluation of identified aspects of students' growth and development is a continuous process rather than an event, built into the total teaching-learning process and spread over the entire span of academic session. It means regularity of assessment, frequency of unit testing, diagnosis of learning gaps, use of corrective measures, retesting and feedback of evidence to teachers and students for their self-evaluation. The second term 'comprehensive' means that the scheme attempts to cover both the scholastic and the co-scholastic aspects of the students' growth and development (CBSE, 2010: 7-8).

CCE places teacher judgment at the heart of assessment and teacher has to assess the students in three broad areas throughout the year and these are: scholastic, co-scholastic and co-curricular activities. Scholastic area is related to learner's knowledge, understanding, application, evaluation, analysis and ability to apply knowledge in an unfamiliar situation. This area has to be assessed on a nine point scale through formative and summative assessments, grades for which vary from A1 (91-100) to E2 (0-20) and minimum qualifying grade in all subjects under this area is D (33-40) marks range. Under the scheme, formative assessment (FA) is to be carried out by the teacher to continuously monitor students' progress in a non-threatening, supportive environment by using various techniques like assignments, group discussions, debates, elocution, quizzes, projects, experiments etc. The summative assessment (SA) refers to written, end of term/semester examination comprising objective, short and long answer type questions CBSE (2010)

The desirable behaviour related to learners' life skills, attitudes, interests, values, co-curricular activities and physical health are described as skills to be acquired in co-scholastic domain (ibid.:15). This domain has to be assessed in four parts on a five point grading scale once in a session, varying from A (4.1-5.0) to E (0-1) and qualifying grade for co-scholastic domain is also D. The four parts of co-scholastic domain are: Life Skills; Work Education; Visual and Performing Arts; Attitudes and Values. These are to be calculated after a period of observation over the year by the class teacher in consultation with the subject teachers. Co-curricular activities wherein choice in participation and assessment thereof is available consists of two sub- parts which are to be assessed on a five point grading scale by the teachers involved in various activities in school. The co-scholastic and co-curricular activities domain has descriptive indicators (statements used to describe each learner) against which the students are to be continuously observed and allotted grades. It is evident from the above discussion that CCE is extensive and pedagogically sound assessment system than the conventional method of evaluation as scholastic as well as co-scholastic domains are being assessed here through diversified activities throughout the year.

Perceptions of Teachers and Students about Effectiveness of CCE

The Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation has been introduced as a new system of evaluation at school level with a focus on de-stressing the students on the one hand and to evaluate them in more extensive terms on the other. Thus, this system is an alternative paradigm for evaluating children. The success of this evaluation system is largely dependent on its effective implementation, wherein the role of teachers remains of utmost importance. Besides, how far the new system has been successful in de-stressing the students and making learning a joyful experience is a vital issue to be looked into. In this backdrop, a survey has been conducted on the high school students and teachers belonging to four different private schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) of Bathinda (Punjab) district in which CCE system was implemented. The perceptions of teachers and students

regarding the effectiveness of the CCE in realizing its goals were collected with the help of a questionnaire. Their responses were content analyzed. The results of analysis are presented as follows:

Perceptions of Teachers on CCE

The proper implementation and hence successfulness of any strategy in the field of education depend on the willingness of the teachers to adopt the new strategy and how well equipped they are in using it without stressing themselves. As CCE is expecting teachers to assess students on a continuous basis in a cyclic manner, therefore, looking at the CCE from the teachers' perspective is very important. They are supposed to integrate assessment in daily classroom activities by balancing scholastic areas with co-scholastic ones. They would also have to assess the students objectively and help them in resolving the problems through remedial teaching.

Teachers gave a mixed response about this new evaluation system. They agreed that the old examination system was faulty and stressful, where main focus was only on cognitive domain and that only on rote memorization and pen-paper tests, while in this new evaluation every child has been given a fair chance and now a child who earlier was unable to perform well in the written tests is also given a chance to excel. A common observation was also that the pressure brought on by the examinations had, no doubt been lifted from the children, but a different kind of pressure has taken its place, especially for the teachers and school management due to confusion related to formative assessment and how to fill in the various columns. They were also apprehensive about the validity of this evaluation programmes in India where still attitudinal change in parents regarding this new evaluation programme is missing and still they are stressing children to score more and more marks.

A teacher teaching science to eighth class in the reputed convent school of Bathinda replied, "Teaching is not the same anymore and CCE has totally changed our way of teaching and even our lives. This assessment on regular basis under CCE has increased our work. Maintaining several registers for recording academic and non-academic achievements has made the process cumbersome." "There isn't enough time to conduct various activities recommended under CCE and also evaluate all the children on various aspects at the same time. Now, it has become a tedious process for teachers to continuously keep record of student's performance and make calculation for conversion of marks into grades, conversion of marks to their weight-age percentage" opined another teacher. "Actually the work load of teachers, class teachers has been increased and teachers are busy with working on CCE formats and calculation rather than teaching" replied another teacher. One teacher remarked, "Teaching is no more the same now. It has been overpowered by the evaluation. I am always busy in conducting one or other form of tests."

The only positive and strongest feature of the CCE, most of the teachers believed was that there are no failures now. It is also benefitting the slow learners. But some others replied, "children are not learning as there are no examinations and they know they will be promoted and those students who prior to the introduction of CCE and its grading system had studied hard and secured excellent marks, were now thoroughly demotivated as the grades did not give that inspiration" . A teacher teaching in the reputed school of the city admitted, "No doubt CCE is student friendly and co-scholastic areas such as life skills, attitudes, values, health and physical education are considered and evaluated to provide comprehensive feedback to the student." But side by side she also expressed doubts to the effectiveness of these evaluations, particularly in co-scholastic areas and remarked that it was not an easy task for a teacher in an Indian classroom to perform these evaluations when there are generally more than 45 students per class. She further remarked that success of CCE depends on the way it is

implemented in the school and also on the dedicated and committed faculty who is well equipped to make the required assessments. Some teachers remarked that CCE is a much elaborated system and to evaluate students on these guidelines is subjective as well as superficial. Many teachers viewed that they were not provided proper training regarding CCE. Therefore, they find themselves in stress while implementing this system.

Perceptions of Students on CCE

Education aims at enabling children of becoming responsible, productive and useful members of society. Knowledge, skills and attitudes are built through learning experiences and opportunities created for learners in school. It is in the classroom that learners can analyze and evaluate their experiences, learn to doubt, to question, to investigate and to think independently (CBSE, 2010:1). But the increasingly competitive environment, into which schools are being drawn, cause tremendous stress and anxiety among children and hamper the joy of learning. In order to deal with this stress among students, new scheme of evaluation in the form of CCE has been adopted.

When students were asked about the CCE and its effectiveness, they gave varied responses. Some students showed happiness on this new scheme as they viewed that now marks have been replaced with the grades, therefore stress level got reduced to some extent. But some other viewed this evaluation scheme to be more tedious than the preceding one, as they replied, "Now we have to prepare for test on daily basis. Besides this there are too much of activities which are just compulsory for us." One student remarked, "Tests and tests all the day, daily, weekly and fortnightly, terminal exams make us cry, teachers are saying show us the performance, parents are burdened with the assignments, overburdened we little souls, find no rest all the day."

Some students who used to be the toppers of the class viewed the new scheme as de-motivating and they have the feeling that competition makes the mare go and when outer world is competitive and marks oriented then why grading here. One student studying in Convent school replied, "This scheme is not practical and also more burdensome as lot of workload has been created as a result of projects in every subject. The assessment at national level is lost, thereby making it difficult for us to judge where we stand." "Thanks to the grading system, the seriousness of getting top marks seems to have vanished into thin air. Further, group projects are interesting and improve our leadership skills and compatibility. In the process of doing assignments we have also gained a lot of knowledge." replied another girl student of the same school. "It is not de-stressing rather the stress on us is increasing. There are too many tests, assignments, projects, homework and review tests being taken. Also co-scholastic assessment is making the students behave artificially" remarked a student of a reputed public school. "We are not enjoying the holidays and busy in completing the projects. My parents are not so educated so I am sometimes helpless in completing this diversified work." replied another student. "I become very conscious that someone is watching me. It is as if I have to put up composure all the time for fear of being graded negatively," said another student. "Getting a B grade obviously means that you are below 90 so fear is the same" replied one student. In the same tone remarked another girl, "Getting a B grade means you are below A and involves the same scolding by the parents. So, where's the difference?" "Time will tell how CCE has de-stressed us. But now a day we are under more stress than before. Doing so many of the tasks such as assignments, projects, weekly tests, quizzes, scrap books etc. demands much of our time and we always busy in these activities." said another student. "CCE is to make things easier for the students but our teachers still evaluate us by providing the marks and punishing those who are poor in studies. Our class test copies are testimony to this statement." remarked a student with straightness.

Conclusion

The CCE aims to assess students from various other perspectives like attitude, aptitude, reasoning, social skills, emotional skills, extracurricular activities etc. rather than the monotonous method of examinations. It holds abundant promise in propagating a more child-centric approach to learning and assessing progress. However, its merit can justly be appreciated and made visible only in small classrooms or schools, where the sheer numbers of students to be evaluated do not overwhelm the teachers. Reports of schools extending daily tests and home assignments to students under the grab of the new CCE system have been confirmed by CBSE officials at many places. Not just students but their parents too are under pressure because of this new system of evaluation. One must also recognize that isolated reforms in the techniques of measurement will not have any meaning unless accompanied by concomitant changes in the classroom culture, where they are no longer seen as places for delivering textbooks or competitive spaces where students compete with each other. Changes are necessary in the ways in which one views learning, teaching and assessment (Nawani, 2013: 40).

Readiness of the teachers to bring about a change in the evaluation techniques is the most important component for the success of CCE. Therefore, without taking into concern the views of teachers and burdening them with trainings will lead to more stress to both teachers and students than de-stressing them. Instead of pressurizing the teachers and forcing them to adhere to the new evaluation system, they should be inspired to adopt it by convincing them of its efficacy in nurturing students to become truly open-minded, explorative learners and not marks-obsessed, textbook-limited competitors. It is the teachers who are needed to make the CCE genuinely work; those teachers who can produce the desirable results or mar them, depending on their commitment to the process and their belief in it. So, need of the hour is to know the concerns of teachers regarding this new system of evaluation, empowering them by making them a partner in the whole process.

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