

A PERCEPTIVE STUDY WITH RESPECT TO THE AWARENESS REGARDING INTRODUCTION OF
GRADING SYSTEM AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL OF SSC BOARD.

Dr. Savita Sable
MCT's college of Education & Research
Mumbai

Abstract

The students Assessment is now in Continuous and Comprehensive evaluation mode entailing formative and summative assessment. The government of Maharashtra has considered a proposal for a grades-based marking system and a no-fail policy for SSC schools. The paper deals with the perception of students, teachers and parents with respect to the awareness regarding introduction of the grading system at the secondary school level of SSC Board. The study was conducted outlining six major areas with respect to grading system were outlined viz. stress, quality assessibility, prevention of dropouts and failures, streamlining of education , educational attainment and the work culture.

Introduction:

The education system is primarily responsible for the overall development of a country, so as to attain this, the goals are to be set and attainment of these goals is tested by examination. Examination are the viable and justifiable for measuring various facets of human potential. Sound education policies go a long way in ensuring a robust and vibrant human resource.

Assessment of performance at any level or of any activity is an important exercise for the purpose of planning interventions and understands whether interventions introduced are moving in right directions. In absence of such a system it is difficult to identify what is required to improve upon the nature and quality of inputs and plan further interventions.

Examination A Dominating factors:

It is common knowledge that examinations have determined education. The curriculum framers keep the examination as the ultimate aim while drawing up courses. The timetable of the school is prepared in such a way that the students can be best prepared for the examination. The quality of the school is prepared in such a way that the students can be best prepared for the examination. The quality of the school is judged on the basis of the Board ,

results. Not only that even the teacher's assessment is based upon the performance of his students in the board's examination. We used to say that examination acts as motivation for pupils and teachers. It is a pity that in the name of motivation and stimulation the examinations became indispensable, instead of becoming a means to provide the right type of education they have become and end in themselves.

According to the Secondary Education Commission of India the educational system in our country was examination- ridden and that the dead weight of the examination (at the top levels as well as throughout the School system) tended to curb the teachers initiative , to stereotype the curriculum, to promote mechanical and lifeless methods of teaching, to discharge all spirit of experimentation and to place the stress on wrong or unimportant things in education. It is , therefore , not surprising that any move for a change in the curriculum, teaching methods and evaluation practices should be met with resistance .

Examination Reform- A Must

Undoubtedly, a new look to the existing examination system is required. Reforms in examination system have been a subject of serious discussion.

The Board of Secondary education has taken appropriate steps while introducing a new pattern of education in schools. One radical change that has come about is the introduction of the system of grades instead of marks. The School Board of Education has given a thought to this process by taking into consideration various factors especially the stress, which is faced by the students and to enlighten the creative abilities and proficiencies. Instead of only the examinations, students will be graded on the basis of performances throughout the year, in which extra-curricular activities will also have weightage. The main purpose of grading system is to report to the students and their parents/guardians the extent to which students have mastered the content of the course as defined by the course objectives and promote continuous evaluation of students performance.

The system of grading of course rises an important question as to what will admission be the criteria for admission to higher course of study.

However to eradicate examination related malpractices, grading system has been adopted wherein grades will be conferred which would be equivalent to the percentages. It has been introduced with proper rules to avoid bias and promote good teaching learning practices. The state boards decision to extend the continuous and Comprehensive system (CCE) is based on the premise that grades cause less trauma than marks. The system will also enhance teacher student interaction and hopefully reduce stress and the fear of failure. In this context some issues were kept in mind that include mainly the perceptions of students, teachers and parents towards the introduction of grading system, keeping in mind certain important issues like stress, quality assessibility, prevention of dropouts and failures, streamlining of education , educational attainment and the work culture. Being a issue of concern , therefore the study was conducted to find out the perception of students, teachers and parents regarding the awareness of introduction of grading system at secondary school level as the new system is the first step towards the revolutionary changes in the educational scene.

In the context of the study done:

1. **Stress related to exams** was pertaining to academic pressure, parental pressure, anxiety, fear , depression and competition.
2. **Educational Attainment** issues were pertaining to interest, attitude towards further studies, increase in literacy percentage at higher levels and fractional difference in marks affects merit.
- 3.. **Quality Assessibility** was studied with reference to increase in quality of performance , decrease in quality of performance, degree of achievement , difficulty in feedback.
4. **Streamlining Education** with reference to choice in diversified courses, increased chances for gaining entry into any course, increase in technological awareness, dissemination of information and knowledge explosion.
5. **Wastage and stagnation** was studied with reference to prevention of failures, increase of passing percentage, decrease in dropout rates, increase in enrolment at higher levels (primary to secondary, secondary to tertiary).
6. **Work Culture** with reference to discipline and ethics/ values (Attendance, unrest, forceful strains), evaluation in various academic aspects (student self development since evaluation will be continuous through unit test, semesters, projects, practicals, assignments), workload of teachers due to continuous evaluation but self development of teachers too, teaching learning process continuous and effective.

It is important to address grading practices as :

- there is less awareness regarding its benefits,
- Understand the primary purpose of grading
- In the search for a good school, many parents have moved to new locations; many have applied for permits that would allow their children to attend a school in their neighbourhood, district or city; and many have opted for private schools.
- There are now alternative schools, schools of choice, and countless numbers of educational centres. None of these schools , however , comes with a certificate of quality.

The study was conducted when grading system was newly introduced outlining six areas associated with introduction of grading system in SSC Board so as to find the perception of students, teachers and parents. Study of this kind will serve to multiply the quality of education in the school.

Aims and Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To find out the perception of students, teachers and parents awareness towards the introduction of the grading system at secondary school level of SSC Board, keeping in view:
 - a) Stress related to exam
 - b) Educational attainment
 - c) Quality assessibility
 - d) Streamlining Education
 - e) Wastage and Stagnation
2. To compare the perception of secondary school students and teachers , teachers and parents , students and parents of SSC Board towards all the six major areas outlined in the study, in relation to the introduction of the grading system
3. To compare the overall perception of secondary school students, teachers and parents of SSC Board on the basis of all six major areas considered for the study in relation to the introduction of the grading system and ranking each of the area on the basis of (student, teachers and parents view considered together) average perception level.
4. To inform students regarding the purpose of implementation and benefits of the grading system.
5. To suggest teachers, about careful handling and award of grades for the purposeful implementation of grading system and inculcate innovations and creativity urge in students.
6. To inform parents regarding the purpose of implementation of grading system in SSC Board and benefits of it.
7. To provide the appropriate bodies recommendations on better implementation of regulations of grading system.

Methodology of study

Methodology-Descriptive survey, sample-85 teachers,61 students and 60 parents from 20 schools in and around Mumbai and Thane area were randomly selected. Tool administered was a four point rating scale including 29 items for teachers, 40 items for students and 26 items for parent items and an Informal interview schedule. Technique of analysis: Percentage analysis and inferential techniques. Test applied: 't' test, Hypotheses was tested. The comparison of perception towards the implementation of Grading system were studied in terms of percentage value. The values obtained for each study were distributed into various groups to explain the perception level on the basis of following range:

1. 70% and above: High perception
2. 60%- 69% : Moderately high perception
3. 51%- 59% : Moderate perception
4. 60% -100% : Positively perceived
5. Below 50% : Low /Negatively perceived

Major Findings of the study:

As per the study conducted to find the perception of students, teachers and parents regarding the awareness about the introduction of grading system in Secondary State Boards, it was found that percentage perception of students, teachers, parents is very high towards "stress related to exam" issues. They believe that grading system will:

1. Grading system will benefit only average students while intelligent students will not much be benefited as there will be no scope for healthy competition.
2. Grading System if it is to be made effective needs to be properly planned so as to ensure methodological quality, quantity consistency and its applicability with proper guidelines. Students, teachers and parents highly perceived the fact that education can be streamlined in grading system as all of them felt that:

3. With this system access to diverse courses is possible.
4. Entry into higher courses will rise as in present marking system gaining entry into higher courses is difficult.
5. Due to wide access in diversified courses there will be knowledge explosion and technological awareness will increase. Students, teachers and parents highly perceived the aspects related to wastage and stagnation in grading system. All of them strongly perceive that due to grading system: Dropout rates will decrease. Eventually enrolment at higher classes will increase. Professional and vocational courses will be more in demand.

However the system will be complex for the authorities to take up decision regarding merit of the student for enrolment at higher levels of education. Few teachers suggested that enrolment could be done first come first basis. All the respondents perception towards work culture is found high by the analysis of the data. The high positive perception is attributed to the feeling that due to grading system:

1. Interpersonal relations will improve as it will lower competency factor.
2. Participation in extracurricular activities will intensify.
3. Self-development of the child is possible due to continuous evaluation in various aspects like Unit test, Semesters, Group assignments, projects, practicals etc.
4. Team spirit will be built up as students will work in groups.
5. Favoritism cannot be prevented, work ethics can be improved³³

6. Continuous evaluation throughout the year will increase work pressure of teachers.

Comparing students, teachers and parents perception towards all areas considered for the present study on introduction of grading system in secondary schools of SSC boards it is observed that all the groups of respondents (students, teachers and parents) have positively perceived (above 70%) various areas such as Stress related to exam, Education attainment, Quality assessibility, Streamlining education, Wastage and Stagnation and Work culture considered for the present study on introduction of grading system. Perception level of parents irrespective of groups and variables was overall highest (78.24%) followed by teachers (74.36%) and students (71.83%) in connection with introduction of grading system.

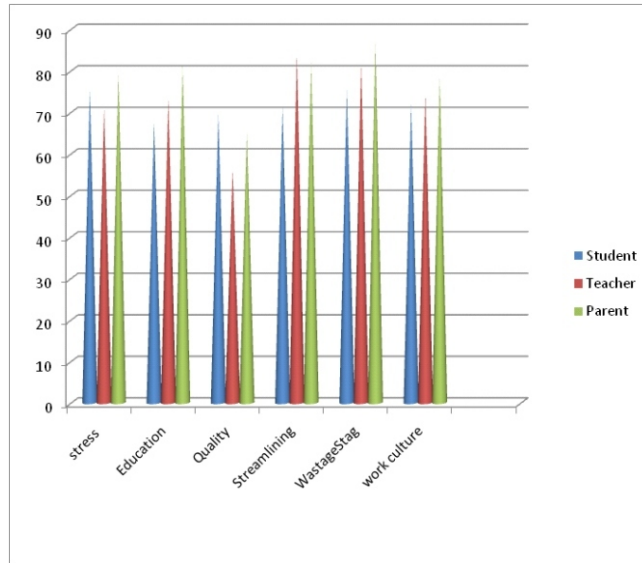
As far as the ranking pattern in perception level (average perception) is concerned, respondents irrespective of any group or variable, perceived Wastage and Stagnation (81.25%), Streamlining education (79.05%), Work culture (75.91%), Stress related to exam (75.21%), Education attainment (73.99%) and Quality assessibility (63.48%) in order of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th respectively.

Table 1 Overall perception of students, teachers and parents considering all six areas associated with introduction of grading system in secondary schools of SSC Board and ranking each of the area on the basis of respondent's perception level.

Table .1
(Values in terms of percentage)

Area associated with Grading System	Overall Perception (% mean)			Average Perception	Ranking pattern	Perception level
	Student	Teacher	Parent			
Stress Related to exam	75.4	71.07	79.16	75.21	IV	High Perception
Educational Attainment	67.68	73.18	81.11	73.99	V	High Perception
Quality Assessibility	69.6	56.07	64.79	63.48	VI	Moderately high
Streamlining Education	71.27	84.11	81.8	79.05	II	High perception
Wastage and Stagnation	75.4	81.83	86.52	81.25		High perception
Work culture	71.67	79.95	76.11	75.91	III	High perception
Average Perception	71.83	74.36	78.24	74.81	Positively perceived	

Fig 1 showing overall perception of students, teachers and parents considering all six areas associated with introduction of grading system in secondary schools of SSC Board.



Conclusion

Most Prominent finding in the present study is the very low perception of teacher (56.07% towards Quality assessment associated with introduction of grading system which may be probably due to the teachers feeling that their work will become tedious and hectic, as expressed during an informal interview, whereas students and parents have perceived (65-69.60%) quality assessment higher as compare to teachers.

Students are encouraged to use assessment results. They feel it conveys to them the level of success they are meeting. It helps them see the continuity in their learning and offers them the encouragement to apply learned skills in one field to other fields and to everyday living experiences. They are encouraged by an assessment system that reveals both their growth and are as in which improvement is needed. It empowers them to share in the responsibility for their own learning.

Parents have perceived quality assessments higher as compare to teachers. In an informal interview with some parents they revealed that by continuous assessment associated with introduction of grading system they will be able to use assessment to observe the progress being made by their children. It will also help them note progress or lack of progress on the part of their youngster and to determine when to assistance. They also feel that assessment will help parents understand what a given school is seeking to accomplish and whether the schools goals are in sync with the goals they desire. It will encourage parents to ask questions, to seek clarification of procedures used, and to determine the impact of a given test on their child s future.

Students themselves attest that thoughtful discrimination in grading has important educational benefits. At the high end, encourages student's best efforts. As one girl student observed, "If I get the same grade for my very best work that I get for work that is not my very best, I'm less motivated to try to stretch as I can". At the low end, more careful discrimination in grading gives students an accurate calibration of the effort that is required to thrive. One student wrote in the suggestion of Item tool, "I got a D in math and I deserved it. Now I learn to try harder. Another student observed, "May most significant educational experience at school has probably been the day that I received my final grades for my first term. I didn't do as well as I should have. This made me realize that I had to work harder and, in a sense, differently. It made me realized that I was no longer in high school and that I had to get accustomed to a different style of learning."

The study reveals that on an average the perception of students, teacher and parents in all the areas associated with grading system i.e. Stress related to examination, Educational attainment, Quality accessibility, Streamlining of education, wastage and stagnation and work culture. The perception of parents is high in all the areas associated with grading system as compared to the perception of students and teachers. Probably due to fact that

Grading system will reduce intense academic pressure of their child.

Parents need not pressurize the child to study intensively,

Develop interest in the child for enrolling in future levels of educational,

Continuous evaluation will enable the child to prove their abilities in various aspects.

Amongst all the areas associated with grading system the study reveals that the 'Wastage and stagnation criteria on an average is highly perceived by students, teachers and parents in comparison to other areas outlined in the study due to the feeling that.

Number of dropout will be less,

Enrolment at higher class will increase,

Literacy rate can be increased,

Professional and vocational course will be in demand due to less dropouts and more enrolment.

Implications of the study

This type of study gives insight into the students, teachers' and parents perception towards ongoing changes due to introduction of grading system in SSC board. By scanning system in terms of perceived opportunities and drawbacks associated with respect to grading system, might help to identify major lacunae or gap areas as well as strategies and activities that appear to have a good potential for improvement of standards and value for education in SSC Board. Study of such a nature would encourage and instigate students and teachers to meet the challenges by inculcating necessary knowledge and skills in teaching and learning process. Involvement of parents in monitoring and evaluation of system will also keep them alert and responsible for the quality education in the schools.

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