

ASSESSING CO-SCHOLASTIC AREAS

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Backdrop

The purpose of education is not confined to making students informed and knowledgeable only but is also concerned with developing a number of co-cognitive skills, attitudes and values which render the process of education to be a holistic and all round activity for ensuring a balanced personality. It is education which transforms the potential within the child to become an actuality. Through it children become capable of assuming responsibilities with a sense of purpose and direction and playing the role of useful and productive members of the society. Our schools are created with the intent that their activities and programs should contribute to the engendering of learning experiences which will be powerful and effective basis for acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

It has been often stressed that the aims of education in the present context of globalization should reflect the contemporary needs and aspirations of a society as well as its perennial values alongwith the immediate concerns of community.

Thus, they reflect the current and contextual articulations of broad and lasting human aspirations and values. It may, therefore, be readily perceived that attitudes, emotions and values form an integral part of cognitive development and are directly concerned with the development of language, mental representations, concepts, reasoning and valuing. As children's meta cognitive powers and capabilities emerge and develop, they become more conscious and aware of their own beliefs and they acquire the capability of self regulating their learning. In this framework it will be appropriate to highlight and comprehend the characteristics of learning as indicated below:

- All children are naturally motivated to learn and are capable of learning.
- Making meaning and developing the capacity for abstract thinking, reflection and work are the most important aspects of learning.
- Children learn in a variety of ways-through experience, making and doing things, experimentation, reading, discussion, asking, listening, thinking and reflecting, and expressing oneself in speech, movement or writing-both individually and with others. They require opportunities of all these

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in the course of their development.

- Teaching something before the child is cognitively ready takes away from real learning. Children may 'remember' many facts but they may not understand them or be able to relate them to the world around them.
- Learning takes place both within school and outside school. Learning is enriched if the two arenas interact with each other. Art and work provide opportunities for holistic learning that is rich in tacit and aesthetic components. Such experiences are essential to be learnt through direct experience, and integrated into life.
- Learning must be paced so that it allows learners to engage with concepts and deepen understanding, rather than remembering only to forget after examinations. At the same time learning must provide variety and challenge, and be interesting and engaging. Boredom is a sign that the task may have become mechanically repetitive for the child and of little cognitive value.
- Learning can take place with or without mediation. In the case of the latter, the social context and interactions, especially with those who are capable, provide avenues for learners to work at cognitive levels above their own.

Framework for assessment

Considering the relevance of the learning characteristics as outlined here long back in 1992 the NPE (revised) had desired that 'Continuous and Comprehensive Internal Evaluation of the scholastic and non-scholastic achievement of the students' should be an important concern. Taking the cue from the averment, the CBSE geared itself in for launching the adoption of CCE in the schools affiliated to it. The following assumptions as mentioned in their policy document appear to be the basic postulates of their proposal.

- Evaluation is goal directed, and educational outcomes are judged in terms of goal attainment. Every educational programme should aim for the all round development of the personality of the child. Therefore, the learning experiences provided in the school should contribute toward the achievement of the desired goals. A teacher, while deciding about the related learning experience should see both scholastic and co-scholastic outcomes as desirable behavioural outcomes of that programme.
- The scope of evaluation in schools 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. Evaluation is continuous and reveals the strengths and weaknesses of learners more frequently, so that the learners have better opportunity to understand and improve themselves. It also provides feedback to the teachers for modifying their teaching strategies.

- Understood properly, 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, it will become continuous like both teaching and learning. When evaluation is subsumed into teaching and learning, learners will not perceive tests and examination with fear. CCE will lead to diagnosis, remediation and enhancement of learning.

It is, thus, apparent that the scheme of CCE is avowedly a curricular initiative, attempting to shift emphasis from testing to holistic learning. It is purportedly aimed at creating good citizens possessing sound health, appropriate skills, desirable attributes, besides academic excellence which will promote a wellness life style for the personal well being of the pupils and others.

Changing the Evaluation paradigm

The objectives of the CCE have been set forth as follows:

- To help develop cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills.
- To lay emphasis on thought process and de-emphasize memorization.
- To make evaluation an integral part of teaching-learning process.
- To use evaluation for improvement of students achievement and teaching-learning strategies on the basis of regular diagnosis followed by remedial instruction.
- To use evaluation as a quality control device to maintain desired standard of performance.
- To determine social utility, desirability or effectiveness of a programme and take appropriate decisions about the learner, the process of learning and

the learning environment.

- To make the process of teaching and learning a learner-centered activity.

Since education is concerned with the total all-round development of the child, (physical, socio-emotional, intellectual etc) all aspects of the child's development need to be assessed. At the moment we do not assess the whole child, but only his or her academic achievement in specific areas. We assess learners basically on examination results, we do not assess effort, performance, attitudes to learning, ability to practically apply what is learned in everyday situations, nor do we assess them on how creatively they use techniques or critically evaluate different theories.

To make the process more comprehensive in nature, it is important that assessment of the child's learning be done in a whole range of situations and environments both in and out of the classroom. The assessment process also needs to be part of the way of providing information and feedback on the extent to which the school and teachers have been successful in realizing the expected outcomes of education.

Focus in Assessing the Learner

In view of getting a complete picture of the child's learning, assessment should focus on the learner's ability to-

- Learn and acquire desired skills related to different subject areas.
- Acquire a level of achievement in different subject areas in the requisite measure.
- Develop child's individual skills, interests, attitudes and motivation.
- Understand and lead a healthy and productive life.
- Monitor the changes taking place in child's learning, behaviour and progress over time.
- Respond to different situations and opportunities both in and out of school.
- Apply what is learned in a variety of environments, circumstances and situations.
- Work independently, collaboratively and harmoniously.
- Analyze and evaluate.

- Be aware of social and environmental issues.
- Participate in social and environmental projects and causes.
- Retain what is learned over a period of time.

Schools of the future will need to develop in their learners the ability to take risks, to be adaptable, to be flexible, to cope with constant change and become lifelong learners. In this context, learners become dynamic leaders with teachers as enablers.

Before looking at how assessment is to be undertaken teachers need to determine objectives for achievement at the school level. They need to look at what our schools should develop in children not only in the cognitive domain but also in the psychomotor and affective domains. Along with these attributes mentioned above they need to incorporate different age related indices and behaviours into the assessment criteria and practices. They also need to determine what their expectations are from the learner at the end of the schooling, and what kind of profile report is required in relation to different aspects and learning areas that reflect the child's rapidly changing personal development.

The Parameters of Assessment

Assessment is a useful, desirable and an enabling process. To realize this one needs to keep the following parameters in mind:

The needs to:

- Assess the learner.
- Use a variety of ways to collect information about the learner's learning and progress in subjects and cross curricular boundaries.
- Collect information continuously and record the same.
- Give importance to each learner's way of responding and learning and time it takes to do so.
- Report on an ongoing continuous basis and be sensitive to every learner's responses.
- Provide feedback that will lead to positive action and help the learner to do better.

In the assessment process, one should be careful NOT to:

- Label learners as slow, poor, intelligent etc.

- Make comparisons between them.
- Make negative statements.

Closely related to what needs to be assessed is the critical question about the periodicity of a child's progress. Assessment of the outcomes of learning in holistic education is integral to the teaching-learning process. Each session on learning should involve three parts: process of learning, applying what has been learned, and assessment of what has been learned. This is one way learning and assessment can combine.

In order to have *Continuous and Comprehensive evaluation*, both *scholastic and co-scholastic* aspects need to be given due recognition. Such a holistic assessment requires maintaining an ongoing, changing and comprehensive profile for each learner that is honest, encouraging and discreet. While teachers daily reflect, plan and implement remedial strategies, the child's ability to retain and articulate what has been learned over a period of time also requires periodic assessment. These assessments can take many forms but all of them should be as comprehensive and discreet as possible. Weekly, fortnightly, or quarterly reviews (depending on the learning area), that do not openly compare one learner with another and are positive and constructive experiences are generally recommended to promote and enhance not just learning and retention among children but their soft skills as well.

Scholastic and Co-scholastic domain

The desirable behaviour related to the learner's knowledge, understanding, application, evaluation, analysis, and creativity in subjects and the ability to apply it in an unfamiliar situation are some of the objectives in scholastic domain.

The desirable behaviour related to learner's Life Skills, attitudes, interests, values, co-curricular activities and physical health are described as skills to be acquired in co-scholastic domain.

The process of assessing the students' progress in achieving objectives related to scholastic and co-scholastic domain is called comprehensive evaluation. It has been observed that usually the scholastic areas such as knowledge and understanding of the facts, concepts, principles etc. of a subject are assessed. The co-scholastic elements are either altogether excluded from the evaluation process or they are not given adequate attention. For making the evaluation comprehensive, the scholastic and co-scholastic both the domains should be given importance. Simple and manageable means of assessment of co-

scholastic aspects of growth must be included in a comprehensive evaluation scheme.

Co-Scholastic areas and their assessment

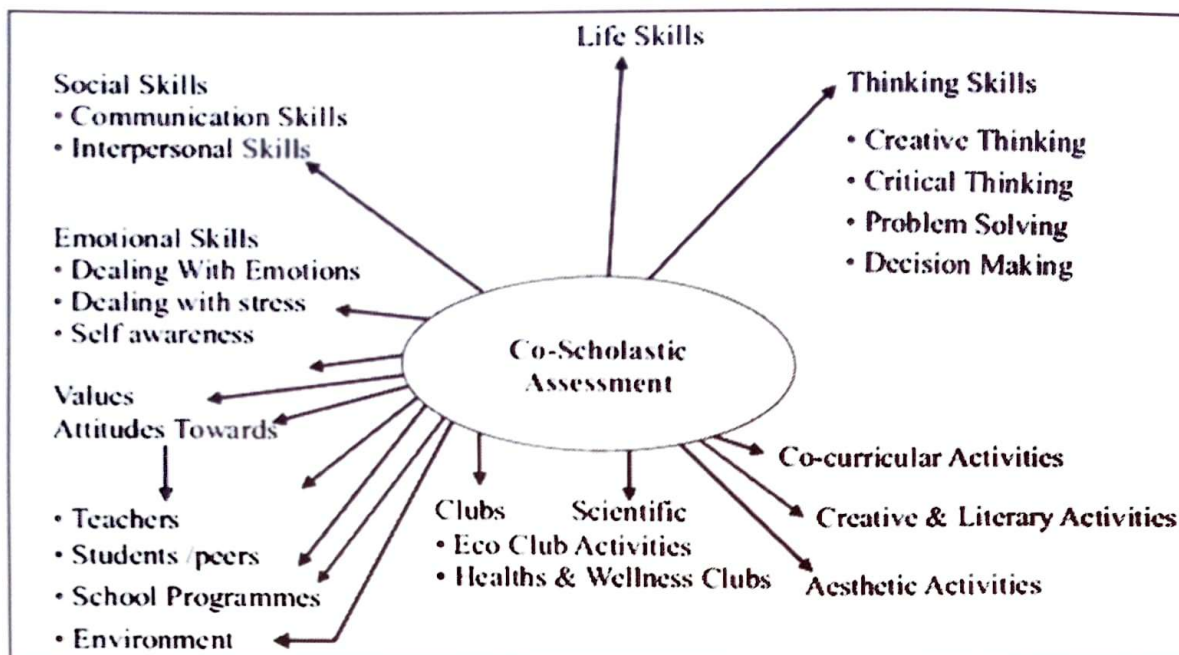
The co-scholastic areas which are considered to be relevant for assessment under the scheme of CCE are life skills, attitudes and values. The life skills comprise social skills, emotional skills and thinking skills. The social skills have been divided under two heads – communication skills and interpersonal skills while emotional skills are those representing skills in dealing emotion and stress and self awareness. The thinking skills have been identified as consisting of creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. It may be noted that attitudes are the relatively longer held dispositions in a person and the same may be specified with reference to attitude towards teachers, peers (students), school programmes and environment.

Values are the key attributes which support the formation of personality on a stabler footing. These have been suggestively linked to co-curricular activities, creative and literacy activities, aesthetic activities, scientific activities specific and participations in Eco-clubs and health & wellness clubs created within a school system.

In assessing these areas evidence in respect of changes which occur in learner's behaviours during the teaching – learning process have to be collected using valid and reliable tools. Based on these evidences, interpretation and judgment about learner's progress has to be arrived at. This consists of the following five main sub-processes:

- Specifying the relevant information.
- Collecting information using suitable tools.
- Interpreting information
- Making judgments and taking decisions.

These sub-processes will have to be gone through and undertaken by a team of teachers with exercise focused on identifying qualities, indicators of the concerned area/skill, collection of evidence through observations and other techniques, recording of the evidences, their analysis followed by reporting and grading.



The following diagram depicts the co-scholastic competencies at a glance:

A brief description of these competencies alongwith their assessment techniques will be in order.

Assessing Life Skills

These are the abilities which help students to be successful in living a productive life. Acquiring and practicing life skills help the learner to improve his / her personal and social qualities such as self esteem, compassion, respect, confidence and credibility etc. These are grouped under three core groups as indicated earlier.

Thinking Skills include decision making, problem solving and information gathering skills. The individual must also be skilled in evaluating the further consequences of their present actions on others. They need to be able to determine alternative solution and to analyze. The influence of their own values and values of those around them. The various techniques for assessment of these thinking skills consist of checklist, observations, anecdotal records and portfolio.

Social Skills include verbal and non verbal communication, active listening and ability to express feelings and give feedback. In such skills are also incorporated negotiation/refusal skills, ability to listen and understand others' needs (empathy) and the ability to cooperatively work in a team & respect for others. These skills may be effectively assessed through simulated settings, dramatizations, group projects and rating scales including self-rating scales.

Emotional Skills refer to managing feelings / emotions and dealing with stress. For assessing these skills participation in groups, interests shown in projects and motivation of the learner may be considered a strong basis.

Various indicators of these skills should be identified, discussed and finalized well in advance by a team of teachers. A five point grading scale for assessment in these areas may be used as follows:

Most indicators in a skill	A+
Many indicators in a skill	A
Some indicators in a skill	B
Few indicators in a skill	C
Very few indicators in skill	D

It may be noted that these life skills may also be assessed through the use of various self-rating scales and checklists prepared by teachers and experts well in advance.

Assessing Values and Attitudes

Value system may be assessed on the basis of indicators such as extent of understanding the need for rules and following them, honesty and ethical exhibits, self respect, politeness and courteousness, respect for diversity including culture, beliefs, and opposite sex.

Similarly attitudes of the learner towards teachers, schoolmates, school / public property and environment may be assessed on the basis of indicators collected from day to day situations. The tools for assessment may range from observations through use of observations schedules, anecdotal records forms and summated rating skills. The consolidation of observations should be undertaken twice in an academic session and certification, reporting has to be accomplished by two teachers, one of them being the class teacher. In order to effect simplicity in handling the assessment process, a three point grading system should be employed as is also the suggestion in the document referred to earlier. The three grades may be regulated in the following manner:

Most indicators reflected	A+
Many indicators reflected	A
Some indicators reflected	B

One of the major objectives of school education is to prepare a student for life. This really means that a student must grow in several dimensions as they move from primary to secondary school. They should know how to take informed

decisions as young adolescents about to step into a world. They need to develop and grow in their ability to interact with their peer-group, society and the community. They need to develop the ability to cope with change and flexibility to adopt a rapidly changing environment. Participation in Creative, Scientific, Aesthetic skills, Performing arts, Eco Club and Health and Wellness Clubs helps them to develop holistically. CCE Scheme at Classes IX & X proposes that every learner should be assessed for at least four activities, compulsorily two from Part 3(A): and two from Part 3(B). The teacher needs to provide documentary evidence in case of the Co-Scholastic areas chosen by the student.

Observation over a period of time through specifically developed schedules and anecdotal record forms have to be the bases of assessment in these areas using three point grading scales for each item to be decided well in advance. There should be continuity in observations and consolidation of observations has to be done twice in an academic session for certification & reporting by a team of two teachers, one of them being a class teacher. Regulation of grades has to be on the same pattern as indicated earlier for assessing attitudes and values.

In the end, it may be stated that assessment of the skills and competencies in the co-scholastic domain is replete with inherent challenges and risks arising from the charge of subjectivity and fiat judgments. In order to effectively address and minimize such possibilities, the objectivity in the choice of parameters and their indicators has to be a watchword and is to be relentlessly enforced in the entire process. This process has to be regulated with appropriate and adequate checks and balances to infuse meaningfulness and credibility in the assessment procedure as a whole. This will make the assessment of co-scholastic domain an effective supplement to the assessment of scholastic domain which thus far has remained neglected.

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