Reviewing Learner Evaluation in India: An Inside Story (After Independence - 2000)

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Abstract:

Since the beginning of 19th century, psychological testing and educational tests have influenced the human mind. The various psychologists across the world have their own definitions and interpretations of individual intelligence. Thus, came into existence the practice of carrying out evaluation of an individual. For the last many years, report cards issued by schools and institutions have become a hallmark of an individual's success.

This review paper stands first out of the series of two written by researcher pointing towards the importance of study of evaluation and assessment, since it is an inseparable part of our education system. The focus of the review is on tracing the several studies to map evaluation as a practice. The review also attempts to highlight the research gaps in relevant knowledge along with reflection on the emergence of a complete evaluation system keeping in mind the various dimensions of scholastic and co-scholastic areas.

Key words: Learner, Curriculum, Evaluation, Scholastic, Co-Scholastic.

Theoretical Framework

> *Evaluation is certainly a "citizen of the sciences", and it is even necessary as a means to distinguish science from pseudo-science.*
>
> Scriven (1991).

Evaluation: All inside Classrooms

Evaluation, assessment and examination have been an integral part of education system since ages. The aims of education keep changing with time and according to the needs of the society. Likewise, the objectives, teaching - learning process, examination system, evaluation procedure, methods etc. are subsequently modified to fulfil the needs of the common man. With the advent of science, technology and machines in every sphere of life, the socio-philosophical advancements have changed the teaching-learning pedagogy, methods of teaching, examination, assessment and evaluation techniques and thus, the whole view inside the four walls of the classroom.

Srivastava (1979) defined and differentiated the meaning of 'educational evaluation' and 'evaluation of educational practice': while the former is defined as a process of estimating and appraising the degree and dimension of students' achievements, the later is the process of estimating and appraising the proficiency level of the particular educational practice which is being conducted.

Evaluation in Indian Context: A Retrospective View

The post-independence era witnessed the demand for change(s) and improvement in the examination system. Reform in the evaluation system was a prior area for carrying out research. While almost every central government (in power) appointed committees on the reorganizations of education system along with special emphasis over examination pattern and marking system, the state governments and provincial authorities also

identified the urgency of introducing reforms in the task of assessment. The following studies highlight the findings and discussions related with the evaluation aspect through which various researches across the country India has reached.

Sharma, N.R. (1966) conducted a study to find out the effect of change in syllabus on the pupil performance on examination reform- an analysis of public examination results of U.P. board, government higher secondary school. The study revealed that from year to year the average performance continuously increased in Hindi, Mathematics and Science but in English a reverse trend was noticeable from 1961 to 1965. The rural candidate on an average got five or more marks less in every subject than his urban counterpart.

Rao, R.S. (1968) conducted a study on the present systems of tests and examinations- both internal and external- in the secondary schools of Madras state, with a view to suggesting lines on which a reform of examinations may be carried out. The investigation was carried out to study the present systems of tests and examinations in the secondary schools of Madras state with special reference to present practices followed in conducting internal and external examinations, structure of question paper and the appropriateness of items from the point of view of their discriminatory power and difficulty value and their relationship with the syllabus and some problems arising out of the introduction of internal assessment. It was found that in many cases the question papers were not properly balanced as far as the difficulty values of the items were concerned. They failed even to discriminate pupils of high from low abilities. When the expectations of the schools regarding the students who would pass or fail were compared with the actual declaration of eligible and non-eligible students through public examination, it was found that 15.1 percent of the students who were expected to pass were declared unsuccessful and 4.1 percent of

the students were declared successful in the public examination.

Srinivasan, R. (1969) worked on the comparative study of language abilities and scholastic achievement of secondary school children belonging to certain social class categories. The objectives were to know the language abilities and scholastic achievement of the children of different class categories. Comprehensive language ability test, progressive matrices test and social class category was used on a sample of seven city schools and five rural schools in the state of madras of class 8th and 9th. The results showed that the middle class seems to choose congenial and advantageous environment for the promotion of education among its children. Lower class people have neither time nor inclination to associate themselves with the activities of the school. They rarely meet the teachers and discuss their children's academic life. Working class parents and their rural counterparts hardly give time to their children whereas children of the urban professional are few to perform better on the progressive matrices test than the other groups. Middle class children have better language abilities than the children of lower class.

Sinha, S.K. (1977) in his research work has studied the attitudes of students, teachers and guardians towards the present system of examination. The study also focused on their attitude towards different measures of improving the examination system, the relevance of some important factors like sex, faculty, degree in education, achievement level and ethnicity which was supposed to influence the attitudes of students towards the present system of examination. It was found that the present system of examination has both merits and demerits. According to the students, teachers and guardians it had more demerits than merits. Most of them were dissatisfied with the existing examination system and wanted immediate and adequate improvement in it.

Reddy, A.V.R. (1979) compared the attitude of teachers of two institutions towards internal assessment. The views of the teachers of a university college where internal assessment (IA) was going to be introduced from the next academic year (C1) was compared with those of the teachers of another university college where the system was being tried out for a few years (C2). The observations were: all the teachers had favourable attitude towards IA except the arts faculty of C1 college, many teachers preferred partial internal assessment, the students of C1 college were mostly dependent on lecture notes while more than half of the teachers felt that students didn't learn the subject better in this system.

Gunasekaran K. and Jayanthi P. (1980) in their research study of the continuous assessment and the university examination marks of the undergraduate semester courses, revealed that both the groups were in favour of the grade system of ranking, internal assessment, supplementing the external examination, semester system and objective type test. The teachers gave high importance to oral test but students gave a low importance. Both the groups gave equal average importance to innovations in the examination system.

Rao, K. Sudha (1981) studied the influence of continuous evaluation on learning in school over eight hundred students and found that frequent tests seem to have positive influence on normal school situation. High education has positive influence in the performance of the children. Centre schools are no way inferior to public schools so, far as gain in learning during formative evaluation, frequent tests improve learning both in central and public schools. Frequent reinforcement given in the form of letter grades and teacher comments are not effective in improving students' performance.

Natarajan V. and Kulshrestha S. (1983) in their study on assessment of non- scholastic aspects of learner behaviour stressed on the need for a profile of achievement in all aspects of growth- scholastic and non-scholastic. The study suggested

ways and means for improvement of measurement and testing procedures of non-scholastic aspects within the affective domain. It surveyed the tools and techniques to record the evidences in affective/non-scholastic domain and also suggested various performa for assessment and guidelines for preparing reports, interpretation and communication of the results.

The study pointed out that educational institutions confine themselves to the development of scholastic abilities mainly. The affective domain is almost neglected, non-scholastic aspects has been denied its proper place, teachers do not attempt to assess the non-scholastic abilities as they are not clearly observed, develop slowly and become visible after a long time. It is difficult to assign quantitative values to them. The evidences collected through tools, tests and techniques must be scored, checked and analysed to assess logical inferences regarding non-scholastic aspects of learners' growth and to be reported to users in a meaningful way.

Rao R.S. and Bharathi M. (1989) in their work on evaluation of continuous evaluation system of examination in Kendriya Vidyalayas reported that nominal success of the system was observed in Hindi in both Vishakhapatnam and Delhi schools. Partial success was observed in Science in the Delhi school and also in Social studies in Vishakhapatnam school. Complete success of the system was observed in English in the Delhi school and in Mathematics in the Vishakhapatnam school. In Sambalpur, the system was a complete failure. Discipline and regularity seemed to be the objective which parents appreciated in this system, 25% of the students in two sample schools disliked the present system of evaluation. Teachers were positive towards this system and majority of teachers think that it promoted creativity, analytical ability, regularity and command over the subjects by students.

Malhotra et al. (1989) conducted a status study of the existing system of internal assessment of students in the polytechnics of Haryana. The study observed that students

were informed about the criterion of assessment of their course work in the beginning of the semester; however no guidelines were available to the teachers. No uniform pattern with regard to the elements of course work assessment existed in the college. The most commonly used elements for assessment in theory subjects were class tests, homework and class work while workshops, field exercise, practical notebook, oral tests and attendance in the practical subjects. It was found that the methods used for assessing practical skills in laboratory/workshop did not ensure assessment of the various sub-component skills, attitudes and behavioural aspects. Even the students expressed dissatisfaction with the techniques used for assessment, since it lacks objectivity.

Malhotra et al. (1990) designed a system of student evaluation incorporating multi point entry and credit system for different streams. It discussed credit based design of the scheme of study. Each course of the study was assigned specific number of credit hours and the students from different streams such as 10+, 10+2, 10+2 vocational etc. were allowed to enter the programme with exceptions granted for courses on the basis of their background. Flexibility in terms of earning maximum or minimum number of credits in a term to satisfy learner's pace of learning, autonomy in terms of course offerings curriculum prescriptions, modes of instructional delivery and certification were also highlighted. It also emphasised on the design for making evaluation of students' performance in course work and end-term examination more valid and reliable.

The Plan of Action (1992) and National Curriculum Framework (2000) has also emphasised over the importance and immediate requirement of internal assessment in Indian classrooms. However, the last decade (1990-2000) has not witnessed any major evaluation and assessment policy implementation in India.

The Paradigm Shift: Understanding CCE

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) has emerged as an excellent illustration in the changing scenario. It focuses on developing multiple intelligences of a learner. The introduction of this scheme has had certain influence on the teachers and school administration. The traditional examination system has received a major setback due to the illusions present. It has also led educational researchers to opt for some other alternatives. CCE is a school based evaluation system which is formulated to fulfil the objective of all round holistic development of the child.

The basic feature of continuous and comprehensive evaluation is continual assessment i.e. assessment from the beginning and during the instructional process and periodicity i.e. frequency/term of assessment. It comprises of two terms, one is continuous and the other is comprehensive. Here continuous means continuity in assessment and regularity, which should be inbuilt within the teaching-learning activity. It is further divided into formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment is conducted within the teaching-learning situation and summative assessment is done at the end or term. Comprehensive on the other hand comprises of assessment of all the aspects besides academics such as life skills, behaviour, attitude, interest, emotional aspect, physical aspect (health), values, and outdoor activities etc. Technically, comprehensive evaluation has been divided into scholastic and co-scholastic areas whereby scholastic is directly related to the assessment of the children academics by using different tools and techniques, or different modes of assessment such as home assignment, worksheets, seminar, symposium, group-discussion / activity, project, survey, written assignment, written test etc. whereas co-scholastic includes assessment of basic understanding about health, habits, interests, attitudes, values, participation in co-curricular activities.

Concluding Thoughts

The main purpose of curriculum and evaluation is to bridge the gap among the individual(s), society and the school. The education system in India has most of the times single handedly focused on categorizing the learner into pass-fail, first-second-third divisions and sometimes merely as promoted through supplementary examination. The recommendations mentioned by various commissions and authorities in the last six decades have underlined the lacunas present in the educational system, particularly related with examination and evaluation. The mind of the learner has always been treated as a centre of rote memorization thus, not allowed to stand outside the frame of marks and divisions. Evaluation should focus on reducing the prevalent anxiety and burden among the youth which is an outcome of the non-productive education and faulty evaluation practices, followed at present.

Though evaluation inside Indian classrooms is synonym to the irreversible judgements and mercurial subjectivity but, reforms have invariably been carried out in the traditional procedures and practices. Mere memorisation and mechanical learning have certainly been replaced by outcomes of pedagogical procedures and advanced psychological theories and principles. Concluding, this review paper sees reforms in examination and evaluation system (keeping the process learner centre) as a part of mainstream education which further highlights research and evaluation as an empirical enquiry method and technique for producing new knowledge.

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