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A Review on Formative Assessment Strategies in English Teaching-Learning of CBSE Schools

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Abstract

Formative assessment as the assessment of learning takes the shape of summative in general, and thus becomes assessment of learning in majority of the CBSE schools. This is not well addressed in majority of them, either because of the negligence or lack of professionalism of the teachers towards the teaching learning process in general, and English in particular. The experiences of capacity building programme for teachers on CCE, clearly indicates that like other school subjects or more, English teaching learning fails to design and implement formative assessment in its real essence. Over emphasis on the quantity of work and the products, rather than the processes, teacher initiated formative assessment activities defeat the scope for diagnosis and remediation, which are supposed to be the heart and soul of any formative assessment. Unfortunately assessment becomes mere teacher activity for collecting evidences. This paper is based on the survey and discussion with teachers, to discuss about the misconceptions of English teachers about formative assessment, how English teaching learning nullifies the scope of applied reasoning and re-emphasizes rote learning through worksheets, projects. Though the teachers try to design formative assessment techniques, in implementation they fail for the real formative assessment rather it becomes another summative. This paper also attempts to suggest some measures to improve the formative assessment in English teaching learning process.

Keywords- *Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment, English Teaching-Learning*

Introduction

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) has its own dimensions in education, as the system was focusing more on the assessment, where the contents were highlighted. As learning is a continuous process, so the assessment need to be continuous, may be not a well-structured justification for implementing the CCE in schools. But justifications are numerous in order to have a

robust system of assessment, where the learner and learning process are the key components. Central Board of Secondary Education started implementing CCE in Class I to IV from the year 2004, and 2007 started at Classes V to VIII and 2009 in classes IX and X. They brought out different manuals for the teachers for the better implementation. Resource persons and training were provided across the schools in order to improve the awareness and attitude of teachers. In the beginning years even CBSE was not clear about what exactly need to be done, recorded and evaluated. This is evidently clear from the CBSE manuals where Class IX and X manuals only revised and the remaining were not. Though CCE started in 2004 onwards, majority of the CBSE schools were not started implementing the same in lower classes. As a surprise it could be seen even today, the essence of CCE is not been utilized in most of the school at the elementary level. Since CBSE was so particular about the submission of evidences, schools were focusing on implementation of CCE at class IX and X. The fluctuating or self-reviewing system of the board, at least on behalf of RTE ended up with training of teachers, which was again a mandatory training that teachers need to undergo five days per year. PPP model was been adopted for the training agencies. The master trainers' training and trainers' manuals were provided by CBSE.

Specific Observations during survey

The training and related observations were quite interesting across the state. The essence of CCE was not yet reached to the entire beneficiaries, rather either confusion or misconceptions were developed among teachers. Assessment of learning is been implemented completely, whereas assessment for learning is either completely forgotten or neglected. In fact the distinction about assessment and evaluation was also not conceptualized by majority of the teachers. CCE has been seen as an additional burden of record keeping and evidence maintaining.

Teachers were sharing various misconceptions regarding CCE in general and Formative Assessment in particular:

- **Need to be activity:** Most of the teachers think that formative assessment means only activities. Formation of learning is been either neglected or avoided during implementation of formative assessment activities. Even CBSE manuals do mention about FA activities, and the teachers oblige the same to conduct. The gap in conducting the activity with relevant observations, diagnosis and remediation through appropriate feedbacks results the activity into summative in nature.
- **Worksheets are FA activity:** English teachers were been labeled as worksheet teachers by the students, as most of them use only worksheets in terms of formative assessment activities. Once the teacher complete one passage, poem or grammar part, immediately worksheets will be given to the students either individually or in group for completing the worksheet. The

learning process or the thinking process behind the completion of worksheets are not been taken care. Thus the teachers are more interested in completion of the worksheets, which also results as the assessment summative in nature.

- **English Creative Writing is FA:** The other misconception is that English creative writing is formative assessment. Though the concept of using creative writing as formative assessment is true, but the way it has been carrying out results assessment as summative in nature. It just becomes another assignment without diagnosis and remediation.
- **Project submission is more important to adhere the time:** Project work is another tool used for FA by most of the English teachers. They assign the projects to the students in group, most of the time and worried about the participation of the group members and submission of the project. The projects were been assessed based on the report submitted and presentation.
- **One member of the group only need to present, share the scores:** Most of the English teachers give projects and other group works for the students and ask them to present. The presentation will be done by either the group leader (may be designated by the teacher in terms of delegation of the work) and based on his/her performance the assessment and scoring will be done.
- **Assessment during presentation either oral or visual:** Most of the formative assessment is been having a presentation either oral or visual and the entire activity will be assessed based on the same, resulting into assessment as summative in nature.
- **Language lab activities are best FA:** One Language laboratory activity is included as one of the formative assessment activity in some of the schools. The way in which the English laboratory activity is been carried out makes the difference. As other laboratory activities, students will be completing the activity in order to achieve the objectives, and based on the same teachers were assessing them.

Details of the qualitative data analysis

During the survey, data were collected regarding teachers' attitude, improvement that CCE brought in them, impact of assessment in class room teaching and learning. 300 teachers from 6 different school across the state were taken as the sample for data collection.

Figure 1.1 indicated the percentage of teachers having different attitude levels towards CCE. Only 10% of the teachers were showing high attitude towards CCE, 40% were showing average attitude and 50% were showing low attitude towards CCE.

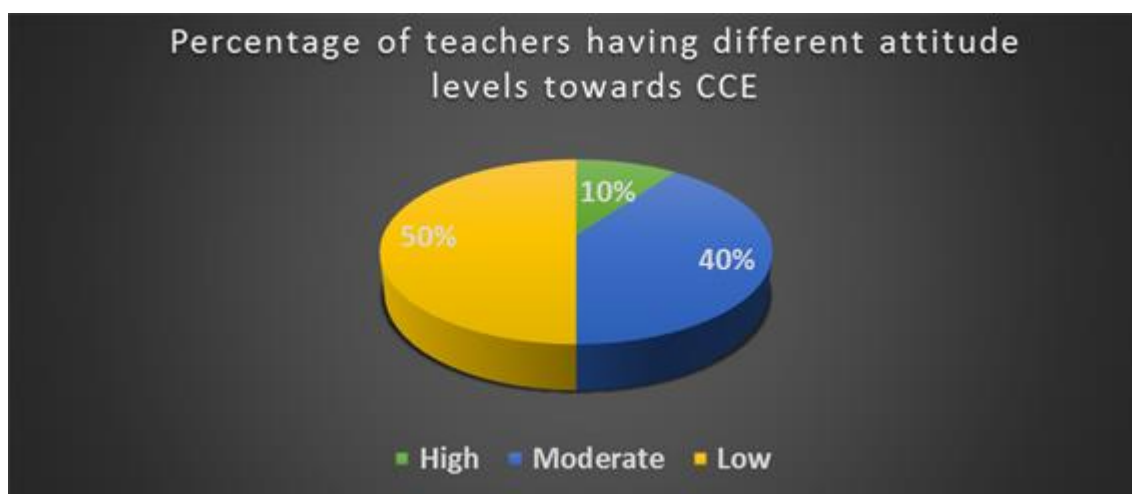


Figure 1.1: Percentage of teachers having different attitude levels towards CCE

Figure 1.2 indicates the percentage of teachers' considered different improvement areas that CCE has influenced. As CCE is an assessment paradigm, the activities allow the teachers enhance their professional skills and qualities. But the reaction of the teachers were showing different results. 44% were reacted that CCE has increased stress, 28% each reacted that CCE increased the workload and improved the teaching skills.

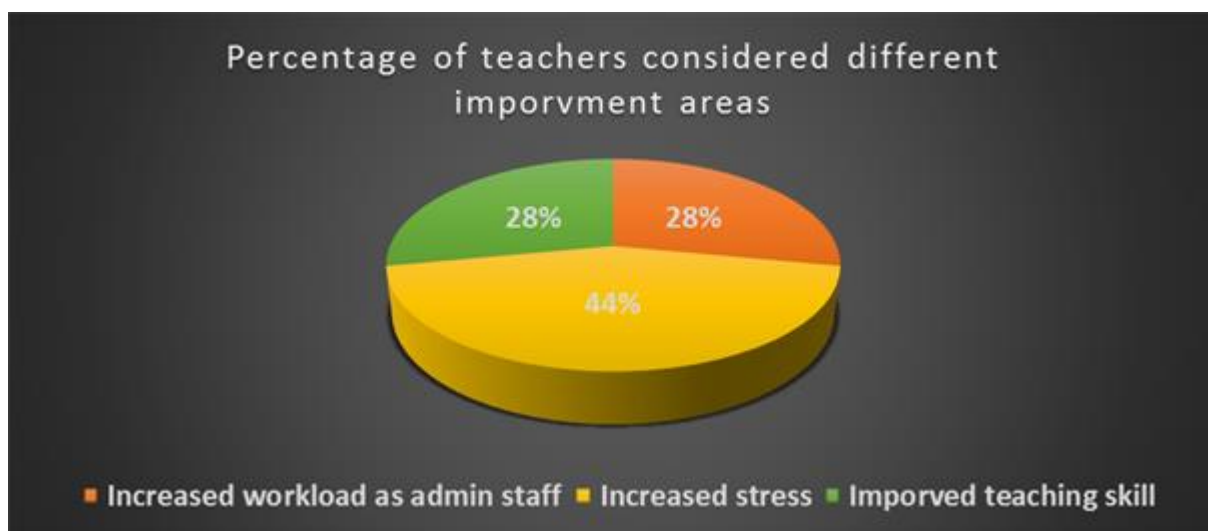


Figure 1.2 indicates the percentage of teachers' considered different improvement areas that CCE has influenced

Figure 1.3 indicates the percentage of teachers considering the impact of assessment in class room teaching and learning. 37% reacted that they were able to plan but failed to implement. 32% reacted that CCE made the class room teaching learning more mechanical, whereas 31% reacted that they were able to use variety of tools and techniques.

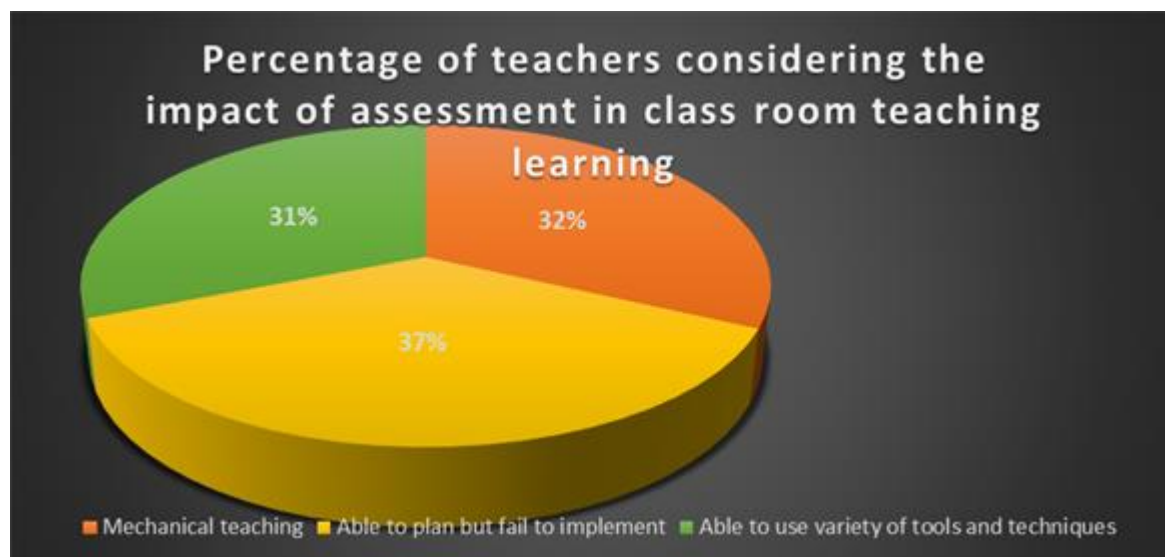


Figure 1.3 indicates the percentage of teachers considering the impact of assessment in class room teaching and learning.

Suggestions for improving FA in English

The following are the suggestions for improving Formative Assessment in English.

- 1. Planning:** The teachers need to go for vertical planning and horizontal planning, so that they can have the complete competence profile of the students and even their portfolio. This inputs could be taken for planning, designing and developing formative assessment activities.
- 2. Design FA:** Designing of formative assessment activities based on the planning need more care. According to the objectives and students' minimum level of performance, teachers can design the formative assessment activities. The design could be articulated well with the details of objectives, time frame, nature of activity, procedure and rubrics.
- 3. Task Analysis:** Whenever the teachers plan and design a formative assessment activity, it would be better to do a task analysis. In English, there is a possibility of students getting deviated from the objectives, when the teachers check at the end; that may be too late to rectify the learning. When teachers do a task analysis, they can easily find the steps in which they need to involve for diagnosing and remediation. The constructive feedback at necessary steps improves the participation of the learners in the process and also motivates them.
- 4. Sharing Expectations:** Once the FA is been designed, teachers can share their expectation, so that the students can work towards that. These expectations need not be of the teacher alone, teachers can have group discussion with students before framing the expectations. This improves the collaborative and democratic environment of the class room.

5. Rubrics and Collaboration: Rubrics are not been used by most of the English teachers for assessing the formative activities. Teachers can give the outline of the criteria and develop the assessment rubrics, or it could be developed in the class room through a discussion.

Conclusion

Formative Assessment as the assessment of learning, need emphasis and teachers need to focus on improving the same. When well planned formative assessment is there, the evidences will be evolved as and when, and it would be easy for the teachers to collect and record. As NCF 2005 envisaged, the applied reasoning and going beyond text book through enriched content by the teachers, the English learning can become more joyful. Once the teachers try to improve themselves with proper planning and clarity, CCE strengthen their professional skills and productivity.

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