

Report

Workshop on Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation at Ambedkar University, Delhi

May 21- 22, 2012

*Ahvaan Group**

In collaboration with the Ambedkar University, Delhi (AUD), the Ahvaan Group (supported by Ahvaan Trust) decided to have a workshop on Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) during May 21-22, 2012 at AUD. Based on focus group discussions with more than forty teachers working in various government schools in Delhi, the Ahvaan group realised that CCE was a major concern for all stakeholders in education.

The participants of the workshop included school teachers from various government schools in Delhi, academics, teacher educators from various institutions (SCERT, DIET, Delhi University and AUD), researchers and people working in the area of child rights. The workshop focussed on the following themes:

- Teachers' conception of CCE and their experiences of implementing it
- Understanding the concept of CCE
- Some tools to enable assessment of children's learning.

The purpose of the workshop was to initiate a reflection on the pedagogy and assessment that CCE envisages. In a way, it was a first step to move away from regarding CCE as a 'technique' and to deliberate up on the broader pedagogical concerns it encapsulates – particularly those at the intersection of the ideas of evaluation, the agency of children and teachers, and the relational ethos in schools. The workshop was structured in a way that teachers could share their concerns and experiences of CCE and reflect on questions like: What are the major

shifts (if any) that teachers observe between CCE and the traditional pattern of evaluation? What changes do teachers observe in children's learning with the shift to the new approach to teaching-learning and evaluation? How would they ideally want to assess children in their classrooms? Whether the purpose of 'assessing' is to understand and support learning or is it to 'evaluate' a child?

The first day's sessions involved plenary discussions, focus group deliberations on specific questions, and a presentation on the idea of CCE by an academic who has worked at policy levels in the area of assessment. The deliberations of the first session brought to the fore several concerns that teachers have and the confusions they encounter while implementing CCE. The implementation of the RtE Act in schools mandates a need to change from the traditional evaluation pattern to what is called the continuous and comprehensive approach to assessment. The manner in which the mandate has been communicated to schools, has created a situation of flux and confusion among the teachers. Teachers are under pressure to hurriedly implement CCE without fully understanding the objectives and without the training and resources required.

The present situation makes teachers feel that the traditional system of examinations is being dressed up in a new set of terminology of (formative and summative assessment, scholastic and co-scholastic domains, and the like) instead of the necessary holistic shift in approach to assessment. It would appear that

even academic authorities lack an understanding of CCE. In these circumstances, the work of a teacher is limited to that of mechanically maintaining different kinds of records and registers, instead of thinking about teaching-learning and assessment in a comprehensive fashion. Further, the limited infrastructure, the high pupil teacher ratios in many schools and the burden of covering the syllabus and compiling these registers, constrain them from reflecting on CCE and realizing their pedagogic imaginations. As a result, there is a huge gap between how CCE (or for that matter any change) has been conceptualised and how it is being implemented.

These discussions were taken forward in the second session by identifying some of the broad concerns CCE seeks to address – the psychological burden, the increasing competitive and commercialised ethos in education, the lack of freedom and equity, and the contradictions of ‘objective’ assessments. The assessment systems followed at the University levels and in other countries were also discussed, particularly to highlight the overall educational experience of a learner and its emotional and intellectual impression on her personality. From the first day’s sessions it emerged that although teachers appreciate the vision of CCE, the conditions in which they work do not allow them to be able to ‘implement’ or practice it properly.

The second day’s session began with a reflection on some real life assessment situations to gauge how they matched the concept of CCE. It was stressed that the manner in which CCE is being implemented in schools at present, compromises the whole CCE approach. The changes that CCE envisions were discussed through the specific instance of the switch from report cards to children’s cumulative records/portfolios.

The following session pursued the idea of ‘shift’ in some more detail. The participants reflected on the ‘shifts’ they have experienced in

teaching-learning at school over the past decade or so. These discussions brought-out that in essence CCE is not a ‘new’ way of assessment – many teachers have been practicing assessment in the way CCE expects them to. However, the difference is that the teachers can now formally use such assessment.

Further in the session, through the sharing of teachers’ everyday experiences, the group engaged in debates which are central to the ethos of assessment practices, or rather the whole pedagogic environment in schools, but are often considered to be peripheral in discussions on CCE. These related to democracy, equity and agency of a child. As a particular instance, the participants deliberated extensively, on the practice of corporal-punishment in schools. This discussion brought out the complicated relational ethos in schools, and how it is difficult to discuss and situate CCE ignoring this ethos. It was also felt that without understanding child as a partner in learning and creating democratic teaching-learning spaces, the vision that a humane assessment approach entails could not be realised.

The session following these discussions, focussed on the various ways of understanding a child’s learning and some possible tools that could facilitate these processes. These tools included observations and teacher-made schedules for observation, dialoguing with and listening to children, anecdotal records, peer appraisal, the teacher’s diary, written assessment and the child’s portfolio. The particular feature of these tools was that these were developed by researchers and teachers in actual classroom situations. The focus was not to present ‘model’ tools for replication, but to share some real-life exemplars used for understanding and supporting learning. The contextual design, purpose and nature of these tools were specific reference points in these presentations.