

A STUDY ON 'BLOSSOMS': ENGLISH TEXTBOOK FOR CLASS VII IN THE LIGHT OF CONTINUOUS AND COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

RTE Act 2009 provides an opportunity for achieving progress in "Access", "Retention" and "Quality" for Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). 'Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) of child's understanding of knowledge and his or her ability to apply the same' should be an integral part of the pedagogical practice in elementary education. Comprehensive evaluation should encompass physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth including the interest, attitude and values of the child and should be carried out through different techniques on a regular basis i.e. it has to be continuous and such a process of evaluation has to be integrated with the teaching learning activities in and outside the school. We may identify 10 abilities / skills for learners in upper primary levels which comprises of Reading, Writing, Participation, Observation, Questioning, Experimentation, Interpretation, Application, Empathy & Cooperation and Aesthetics & Creativity. The English text book of Class VII, 'Blossoms' has 'human relationships' as its central theme. It is expected to inculcate values and instill social skills in the students as a part of their learning experience. The main objective of 'Blossoms' is to lead the students from the appreciation of literature to the acquisition of language skills. Each lesson of this book is subdivided into 'Let's Start', 'Let's Share', 'Let's Read', 'Let's Do', 'Word Nest' and 'Let's Work Together'. In the new books the learner will not be confined in mere acquisition of information and self-learning. So, this paper finds out that in the light of CCE this textbook 'Blossoms' is appropriate for them.

Keywords: CCE, UEE, Blossoms: English text book for Class VII

INTRODUCTION

The system of school education in India has been struggling to solve issues pertaining to "Access", "Retention" & "Quality" for Universalization of Elementary Education. RTE Act 2009 provides an opportunity for achieving progress in these domains. Section-29 of the RTE Act 2009, in particular, describes some principles for enhancement of quality education in schools. It stipulates that "the curriculum and the evaluation procedure for elementary

education shall be laid down by an academic authority to be specified by the appropriate Government, by notification". The said section also mentions some issues to be considered while framing the curriculum and evaluation procedure.

It is therefore imperative that the curriculum, syllabi, textbooks, pedagogical practice and the evaluation procedure at the elementary stage of school education should be developed in tune with the following principles:

- 'conformity with the values enshrined in the constitution';
- all-round development of the child';
- 'building up child's knowledge potentiality and talent';
- 'development of physical and mental abilities to the fullest extent';
- 'learning through activities, discovery and exploration in a child friendly and child centered manner';
- Making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety and helping the child to express Views freely' ; etc

It is also an imperative that "Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation of child's understanding of knowledge and his or her ability to apply the same" should be an integral part of the pedagogical practice in elementary education. Comprehensive evaluation should encompass physical. Intellectual. Emotional and social growth including the interest, attitude and values of the child and should be carried out through different techniques on a regular basis i.e. it has to be continuous (growth of the child is continuous) and such a process of evaluation has to be integrated with the teaching learning activities in and outside the school.

Our Vision

Implementation of CCE, therefore, would require continuous assessment of the child's understanding of knowledge and his/her ability to apply the same in a comprehensive manner, for all-round development of the child(e.g. physical, social , emotional , cognitive , language , creative and aesthetic development). The CCE would serve as a feedback mechanism for the teachers, the children and the parents at regular intervals, so that sufficient support may be provided to the child during his /her progress in the school. The judgment of failure in a particular academic programme, when provided in the form of score or grade at the end of the year does not help the child in deciding "What went wrong?", neither does it provide any direction for mid-course correction rendering a child and parent helpless in the situation. The RTE Act mandates no detention of the child at the elementary level but it also mandates all round development of the child in the school. Thus, the responsibilities for non-performance of the child in any curricular area should lie on the teacher and the school.

The Assessment Procedure for CCE

Under the right based paradigm, therefore, the assessment procedure should assist the teacher and the student at the elementary level to identify levels of progress of each child in the achievement of declared learning goal objectives (formative assessment) through observation. It will be desirable to maintain a child profile record in terms of abilities of each

child in diverse fields (both scholastic and non-scholastic). The information so obtained should assist the teacher to provide necessary and sufficient support to the student in attainment of the curricular goal. The success of CCE in the improvement of quality of education would depend upon the nature of records and subsequent actions for providing support to the child. Hence, it becomes extremely important that the school should keep records of observations of performance of the child in different activities child will demonstrate different abilities in the school, details of the rubrics may be articulated, tools and techniques may be decided during the in-service training of teachers) by maintaining suitable child profile for evidence of child's learning.

In a teacher-centric approach, a teacher would normally explain, perform demonstrations, ask questions during development of a lesson, assign tasks, involve students in different activities for teaching - learning of concepts and propositions and would obtain valuable observation about the progress of the students in the class in general. Thus he / she would evaluate progress of some students in a large group in the class during development of the lesson, but this practice will not be adequate for making assessment of the individual child, such a process of formative assessment by the teacher

is subjective and does not serve as a feedback mechanism for the students and parents. A large number of students in West Bengal seek the assistance of a private tutor to seek additional support when such support is not available in the school, some of them would not be able to afford the cost of private tuition and may not perform at a satisfactory level in the school and would be declared as failed, such practices would not be acceptable in the fundamental right based paradigm, under the RTE Act. The system of school education under the teacher centered approach may or may not generate a feedback mechanism for the individual student and may or may not provide support to the individual child who is not progressing well in a large group and unfortunately such child may be declared as "failed" in attaining desired level of competence during performance appraisal of the child in weekly test, unit test, terminal test, half yearly test or in the annual test.

Hence, the prevalent practice of teacher-centred methods of teaching – leaning need to be revised and this would also require redesigning of the curriculum and the evaluation procedure being followed. In a right based paradigm under RTE Act each and every child has the entitlement of obtaining appropriate support in the school for understand of knowledge. Therefore, the assessment protocol for CCE need to be carefully articulated by each teacher in every school so that the child is able to understand “what is to be learnt” and how it is to be learnt”. In other words, therefore, the practice of CCE should help the child, parent, the teacher and the school to capture the different abilities of the child and progress of learning of each child in and outside the school as desired in curriculum. The principles of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 according to the RTE Act has to be implemented by all curricular authorities in the country and the teaching- learning activities has to be designed,

Learning environment has to be created so that the child is able to construct knowledge.

Formative Assessment

The formative being an integral part of teaching-learning, the best solution would be to engage the child in different learning activities in the school, preferably in a small group

where each child is able to participate, explore, experiment, observe, interpret, conclude, debate, articulate, describe, question, predict and demonstrate many other skills in an enabling environment with the support from the peers and the teacher to understand and apply the knowledge. By conducting such activities for transaction of the curriculum it is also possible to collect valuable information on progress of each child during formative assessment in a comprehensive and continuous manner and it is possible to provide support to the learner as and when necessary for remediation. The activities should include both the scholastic and co-scholastic areas of the curriculum.

This may happen smoothly when the curriculum for all the grade levels are suitably revised, the textbooks and teaching learning materials are appropriately rewritten and are available, the classroom practice is shifted from teacher-centered to a child-centered approach, the seating arrangement for all the classes are redesigned for conducting group activities, the pre-service and in-service teacher education programme is revised, i.e. all enabling conditions are simultaneously available. The process as described would obviously require some time but the mandate for implementation of CCE under the RTE Act is immediate, hence some innovative measures will be necessary. Teachers have to take up some action research activities. It will be necessary to orient teachers through in-service programme.

Separate strategies should be followed for in-service training of all teachers at the elementary level in the current year. One of them should be for design of activity based curriculum transaction and CCE for the classes in which revised curriculum will not be implemented in 2013 and the other set of programmes should be organized with the newly written textbooks for the classes I, III and V, for which revised curriculum and textbooks will be implemented in 2013 in West Bengal.

The CCE procedure should entail measurement and monitoring of learners' performance in respect of curricular goals, which would include formative assessment (through continuous observation by the teacher and parents in and outside the school, self observation or reflection by the students to be preserved by the school, for providing additional support as and when necessary) and summative assessment (judgment of performance at term -end examinations and annual examination). The following suggestions on making effective record of student's involvement during an activity may be useful (Source Book on Assessment,

1. Observing children and immediately recording the observations/changes seen in a diary/register.
2. Assessing the child's work during an activity/when it is completed.
3. Making a special effort to write qualitative/descriptive statements of a child's work or any interesting incident.
4. Preparing a child' profile.
5. Keeping samples of a child's work in a portfolio.
6. While making notes talking to the child about what is being done and how it is being done.

7. Making a conscious effort to note down important changes, problems, positives/strengths and learning evidences.
8. Clarifying any doubts with the child while recording.

Maintenance of a child profile/ cumulative record reflecting a child's progress (recording may be done in qualitative manner) in each term of the academic session would be helpful in sharing of the information to the child and parents and would serve as a feedback. This will also help to understand about the nature of activities being carried out by the child in the school. It has been also suggested that classroom interaction provides a wide range of opportunities to make observations of a child's behavior and learning and one has to remain careful about bias or error, which will affect recording. Implementation of CCE should not merely focus on performance of the learner alone, the process who

- **Application** (may include "use of known letters to propose spelling of a known word" at elementary level and "building hypothesis", "developing new experimental set up" at higher levels)
- **Empathy and cooperation** (may include appreciation of peers' ability, sensitivity towards, week peers problems etc).
- **Aesthetics and creativity** (may include appreciation of beauty of arrangement and presentation of ideas etc)
- Undoubtedly, as indicated, the above skills are not exclusive. For example, "participation" may include "questioning" and "experimentation" in some sense. Some-times it would be necessary to measure the sub-skills separately. An innovative facilitator might decide what would be the best nomenclature for the "ability/skill" under his/her evaluation.
- To make the evaluation stress-free for the learners it is needed that the facilitators record their observations about the "abilities /skills" of the learners in their daily dairies without informing the children. They may only be informed that their performances for the purpose of CCE are on record all the time and that the CCE record would help them to understand how far they move to become a complete human being

The English text-book of class VII, 'Blossom', has human relationship 'as its central theme. It is expected to inculcate values and instills social skills in the students as a part of their learning experience.

The lessons with associated activities are only some of the channels through which the learner's talents may find manifestation. The facilitator may, however, use his/her own understanding in building up life skills among the learners. Accordingly, new activities may be introduced which may help in the development of the personality of the learners. Facilitators must look out for, and recognize, latent talents in the learners; they must also try to improvise activities which are tailored to bring out and develop these hidden qualities.

In class VII, the teaching-learning method is basically the same as that of class V, with a few differences. The text selection allows the students to have a taste of the works of eminent writers. Most of the texts are adapted or edited from well-known literary works. The selected

texts belong to various genres and are expected to enhance the skill of imagination and encourage the spirit of discovery in the learners. The main objective is to lead the students from the appreciation of literature to the acquisition of language skills. This will ensure that the learners will be able to use English in real-life situations and at the same time develop a significant interest in literature. Unlike the textbook for class V, the poems here are not meant to be reading accompaniment to texts. Poems here are used as separate and full texts and full texts and they are set out for reading comprehension. Discovering the joy inherent in rhyme, rhythm and imagery is also one of the major objectives here.

Let's Start:

This section intends to provide information about the author or poet and /or offer an introduction to the text. It is an important step to put the learners in a proper frame of mind to approach the text.

Let's Share:

This section motivates the learner to read and understand the text. It helps him/her to reach the point where the learner may associate himself/herself with the content by sharing experience with his/her peers the teacher may motivate the learners by using different tools of learning such as pictures, questions, quiz, models, songs etc. lesson II, 'The Riddle', provides an illustration :

Let's Read:

The objective of this section is to ensure that the learners is able to read the text silently, compare, contrast and contextualize his/her experiences with that given in the text, arrive at multiple interpretations and develop his/her own conceptual knowledge. As for instance, in lesson I, 'The Book of nature', the learner gets to know that England is an island. The curiosity of the learner may lead him/her to question and find out why England is called an island, the actual concept of an island [and not simply memories the word-meaning as is common in rote-learning].

Let's Do:

The activities are graded from simple to complex. The activities are intended for testing textual comprehension as well as for multiple manifestation of knowledge in textual information, grammatical and vocabulary skill.

Word Nest:

This section is used to enable the children to enhance his/her stock of words. It will also stimulate them to comprehend the word-meaning from the context and if required to look up the word in a dictionary.

Let's Work Together:

The main objective is to encourage the learners to use English in real life situations by engaging them in a project and involving them in the process of learning through collaboration.

Thus, it is expected that in the new books the learner will not be confined in mere acquisition of information, rather he/she will be involved in the development of skills and gradually will

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proceed towards self-learning. The textbooks are to be used as a tool for bringing about the manifestation of the various talents inherent in the learner.

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