

STREAMLINING TEACHER EDUCATION WITH EXAMINATION REFORMS

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Abstract

The 21st century begins with some radical changes in Indian education system and the examination reform is one of them. Its paradigm shifted to many innovative assessment practices into reality and some others are in wait to be implemented. These reforms even touched the school education which is now adopting innovative assessment approaches blessed with ICT. This trend has created the new role of teachers and consequently it demands special assessment skills on part of a teacher. It imposed a challenge before teacher education to train the teachers for such new circumstances. Scarcely, teacher education programmes have made significant effort to resolve this issue. This paper is a sincere call for streamlining of teacher education with recent examination reforms at school level. It presents logical arguments about the grave need of orientation and training for innovative assessment practices. The paper also suggests a plan of action to realize this approach, keeping the probable constraints into consideration.

Key Words: *Examination Reforms, ICT, Assessment Skills, and Technology-Enhanced Assessment.*

Introduction

Education is recognized across the globe as the most vital public service. Assessment is the crucial part of the educational process as some form of it is necessary to determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It is a central feature of teaching, learning, and the curriculum. Assessment is essential to allow individuals to get the educational support they need to succeed, to see the effectiveness of different educational methods, and to ensure that education budgets are being spent effectively. An important role that every teacher has to play is assessing the learner's progress, both in terms of their psycho-physical development and the criteria set by the curriculum.

Recent Developments under Examination Reforms

The 21st century begins with some radical changes in Indian education system and the examination reform is one of them. Examination reforms refer to the induced changes intended to improve the assessment as a reliable, valid, and objective instrument for the assessing learner's all-round development. It includes modification in or withdrawal of faulty assessment techniques, and implementation of innovative assessment methods. It brings many innovative assessment practices into reality and many new ones are waiting for being implemented. This is happened probably due to the globalization of education and intervention of ICT in education. The school education is now adopting school based assessment, alternative assessment, and technology-enhanced assessment. The CBSE has implemented school based evaluation in form of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) as a long-term goal of examination reform. School based assessment is held at school level unlike external examination conducted by the Boards of School Education. This is done by the teachers according to the schedule developed by the school and guidelines given by the Board. In the School Based System of assessment, the focus on the purpose of assessment has

changed. Now, it includes readiness testing, screening of development, evaluation of performance in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains more frequently, systematically and effectively. There is also a scope of self-assessment and peer-assessment as alternative assessment methods.

ICT in Assessment

ICT stand for information and communication technology and may be defined as a “diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information” (Blurton, 1999, p.1). It includes computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony. In assessment practices, the use of ICT is increasing day by day. CBSE is paying attention to computerization and digitalization of assessment system and acknowledged the evaluation of answer sheets digitally. The board has also decided to available the evaluated answer sheets to concern student through email. It is already started from session 2013-2014. These steps lead to develop a system of Technology-Enhanced Assessment, which refers the use of technology to extend or add value to assessment and feedback process (JISC, 2010). It includes digital evaluation of answer sheets and provides feedback to the learner. The online examination and on-demand examination are also gaining popularity. National Institute of Open Schooling, India (NIOS) has introduced ICT based On-Demand Examination (ODE) at Secondary and Senior Secondary stages of Education. It is again imposed the need of training of teachers for technology-enhanced assessment.

Status of Assessment Practices in Schools

CBSE has published the data about implementation status of CCE in its schools and expressed the dissatisfaction towards teachers' performance under CCE. The board has remarked that the teachers need to maintain methodical documentation of student's behaviors as evidences of Co Scholastic Assessment and they must plan multidisciplinary, values based and group projects for their students as assessment for learning (CBSE, 2013a). This remark also highlights the crucial role of teachers in the success of new assessment system. Therefore mere adoption of innovative assessment practices in schools can't ensure their effectiveness in providing quality education. The studies also revealed the poor implementation of CCE in schools. The teachers are not adequately prepared for the effective execution of CCE and need proper training (Hassan, 2010; Kothari & Thomas, 2012; Singhal, 2012). The implementation of CCE in its real essence is a big challenge in a country like India (Kalia, Arora & Sharma, 2012).

Assessment skills for Teachers

A teacher should equip with the assessment skills according to the demand of the profession. Assessment skills refer to the set of skills necessary for the practicing the existing assessment techniques proficiently. This definition confirms dynamic nature of term 'assessment skills', as the set of skills changes with respect to time and place. It laid emphasis on the proficiency standards which stands for the degree of expertise of the practitioner in assessment and evaluation. In other words, proficiency standards explain 'how well teachers conceptualized assessment, and how well can they do it'.

According to the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students (1990) teachers should be skilled in following areas:

- Selection and development of assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions

- Execution of assessment and interpretation the assessment results
- Utilizing assessment results in making decisions about learners, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement
- Developing valid grading procedures for learners
- Communicating assessment results to stakeholders
- Recognizing ethical and legal issues in assessment of learners (as cited in Brookhart, 2011)

The ACPA ASK Project-2006 suggested a comprehensive categorization of assessment skills in terms of Proficiency standards covering different aspects of assessment and evaluation at professional level (Mitchell, 2006). The relevant points can be briefed as follows:

- **Assessment Design:** Ability to design a quantitative assessment plan including learning objectives, measurement of student achievement of those objectives, selection of appropriate quantitative data collection techniques, and analysis plan. Ability to determine the type of assessment desired or anticipated as being most useful by a specific group.
- **Articulating Learning and Development Outcomes:** Ability to articulate intentional student learning and development goals and their related outcomes. Ability to gather evidence through formative and summative assessment of the degree to which students demonstrate the projected outcomes.
- **Selection of Data Collection and Management Methods:** Ability to identify the types of data/information needed to perform the assessment. Ability to select methods and techniques of data collection and analysis appropriate to answering the questions posed by the assessment project.
- **Assessment Instruments:** Ability to identify strengths and weaknesses of established assessment instruments and select most appropriate instruments for the desired measurement target.
- **Analysis of Assessment:** Ability to analyze and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data. Ability to use software appropriate to these analyses.
- **Assessment Ethics:** Ability to appropriately determine when and where data and findings should be promulgated in a way that respects confidentiality and/or anonymity of the participants. This category is perhaps the most important as non-scholastic aspects of learners are also given due weightage in their academic evaluation.
- **Effective Reporting and Use of Results:** Ability to develop an appropriate written report of findings and to effectively communicate results that recognizes the stakeholders in terms of sophistication, areas of sensitivity, and level of detail likely to be effective and helpful.
- **Politics of Assessment:** Ability to use assessment in the context of strategic planning, budgeting, unit or institutional decision-making including use of assessment to effect changes when warranted.
- **Assessment Education:** Ability to educate others about the goals, needs, and techniques of assessment. Ability to work with educators across the institution on shared outcomes.

This categorization is meant for practitioners and scholars in the field of assessment and

evaluation. Since the teachers have assigned the responsibility of evaluation of their students, these skills are equally important to teachers also. Beside the above list, it is vital to add one more category, which can be termed as 'ICT skills for assessment'. It refers to the ability of using recent ICTs in assessment procedure effectively. It also connotes to the ability of developing new technologies for better assessment system. These skills are not purely exclusive from the above categories, rather intertwined with all of them. This set of skills permit the practitioners to go beyond the human limitations and to make the process of assessment and evaluation reliable, transparent as well as economic in terms of time, energy and money.

Role of Teacher in New Scenario

The expectations of the school system from a teacher change from time to time, responding to the broader social, economic and political changes taking place in the society (NCFTE-2009, p. 2). The teacher must be equipped not only to teach but also to understand and facilitate the students through continuous observation and assessment. Teacher must be efficient in using innovative practices under CCE system. No system can function in the absence of the availability of the right quality of teachers (NCFTE-2009, p. 18). In this context, there is a need to redefine the role of teachers under new assessment system. Teachers are now the evaluators of their students also and they should use assessment for learning along with assessment of learning.

Teacher Education and Examination Reforms

At present both pre-service and in-service training of school teachers are extremely inadequate and poorly managed. The training of teachers happens in insular, intellectually indigent environments that are detached from ground realities as well as the aims of education it advocates (NCFTE-2009, p. 6-10). The NCF-2005 has raised the issues regarding pedagogy, learning experiences, practical works as well as assessment system in teacher education. NCFTE-2009 has recommended CCE as one of the significant areas to the professional development of teachers at all stages, both in their pre-service and in-service training. The current model of practice teaching is failed to provide the opportunity to get hands-on experience of innovative assessment methods.

Rajput, Tewari and Kumar (2005) have concluded that intensive and need-based training of teachers in assessment procedures is required for school-based evaluation system in Indian schools. Rao and Rao (n.d.) revealed that CCE demands the development of essential evaluation skills and competencies among teachers in order to integrate evaluation with their teaching-learning process assist students in the attainment of required standards through proper guidance, feedback and remediation. The findings of international studies also confirm that awareness and teachers' training plays important role in school based evaluation (Singh et al., 2004; Hayford, 2007; Begum & Farooqui, 2008; Bello & Tijani, (n. d.); Kakai, 2010; Pinar, 2011).

In the light of NCF-2005, NCFTE-2009 and the results of research studies on assessment system in schools, the teacher education programmes should also be focused on training of in-service as well as prospective teachers for innovative assessment methods and techniques. The approach in training for assessment should be futuristic. The dimensions of training for assessment and evaluation which must be taken into account in teacher education programmes are assessment skills, innovative assessment practices, and technology-enhanced assessment.

Streamlining Teacher Education with Examination Reforms

A teacher has to be trained in relation to the needs and demands of the school, the learner and

the learning process. There is a dire need to reorganize teacher education system in the light of recent developments in assessment and evaluation. Teacher education must integrate assessment theories with field experiences in innovative assessment practices to help trainees to develop necessary skills of assessment. Teachers should be skilled in organizing and executing assessment, as well as in providing feedback and follow up the results for improvement.

The different boards of school education and other agencies are making efforts for training of in-service teachers. CBSE has seriously taken the task of training of in-service teachers for CCE, and established the Centre for Assessment, Evaluation, and Research (CAER) through public private partnership with Pearson Foundation. They launched Assessment Training Programme (ATP) from February 2013 for teachers and principals (CBSE, 2013 b). CBSE has instructed schools to organize more workshops for their teachers on various aspects of CCE (CBSE, 2013a). Some private agencies like NIIT have also started training programme on CCE for teachers and other office staff.

On the other side, the inclusion of this issue in pre-service teacher education programmes is badly ignored. The curriculum of in-service teacher education has inadequately included the recent examination reforms. Few universities and institutions have incorporated topics like CCE, ODE, and online examination in theoretical part of their B.Ed. curriculum. But, such topics hardly find their place in the practical part of B.Ed. curriculum.

Plan of Actions

The plan of actions for streamlining teacher education with examination reforms includes both in-service and pre-service teacher education programmes. The plan of action also follows dual approach – that is – training for and training through innovative assessment practices.

- 1. Action Plan for In-service Teacher Education:** In case of in-service teacher education the training for innovative assessment practices is a better approach. The action plan consists of three phases- development of training scheme in first phase, development of peer group trainers in second phase and training of in-service teachers in final phase. To execute this plan we need survey experts, professional assessment trainer and peer group trainers. A comprehensive survey will be conducted to find out the conceptual status of teachers on these practices, their problems and requirements regarding new examination system. Based on the findings a scheme for in-service training will be formulated and workshops, refresher courses, and symposiums will be planned for in-service teachers by the experts of assessment and evaluation. Then will be oriented about whole scheme and strategy of training. Some selected in-service teachers will be trained by these groups of professional assessment trainer accordingly. These peer group trainers should be trained upto professional level and they will train the in-service teachers at their work stations. Video lectures with real illustrations can also help better to develop concepts among in-service teachers. They have to be encouraged to participate actively in these activities. The feedback of in-service teachers at regular intervals is also beneficial to evaluate and modify the action plan.

Along with the above plan short term certificate courses on modern assessment methods and techniques will also helpful for in-service teachers. For this purpose faculty of Teacher Education of Central Universities and research institutions should develop their Measurement and Evaluation section to professional level and arrange such specialized courses.

2. **Action Plan for Pre-service Teacher Education:** The action plan for streamlining pre-service teacher education should follow both approaches - training for as well as training through innovative assessment practices. Under training for assessment approach the curriculum of pre-service programmes and internship (or practice teaching) will be modified with respect to examination reforms. The curriculum of in-service programme has inadequately included the recent reforms in examination system which is largely theoretical in nature. The theoretical part of curriculum should include topics on recent assessment practices adequately. These topics should be compulsory to all trainees.

It is also felt that the internship programme is largely focused on the development of teaching skills among students and the training for assessment is badly ignored. In this context, the internship programme must provide the following opportunities for trainees:

- Interaction sessions with school teachers to share their experiences with trainees about new assessment practices
- Participant observation of assessment activities held in schools
- Designing assessment task based on any innovative assessment practice, executing, reporting and feedback to the stakeholders
- Preparation of a report on their experiences with new assessment system including its strength, weakness, and suggestion for improvement

Training through innovative assessment practices refers to implementation of innovative assessment practices in assessment of trainee-teachers. It is wise to ensure the active participation of trainees in their assessment, which can also provide some experiences to them about new assessment techniques. It may include self-assessment, peer-assessment, assessment through team project, and assessment of co-scholastic aspect of trainees.

Issues in Streamlining Teacher Education

The in-service training is a long-term process and demands both committed resource persons as well as financial support. The pre-service teacher education programmes are already overloaded with different activities and hardly fit in the specified duration of the programme. Most of the trainees are not getting their internship in schools which have implemented innovative assessment practices. Such schools may not ready to allow the trainees participate in assessment procedure in the name of confidentiality. Therefore, incorporating the above plan and activities during the internship is a challenging task. It needs a reorganization of the curriculum and needs to increase the duration of the pre-service teacher education programme. The above mission demands sufficient number teacher educators who are experts in innovative assessment practices.

Concluding Remarks

Modern teacher education has to functions under a global canvas created by the concepts of 'learning society', 'learning to learn', and 'assessment for learning'. The teacher education must be responsive to demands of schools, society, and nation. Therefore, in response to the examination reforms in schools the teacher education should own the responsibility to train both the pre- and in-service teachers for new assessment system. The different agencies related to school education, assessment system, and research bodies should collaborate to resolve the issue of professional development of both pre- and in-service training of teachers.

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