



Reflections on Using Self Evaluation as a Technique to Improve Outcomes in Education

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Abstract

Assessment and Evaluation are two important cornerstones of teaching and learning but these are seldom focused upon with respect to Self Evaluation . The paradox is that we often use these terminologies only in the context of learners and our lens is restricted to cover mostly just the cognitive domain .We easily or intentionally forget about the affective and the psychomotor domains of learning, thus deeming them to be of less value. In this technology enabled and technologically driven century wherein the learners have an easy access to information, isn't it important to look beyond the cognitive aspects and rather strengthen the assessment and evaluation procedures so that we are able to know how well our education system is attuned to cater to the affective and psychomotor domains of the tender minds. We also need to focus on the teacher education institutions so as to see if these are equipping the teachers of tomorrow in a way that they are able to engage in critical thinking and reflection in order to evaluate their own self before they evaluate their students. The present paper discusses the role of self evaluation for improving the outcomes of education.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Reflection, Outcome Based Education

Need for Self Evaluation:

All across the world you see policy makers and administrators shifting the focus to outcomes rather than output with respect to education. We ,as teachers and teacher educators, too are worried as to how to ensure that our students learn meaningfully and joyfully such that they attain the desired milestones with respect to knowledge ,attitudes and skills. Once this takes place the student will easily find a firm and desired place in the world of work too and contribute effectively in the development of a healthy and vibrant democratic space everywhere. One of the

most important factors which facilitates the holistic development of the pupil in every possible way is undoubtedly the teacher .For the teacher to be effective one of the most important aspects to be considered is whether the teacher reflect on his/her practices .A teacher's journey never reaches close to perfection unless he/she continuously strives to reinvent himself/herself in the light of the feedback of his/her peers and students .This journey begins with self evaluation of one's own practices which may be done by personal reflection or by seeking formal assessment .Self evaluation not only supports the teacher to improve the classroom experiences of learners but also helps him/her to recognize the need for capacity building in the identified areas

In the present day classrooms, more emphasis is being laid upon adopting constructivist pedagogies so that the students take ownership of their own learning as teachers and students venture into learning with each other . The present day classrooms favoring collaborative learning and cooperative learning definitely require the methods of assessment which measure beyond the cognitive domain of the students and therefore peer Assessment and self assessment are the core focal areas to be looked into. The terms "assessment" and "evaluation" are related, as the value judgments when added to assessment becomes evaluation. Self evaluation is required to understand one's strengths and weaknesses; find out the ways to improve and know what needs to be done to achieve the next goal. Undoubtedly meta-cognition plays a big role in self evaluation. Self-evaluation is often very desirable as a means of enhancing personal development and for the growth of an organization. In the context of Teaching – Learning, self evaluation manifests at three levels:

Student Self Evaluation: Self Evaluation by the student is very important as it helps the learner know not only about their learning achievements but also about their learning experiences. It helps the student take charge of its own learning because self evaluation help the child know and express what 'he /she can'/or has achieved and what 'he/she is not able to'. National Curriculum Framework 2005 states that

“Every classroom interaction with children requires their evaluation of their own work, and a discussion with them about what should be tested and the ways of finding out whether the competencies are being developed or not”. – (NCF2005, p75)

Student Self Evaluation helps the student to:

- Know their strengths
- Identify the areas where they are lagging behind
- Set realistic goals
- Plan for revisions
- Track their own progress

Student Self Evaluation helps the students stay motivated and be responsible for their own learning.

Student Self Evaluation is valuable for teachers as well because it helps them understand the child in a much better way and implement pedagogies that cater to the individual needs and learning styles. NCF 2005 advocates that Self Assessment by the student must form a part of the summative evaluation as well. It says :

“Along with the teacher assessing each child, each student could also assess himself or herself and include this self assessment in the report card”. – (NCF2005, p76)

Teacher Self Evaluation: Teacher Self Evaluation is essential as it not only helps teachers enhance their professional competencies and stay abreast of the latest developments but also enables them to ascertain how the various factors (personal/institutional) impact their teaching. Teacher Self Evaluation helps strengthen not merely the teaching competencies but also the classroom management skills so that it leads to effective teaching. Teacher Self Evaluation helps the teachers to monitor and adjust instruction so that it maximizes students' learning in the given conditions with the available resources. Critical evaluation of teaching strategies and instructional techniques by the teacher himself /herself helps to evolve and become effective teachers.

Teacher Self Evaluation helps the teacher to:

- Relook and Re-align teaching and classroom management strategies
- Refine their teaching skills
- Develop better Interpersonal Relationships
- Find out ways to maximize learning outcomes
- Create enriched teaching-learning environments
- Identify professional development programs for improving their own performance
- Document Best Practices
- Prepare themselves for Professional Development

Buchanan and Jackson(1998) report that self evaluation led to the development of competence and confidence among the trainee teachers. Majzub (2013) reports that self reflection improves self esteem and teaching competencies of trainee teachers and also concludes that they are able to manage the teaching climate in a better way during teaching practicum. When teachers evaluate their own self, such introspection gives them a deeper understanding and help them change attitudes and behavior. In the book *Teacher self-evaluation: Teachers in their own mirror*, author Lya Kremer-Hayon (p131) points out the following areas for teacher self evaluation:

“ The teacher in relation with others - community members, parents, school principal, colleagues, and pupils;

‘Teachers' professional attitudes;

Teaching experiences, including the varying facets of planning, implementation and evaluation, or viewed from a different angle;

“The school and classroom environment and culture.”

Teachers' self evaluation may be recorded and analysed in two ways: quantitatively and qualitatively. The data which provide the basis for qualitative evaluation may be collected in a number of forms: Recorded on Audio/videotapes; Documented as Journals, logs, diaries, portfolios and other records including activities, reflections, narratives. The quantitative methods include category systems like the Flanders interaction Analysis, rating scales and check lists. In the book –'Teachers in their own mirrors' (p141), author states:

“The process of documentation helps to make things clear; it is like talking to oneself without the inhibition that may be aroused by the presence of others. The moment incidents are written down they can be looked at from the distance of an outside observer. After some time they can be re-read and interpreted from richer and additional perspectives, not only because of the time lapse, but also because of teachers' growing experience and knowledge. By analyzing these differences in interpretations teachers are likely to gain more insight into their teaching, become more sensitive observers and aware of their growth.”

Some areas worthwhile and suitable for documentation are:

- * Discussions with parents, pupils, colleagues, school principal, and the nature of the interaction with these groups of people;
- * Pedagogical issues that emerge from reading educational literature, or from the participation in development programs;

* Dilemmas regarding teaching methods;

* Contextual factors: school policy, school climate, constraints or facilitators outside the situation that interfere with the implementation of plans.

Institutional Self Evaluation: Self Evaluation of the educational institution is important to gauge their performance. It is vital for the improvement and development of the institution. Institutional Self Evaluation is a collaborative, reflective process of review of the institution by the Head and the Faculty in consultation with the Parents and Students. All the stake holders engage in a reflective enquiry on the work of the institution.

Institutional Self Evaluation enables institutions to:

- Improve the quality of education being provided
- Identify areas that need attention
- Communicate their role to the society
- Plan for improvement and expansion

Institutional Self Evaluation can be used for external evaluation and accreditation purposes.

Modern day Tools for documentation of Self Evaluation

In this technologically advanced age where the paper and pen have been replaced with kindle, tablets and smart phones, there are many tools available which help us in documentation of self evaluation. A few of them are discussed below:

1. E-Portfolio- An e -Portfolio (electronic portfolio) can be best defined as a digital compilation of the work of an individual which may include diverse types of audio and visual content . An E -Portfolio may include :

- ✓ Writings (research and concept papers ,project reports, essays, fictional writings , personal reflections, etc)
- ✓ Showcasing of photographs/slideshows/audio files/videos/podcasts or other types of media files produced
- ✓ Details of Research projects undertaken
- ✓ Links to blogs, web pages, or other online content developed .

These 'artifacts' are usually accompanied by reflection on how or why the item is included in the e-Portfolio in order to support the need for it's documentation.

Uses of e Portfolio:

- e Portfolios can provide a means for assessment based on evidence of an individual's growth over time and effort- not a list of test scores.
- Evaluating the learner's work using a variety of artifacts – graphics, pictures, multimedia, stories, journals, or projects – provides a view into the individual's mind and capabilities as well as the teaching and learning environment
- The collection of work provides a powerful and comprehensive digital platform in the form of a resume highlighting the multiple intelligences of an individual.
- This bioscopic view of a learner's work provides us his/her trajectory of growth and continuity over a period of time such that the learner can collect, select, and reflect upon the progress presented as a profile of accomplishment based on evidence.

2. Online Journal keeping: An online learning journal is a collection of notes, anecdotes, observations, thoughts and other relevant reflections recorded over a period of time on an online platform. Maintaining a learning journal enhances the learning through the process of critical thinking and reflecting upon his/her own experiences. Journals can take a number of forms. It is easy to record notes anywhere anytime using online blog tools such as within e Bridge, Pebble Pad, Blogger or Word Press . The journal could be private, public or shared with only authorised readers. 750words, Oh life , One Word , Penzu , Ever note are some online journaling tools which teachers may use to document their learning .

Conclusion: Therefore in order to improve are outcomes in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skill sets it is important that self evaluation as a best practice is instituted in every organization be it a school, a college or a university .Care has to be taken that self evaluation is not taken as an exercise to pin individuals down by identifying their weaknesses .It is important that this effective tool is used to improve the performance of students and teachers both, by way of reflection followed by action. There is no doubt that if both the teachers and the students reflect on their own performance based on self evaluation the outcomes in education will automatically improve .Thus there is urgent need for a systemic reform which includes self evaluation as a means for total quality management in education.

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