



IN Focus

... THE EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

"The teacher's job is not to transmit knowledge, nor to facilitate learning. It is to engineer effective learning environments for the students. The key features of effective learning environments are that they create student engagement and allow teachers, learners, and their peers to ensure that the learning is proceeding in the intended direction. The only way we can do this is through assessment. That is why assessment is, indeed, the bridge between teaching and learning."

The quote can be found in *Dylan Wiliam's book - Embedded Formative Assessment*. In the most successful educational institutions, assessment provides formative and summative data to allow for continual improvement and adjustments, as well as formal evaluation of a course or program, as **evidences of learning**.

The individualization of learning fundamentally redefines the role of assessment.
- Sebastian Thrun

The best types of assessments are those that not only provide an evaluation of student work, but also prompt students to deepen their understanding of course content and improve their skills and performance. **Authentic assessment** aims to test skills and knowledge in "real world" applications that are relevant to future disciplinary professions. Authentic tasks encourage student success and course completion by promoting an awareness of the value of the work to student goals and/or future professions, encouraging student self-directed learning, promoting a growing sense of competency in the student, and fostering a sense of relatedness, not just between theory and practice, but between students and various social groups.

WONDER WORDS

When defined within an educational setting, **assessment, evaluation, and testing** are all used to *measure how much of the assigned materials students are mastering, how well students are learning the materials, and how well students are meeting the stated goals and objectives*. Education professionals make distinctions between these 3 terms:

TEST: or quiz is a tool used to examine the level of *skill & knowledge* of some concept, to determine what s/he knows or has learned.

EVALUATION : is the process of making judgments based on criteria and evidence.

ASSESSMENT : the process of documenting knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs, usually in measurable terms. The goal of assessment is to make improvements, as opposed to simply being judged. In an educational context, assessment is the process of describing, collecting, recording, scoring, and interpreting information about learning.

“Assessment is, indeed, the bridge between teaching and learning.”

— L R Knost

QED Talk

NEP 2020's focus on ASSESSMENTS

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■ *We live in a dynamic age, where just about every aspect of school education is fast evolving. Please share your insights about the paradigm shift in assessment practices, as proposed by NEP 2020, and being undertaken by CBSE on almost a 'war' footing?*

NEP 2020 envisions some far-reaching transformations in the way assessments are perceived and conducted. First and foremost is the **shift from content-based assessment to competency-based assessment**. Assessments are now perceived as tools for **optimizing learning and development** of all students as opposed to testing rote memory.

As per NEP 2020, assessment must **focus on core concepts, higher order thinking** and **foundational skills**. The focus is on '**assessment FOR and AS learning**'. Assessment must promote learning and development of students. We will see a switch to regular, formative and competency-based assessments in the coming days, assessments that **test higher-order skills** (analysis, critical thinking and conceptual clarity etc.) and **promote continuous tracking** of the attainment of Learning Outcomes of each child.

■ *The Fairness Principle in assessments aims to ensure unbiased and equitable assessment practices for all learners - in terms of ethics, fairness, sufficiency, currency, authenticity, reliability, validity, and learning domains. To what extent, in your opinion, are Indian School Assessments truly Fair?*

In terms of ethics and fairness, there is a lot of subjectivity and that is a universal problem I think. Indian school assessments generally aim to be ethical, ensuring confidentiality and fairness in grading (*although, the recent events in entrance exams for higher education are most concerning!*). **Ethical standards do sometimes get compromised due to excessive pressure on students to perform well**. Assessments need to be current and relevant. In India, there's often a lag in updating assessment practices to reflect contemporary knowledge and skills required in the real world, especially in rapidly evolving fields like technology and digital literacy. **Indian sadly assessments rely a lot on academic content at the expense of critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills**. This can impact the evaluation of holistic learning.

Where reliability, validity and learning domains are concerned, we have a long way to go. Our approach tends to be "**one test fits all**" and **that needs to change**. Assessments should **assess a broad range of learning domains including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills**. Indian assessments historically *focus heavily on cognitive domains (knowledge, comprehension)*, with less emphasis on others, potentially limiting a comprehensive evaluation of student abilities. We face **challenges in ensuring equity across diverse student populations and in measuring a wide spectrum of learning outcomes**.

■ *Please share your views about the conscious shift in weightage in favour of MCQs in recent times, as opposed to Qs requiring 'constructed response long answers'? Will the importance of developing 'language & communication skills' necessary for all subject domains not be undermined?*

MCQs are gaining traction among educationists for the obvious reasons. It is **efficient for assessing a large volume of content quickly**, making them suitable for standardized testing and large-scale assessments. Since it can be graded objectively, it **reduces subjectivity** thereby **increasing fairness of evaluation**.

On the other hand, **constructed responses** require students to **articulate their thoughts clearly, organize information coherently and use appropriate language conventions**. These skills are essential for effective communication not only in academic & professional spheres, but also in personal contexts. They encourage students to **analyze information, synthesize ideas, formulate arguments, fostering critical thinking skills** that are **vital for higher education and beyond**.

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Creativity is essential to 21st-century success, yet it remains one of the most challenging forms of learning to assess. Innovative approaches to assessment can help educators unlock the full potential of creative students.

While MCQs offer benefits in terms of **efficiency and objectivity**, they should be **complemented with other assessment formats**, including constructed responses, essays, projects, and oral presentations. This ensures a **more comprehensive evaluation** of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities, including their language and communication proficiency.

■ **CBSE has recently proposed 'open-book' assessments (as a pilot), for core subjects in Grades 9 & 11, to be further expanded (across subjects & grades) in the coming years. What would teachers require to change / modify in curriculum delivery, implementation and formative assessments, to ensure such Authentic Learning?**

Open note tests focus more on testing comprehension, analyzation, and critical thinking. To ensure authentic learning experiences for students, teachers may need to make several adjustments in curriculum delivery, implementation, and formative assessments:

- To bring in real-world relevance, teachers will need to **integrate real-world contexts and applications into the curriculum**. This could involve case studies, simulations, projects based on community issues, or partnerships with local businesses.
- **Shift towards student-centered learning** is a must where *students have a say in their learning goals, methods, and assessments*. This would promote autonomy and engagement and make students independent learners.
- Bring in **more Project-Based Learning (PBL)** where students investigate and solve complex questions or problems. This allows for deeper engagement, collaboration, and application of knowledge.
- Time to **try out variety in assessment** patterns like portfolios, presentations, exhibitions, or performances.
- **Reflection & Feedback** must become a natural part of teaching learning process.
- Schools must provide for **ongoing professional development for teachers** on strategies for authentic learning, integrating technology effectively, and designing meaningful assessments.
- Schools must **review and revise curriculum** to ensure it aligns with current knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- **Differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of students**, allowing them to progress at their own pace and in ways that suit their learning styles.

■ **What is your view about 'rubric-based assessments' that measure the progression / status of a learner's Knowledge-Skills-Attitude-Behaviour over a period of learning, v/s hard core marks over a 1 - 3 hr timed paper-based assessment?**

My vote is definitely for "**rubric-based assessments**" that facilitates assessment of **holistic** learning. While timed paper-based assessments remain a cornerstone of traditional evaluation methods, rubric-based assessments **offer a more nuanced, individualized, and holistic approach** to measuring and promoting student learning and development. They **support continuous improvement** and can **better capture learning beyond what a single exam can measure**. We **must use rubrics** for **formative assessments**, where the goal is to monitor learning progress and provide ongoing feedback.

■ **Your final words...**

We are indeed in the **cusp of very exciting times in education in India**. NEP 2020 promises far reaching changes in the very purpose of education, in the way we teach and assess. The challenge however, lies in **how we will implement the changes**, what role are we going to assign the stakeholders and how far into the future are we willing and prepared to look. ***



FOR TEACHERS

Embedded Formative Assessment -
practical strategies and tools for K-12 teachers

- by **Dylan Wiliam**

William argues that quality of teachers is the single most important factor in the education system. He outlines the many possible ways in which we could seek to develop the practice of serving teachers and concludes that of these, *formative assessment has the biggest impact on student outcomes*. Formative assessment functions to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted and used by teachers and learners to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better than the decisions they would have made in the absence of that evidence. In this book William outlines 5 key strategies for Formative assessments.



FOR PARENTS / TEACHERS

Teaching Students to Self-Assess:
How Do I Help Students Reflect and Grow as Learners?

- by **Starr Sackstein**

In this book, Starr explains how teachers can use *self-reflection* to help students decipher their own learning needs and engage in deep, thought-provoking, analytical discourse about progress. She suggests how to get students to set actionable learning goals, reflect on & chat their learning progress and use self assessment to determine student mastery against skills & competencies. Filled with practical tips, innovative ideas, sample reflections from real students - it guides us to shape students into mindful receptive learners for a fast changing world.

DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES

In the real professional world, **Competency-Based Appraisal** has become a cornerstone of modern HR practices, allowing organizations to align their workforce with strategic goals and cultivate a thriving work environment.

As a country with the **largest youth population** getting groomed for the future workforce, the **NEP 2020** has more than stressed on this aspect & **Educational Initiatives** (in association with CBSE) has developed manuals & guidelines on bringing in **Competency based Learning & Competency Based Assessments** into school classrooms. Whether your school is affiliated to the CBSE or ICSE or other central boards or a state board, this article attempts to unravel some core principles behind CBA before you think of diving into it.

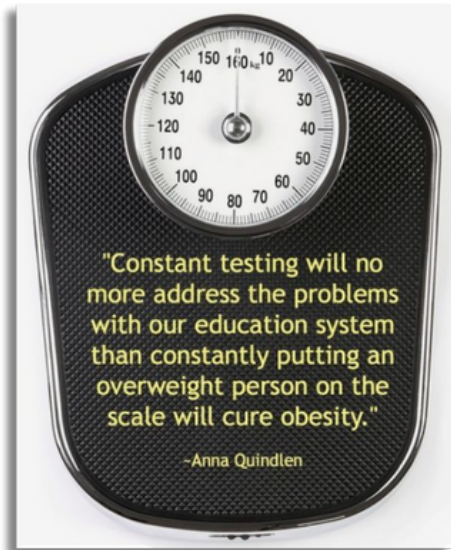
Understanding Competencies and Their Types:

Competency is the ability of an individual to apply related skills, knowledge and abilities to perform specific duties successfully in a defined context. They include essential skills, behaviors, and knowledge that individuals need & use, in order to perform their roles effectively - be it as a student, a teacher, a leader or the CEO of a company. They can be broadly classified into these broad types:

- **Core Competencies:** The abilities and skills that make up an individual's competitive advantage. These are fundamental skills applicable to all roles, such as effective communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Analytical & creative thinking abilities form the core of these. Though technology continues to develop, personal core competencies continue to be a top priority.
- **Functional & Cross-functional Competencies:** These competencies are related to the possession of significant subject knowledge, technical proficiency (depth and breadth) and other pertinent elements required for effectively applying conceptual understanding & Computational Thinking mindset (in a cross-subject/domain integrated way) into a real life context.
- **Behavioral Competencies:** Relate to behaviors and attributes like that cover a whole gamut of how we interact with people, events and the environment around us - adaptability, open-mindedness, ability to think critically after considering different perspectives, taking on multiple roles, adapting one's behaviour to team requirements, managing uncertainties and remaining motivated even when encountering setbacks. These over time develop into leadership, adaptability, and conflict resolution competencies.

Competency should not be confused with **Skill**, although we need to develop both. While the latter refers to *Learned and Applied abilities* to effectively execute a task, the former refers to a broader concept, that combines skills, knowledge and behavior - so skill is a component of competency. **Proficiency** is consistency in competency (or the continuous achievement of excellence) in any and even new situations.

Educators may like to be familiar with **five strategies** that should be part of *curriculum, assessments in developing holistic competencies*:



1. Clarifying, understanding, and sharing learning intentions

'If you don't know where you're going, you'll never get there' is a very famous quote. This is largely about curriculum planning and as teachers we must be sure of the **'learning intentions'**: what do we want all students to know and be able to do? This means spelling out what knowledge (in all its forms) students should have and know how to apply in new contexts. It also means 'what does excellence look like?'. This connects to ideas about assessment, teachers knowing the standards and comparative judgement by self and peers. This, in turn, feeds into ideas about self-regulation and metacognition.

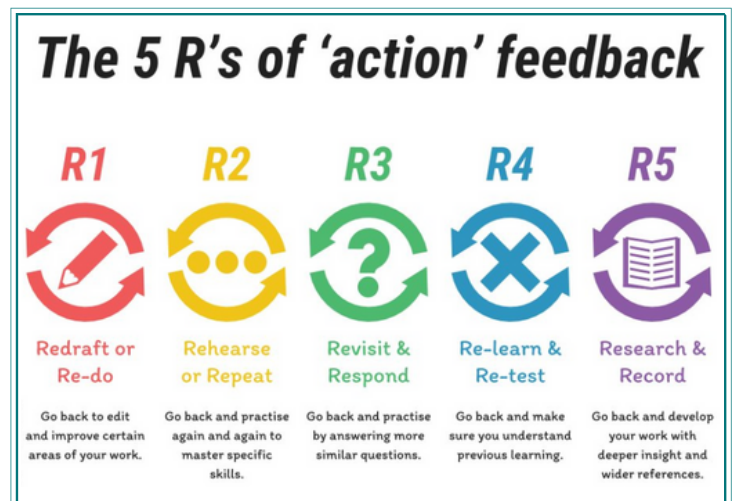
2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning

Instructional teaching has to be **highly interactive** so that teachers constantly get feedback from their students about *how well their schemas for the material in hand are forming and how fluent they are becoming retrieving and using what they've learned*.

The challenge for teachers is to involve as many students as possible which leads to the need for good questioning routines and good knowledge-check routines where the ratio of student involvement is high and the information received has a good diagnostic component. At the centre of it is the idea of **'responsive teaching'** where discussions, tasks and activities' covers a lot of possibilities.

3. Providing feedback that moves learners forward

Feedback is only successful *if students' learning improves* – and this depends on the teachers ability to effectively communicate it AND the student's capacity to understand it, alongwith inclination to accept and act on it. It's got an interpersonal, motivational element that can't be brushed aside. The goal is to change the students' capacity to produce better work, not just to improve their work. At an ideal level, students should be able to needs to be able to generate their own feedback and become more independent in charting their path ahead for improvement and excellence.



4. Activating students as learning resources for one another - assessment AS learning (peer)

All too often teachers create major bottlenecks by forcing all classroom interactions to pass through them. We can't have a dialogue with every student at once but they can all be involved in meaningful dialogues with each other to support the process of working out **'where the learner is'** and **'how to get to where the learner is going'**. If teachers develop strong routines where students support each other's learning in a serious structured manner, then the ratio, quality and frequency of student interactions with the knowledge in hand can increase significantly. This is where disciplined **'think pair share'** becomes so powerful. If one person in a pair acts as the verifier for the other, using exemplars, fact sheets, mark schemes as a reference, the extent of retrieval practice and feedback can be increased hugely. Another example might be using structured dialogues for practising the use of language or rehearsing explanations and arguments.

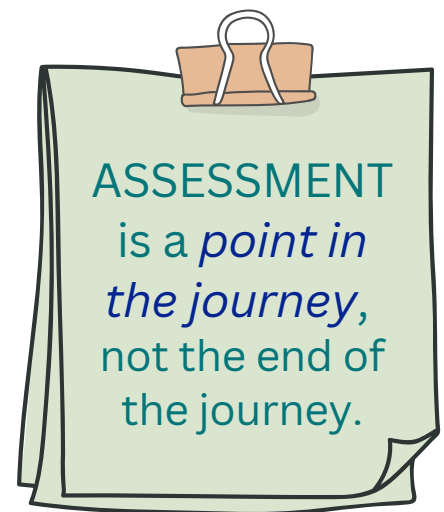
5. Activating students as 'owners of their own learning' - assessment AS learning (self)

In reality, more often than not, implementation of the strategy behind this *feel-good-phrase*, often falls into the dust of 'noble intent' rather than delivering something *tangible*. **'Owning one's own learning'** is at the heart of strong self-regulation and metacognition: setting learning goals, planning, monitoring and evaluating success in tasks links to those goals; forming effective schemata that take account of big-picture questions and themes that inform subsequent conscious rehearsal and elaboration. However, these 'goals' are not *broad brush life goals*; they are the **next steps in improving** writing fluency, science knowledge, confidence with maths and languages, physical fitness etc. If a student knows for themselves what they need to do in order to improve and gains the experience of being able to achieve success through applying effort to these self-determined goals, then they begin a positive upward spiral of confidence building, growth mindset-inducing, self-regulation that fuels even more success. ***

CREATING MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENTS

There have been so many times when educators have felt *success in learning* with their students throughout a unit, only to realize they really *haven't learned* what the teacher had thought or hoped they would have. It's equally frustrating for their students to take an assessment, thinking they're prepared, only to bomb the test. The truth of the matter is that the responsibility falls on us - teachers!

Certainly, there will always be students who will *not put in the work* it takes to be successful, but the majority will, and if they too are floundering, **the responsibility is the Educator's**. If this is a place you are at, then **you need a hard reset** when it comes to assessments. You need to spend some time reflecting on why you were using assessments in the first place (aside from the obvious that it is a requirement from your school administration). Ask yourself, "*What is the point of this assessment? What is the objective? What do I hope to understand through this exercise?*"



We are in an inspiring place in education. Teachers are intentionally revamping every aspect of TL processes in their classrooms. One challenging aspect of this planning, learning, and creating, is **creating meaningful assessments** that truly and deeply showcase learning. Unlike teaching itself, **traditional assessments have NOT changed drastically over the course of the last decade**. For many, the true **purpose of assessment** remains unclear, and finding ways to teach through the assessment can be even more challenging. Creating meaningful assessments can be a difficult task; now more so with the NEP 2020 & NCERT focus on **Competency-based Assessments, Open-book Assessments, Rubric based assessments!** Reflecting on the following *dos and don'ts* of effective assessment creation can help you to explore the *purpose of each assessment* and provide *tips to create assessments* that will make the learning process more *meaningful* and *relevant* for an unknown future:

- **Start with reflection.** Have the assessment reflect primarily on the *big concepts and skills* that were emphasized in class throughout the unit. Use the SWBAT-LOs (learning objectives) and student outcomes as a guide.
- **Provide students with clear criteria for judging performance.** Transparency around what you are looking for and how each Qs will be graded is of utmost importance. This can be accomplished through sharing *rubrics, exemplars, sample problems used throughout the unit as formative assessments, etc.*
- **Create an assessment rubric for yourself** as a *grading aid* to keep grading honest and objective for each student. Rubrics are excellent tools for kids not meeting the learning standards and that gives them a tangible goal to aim for.
- **Provide significant timely feedback regarding the grading on each assessment as.** Downplay the importance of grades and mould them to *focus on reading the feedback*, only to end up making the same mistakes again. Try giving the assessment back with only the feedback and no grade, then plan a schedule to meet them 1-on-1 after they read the feedback, to discuss it with you and receive their numerical grade.
- **Allow students to fix wrong answers for partial (or full) credit.** If they didn't learn the material, how can they move on until they do? If we keep the learning as the focus rather than the grade, it makes sense to allow them to further their learning of missed material and try again for proficiency.
- **Make sure that formative assessments are reflective of the summative assessment.** Students need to be able to practice testing as readily as they practice learning. If the summative assessment is more *traditional* (multiple choice, true/false, short answer) make sure that at least *one-third of the formative assessments are that format as well*.
- **Use the collective student success (or lack thereof) to inform your teaching practice.** If most of your students miss the same question or section, perhaps it's not their inadequacy, and it might be your teaching strategy of that topic. Use the assessment results to *inform instruction moving forward*.
- **Allow students to take collaborative tests.** This is more representative of real-world learning and provides practice at high-stakes collaboration.
- **Use exemplars.** Modeling a range of exemplars from poor to excellent for students will help kids to better understand what *quality work* looks like.
- **Always provide opportunities for self-reflection for students.** Include a section of *self-assessment* at the end of each summative unit test. E.g., "*On a scale of 1 to 5, this unit helped me to further develop my critical thinking skills.*" Follow this question with, "*Provide three pieces of evidence to support your answer.*" When asking students to be self-reflective or peer-reflective, always ask for *multiple pieces of evidence to support their opinions* as they may be seeing things about their work and development differently than you do. These can then be discussed.
- **Use authentic assessments whenever possible.** Every assessment doesn't have to be traditional in nature. Authentic assessments might look like reports, journals, speeches, videos, or student interviews. Allow yourself to be creative with the assessment format and be willing to try something new.

Ultimately, we assess our students' learning to know **where they are** as students and where **we are as** teachers. ***

St. Peter's School, ICSE
Mumbai

'DOMAINS OF LEARNING'

DAY 1



TEACHER TRAINING

Team QEDRAK has the privilege of conducting a 2-day workshop at **St. Peter's School** (Mazgaon, Mumbai). The school began as a choir school for parishioners of St. Peter's Church that had earlier been built in **1858!** A true exemplar of heritage, quality and life-long learning!

Across the 2 days, 2 groups of teachers immersed themselves in learning about - *re-defined Domains of Learning, Integrated Curriculum, Newspaper based Learning, TL Adaptations for Pedagogy to Andragogy* with activities, and examples. The final day was a common session on *Professionalism Matters*, with case-studies & group-enactment. ***

'PROFESSIONALISM MATTERS'

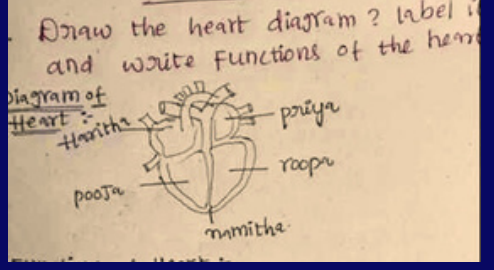
DAY 2



HUMOUR

Student : "Dear Algebra, please stop asking us to find your X. She is never coming back ; dont ask Y."

Teacher : "Thank God I am using a rubric scale for skills of drawing and labelling !!!!!"



Student : "This C+ isn't consistent with the vision I have of myself."

Teacher : "Only in Math problems can i ask my students to buy 60 water-melons, without anyone asking the rationale behind such a purchase!"



The **July 2024** issue is based on the theme - **Curriculum Design**. Please send your contributions - an effective classroom strategy / class humour / vocab word / a featured article / book titles, etc. related to the theme to - team@qedrak.com



RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGEWARE

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