ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN ANDHRA PRADESH : PERCEPTION OF STAKEHOLDERS AND IDENTIFICATION OF POLICY GAPS

1. INTRODUCTION:

Assessment can be regarded as an effective medium for communication between the teacher and the learner. For example, as the saying goes, "If you don't know where to go, how can you expect to reach there?" Likewise, if students need to progress in their learning, then they must know – 'Where they are in their learning and where they are supposed to be going with their learning.' In order to ensure learning progress, the answers to these questions are obvious. Transparency of learning goals would allow students to more clearly see where they are going, and as such, increase the likelihood that they are going to get there. In short, assessment is a process that not only help a teacher to ascertain what to teach, how to teach, but also to know how effectively that he/she taught.

The most significant issue in our school system is the amalgamation of assessment and teaching-learning. Ours is a country where both the formative and summative methods are used while assessing the students-with a comparatively more weightage given to the summative one. Furthermore, the use of assessment data in schools are not uniform; in other words, there is no consistency and definite pattern. There is also a wide variation in the forms and types of assessment used in the Government schools of Sikkim in particular and the whole country in general. Earl (2013) argues that- "Teachers should have a deep understanding of different purposes and functions of assessment practices in order to achieve right balance of summative and formative assessments."

Regarding the assessment practices, Several National level commissions and committees had pointed out to the need for improvement in the following manner:

- Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) recommended that the number of external examinations should be reduced and in the final assessment of the pupils, due credit should be given to the internal tests and the school records of the pupils.

- Indian Education Commission (1964-66) recommended that the evaluation should be a continuous process and be related to educational objectives. It emphasised for developing pupil's study habits and the teacher's methods of teaching. Further, the commission recommended for improved written examination with due weight-age to oral tests as a part of internal assessment.

- National Policy of Education-(1968) recommended that major goal of examination reforms should be to improve the reliability and validity of examinations and to make evaluation a continuous process aimed at helping the student to improve his level of achievement rather than at 'certifying' the quality of his performance at a given time.

- Regarding the assessment practices, the NPE (1986) recommended reduction of emphasis on external examination and introduction of continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) in its place to improve quality of school education. In the context of non-detention policy in order to universalize the elementary education, CCE was highly recommended to ensure the learning attainments by children, thereby enhancing quality of education.

- In the year 2000, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE 2000) had reiterated the recommendations made in the earlier curriculum framework (1988) with respect to continuous and comprehensive evaluation. It pointed to the need for a pedagogical shift

by drawing readers' attention to social constructivist approach to learning and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) of the learners. The document expressed the need for comprehensive student portfolios based on observational and situational tests; continuity of Evaluation through periodical assessment; diagnosis of learning difficulties and providing remedial instruction; shift from 'content' to the 'processes' of learning and evaluation of personal and social qualities.

- The NCF (2005), recommended the need for a shift from content-based testing to problem solving; assessment of projects, activities and assignments of various kinds and lab work; assessment of participation, interest and level of involvement in group work etc.

- National Policy of Education-(2020) recommended that the aim of assessment in the culture of our schooling system should shift from one that is summative and primarily tests rote memorization skills to one that is more regular and formative, is more competency-based, promotes learning and development for our students, and tests higher-order skills, such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity. It also recommends that in order to reverse the harmful effects of the current assessment system, Board exams should be redesigned to encourage holistic development (NEP, 2020).

Assessment Defined

Assessment has been defined in different ways at different times by different authors. The following definitions of assessment have been present in this study:

- Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development (**Marchese,1987**).

- According to Stefankis (2002), the word assess comes from the Latin assidere, which means to sit beside. Literally then to assess means to sit beside the learner.

- Assessment is broadly defined as the process of collecting and interpreting information that can be used to inform teachers, students, and, when applicable, parents/guardians or other users of assessment information, about students' progress in attaining the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours to be learned or acquired in school (**JCSEE, 2003**).

- **Goodrum** *et al*., (**2005**) stated that, ideally, assessment enhances learning, provides feedback about student progress, builds self-confidence and self-esteem, and develops skills in evaluation. In addition, they argue that effective learning occurs when correspondence exists between teaching, evaluation, and results. Therefore, due to its close relation with instruction and learning outcomes, assessment has a key role in learning.

- Assessment, defined as "a systematic process for gathering data about student achievement," is an essential component of teaching (**Dhindsa, Omar, & Waldrip**, 2007, p. 1261).

- According to **Brown** (2008, p. 9), "conceptions of assessment refer to the perceptions people have about assessment, based on their experiences with and of assessment."

- William (2013) in his article states that our students do not learn what we teach. If our students learned what we taught, we would never need to assess. No matter how carefully we design and implement the instruction, what our students learn cannot be predicted with any certainty without conducting assessment. Hence, assessment works as the connecting link between teaching and learning process.

- In the words of Black and William, assessment enables teachers and students to draw inferences from the information obtained and act accordingly. Such actions may aid in making the necessary improvements to teaching and learning, or simply provide a picture in time of students' competence or achievement (**Black and William,** 2018).

Types of Assessment

In simple words, knowing the true purpose of assessment and assessing the students accordingly, adopting the best possible method or methods for assessment, communicating the assessment result in the most judicious way and involving the learners in the assessment process together constitutes assessment practices.

Depending on the purpose of the assessment, assessment practices can be of different types viz., diagnostic, summative and formative.

i) *Diagnostic assessment*

The diagnostic assessment, which is considered as a starting point for designing knowledge teaching, is carried out for the purpose of determining the interests, abilities and other characteristics of the students. Such assessments enable new behaviours, content, teaching method, tools to be selected, organized and planned in accordance with student characteristics (**Gömleksiz and Erkan,** 2016).

It is a distinct form of measurement which is often undertaken at the beginning of a unit of study to ascertain prior to instruction, each student's strengths, weaknesses, knowledge and skills. For example,
- can involve formal measurements for example, IQ tests, which is used to establish a starting point or baseline OR informal measurements e.g., observation, discussions, questioning.

- It permits the instructor to remediate students and adjust the curriculum in a manner to meet each learner's unique needs.

(ii) Summative assessment

The summative assessment, is a type of assessment that involves administering examinations, generally at the end of the unit or term, to determine whether students have reached certain predetermined achievements in the lessons and to measure, through grading, the success the students have been able to achieve in the lessons (Bulunuz & Bulunuz, 2013).

Summative assessment assists one to make judgements about student achievement at certain relevant points in the learning process or unit of study. For example, end of course, project, semester, unit, year.

- Can be used formally to measure the level of achievement of learning outcomes, to motivate individual to maintain or improve performance through- tests, labs, assignments, projects, presentations etc.
- Can also be used to promote, to assign grades or for certification.

(iii) Formative assessment

Formative assessment, which is an assessment to learn and teach, take place during instruction and is considered as a way of deciding on the progress of students, providing feedback and deciding on future teaching activities (**McMillan**, 2015). Through directing teaching activities, formative assessment which is in the center of new approaches in education ensures that teaching and assessment-evaluation activities merge together. Formative assessment is the practice of building a cumulative record of student achievement (Dumit, 2012).

- Formative assessment usually takes place during day-to-day learning experiences and involves ongoing, informal observations throughout the term, course, semester or unit of study.

- Is used to monitor students' ongoing progress and to provide immediate and meaningful feedback.
- Assists teachers in modifying or extending their programs or adapting their learning and teaching methods.
- Is applicable in identification of areas for improvement and provide specific suggestions for the same.

Principles of assessment

Lindstrom et al., (2017) summarized major themes emerging from the scholarly literature related to assessment principles in education. The following are the Guiding Principles for Assessment of Students' Learning:
- Effective assessment requires a culture shift that moves away from focusing on evaluating student performance in isolation to evaluating student learning as part of a comprehensive design to support student learning.
- Assessment strategies are authentic in that they reflect the work of our disciplines and respect the integrity of epistemologies.
- Assessment is a developmental and sustainable process that fosters self-regulated learning, academic integrity and the ability for students to be lifelong learners.
- Assessment is a continuous process that is embedded in the culture of the institution, and curriculum as opposed to a course component meant solely to finalize a specific unit of student learning.
- Assessment should include discussion about the assessment process between students and teachers to foster a learning partnership that can evolve based on student learning student feedback.
- There is a balance between summative and formative assessment processes and also some degree of separation between grades and feedback distribution.

- Fair assessment processes are transparent, providing students with clear expectations on what, how and why they are being assessed, and with quality information regarding their progress and status of their learning.

- Assessment strategies are aligned with learning outcomes and instructional strategies.

- Assessment feedback is conceptualized as a 'feed-forward' approach: future-focused, action oriented and used to improve student learning. Effective feedback is provided to students with an understanding that they can use it to improve future work.

- Multiple opportunities for timely feedback on students' learning progress are provided throughout a course so students have sufficient time to practice, reflect on the results and incorporate previous feedback.

- Assessment is designed to motivate and foster student learning and confidence, rather than be a source of anxiety.

- A variety of assessment methods are utilized with some level of student choice in order to maximize student engagement and involvement in the assessment process.

- Ample opportunities are provided for students to self-assess, and reflect on their own work to enhance self-regulated learning.

- Effective, reciprocal peer-assessment processes are premised on formative assessment principles to facilitate learning.

- Assessment processes and tasks reflect cultural and individual diversity

- Teachers recognize the importance of assessment and use assessment as a core element in planning instruction. Resources are invested to ensure that appropriate professional development opportunities are provided to academic staff and teaching assistants so they can gain the required expertise on assessment theory, strategies, and ways to effectively utilize assessment data.

- Teachers collect and use assessment data to inform the development of new assessment strategies and instructional interventions.
- A consistent institution-wide grade scale system is clearly defined (**Lindstrom** *et al*., 2017).

Major aspects of assessment

Carmen (2011) states that the major aspects to be considered while designing the assessment include role and uses of assessment, purpose of assessment and domains to be tested. The details of these aspects are as follows:

The Role and Uses of Assessment

One of the contemporary classroom assessment classifications was developed by McMillan (2015), who classified classroom assessment as "assessment of learning," "assessment for learning" and "assessment as learning," depending on its purpose, method and time. Assessment plays a major role in how students learn, their motivation to learn, and how teachers teach. Assessment mainly comprises of the following uses:

- Assessment for learning: where assessment helps teachers gain insight into what students understand in order to plan and guide instruction, and provide helpful feedback to students.
- Assessment as learning: where students develop an awareness of how they learn and use that awareness to adjust and advance their learning, taking an increased responsibility for their learning.
- Assessment of learning: where assessment informs students, teachers and parents, as well as the broader educational community, of achievement at a certain point in time in order to celebrate success, plan interventions and support continued progress.

In schools, teachers use many different processes and strategies for classroom assessment, and adapt them to suit the assessment purpose and needs of individual students.

The Purpose of Assessment

Alkharusi, (2021) proposed two dimensions of the assessment purposes: Instructional- versus learning-oriented purposes. Instructional-oriented purposes are related to teachers' use of assessment for evaluating their teaching methods and managing student behavior. Learning-oriented purposes are related to teachers' use of assessment for motivating students to learn and assigning grades for students.

Likewise, teachers use classroom assessment for many purposes. These include evaluating teaching methods, motivating students to learn, comparing students' performances, reporting grades to students, parents and other stakeholders (Jabbarifar, 2009).

Moreover, assessments are used for a wide variety of purposes in schools and education systems. Dietel et al., (1991) gave a detail description of needs and purposes of assessment practices;

Assessment of Learning Domains

Ramalingam et al., (2014) highlighted that during 1950's, Benjamin Bloom led a team of educational psychologists in the analysis of academic learning behaviour. He aimed to develop a system with different categories of learning behaviour to assist in the design and assessment of educational learning. The results of this research produced what is known today in the field of education as Bloom's taxonomy. A goal of Bloom's taxonomy is to motivate educators to focus on all the three domains, creating a more holistic form of education. Bloom's taxonomy divides the educational objectives into three domains: cognitive domain, psychomotor domain and affective domain.

The designed learning domains are:

i.   Cognitive: Mental skills (knowledge), consisting six levels.

ii.   Affective: Growth in feelings or emotional areas (attitude), consisting five levels.

iii.   Psychomotor: Manual or physical skills (skills), consisting seven levels.

Cognitive domain

Cognitive domain deals with how a student acquires processes and utilizes the knowledge. It is the "thinking" domain. The levels in the cognitive domain can be measured through:

- Class discussions – refreshing previous lectures
- Organized class notes
- Tutorials
- Provide sufficient information through charts
- Power point slides
- Real time examples
- Self-check quizzes
- Project/problem-based learning.
- Conducting course seminars and viva voce.
- Practice questions with answers and "expert" explanations.

Affective domain

Affective domain is critical for learning, but is often not specifically addressed. This domain focuses on attitude, motivation, willingness to participate, valuing what is being learned and ultimately incorporating the discipline values into real life.

Stages in this domain are not as sequential as the cognitive domain, but have been described as the following:

- Receiving (willing to listen)
- Responding (willing to share)

- Valuing (willing to be involved)
- Organizing (willing to be an advocate)
- Characterization (willing to change one's behaviour, lifestyle, or way of life).

Teachers usually expect the students to be willing to "show up," participate in teaching-learning activity, expend the effort in their courses and sustain the effort throughout the course duration. Furthermore, the teachers would like the students to proceed to the next higher-level course in the curriculum as they value what they have learned.

Psychomotor domain

Psychomotor domain focuses on performing sequences of motor activities to a specified level of accuracy, smoothness, rapidity, or force. Underlying the motor activity is cognitive understanding. In the higher education environment, psychomotor learning can be included in the following contents:
Lab courses for science classes
- Vocational courses
- Physical education courses
- raining using specified equipment such as computers, projectors, videos etc.
- Performing arts.

The psychomotor domain is best assessed in a face-to-face situation (Ramalingam et al., 2014).

2. CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

The review of related literature have been collected in the ideology of the present topic and presented in the following manner.

Studies on Leadership Styles:

Joshua (2019) studied the effect of leadership style and organizational health and found (i) a significant relationship between Leadership Style and School Effectiveness and (ii) a significant inter-correlation among the components of school effectiveness and leadership style.

A study conducted by Palmer (2016) concluded that (i) there was a significant relationship between leadership style and school effectiveness, (ii) No significant relationship was found to exist between school effectiveness and range of leadership styles.

Hinger and Heck (2016) have reported that there are differences in the beliefs and expectations of Principals of low and High Socio-economic Status.

The study of Callahan (2012) deals with leadership effectiveness of school Principals in schools that had gained recognition as effective schools and found (i) Principals in schools that are ineffective differ in the scope of their behaviours in response to similar situations, (ii) Principals in effective schools function at high levels of effectiveness (iii) the profiles of behaviours of Principals in demographically similar in both in effective and not in effective,

Maria Arulraj (2012) studied the relationship between leadership beahviour and quality in education in selected schools of Tamilnadu and found a positive correaltion between quality in education and leadership behaviour.

3. OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to investigate the various assessment practices at secondary school level in Sikkim, study the perception of stake holders and further identify the policy gaps if any.

Specifically, the objectives of the study were:

1) To study the perception of stakeholders about the present Assessment practices in the Secondary Schools of Andhra Pradesh.

2) To assess the prevailing practices of Assessment in secondary schools of Andhra Pradesh in the light of CBSE guidelines.

3) To examine Policy Gaps if any exists in the Assessment practices at Secondary school level in Andhra Pradesh.

4) To document the effective assessment practices of selected Secondary Schools through an in-depth case study.

4. HYPOTHESES

To study the perception of stake holders about the present Assessment practices (based on General Aspect, Purpose, Use, Domains, and Problems and Suggestions) in the Secondary Schools of Andhra Pradesh, the following null hypotheses were used to guide the study:

a) There exists no significant difference in perception on Assessment practices between male and female teachers of secondary schools in Andhra Pradesh.

b) There exists no significant difference in perception on Assessment practices between secondary school teachers of aspirational and non-aspirational districts in Andhra Pradeh.

c) There exists no significant difference in perception on Assessment practices among teachers of different academic streams.

d) There exists no significant difference in perception on Assessment practices between trained and untrained teachers of secondary schools in Andhra Pradesh.

e) There exists no significant difference in perception on Assessment practices of teachers with varied teaching Experiences.

f) There exists no significant difference in perception on Assessment practices between boys and girls of secondary schools in Andhra Pradesh.

g) There exists no significant difference in perception on Assessment practices between Students of secondary schools of aspirational and non-aspirational districts in Andhra Pradesh.

5. DATA COLLECTION

Design of the Study:- The present study, which is descriptive in nature, aims at finding the relationship between Assessment Practices and Policies. The relationship is studied from two points of view, which form the constituents of the inner most circles of customers viz., policy makers.

Tools Used:- The following tools are used to measure the variables.

The specific nature of the study was to assess the prevailing practices of assessment, to secure the perception of the stake holders towards Assessment Practices, to examine Policy Gaps if any exists in the Assessment practices and to document the effective assessment practices of selected Secondary Schools in Sikkim. In this regard, the following tools were used for the purpose of the study:

1 A self-developed Perception Assessment Scale (PAS) was used for collecting data relating to the Teachers', Students' and members of SMDC' perception towards Assessment practices, and problems faced by them at Secondary school level in Andhra Pradesh.

2 Interview schedule with the teachers to collect more in-depth data relating to their perception towards Assessment practices at Secondary school level in Andhra Pradesh.

3	A guideline for Focus Group Discussions with students to collect more in-depth data relating to their perception towards Assessment practices at Secondary school level in Andhra Pradesh.
4	A field verification schedule was developed by the investigator for collecting information about the Assessment Practices in Secondary Schools of Andhra pradesh.
5	An observation schedule was developed by the investigator for documenting effective Assessment practices within one Secondary school of Andhra Pradesh.

Plan & Procedure

Planning was made for selection of sample and justification of the tools used. Administration of the tools and scoring was made as per the standard methods followed in research studies. Reviews were collected as per the requirement and result and discussion was done as per the objectives and hypotheses. Organization of the chapter for reporting was done as follows:

The first chapter comprises of Introduction, where the theoretical approach of Assessment Practices has been presented, and it also contains all relevant details of introduction. The second chapter deals with the Review of related literature supporting the current study. In this chapter the researcher has tried to give a clear picture of the earlier studies, both from India and foreign, which are more relevant to the present research and it also contains all relevant details like Major Findings of the Study, Rationale of the study, Statement of the problem, Objectives, Hypotheses and Operational definitions. The third chapter gives the description of Research Methodology which consists of Design, Sample, Tools to be used, Plan and procedure and Procedure of data analysis. The fourth chapter would be devoted to Analysis and Interpretation which deals with both numerical and graphical presentations. The fifth chapter deals with the Case

Study of one of the best performing schools with regard to assessment practices. The Sixth chapter deals with the Summary, Major Findings, Discussions and Recommendations, Educational Implications, Suggestions for further study, Limitations, and Conclusion. References and Appendices would be appended at the last pages of the report.

6. DATA ANALYSES

Quantitative data were analyzed by using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used for study of distribution of the scores and assessing of the normality of distribution was done through central tendency, variability, and percentile along with graphical representation of the data. Inferential statistics such as 't' ratio, and ANOVA were used to study the significance of differences on the bases of certain demographic variables such as, gender, locality etc. Qualitative data analysis includes thick description.

The quantitative data gathered from the field were analysed using descriptive (means and standard deviation) and inferential statistics ('t' test and ANOVA). Responses to the various items in the questionnaires were tabulated and statistically analysed. In the analysis, the mean provided the summary of the responses and the standard deviation indicated whether the responses were clustered to the mean score or dispersed from it.

Also, in the analysis, standard deviation ranged from lower to higher. Where the standard deviation was relatively small, the stakeholders' responses were believed to be homogeneous (similar responses). On the other hand, where the standard deviation was relatively large, the teachers' responses were believed to be heterogeneous (dissimilar responses).

A higher mean indicated teachers' positive perception while a lower mean indicated a negative perception towards assessment practice. Kurtosis values were used to determine the normality and skewness of the responses.

After analysing the quantitative data, the researcher identified some areas that needed explanation and clarification. 60 teachers and 100 students who took part in the study were identified and those who agreed to be contacted were purposefully interviewed. Their views constituted the qualitative data. This was to supplement the information provided in the quantitative information gathered.

The data from the qualitative phase like-FGDs, interviews, observation, field verification were transcribed and analysed thematically. With this procedure, common trends that extended throughout the entire qualitative data collection procedure were identified. For instance, the tape-recorded interviews were transcribed, after several readings by the researchers. The transcribed interviews were then summarized; keeping in mind the possibility of multiple themes that might exist in a set of interviews.

7. RESULTS

The results will be made on the basis of the above statistical analyses procedures.

- ✓ On the whole Sample
- ✓ In the opinion Interview schedule
- ✓ In the opinion of the Perception scale

8.   SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions will be made on the basis of Data Analysis of the data. For example :

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that an analysis of the overall perspectives of the students and teachers in terms of perceiving assessment practices shows that both students and teachers had a better recognition of various domains, purposes and use of assessment. In addition, both students and the teachers viewed assessment as activities for educational purposes not just assigning score or grade, although to some extent the teachers leaned towards the achievement aspect that is assessed at the end of a course. Additionally, findings on analysis of policy gap reveals that the gap between theory and practice of teacher education, lack of seriousness for in-service trainings and need of well oriented school heads and teachers, innovative practices and coverage of syllabus in schools, good classroom practices and examination-oriented teaching learning in many of the Government Secondary schools are some prominent barriers to facilitating the effective assessment practices required to achieve desired educational goals of the 21st century. The gap can however be covered if teaching-learning and assessment, are brought into better alignment with the requirement of the educational needs of the present society.

To reduce the gap, a strong policy like the NEP 2020 could go a long way which envisions to instill among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.

9. RECOMMDNDATIONS

The following recommendations were quoted:

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY