



Assessment in Higher Education: A Case of Central University of South Bihar

KEYWORDS

Assessment, Evaluation, Higher Education, CCE

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ABSTRACT Basic principles of educational assessment and evaluation say that they are an integral part of teaching-learning process and enhance instruction. In principle, the conducive environment for examinations assures absence of anxiety and fear from the minds of the students. Also, it is based on testing of all the three domains – Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor. But, in the present examination system in India all these principles are absent. For decades, the country has witnessed an examination system, particularly in higher education, that is totally summative in nature, emphasizes lower levels of cognitive domain only through paper-pencil tests and does not provide scope for improvement in learning. In this situation, the Central University of South Bihar (CUSB) claims adoption of CCE in its true sense. Present paper describes the examination system of CUSB – a university without a conventional examination section and examines its functioning informally.

Introduction

Examinations are an indispensable part of the educational process as some form of assessment is necessary to determine the effectiveness of teaching learning process and their internalization by learners. According to the CBSE's CCE manual basic principles of educational assessment and evaluation say that it is an integral part of learning process and enhances instruction. These principles remind teachers that even though tests may be used primarily to diagnose or evaluate learners' achievement, in effect, they can also be a learning experience. Going over tests outcomes provide teachers with opportunity to reattach important information the learners may have missed. Observation and discussion over "right" responses can stimulate further to study about a particular topic. Emphasizing upon the continuous and formative nature of assessment, the document further says that effective teachers integrate their testing and evaluation processes in which they put a high value into their total instructional programs for the purpose of guiding and enhancing the student's learning. Hence, evaluation should be viewed as a component of curriculum with the twin purpose of effective delivery and further improvement in the teaching learning process. If properly understood, evaluation or assessment will not be perceived as something administered by the teachers and taken by the learners on the conclusion of a period of learning. When evaluation is seen as an end of the learning exercise, both the teachers and the learners will tend to keep it outside the teaching-learning process, rendering assessment broadly irrelevant and alien to the curriculum. Further, such a perception associates anxiety and stress with evaluation for learners. On the contrary, if evaluation is seen as an integral part built into the teaching learning process; learners will not perceive tests and examination with fear. It will lead to diagnosis, remedial action and enhancement of learning.

The scope of assessment in education extends to almost all the areas of learners' personality development. It should include both scholastic and co-scholastic areas, i.e. it should be *comprehensive* in nature. This is in line with the goals of education. So, it should be based on testing of all the three domains – Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor.

But, in the Indian system of education, particularly in higher education, the examinations, in general, are external and summative and thus do not provide scope for improvement. Most of the times, they are in paper pencil form covering only some lower levels of cognitive domain. However, various Commissions and Committees have felt the need for examination reforms. The *Hunter Commission (1882)*, *Calcutta University Commission or Sadler Commission (1917-1919)*, *Hartog Committee Report (1929)*, the *Report of Central Advisory Board or Sargeant Plan (1944)*, *Secondary Education Commission or Mudaliar Commission (1952-53)* have all made recommendations regarding reducing emphasis on external examination and encouraging internal assessment through CCE.

The *Kothari Commission report (1966)* observed, 'On the completion of the course, at the end of the lower or higher secondary stage, the student should receive a certificate from the school also giving the record of his internal assessment as contained in his cumulative record. This certificate may be attached to that given by the Board in connection with the external examination...' (9.81). Emphasizing on comprehensiveness of assessment, it further adds, 'It should be comprehensive, evaluating all those aspects of students' growth that are measured by the external examination and also those personality traits, interests and attitudes which cannot be assessed by it.' (9.84).

Report on the Committee for Review of NPE (1986) recommendation brought out by Government of India in 1991 lays down norms for "continuous comprehensive internal evaluation and suggests safeguards against abuse of this evaluation system" (268(iv)).

Report on the *CABE Committee on Policy* brought out by the MHRD, Govt. of India in January, 1992 has also referred to the provisions of NPE with regard to evaluation process and examination reforms and also suggested 'continuous and comprehensive internal evaluation of the scholastic and non-scholastic achievement of the students' (16.8).

"*Learning without Burden*"- Report of the National Advisory Committee appointed by the MHRD, Department of

Education, Govt. of India has stated - "Board examination, taken at the end of Class X and XII, have remained rigid, bureaucratic, and essentially uneducative...". Accordingly, National Curriculum Framework, 2005 proposing Examination Reforms stated, "Indeed, boards should consider, as a long-term measure, making the Class X examination optional, thus permitting students continuing in the same school (and who do not need a board certificate) to take an internal school examination instead" and continues, "Excellence in diverse areas should be recognized and rewarded. And it is children's responsiveness to what is taught rather than just their capacity to retain it that should be the focus of evaluation",

It is clear from above discussion that the evaluation in educational settings should be an outcome of continuous and comprehensive assessments. Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) refers to a system of internal evaluation of a student that covers all aspects of a student development. It is a developmental process of student which emphasizes on two fold objectives. These objectives are continuity in evaluation and assessment of broad based learning and behavioral outcomes on the other. 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.

Examination System of Central University of South Bihar

The Central University of South Bihar (CUSB), formerly Central University of Bihar is one among the newly established central universities in India in 2009. The university, without a conventional examination section, has adopted CCE in its true sense. The university follows semester system with hundred percent internal evaluation system of examination. The courses (papers) are designed to follow the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) in which, generally, one credit is defined as 10 hours class room teaching and accompanied home/library work/school contact programme/internship.

- There is continuous internal evaluation of the students learning and performance by the teacher(s). Considering the nature of the course, the teacher(s) decides the mode of internal evaluation which may include assignments, announced class tests, unannounced test, class participation, case studies, take-home tests, term paper(s), presentations etc.
- Evaluation pattern adopted for each course generally has point distribution as: continuous assessment 35 points, mid-term examination 15 points and end term examination 50 points. For the internal assessment, the teacher in consultation with the students and according to the requirements of the course decides upon the numbers and modes of assessments. In the prevailing system, generally, for a four credit course, 5 tests of 10 points each (including various modes e.g. class tests, presentations, project work etc.) are conducted and best three are taken into account for the calculation of 30 out of 35 points. Additional 5 points are awarded for class attendance and participation.
- Each course teacher(s) designs the examination/evaluation system (mid and end semester examinations and continuous assessment) for the course s/he offers with the approval of the Centre Committee/Department

Committee (CC/DC). The CC/DC is responsible for overall moderation of tests and evaluation. The pattern is made known to students at the beginning of each semester.

- Generally, each course is taught by one teacher who keeps all the records related to attendance, teaching and evaluation in a systematic manner. In case, the teacher has been assisted in teaching by other teacher(s), the teacher (in-charge for the course) becomes responsible for coordinating teaching and evaluation including award of final grade.
- This total internal evaluation conducted by the teacher(s) is validated externally. A Board of Examiners (BOE), consisting two external and one internal examiner, validates the result prepared by internal evaluation and forward it with due modification, if needed, to the Controller of Examination for final declaration of results. The Board is proposed by the CC and approved by the Chair, Academic Council. The BOE also addresses the students' grievances, if any, related to examinations.
- The answers scripts are shown and immediate feedback for further improvement is provided to the students after each and every assessment.
- The students are evaluated using indirect absolute system of grading based on 10 point scale.
- Grade Points Average (GPA) is calculated for each semester on the basis of grades obtained in that semester. Due weightage to the grade in a particular course is being ensured in proportion to the credit(s) of the course while calculating GPA.
- At the end of the programme, CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) is calculated. The CGPA are also convertible into percentage of marks using a given formula. The method of calculating GPA/CGPA ensuring weightage can be seen on the university website (www.cub.ac.in).
- At the end of each semester the students give feedback for the teacher and the course. The feedback sessions are conducted online and the feedback is forwarded to the concern teacher, keeping student's identity confidential, for further improvement of the teacher.

Discussion and Conclusion

The above given system of examination in CUSB is in its sixth year of use. Till date not a single complaint is received by the authorities regarding the system. To know the students' experience about this system of examination an informal interaction with the university students was carried out by the author. During this interaction the students shared that in this system of continuous assessment and immediate feedback the preparation is continuous throughout the semester and they do not feel any last moment pressure of cramming for the end term examinations. Immediate feedback helps them in self-analysis and planning for future preparation. However, some of them revealed that if a teacher adopts only one mode, say paper pencil classroom tests, then it becomes burdensome. They accepted that using various possible forms of assessment by a teacher, for instance assignments, seminars, participations, field activities, etc in addition to the typical classroom tests, helps students to enjoy the examination along with in improving the learning. Thus, it seems that following CCE in higher education is a better option; however, a formal inquiry about the students' experience about this system of examination is required.