

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AS AN EXAMINATION REFORM

DR. GYAN SINGH GAUTAM, G.RAVI KUMAR

Abstract: The examination system of India has remained unchanged from so many years. No doubt, this system is full of stress. That's why most of Newspapers and Magazines publish articles on this topic during examination session. In the education system of India, ability of a student is decided by an exam. In this system there is no place for performance of a student is decided by an exam. In this system there is no place for performance of a student in full academic session. Scoring more and more marks in exams has become the only aim of a student.

Impact of this stressful examination system is immense. Those who are in favour of this system should think about those bad impacts. First of all, if this system is good then all those who secure good marks in these must be brilliant and successful in life but reality is different. Now a day's most of institutions don't give admission on marks basis. They have a separate test and this trend is growing rapidly because they have no faith in this examination system. Unfortunately, these institutions too rely on exams for assessment of a student. This faulty examination system is forcing so many students to commit suicide every year. These incidents are growing rapidly. According to an estimates more than 20,000 students has committed suicide in the last year. The mindset of the society is also responsible for making exams a source of stress. If someone scores good marks in examination then society starts treating him like a hero. On the other hand if someone scores less marks then society treats him just like an untouchable. At this point one question arises. What is the importance of getting more and more marks in an examination? Just getting admission in a reputed educational institution or making first impression to any employer firm? If anyone gets a job then he must have to perform well on practical front. Marks of any examination won't work there. Only knowledge will work there.

In present education system teachers, instead of assisting learning, spend most of their time assessing learning. Instead of enabling and equipping students to learn, schools have taken on the function of examining and screening out on the basis of those examinations. So, the need of the hour is to make possible changes in whole education system. Our education system needs examination reforms. Format of exams must be changed. Marks should be given for performance of overall academic year. It should be given on behavior of student, on his performance in extracurricular activities, on performance in class test, on attendance.

Key Words: Assessment, Examinations, Periodically, Portfolio, Coherent, Component

Introduction: The last one and a quarter century of the history of examinations in India indicates a number job trends. The dominant one among the trends is that of recognizing evaluation as integrated with the educational process, broadening its scope to mean something beyond and much more than a mere examination or a test. It is a move towards realizing evaluation as a total school concept' (Singh, Pritam 1989).

This will lead to our consideration of evaluation as a means to an end and not an end in itself. It means evaluation has an important role to play as a teaching – learning device to inform and direct the activities involved in it.

In this section we shall examine in detail what is meant by Continuous-assessment and how/what it offers to serve the purpose.

Definition of Continuous assessment:

Continuous assessment is said to be more susceptible to description than to definition. Nevertheless Harris and Bell define it as "assessing periodically throughout a particular learning process. But it is not as simple as this, Continuous assessment is an umbrella descriptive term and not a technique of

assessment (Rogers. T.J, 1974). So, to explain it clearly, it is first necessary to identify the various aspects and dimensions it covers.

The West Yorkshire and Lindsey Regional Examinations Board which has undertaken valuable pioneering work in the adoption of Continuous assessment – refers to the process as follows:

- (a) It represents continuing awareness, by the teacher, of the development of knowledge of his pupils, it is a process which extends over a period of time : the gradual building of a cumulative judgment about performance.
- (b) A teacher making use of Continuous assessment is looking for signs which show the growth of thinking processes and the development of those varying abilities towards which the teaching is aimed ; he is more concerned with signposts than with the whole itinerary.
- (c) An end of course examination will test achievement at one point of time within the limits of the test; under continuous assessment there is knowledge not only for this achievement but also for progression towards it : not merely of where he

has got to but also of how he got there' (Roger.T.J, 1974).

What modes, approaches, techniques and kinds of testing does continuous assessment utilize to "assess periodically throughout a particular learning process"?

Techniques or types of tests for continuous assessment:-

To assess periodically throughout a learning process, what are the techniques of testing/kinds of tests to be used.

Portfolio assessment, class tests or unit tests are some of the important techniques for continuous assessment.

Portfolio Assessment: Portfolio assessment is that kind of assessment which ties more closely teaching to the intricacies of the student learning process. It involves setting activities at the beginning of the process of learning, after negotiation between the teacher and learner.

All through the process of learning, the construction of portfolios of students work is tracked. It is an ongoing compilation of student work. Informal conversations and at certain stages personal meetings of the teacher with individual students are arranged, when students become conscious of their mistakes and acquire a direction toward achievement. At other junctures, peer and self evaluation methods are also used to assist and monitor student learning. The portfolios or samples of student work form the evidence of students learning and achievement. In this way it is possible both to recognize the interests and aptitudes of students and monitor their development and achievement. Portfolios are a standing testimony of progress both for the learner and teacher – such assessment is concrete and authentic recording and appraising of student achievement.

Class tests: We usually equate class tests with what are called unit tests. These are more or less formal tests after the Xerox model of the Quarterly, Half yearly or Final Exams. After the completion of instruction of each unit pupils are tested for their acquisition and understanding of all knowledge that they have been exposed to in that particular unit.

A unit is defined as a related learning experience. A test which follows such a learning experience is to measure students achievement in order to improve it through feedback. The unit tests may be of different nature and kinds depending upon the purpose of the unit, its scope and the nature of the subject matter in it. The time allotted, type of questions and the mode of testing could be chosen depending on the learning content in the unit covered. Such tests highlight the area of weakness for students and serve as a diagnostic test with limited use, with reference to a particular topic in the class concerned.

Slip tests, dictations, surprise tests are all several other terms which are used to talk of class tests. These are also techniques of bringing evaluation closer to instruction to enhance and direct student achievement.

The class tests are tailored by the teacher who has the context of her/his class and students in mind. The Board doesn't dictate to the teacher, what rules to follow to make such tests or what questions to ask in these tests.

The kind of tests which many schools have the practice of holding throughout the year, also now have attained a very formal nature. They have become to students a threat of facing a mini examination session every month. The features and advantages of continuous assessment are totally lost sight of in such a practice. These formal tests and also class assignments will contribute much to mark the progress of students if they are also freed of the formal achievement test atmosphere.

Teacher Observation: By virtue of his/her position the teacher is the only person able to conduct Continuous assessment through the technique of observation. The teacher here marks individual pupil's progress by closely monitoring their moves towards it. This technique of assessing helps the teacher to ensure success for all the students, by being able to diagnose their difficulties in time and give them specific help.

The purpose of such assessment carried out by the teacher is to look for specific sensitive information about the problems of the students such as what a doctor going on his rounds looks for in his patients.

This technique is the most informal of the techniques of assessment for Continuous assessment. It is something that every teacher had always been involved in doing, both students and the teacher not paying much conscious attention to it. This is concerned with the impression, the teacher records in her mind of the individual pupil's attainment and effort in the learning process. Except for the administrative problems – when it comes to public consumption, such assessments hold great potential to serve instructional purposes. They become an appropriate, cost – effective, ongoing check on the work of the pupils.

The use of such alternative forms of assessment and the techniques involved there in help to maintain a 'coherent curriculum' (Johnson, R.K, 1989). It also poses different implications toward the participants and the components involved in it. The important of them being considered are the teacher and the subject matter.

Continuous Assessment and the Teacher :

The shift towards using such assessment, increases the demands on the teacher. The move towards such

changes in curriculum might lighten or alter her role to be a guide, facilitator, monitor or a friend even, but in the area of assessment it increases his/her responsibility. This shouldn't be discouraging but should be appreciated as a move towards legitimizing the types of assessment that help for teaching itself. Introducing continuous assessment is a move towards teacher-empowerment. Through this a teacher can use evaluation to hand in hand with teaching, keeping the context of her students and their progress in view. And it provides her with the information by which she can mould her teaching to ensure learning in every student.

Continuous assessment is extremely valuable in providing teachers with information of the teaching-learning relationship for each pupil. And it is the subjective nature of the assessment, far from lessening the demands made upon the assessors, increases them.

Whether continuous assessment is designed for internal classroom use or in an external examination, the basic requirements remain the same, Viz. :

- (1) Careful consideration of objectives, both in a partial and in a total sense.
- (2) Knowledge of, and ideally, ability to construct assessment appropriate for the achievement of the objectives.
- (3) Careful planning. The more closely the assessment and the teaching are knit together, the more imperative it is that detailed planning takes place. If this is not done then there will inevitably be distortion.
- (4) The maintenance of detailed records. This is as much for the teachers benefit as for that of an outside agency. (Trevor J. Rogers, 1974).

In summary, teachers making use of continuous assessment in any organized framework require commitment, experience and assistance. Greater objectivity and detachment on the part of teachers in relation to the assessment of their own pupils should be achieved. If this occurs, then the benefits of Continuous assessment can be obtained without the attendant disadvantages.

That continuous assessment will provide a more valid assessment goes without saying. Only the teaching profession can however, turn this potential into a reality.

Continuous Assessment and Subject Matter:- Continuous assessment is an enormously useful and powerful way of assessment for certain purposes only. We cannot regard Continuous assessment as solving everybody's problems in every subject. So it is important here, in our discussion to see, which subject matter yields itself more to Continuous assessment.

There are certain aspects of subjects, certain objectives which you are aiming at in your teaching,

for which Continuous assessment is contra indicated. If you want to measure factual knowledge you do not need Continuous assessment. When you come to the development of the aesthetic attitudes and the development of skills, the continuous assessment comes into its own. "Informal assessments (probably not called 'tests' at all) should be part of the learning programme, a constant source of feedback on the way in which students are developing the application skill.

" Communicative exchange must be judged in its context." (Andrew Harrison, 1983). Therefore Continuous assessment should be used only when it is clear that it is going to be an advantage to do so; we should not think that it can be applied everywhere.

Rogers quotes Prof. J.T. Allanson who makes the same point very cogently when he says – "the most reliable indicator of ripeness in pears and cheeses is still a well informed thumb.." (Rogers 74). Likewise, the choice of appropriate way of assessment in learning depends upon the subject matter in question.

There are many subjects in which the examination of course work is essential if these subjects are not to be restricted by the requirements of external examinations. Art is an obvious example. Art work undertaken in examination time tends to restrict art to a two dimensional means of expression, whereas assessment of course work would encourage the growth of three dimensional work and allow complete freedom as to the size of the work.

Conclusion:- The list of subjects amenable to continuous assessment can be extended to include craft, music, science.

Recent research into the nature of language (also considered an arts subject) suggests that language learning is twofold in terms of competence and performance.

Morrow (1979) and Canale and Swain (1980) argued that communicative language testing, as well as being concerned with what the learner knows about the form of the language and about how to use it appropriately in contexts of use (competence), must also deal with the extent to which the learner is actually able to demonstrate this knowledge in a meaningful communicative situation (performance), i.e., what he can do with the language, or as Rea (Rea, 1978) put it : his ability to communicate with ease and effect in specified sociolinguistic settings:. (as quoted by Wier, 1990).

Thus unlike content areas the features of language learning make it important to employ continuous and progress testing. Against this theoretical background therefore, the problem of studying the implementation of continuous assessment policy in the new/revised CBSE Class IX Language curriculum

has been chosen. In chapter 3 a review of issues in language testing is presented.

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Dr. Gyan Singh Gautam / Professor & Head, Dept. of English, / IEHE, Bhopal (M.P)
G. Ravi Kumar / Research Scholar / Barkatullah University, Bhopal