Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction: Context of the study

Evaluation has become an increasingly important area in English Language Education which has received considerable critical attention. The use of evaluation, traditionally speaking, has been narrow and limited. It was directed towards the measurement of performance rather than being constructive and developmental. Therefore, the emphasis was more on learning and learner performance which resulted in stress for the learners. This kind of practice in evaluation consequently developed a system of assessment which resulted in a fear of examinations among the learner. However, the introduction of Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) marks a significant shift and emphasises using evaluation, not as an end process but as a continuous reflective practice.

Many authors have stressed the importance of evaluation in pedagogic practices. Recent developments in the field of testing and evaluation have led to a renewed interest in the different uses of evaluation. Along with this, there is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of evaluation in teaching and learning. It is now well established that evaluation can be used for different purposes other than measuring learning. Studies over the past two decades have also emphasised the place of evaluation being as significant as teaching and learning.

This study, through an extensive analysis of the collected corpus of data, attempted to explore the ways through which evaluation could be used for more constructive purposes and thereby bridge the gap between evaluation and learner progress.
mainly focused on using evaluation as a powerful tool for identifying learner problems and modifying instruction to suit the needs of the learners needs. (Hereafter, learner needs is used in the context of the needs of the learner in overcoming their learning problems and the needs of the learner in realising their learning goals). This study elucidated the status of evaluation and emphasised using diagnosis and remediation as a means to help the learners overcome their learning difficulties. It stressed on the use of washback and using assessment as a tool for modifying instruction. In addition to this, the study also aimed to contribute to this growing area of research by attempting to identify the different strategies that a teacher uses in the classroom as a result of diagnosis, which in turn could be helpful for teachers to monitor learner progress.

The following sections discuss the background of the study, lacuna in the system, statement of the problem, assumptions related to the study, the context of the study, the objective of the study, the research questions, the research methodology and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Since the overall aim of education is to facilitate learning by improving the teaching-learning process on the basis of learner performance, a need for establishing formative assessment has emerged. Learners should be made aware of their own learning and be involved in the teaching-learning process. In addition to this, learners should be encouraged to recognise the importance of evaluation and its potential use.

There was simultaneously a growing need to create a disparate kind of assessment that was both supportive and encouraging, and flexible and transparent. Along with
this, it was necessary to develop the conditions that motivate and encourage the use of evaluation for various purposes other than measurement of learning.

The focus of the education system that existed previously was more on teaching and learning. Evaluation, on the other hand, was viewed as the end of an educational course. What was evaluated had a very little role to play in modifying instruction based on learner performances.

Therefore, it can be said that the challenge of changing the traditional system of evaluation has emerged as a major focus. The introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) at the secondary level with effect from 2009-2010 has made clear that assessment must take into account all the aspects of the development of the learner and that since teaching and learning are continuous, assessment also needs to be continuous. This was done with the intention that teachers make potential use of evaluation to address specific learner problems and to push for inclusive holistic learner development.

CCE states that with the help of formative assessments, teachers have the opportunity to analyse their learner’s problems based on which they can plan for washback, which is the impact of testing on teaching, in order to help the learners overcome these problems. This, in turn, can be instrumental to the teachers to accommodate remediation. Formative Assessment can be used by the teacher to continuously monitor learner progress at regular time intervals. This process not only involves planning lessons based on learner needs but also providing the learners with immediate feedback so that learners can reflect on their own performances. Formative assessment, which is diagnostic in nature can be used to provide feedback to the learners and can further be used for remedial purposes. It also forms a platform for the
learner to be actively involved in the teaching-learning process. Formative assessment, by definition, provide space for washback where teachers can make changes in their lesson plans.

According to CCE, evaluation should be established in such a way that it provides space for the teacher for creative teaching and serves as a tool for diagnosis and remediation at every stage. It should make opportunities accessible to the teachers to know their learner’s learning patterns alongside the difficulties and the limitations they face in realising their learning objectives. While interacting with a few teachers from CBSE schools, it was found that teachers were more conscious about diagnosis, washback and remedial instruction after the implementation of CCE in their syllabus. As a result, teachers were more sensitive towards diagnosing learner problems, using washback to modify their teaching based on evaluation and planning for remediation.

Consequently, there has been a shift in viewing the classroom from the learner’s point and catering to the learner’s needs, based on their abilities and weaknesses. Teaching was more of building on what the learner was able to do and the focus was more on helping the learner move to the next stage. In this process, the tests that the learners took provided a clear overview of what needs to be done. Moreover, washback is viewed as a process that could provide scope for the teacher to a) analyse the performance of the learner and b) decide their next lesson plan based on what is required for improvement in learning.

As Tharu (2013) states that:

Institutional evaluation that is wide in scope, spread over time, and potentially in the hands of the teachers is the central theme. There is not much clarity
about what is supposed to happen in the classrooms as teaching ‘with built-in assessment’ proceeds. Yet the idea of CCE is certainly appealing since it endorses long-standing concerns about the dominance of the single final examination, and to broaden the scope of what should be assessed in the name of student’s development (p.98-99).

He further adds that:

There is ample evidence from teachers on the frontline that they find it cumbersome and unrealistic. Students have expressed confusion and anxiety. There is a need for debate and a commitment to learn from experience and slowly bring about meaningful and appropriate improvements of CCE. Activities under CCE, like all orders to be implemented in our top-down approach system, are subject to inspection for compliance and the space for dialogue has to be created (ibid. p.99).

It can be observed that Tharu’s views on broadening the scope of evaluation not only endorse but also reaffirm the notion that was proposed earlier that evaluation should be looked at from the learner’s perspective and it should be used for constructive purposes. The introduction of CCE in the CBSE schools not only was instrumental for teachers to expand their understanding of evaluation but also created awareness among teachers on different uses of evaluation. Since teachers were provided with sufficient information in the form of teacher training, teacher manuals and other reading resources, even without any form of substantial evidence, there seems to be a generalization that the objectives behind implementing CCE have been met to a great extent. Tharu (2013) further highlights the massive challenges for the teacher from
CCE and further states that teachers need to be helped to gain understanding, practical knowledge, and appreciation with regard to the new elements of day-to-day practice.

In addition to this, he states that:

The basic fact is that virtually all the significant in CCE lies in the hands of the teacher in his/her unique setting – often multi-grade and diverse in unpredictable ways. Consequently, all that is provided from the outside can only be guidelines to follow the other resources to draw on as needed. Tightly packed training modules of 5 or 10 days can at best be priming devices. Ongoing support in a dialogic-collaborative mode has to be provided for a long period of time. Both training inputs and ongoing support presuppose the availability of relevant ‘expertise’ (Tharu, 2013, p. 103).

Hence, it can be said that, for teachers, a deeper understanding with regard to the usefulness and potential of evaluation for different purposes, such as diagnosis and remediation, is to be established which in turn could provide support to the claim made by CCE on the many potential uses of evaluation.

1.2 Assumptions

The assumptions for the study were mainly premised on the areas related to evaluation, diagnosis and remedial instruction and learner progress, which are as follows:

- Evaluation provides more comprehensive evidence on which instruction can be based. While making lesson plans, teachers need to consider their understanding of learners’ strengths and weaknesses. Evaluation plays an important role in informing the teacher about the learner. The evidences found
in assessments can provide scope for the teacher to plan in advance the possible strategies that can be used in the classroom to help learners overcome their problems. Hence, evaluation can be a useful tool for diagnosis.

- These evidences can provide information about the difficulties that the learners face which in turn can help the teacher in planning remedial instruction. Teachers can make changes in their lesson plans to suit the learner needs. Therefore, based on what is diagnosed, as part of remediation, there is a possibility to explore better about what needs to be done to help the learners.

- The introduction of CCE was more of a top-down approach and it has immensely emphasised the different ways in which evaluation can help the teachers comprehend learner progress. The training and teacher manuals provided on CCE to some extent can be instrumental for teachers in planning their instructions and for developing new strategies that can help the learner overcome their difficulties and thus, can be useful for teachers in modifying instruction.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Evaluation in a way provides scope to find out the needs and learning styles of every learner which can help devise a teaching-learning plan that is observant of the learner’s learning styles and learning needs. CCE emphasises that the judgements made by the teachers about the learners can provide valuable information about learner’s achievements and teachers need to develop ways of including these judgments based on which learner progress could be recorded.
Teachers need to use formative assessments to provide scope for learners to develop their own learning techniques. Teachers also need to possess the necessary skills to maintain the balance between formative and summative assessments so that they can plan for positive washback and thus aim for learner progress. Also, an understanding of how helpful the teacher manuals are for teachers in planning and modifying their instruction is to be established.

However, there seems to be an assumption made about the teachers embedding CCE into the classroom pedagogy and they are also expected to adopt different evaluation techniques and use different methods of teaching such as incorporating remedial instruction, washback and so on. During the interactions with the teachers, as part of the preliminary study, it was observed that they were in favour of the new shift in evaluation to a great extent but were more concerned about handling the extensive work they were assigned with regard to the documentation of the evaluation process carried in the classrooms. It was also evident that the underlying objectives behind the implementation of CCE were not clear to some extent as the training provided to the teachers was not adequate. All the above reasons imply that there is a mismatch between what was expected and what was achieved from the time of implementation of CCE and hence, it is to an extent still debatable to what extent CCE is a part of everyday classroom practice. Therefore, a need to examine the impact of evaluation, diagnosis and remedial teaching on learning is necessary as it would provide much scope to envisage the eminence of CCE in practice.

Based on the above discussion, it is observed that there was no proof that teachers were equipped with the required dexterity to implement CCE at its best. Though there have been enough measures were taken to help the teacher in conceptualising the
ideology behind implementing CCE, surprisingly it was also observed that teachers were not in a position to see beyond a certain point. The above reasons imply that much uncertainty still existed about the successful implementation of CCE and that there was a mismatch between the objectives laid down by CCE and the actual classroom scenario. Therefore, it can be said that there was a need to examine the current pedagogic practices in order to widen the scope of evaluation in the existing educational setup.

By observing how teachers can use diagnosis to modify instruction according to learner’s learning needs and learning objectives, there was a scope for minimising the hurdles that the learners face in learning. It was through planned remedial teaching that a teacher can aim at monitoring learner progress. Therefore, this study was an attempt to investigate the role diagnosis and remediation play in monitoring learner progress, which was done keeping in view the objectives behind CCE.

1.4 Objectives and research questions

There has been a huge impact of CCE on the teachers and their teaching styles. CCE has laid further emphasis on formative assessment which is diagnostic and remedial. Similarly, washback plays an important role in linking diagnosis and remediation by relating evaluation to teaching and learning. Therefore, this indicates that there is a need to emphasise the importance of diagnosis, washback, remedial instruction and strategic teaching in the teaching-learning process, through which teaching and learning objectives can be met. This study also tried to see if there was any correspondence between the advice given in the teacher manuals and the strategy adopted by the teachers.

The main objectives of the study are to:
1. Examine how teachers used evaluation to diagnose learner problems

2. Investigate how teachers used diagnosis to modify instruction

3. Examine how teachers used diagnosis and remediation to monitor learner progress

4. Analyse the role CCE in helping teachers plan remedial instruction to suit the learner needs and learning objectives

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were proposed:

1. How does evaluation help the teachers in understanding learner problems?

Explanation for RQ 1: This question investigated if evaluation, apart from assessing language learning, could also be used as a tool for diagnosis by teachers to understand learner problems.

2. How do teachers use diagnosis to modify instruction?

Explanation for RQ 2: This question explored how teachers, based on the evidences found in learner responses about learner problems, modified instruction according to the learner’s needs. This question was asked to identify the different instructional strategies the teachers used in the classroom based on their understanding of learning problems from assessment.
3. How does diagnosis and remediation help the learners overcome learning problems?

Explanation for RQ 3: This question attempted to examine if diagnosis and remediation could actually help the learner overcome learning problems and attempted to find out the role diagnosis and remediation have to play in this process.

4. To what extent the implementation of CCE has proved helpful for the teachers in monitoring learner progress?

Explanation for RQ 4: This question attempted to examine if there was a change in how teachers visualised the potential of evaluation after the implementation of CCE and if this innovation had been helpful for teachers to ascertain that evaluation could be a useful tool to eliminate learner problems and thus monitor learner progress.

1.5 Sample of the study

The study was conducted in Kendriya Vidyalayas (governed by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)), that were located in and around Hyderabad and Secunderabad that were a part of the shift in the evaluation system. Since their inception, in 1963, the Kendriya Vidyalayas promoted national integration and aimed to ensure the learner’s total personality development and academic excellence.
The objectives of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangatan are:

- To cater to the educational needs of the children of transferable Central Government employees including Defence and Para-Military personnel by providing a common programme of education;
- To pursue excellence and set pace in the field of school education;
- To initiate and promote experimentation and innovativeness in education in collaboration with other bodies like the Central Board of Secondary Education and National Council of Educational Research and Training etc.
- To develop the spirit of national integration and create a sense of "Indianness" among children. Memorandum Of Association (Hindi version)
- To Provide, establish, endow, maintain, control & manage schools, hereinafter called the 'Kendriya Vidyalaya' for the children of transferable employees of the Government of India, floating populations & others including those living in remote & undeveloped locations of the country & to do all acts & things necessary for the conducive to the promotions of such schools.

(Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangatan, n.d.)

The target group for the study sample included twenty-two teachers and one hundred and fifty-five learners of Kendriya Vidyalayas of classes VIII and IX from six schools located in and around Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The above selection was made taking into consideration the implementation of CCE (since its inception) in Kendriya Vidyalaya schools and the teacher training provided to the teachers.
1.6 Scope of the study

The scope of the study is:

- The study tried to unfold the use of evaluation for varying purposes other than measuring learning. It focused on diagnosis, remediation and learner progress.
- The study intended to unravel some of the mysteries of the present day classroom scenario i.e. after the implementation of CCE as it was an attempt to examine the shift in assessment practices.
- The study attempted to observe and investigate the process of implementation of the innovation in evaluation (CCE) through informal and planned interviews with the teachers and learners. Hence, the findings might be applicable to a similar type of scenarios only.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study attempted to examine the role of evaluation in pedagogy which eventually leads to diagnosis, remediation and enhancement of learning. It further analysed the effectiveness of teacher manuals and tried to identify the usefulness of these manuals in modifying instruction. In addition to this, it investigated into the ways teachers develop new strategies to help learners overcome reading difficulties. The study also made an attempt to ascertain teachers’ views on the usefulness of teacher manuals. Following this, the teacher manuals were analysed to check on their usefulness for teachers in developing their teaching practices and in modifying instruction. The research carries significance for the teachers who might reflect upon a) the way they implement CCE in the classroom, and b) how they bridge the gap between the planning level and execution.
This study also provided an important opportunity to advance the understanding of how teachers developed remedial instructions based on diagnosis and devised new strategies for teaching to help learners learn better. The significance of the study lies in the fact that it attempted to underline the grey areas and the areas that lag behind in the current evaluation system. The study also carries significance in enhancing the importance of evaluation in the process of teaching and learning and also in sensitising the teachers towards using evaluation for the purpose of diagnosis and remediation.

1.8 Research methodology and tools used for the study

The proposed research was an exploratory study and interpretative in nature. The methodological approach adopted in this study was a mixed method of research where it was mostly qualitative in nature as it aimed at finding the answers to the research questions proposed by using in-depth interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations for the purpose. It was also quantitative in nature as it quantified the data based on teacher responses, learner responses and classroom observations.

The research followed several stages, such as, extensive study of relevant literature and available resources, work done in the field earlier, deciding upon the research tools and their construction and validation through piloting, their administration with the sample chosen from the population, analysis and interpretation of data, arriving at the findings and finally offering implications for improvement of the present situation. An attempt was made to collect data related to various differences and similarities in the evaluation procedures adopted as part of formative assessment and remedial teaching.
On the basis of the classroom observations and feedback received from the respondents, conclusions regarding the best available option were drawn upon. The following section provides a brief of the stages adopted for the study.

1.9 Phases

The study was conducted in two phases which contained eight different stages. The phases and stages are discussed below in detail.

Phase I: Preliminary study

This phase was done in one stage i.e. stage-1 and was planned to collect basic information of the present day English language classroom.

Stage 1: Questionnaire-I

A preliminary study was carried out as part of stage 1, where questionnaire-I was distributed to six teachers. This questionnaire were used to collect basic information about CCE. Information pertaining to the training provided to teachers, teacher beliefs about CCE, formative assessment and others were gathered in order to visualise the present day classroom scenario to some extent. This stage was intended to congregate some basis to support the assumptions and provide scope for estimating the next stages of the study.

Phase II: Main study

The main study was comprised of seven stages i.e. from stage-2 to stage-8 which included Questionnaire-II, teacher and learner interviews, classroom observations, analysis of test scripts (question papers and answer sheets) and teacher manuals.
Stage 2: Teacher Interviews - I

Teacher interviews were executed with six teachers in this phase in order to gather information about CCE in everyday classroom, how it has changed the overall outlook of evaluation (formative assessment), and how evaluation and instruction were interrelated. This stage, along with the CCE manual for teachers provided by NCERT, was also intended to be helpful in providing a basis for formulating a checklist for stage 4, which was classroom observation.

Stage 2: Distribution of Questionnaire-II

As part of the main study, questionnaire-II was distributed to twelve teachers of classes VIII and IX of which eight teachers gave their responses. This questionnaire was divided into five sections and was mainly devised to gather information about the teacher, learner, methodology, materials and evaluation. This stage was planned to get the teacher’s detailed responses that were necessary to explore the process of teaching-learning-evaluation.

Stage 4: Classroom Observations - I

Classroom observations were carried out with five teachers with the help of a checklist. This stage sought information on how teachers used diagnosis to modify instruction and washback if employed. Classroom observations-I were planned immediately after formative assessment-I. This stage mainly aimed to capture the reality in the sense that it focused on the way teachers incorporated CCE in classrooms and the extent to which the objectives of CCE were met.

Informal discussions were made with the teachers after the classroom observations to clarify doubts if any with regard to the methodology, the execution of tasks/activities, lesson plans, lessons taught and so on.
Stage 5: Analysis of test scripts and teacher manuals

Analysis of test scripts using checklists, which included the question papers and answer sheets was done to examine the criteria used for evaluation and to observe learner problems (if any). An analysis of the teacher manuals using a checklist was done in order to check the usability and feasibility of teacher manuals. This stage was mainly planned to investigate the different types of problems learners had and also to find out the underlying reasons for these problems (which in turn can be helpful for the teachers in modifying their instruction) and to check the usefulness of teacher manuals.

Stage 6: Learner Interviews

Learner interviews were conducted to explore the learner’s perception of CCE and also to get an idea of the level of the learners. A total of one hundred and fifty-five learners were interviewed in groups. This stage tried to identify with the learner and learner problems with regard to assessment and instruction. This stage also focused on obtaining information to help validate the data obtained during classroom observations and teacher interviews.

Stage 7: Classroom Observations - II

Classroom were observed again after formative assessment-III in order to examine if there was any modification in instruction based on the information gathered from assessments. This stage tried to grasp the change in methodology that the teacher adopted after analysing learner problems and also attempted to observe if remedial teaching had actually taken place.
Informal discussions were made with the teachers after the classroom observations to clarify doubts if any with regard to the methodology, the execution of tasks/activities, lesson plans, lessons taught and so on.

Stage 8: Teacher Interview - II

Teacher interviews were again conducted to communicate with the teacher the findings from evaluation and discuss on diagnosis and remediation in the process. This stage mainly focused on interacting with the teachers about the strategies used while teaching which were aimed at helping the learner overcome learning problems.

1.10 Tools for data collection

To collect different types of data for avoiding mono-methodic bias, the research tools that were used included:

i) Teacher interviews to examine the teacher’s perspective of the learner, the needs of the learner in overcoming learning problems and their methodology; Learner interviews to examine the learner’s perception of evaluation and also to get an idea of the level of the learners;

ii) Questionnaires for teachers to help identify the role of evaluation that has to play in teaching and learning;

iii) Checklist for evaluation of teacher manuals (to recognise the usefulness of these manuals as a teacher’s aid); and

iv) Classroom observations to identify and categorise the strategies that teachers device and implement while teaching to help learners overcome their learning difficulties;
v) Test scripts to explore the criteria for designing a question paper and to examine the problems faced by the learners and feedback provided to them.

The next section presents a discussion on the design of the thesis.

1.11 Design of the thesis

The thesis is composed of five themed chapters.

Chapter one presented an introduction to the proposed study along with the background of the study, lacuna in the system, statement of the problem, assumptions and research questions. The research procedure adopted for the study, the tools used for data collection and the design of the thesis are also included in this chapter.

Chapter two aims at exploring the theoretical background by reviewing the related literature and existing research. An extensive study of the literature related to evaluation, assessment and CCE in relation to the concepts such as feedback and washback are presented in this chapter. It also presents summaries of earlier researches done in the field related to the study.

Chapter three discusses the research methodology adopted for the study and the framework of research. The details of the process of designing the tools used for data collection, their construction, administration, process of analysis and interpretation are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter four presents the data collected through the research tools along with a discussion on the analysis of the data. It presents an interpretation of the data to arrive at the findings. It discusses the findings and presents the implications for advances in the existing evaluation system based on the research findings. It also suggests a
framework for policy makers developed with the help of the interpretation of data collected during the study.

Chapter five presents the findings of the study, its implications for future research and the limitations of the study.

1.12 Limitations of the study

Though the study was conducted meticulously, it could not escape limitations. The limitations are:

- The study was conducted only in the CBSE schools (Kendriya Vidyalayas located in and around Hyderabad) and it excluded other CBSE schools that followed CCE.
- The study chiefly included teachers and learners and it did not engage with all the stakeholders.
- The study was conducted only in the urban context excluding the schools located in the rural regions.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief introduction to the study. It discussed the importance of evaluation in pedagogy and highlighted the use of evaluation for diagnosis and remediation and presented a brief summary on CCE. It has laid down the background for the study, statement of the problem, along with stating the research questions, the context of the study, the significance of the study, the research procedure adopted for the study and finally the design of the thesis.