Critical Reflections on Assessment Approaches in School Education

Minimum Levels of Learning, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation and Learning Outcomes

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Abstract

Assessment being an inextricable part of any learning process has gone through many ups and downs since independence in India. Transformations have seen from the introduction of Minimum Levels of Learning: to measure a list of competencies as an end product, to the introduction of theoretically sound 'Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE): to guide the overall learning process of student. With time, many pitfalls and implementation failures have been observed in these approaches of assessment. Thus, the inception of learning outcomes approach after CCE's unexpected implementation failure opens a scope for critical discourse in the field of school education in India. The term 'learning outcomes' reflects a conceptual tension and far less scope of flexibility as propounded by many educationists globally. Thus, the paper attempts to show the post-independence journey of school level assessment procedures in India and critically reflects upon the current learning outcomes approach from national and international perspective to predict its future feasibility and upshots.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, knowledge is commonly viewed as static and absolute in nature and learning as a passive exercise. Accordingly, the curriculum tends to be designed and implemented as a collection of facts and truths and assessment as a means to quantify how much and how well these facts have been memorised and reproduced by the students. But with the changing perspective of knowledge in terms of social, cultural and political dimensions as a constructive process of meaning making, contest these absolute and rigid notions of 'knowledge', 'learning' and 'assessment'. The assessment process stays within the socio-cultural context, emphasising upon the diversified needs and ways of knowing and learning and a 'fair' opportunity being provided to all to express their learning throughout this process (Rampal, 2020).

WHAT ROLE DOES ASSESSMENT PLAYS IN EDUCATION?

Assessment is inextricably embedded in the teaching-learning process. A careful and effective design of assessment could facilitate learning by providing valuable feedback to the learners as well as teachers on their learning process and help external stakeholders to pass a judgement on learner's course of study (Azim Premji Foundation, 2015).

At the time of designing assessments, it becomes difficult what purpose does it serve, i.e., formative or summative. Summative assessments are designed to judge a learner's performance at the end of an academic year or a particular course against pre-defined standards. While formative assessments are designed as a part of the on-going learning process and provides a detailed, individualistic and continuous feedback on the learning process of learners. This kind of 'assessment for learning' also helps the learners, teachers and their parents in understanding the process of learning and reframing the teaching strategies and assessment practices as per the individual learner's profile. The kind of assessment also depends upon for whom it is being designed, i.e. for students, governance purposes, institutions, a program and so on (Azim Premji Foundation, 2015).

TRANSFORMATIONS IN ASSESSMENT APPROACHES AT SCHOOL LEVEL IN INDIA

Important Policies, Commissions and Frameworks: Perspective on Examination Reforms

The education system of any nation has its foundation based upon the recommendations made by educational policies, national frameworks, various commissions and committees as well as the decisions and conclusions made by the higher bodies and institutions set up for the planning, research and governance of the education system

at the school level. The Education Commission (Ministry of Education. Government of India, 1964) and Secondary Education Commission (1952) stated the educational system as examination-ridden and reflected upon the crippling effect of external examination on quality of learning and suggested that teaching for successful learning cannot occur without high quality assessment (Ministry of Education, Government of India., 1964 and Mudaliar, 1953). Therefore, assessment needs to be integrated in the process of teaching and learning and designed in such a manner that it becomes a powerful means of influencing the quality of what teachers teach and what students learn. Similarly, the National Policy on Education (1968) had mentioned that the major goal of examination reform should be to improve the quality of evaluation system and make it a continuous process for the students to improve their level of performance rather than focusing upon certification. In the queue, the second National Policy on Education (1986) revised in 1992 and Programme of Action (1992) addressed that the reforms in examination have been a subject of serious discussion for quite a time and suggested decentralisation of the operations in examination system; increasing the credibility of the examination system; shift from pass or fail criteria to grade system; open book examination, diagnostic evaluation to be experimented with (Programme of Action, 1992). The Minimum levels of Learning (MLLs) in language, Mathematics and Environmental Studies for Classes I to V have been developed by Ministry of Education at the national level and the POA (1992) suggested developing the same in the remaining subject areas. It also suggested a flexible scheme of Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation, 2019 guidelines recommended at the elementary stage so as to make the evaluation process an integral part of teaching and learning process (Programme of Action, 1992).

Another remarkable documents, National Curriculum Framework (2005) and Position paper on Examination Reforms (2006) associated the term evaluation with stress, anxiety and examination and accepts that the efforts at redefining curriculum would be of no use if the evaluation and assessment system would not change for good. It deeply identified that CCE would require a great deal of planning at various levels if it is to be meaningfully executed and if it is to have any reliability as an assessment. It explicitly addressed the issues in the examination system as categorisation of students as 'fast' or 'slow' learners; stress-ridden examination system; one size does not fit all and suggested to not expect of everything of every subject from every student; flexibility in when exams should be taken and elimination of pass or fail concept; make use of variety of assessment methods;

qualitative feedback; self-evaluation; criterion based assessment, term-wise exams; progress card indicating general observations on health and nutrition, specific observations on the overall progress of the learner, and information and advice for the parents etc.

CCE was then introduced into the school examination system as one of the measures of Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009) and many alterations have been done since then, following which, the latest document on CCE published by NCERT in 2019 was designed to keep it abreast with the learning outcomes designed in various curricular areas in 2017. It provides information to help different practitioners to understand and overcome the misconceptions related to CCE supported with detailed insights on 'What', 'Why', 'How' aspect of CCE as well as provides exemplary 'Rubrics' for evaluation in consonance with the learning outcomes with a focus on bringing inclusivity and quality into the system. Parallel to this, the National Education Policy (2020) envisages transforming the culture of coaching, rote memorisation and checking content knowledge of students to the flexible and competency based assessment system where learning outcome and indicators would guide the course of learning and suggested to establish a National Assessment Center (PARAKH) and report cards of students with 360–degree coverage.

A brief timeline of important policies, frameworks and commissions on the examination reforms at the school level provides a backdrop to how different assessment approaches came into existence which is reflected upon in a detailed manner ahead.

From Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) to the Inception of Learning Outcomes Approach

Special focus on educational achievement and quality of education began in India when National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in collaboration with the UNICEF, worked upon the projects on 'Primary Education Curriculum Renewal' and 'Developmental Activities in Community Education and Participation' in 1978 and laid down Minimum Learning Continuum (NCERT, 1991). This continuum included learning outcomes to be achieved by the students studying in Classes 2, 3, 4 and 5. Considering the evidences collected from these projects and the recommendations of the National Policy on Education (1986), NCERT developed another document named 'Minimum Levels of Learning at Primary Stage' (NCERT, 1991). The vision behind formation of MLLs was to reduce the disparities in terms of caste, class, creed, and promote equity by providing a standard access to education to all children of primary

stage. The government laid down the MLLs which specified the standards to be achieved by all learners in various grades of the primary stage in three curricular areas of language, mathematics and environmental sciences (NCERT, 1991). But critics have argued that the philosophical and conceptual basis of the MLL concept was flawed in many ways as stated in a report titled 'Status of Learning Achievement in India' published by Azim Premji Foundation in 2004.

A radical shift has been observed in the process of learning and teaching as a construction of knowledge rather than focusing upon the competencies and product oriented evaluation. Soon, the MLL concept was found to have a limited scope for the overall development and assessment of the learners as well as equally focusing upon the affective and psychomotor domains of learning. In order to address these changes and bring them into the system, NCERT undertook an exercise to frame 'Learning Outcomes' for Classes 1–8 in all the subjects (NCERT, 2017) based upon the long term grade and subject-wise curricular expectations and suggested pedagogical processes.

It is pertinent to reflect upon the major assessments related initiatives taken in between the era of MLLs and the concept of learning outcomes before jumping upon the conclusion.

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), Non-Detention Policy (NDP) and Admission in Age Appropriate Class (AAAC): Major Initiatives under RTE Act, 2009

More than a decade ago, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, highlighted a shift in the paradigm of learning (NCF, 2005). Children as active learners than passive consumers of knowledge; construction of knowledge as a natural process within the environment; learning— a meaning making process by exploring, inventing, enquiring, reflecting and deciding wisely, were the few highlights of this shift (Sharma, 2015).

Keeping that in mind, the Ministry of Education (MoE) earlier known as Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) advised the academic authority in one of its advisory notice that apart from following ABL (Activity Based Learning) methodology, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system involves creating profile for each child by focusing upon five major tools, namely, the engagement of child with others and oneself; overall observation; observation pertaining to group activities as well as individual activities; understanding of child's written responses on teacher assigned activities and recording anecdotes (MHRD, 2012). CCE in itself was proved to be a well thought shift in the assessment system.

Highlighted in an e-article on 'Assessment in School Education: The Current Debate' by Azim Premji Foundation (2015), the poor implementation of a well thought concept of CCE made it a huge hurdle to realise its real intent into the process. It was misunderstood as a process of weekly testing of learners in the name of formative assessment and passively filling the formats. If teachers would have given intensive trainings, first, for understanding the conceptual dimensions of CCE and, then, its pedagogic implications into the classroom, the implementation of CCE would have been processed in a desired manner (Azim Premji Foundation, 2015).

The policy in itself was fault free and theoretically sound but the authoritarian structure of education system could not make it possible in practice (Mishra, 2015). Thus, there seems to be a need to challenge and reconstruct the overall evaluation system of the country from being authoritarian to child centred for the policy ideas, like CCE, Age Appropriate Admission to the Class (AAAC) and NDP, could realise their true potential in practice (Mishra, 2015).

The actual worth of CCE could be understood well if other important measures of Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009), such as AAAC and NDP, would be read and understood in concomitance (MHRD, 2012). All these measures are based upon the rock solid constructivist philosophy of child-centred education. This paradigm believes in child's own construction of knowledge in an active and enriched environment as per their own individual potential with the positive support and guidance of the teachers. The goals of learning, the process and assessment activities, are all discussed and decided among teachers and learners together as a part of overall learning process.

This approach disapproves the authoritarian role of teachers and requires learners to ask questions and think critically and rationally to arrive at a solution for the well-being of the humankind. The underlying assumption that similar age group would help learners to collaborate well brought in the concept of AAAC. Likewise, individual differences among learners make them learn in their own way and pace. A 'one-size fits all' type examination system cannot justify with each child's potential and leaves many important areas of child development untouched. Consequently, CCE was recommended through RTE, 2009. From here, the need for NDP was recognised because each child progresses as per their own potential level and mere tagging them with 'pass-fail' would not account for conceptual clarity rather make them feel demotivated (Mishra, 2015).

Before the new National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) became public; there had been a lot of murmuring in the reports and news about the future of assessment and evaluation system

of the nation. This whole buzz was about whether the traditional pass-fail exam based system will be reinstituted or 'No Detention Policy' (NDP) will be followed which was assumed to promote learners automatically to the next class by the majority.

How are They All Connected?

After the decline of MLLs approach and poor implementation failure of CCE and related measure like NDP, the next transformation in assessment procedures came into the form of 'Learning Outcomes' till elementary level. NCF (2005) emphasised upon the fact that though MLLs were designed to measure the level of competencies of children in different curricular areas but the fragmented manner of sub-skills to be achieved in a timely manner was never a condition for flexible learning process. With regard to the concept of learning outcomes, NCF (2005) takes a stand that, "designing learning and test items for these detailed lists (competencies), and teaching to these learning outcomes, is impractical and pedagogically unsound". Apart from having its own merits and demerits, there is still a lack of clarity between what NCF (2005) emphasised about learning outcomes approach and the vision behind designing 'Learning Outcomes' till elementary stage. Therefore, the recently developed 'Learning Outcomes' (LO) for assessment purposes make it even more crucial to look at it from multiple perspectives with a critical stance.

Critical Reflection on the Learning Outcomes Approach in School Education of India

In India, the journey of assessment system at school level has gone through various stages and forms since independence. A number of studies have shown the concern behind India's declining rate of educational achievement with no signs of improvement. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2018 released by Pratham, indicated that though the levels of basic arithmetic and reading has improved a bit in rural India since 2014, but significant efforts to improve foundational skills are the need of the hour as noted in the report. Similarly, the National Achievement Survey (NAS) of the academic year of 2017–18 conducted by NCERT shows levels of learning in different subject areas, wherein lowest performance of students was seen in the area of mathematics as compared to other subjects.

Since independence, many commissions and committees laid emphasis upon revamping the assessment system based on standardised examinations and tests to bring about qualitative reforms in the education system because assessment takes a significant part of any teaching-learning process (Assessment Reforms; NEP, 2020). Student assessment in India has passed through oral testing, written tests, centralised examinations at secondary and senior secondary levels, continuous and comprehensive

evaluation and, now, towards competency based assessment through predefined learning outcomes. The recently launched 'National Education Policy' (NEP) 2020 amidst COVID-19 pandemic, in its fundamental principles, stated, "focus on regular formative assessment for learning rather than the summative assessment that encourages today's 'coaching culture' (NEP, 2020), which has been a word of mouth in several previously published policies and commissions.

The new NEP insinuates upon replacing the rote memorisation and summative form of assessment to a more flexible, formative, competency based assessment system which includes assessment 'as', 'of' and 'for' tools designed to measure the predefined learning outcomes and capabilities in a specific subject area (NEP, 2020). At once, these changes sound vibrant and give a lot of hope, though a few have been repeated throughout education policies, but to announce board like school examinations at the end of Classes 3, 5 and 8 to be conducted by an external authority reflects worrisome story as highlighted by many activists and educationists. Anita Rampal, an eminent educationist from Delhi University, stated explicitly in this context that,

"It's centralised focus on state examinations even in Grades 3, 5 and 8 in addition to the board examinations in Grades 10 and 12 runs contrary to the RTE which had banned children from being subjected to any board examination till Grade 8, and even its modified Section 16 allows a regular school examination" (Rampal, A. 2020).

This centralised focus on examination system even at the foundational stages of education clearly indicates the focus on measuring the previously made learning outcomes for each subject of a given class for the purpose of governance and accountability matters. However, an e-news article on 'NEP 2020: Why altering school education in India has divided experts' puts it in favour of the policy guidelines on assessment that it could benefit students to take enough time to grasp concepts even in board exams and the school examination at class 3, 5 and 8 by an authority would fill the gaps in learning then and there, instead of failing students at higher classes (Kaveri, M. 2020).

Another perspective in this discourse supports the formulation of learning outcomes in lieu of broad curriculum expectations suggested by NCF-2005 as it would benefit the teachers to measure students' learning progress and also throw a light on the health of the education system (Sharma, 2015).

The document on learning outcomes at the elementary stage claims not to be prescriptive in nature and may be modified as per the local requirement on one hand and constructivist in nature on the other hand (NCERT, 2017), but failed

to recognise that in constructivist paradigm, learning outcomes are not prescribed in advance for all the students as repeatedly mentioned by majority of educationists earlier in this paper.

The document also reads, "Keeping in view the decline in outcomes of reading ability as well as numerical and mathematical ability which is a major concern at present, quality, as measured by learning outcomes to be achieved by all, especially for literacy, numeracy and essential life skills is crucial. The focus of the Twelfth Five Year Plan for basic learning as an explicit objective of primary education and the need for regular learning assessments to make sure that quality goal are met" (NCERT, 2017).

The focus of above statement is reflecting the ultimate objective of developing learning outcomes is to shift the focus from 'teaching to test' culture in order to judge and maintain the quality of learning in a standardised manner. A special focus was given to suggest some curricular strategies for the categories of students who fall under inclusive education but it was made sure that they, too, reach the same levels of learning or obtain same outcomes at the end of the year. The individual learning needs and styles of learning are given due importance in terms of developing class-specific or student-specific suggested learning outcomes. The document emphasised upon process-oriented learning to be

measured in both qualitative as well as quantitative forms (NCERT, 2017) for students to develop holistically which provides a ray of hope that at least it did not completely loosened a touch with constructivist approach.

Also, the document points, "Most often, teachers are not clear about what kind of learning is desired and the criteria against which it could be assessed" (NCERT, 2017). The fact could be valid but the bigger concern remains, "Would the suggested learning outcomes make teachers competent enough to teach and assess what they are expected to do in the constructivist paradigm?" or "will it rather make them mechanistic in their approach by withdrawing their academic freedom and autonomy"?

The reasons presented for the development of learning outcomes in order to maintain quality in school education driven towards constructivist paradigm but more clear guidelines are required to make the learning outcomes inclusive for all (special needs as well as social inclusion categories) students in the near future.

Critical Reflections on Learning Outcomes (LO) Approach: International Perspective

The term 'Learning Outcome' has been used extensively in educational literature and the concept has found widespread application in educational institutions. Along with the developments made in this prospect, it has become an area of

constant dialogue. While the idea has been embraced by some, some have criticised it on many accounts or argued that it has been misused. At present, the diverse meanings attached to this term and multiple ways of implementation has made it pertinent to reflect upon the concept of learning outcomes supporting with different perspectives upheld by various educationists globally.

The term 'learning outcomes' was first defined and used in the Educational Policy Document of European countries as part of Bologna Declaration 1999 to provide some common standards of performance in higher education (European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, 1999). The concept of learning outcomes presumes that predefined and precise standards of learning would ensure the level of student's performance at the end of the academic term or course of study (Murtonen et al., 2017). The overriding discussion in this area has been about whether predefined, unchanging, precise and measurable statements should judge the level of learning or less precise, open-ended and less focus on measuring learning in standard outcomes would analyse the process of learning (Prøitz, 2010; Zhang, 2016). Another view posited by Hussey and Smith highlighted that learning outcomes have been used in behaviouristic terms since a long time but the introduction of a "more fashionable term" as 'Learning Outcomes' would not change the level of magnitude they deem to

check in a standardised manner (Hussey and Smith, 2008). The purpose of any teaching-learning is to scaffold, elaborate, extend, apply and critically form an understanding of a particular concept with the help of previous occasions of learning or a skill to be refined further. During these sessions, it is neither preferable nor possible to design specific or stable learning outcomes because the emphasis of any teaching-learning session would vary with the level of individual student's ability (Hussey and Smith, 2008).

Eisner quoted the movement of learning outcomes as, "uniformed army of young adolescents all marching to the same drummer" (Eisner, 2000, p. 344). The paradigm shift discussed earlier in this paper involves teaching and learning as an interaction between a teacher, learners, learning environment and learning aids where individual needs and potential of the learners could take unexpected moves leading the process of learning towards a completely new path and used as "learning moments" (Hussey and Smith, 2008) by the progressive teachers and thus, the role of the teacher is of prime importance in framing learning outcomes according to the relevance and worth. Bennett and Brady seems to be in agreement with what Hussey and Smith said about 'Outcomes' being a tool for judging and auditing the teacher's ability of teaching in place of measuring the teaching and learning process (Bennett and

Brady, 2014). The movement of LO based assessment contributes to the existing structural inequalities, further homogenize the classrooms, curtailing the academic freedom of teachers and placing them under the unfair surveillance (Bennett and Brady, 2014). It was also noted by some that learning outcomes are not showing results as they were deemed to (Holmes, 2019) but could benefit if the teachers and curriculum designers would allow learners to become a part of designing learning outcomes and observe learning from learner's perspective (Allan, 1996).

Conversely, Manuel Souto-Otero noted the critical and defensive viewpoints regarding LO movement and presented a neutral stance that learning outcomes may work for different purposes in different geographies. They could be precise as well as open-ended; some could be used for assessment purposes (Souto-Otero, 2012) and others might not; some might follow the process of learning by using different modalities and others might use them as an end; if implemented in a desired manner (Lassnigg, 2012).

From the above considerations, it is seen that globally the learning outcomes approach is being widely used in the higher education system and the pros and cons presented by various educationists indicates that LO may be useful in the successful completion of a specific teaching session with teachers and students equally participating into the process of learning but cannot be used as performance indicators.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of education is to imbibe the three essential processes of learning (how to learn, relearn and unlearn) into the learners. The assessment of such learning is a part of the broader learning process which does not focuses solely upon pass or fail criteria or achieving an end outcome but to improve learning throughout by systematically maintaining the holistic learning reports of students. Traditionally, teaching to test the knowledge of pre-decided competencies and specific performances in rigid contexts does not hold much scope of growth in the 21st century. There should be a constant discourse among educational departments, teachers and policy makers regarding the current wisdom that assessing the pre-assumed learning outcomes should take priority over teaching our students how to think critically and become a critical part of their own learning and assessment processes. One can ask, "What really is the purpose of this focus on learning outcomes?" Although a number of critical remarks on the learning outcomes approach have been observed by the international researchers in the previous section of the paper but a constructive approach towards achieving these learning outcomes and timely reflections with a critical lens would

prove their worth in the Indian school education system. Only if the learning indicators mentioned in the document 'Learning Outcomes at Elementary Stage' (NCERT, 2017) in order to achieve the learning outcomes, would be effectively conceptualised and practiced by the teachers at the ground level with continuous and appropriate training programmes, the vision behind the inception of learning outcomes approach could be internalised and realised by the system accurately.

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Problems of Teaching English Language in Nagaland

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Abstract

In today's world, the growing importance of English language is evident in various fields of life. Owing to its usefulness, our education system requires skilled English language teachers who can cater to the needs of the learners for learning to be maximised. This paper focuses on the status of English language in the state of Nagaland. Through this paper, the researcher attempts to identify the problems faced by the teachers of English language in Nagaland and also to suggest strategies for the elimination of the problems. Researcher's own experiences as a teacher of English in the state of Nagaland have been mentioned in this paper. Review of literature consists of the various language policies, commissions and committee reports on English language, articles on English language teaching in Nagaland, newspaper articles and books related to English language teaching. The findings of the study reveal that teaching of English language in Nagaland has several issues and challenges. This calls for special efforts and changes so that language learning can be improved.

Introduction

In today's world, the importance of English language is evident in various fields of life. It is a language used in communication, international business, education, publications, entertainment, for seeking job and career opportunities, for travelling to other parts of the country and the world at large.

A vast reservoir of information, documents, e-books, etc., are found in the internet in the English language. It is a language that is used for the

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expression of our thoughts and feelings. Its importance can never be denied in the present world.

It is a way and means to keep pace with the other nations of the world. Today, English is an instrument of communication, a medium of expression and exploration. English is regarded as the major international language and billions of people speak English in current times. According to F.G. French, "Because of rapid spread of industrial development, science and technology, international trade and commerce and the close interdependence of nations, English has become a world language" (Pahuja, 2009, p.1). Jawaharlal Nehru says, "English is our major window on modern world" (Pahuja, 2009, p. 2).

This paper reflects the status of English in the state of Nagaland. Despite the growing demands and need of the language, proper measures are not taken for imparting English language education in the state. Plethora of gaps exists in the teaching and learning of English. The purpose of the study is to identify the problems faced by the teachers of English language in Nagaland and through the identification of the problems; it strives to suggest strategies for the elimination of the problems. The researcher's own experience as a teacher of English for over a decade in the state gives an impetus and forms the background of the study.

Literature Review

For the present study various articles, dissertations and theses related to English language teaching have been reviewed. The reports of various committees and commissions appointed by the government of India from time to time which looked into the matters of education have also been reviewed for a detailed analysis of the importance of English in India and also how the language policies have evolved and led to the present system of education.

The University Education Commission (1948–49) suggested that in addition to the mother tongue and Hindi, english should be taught at the secondary and university levels. English should be the medium of instruction for higher education. According to the commission, the richness of the English language is evident in the field of literature, humanism, scientific expansion and technical growth and development. If we give up English considering it a language of the foreign land, we would surely lag behind and be far off a place from the rapid expansion of knowledge. The lack of exposure to the language would result in deterioration of our standards of scholarship. It further says that our students should have sufficient mastery of English and that without having required competency in the language the students should not be deemed to have completed the course.

The Secondary Education Commission (1952–53) has also emphasised the need for teaching

and learning English at Secondary School and University levels. It stated that English as a subject should be mandatorily studied at the secondary level across the country accounting to the fact that it is widely known among the educated, it is a means of national unity, and it is useful in international sphere. To exclude it will lead to harmful effect.

The Kothari Commission (1964–66) emphasised the need to master the English language. For this, adequate emphasis has to be laid on the study of English from a very young age. It reiterated its importance as a library language and also the role it plays for the dissemination of knowledge across the world.

The National Policy on Education (1986) lays special emphasis on the study of English. Teaching and learning of English must be strengthened as it is the language of science and technology. In order to keep pace with the rapid growing world, India has to contribute to the field of knowledge by playing its active role.

The NEP 2020 throws light on the importance of the study on the Indian languages, classical languages and literature of India. It mentions about the three-language formula which 'includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking States, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non Hindi speaking States' (Report of the Education Commission, 1964–66)

and 'also to encourage the study of Indian languages across the country' (NEP 2020). It envisions to give 'high quality offerings in Indian languages and English' and some foreign languages (NEP 2020). This policy lays stress on the need to promote multilingualism for national integration.

Sothu (2020) studied the problems of teaching and learning of English as a second language at secondary level in Nagaland. The study revealed that deficiency of proper aim, method, good textbook and lack of facilities are some of the problems faced by the teachers of English language.

Khamari (2014) explored the problems of teaching English at primary level. Descriptive survey method was used. The major findings reveal that there is lack of congenial atmosphere for teaching English in the classroom and the number of English teachers in school is not sufficient.

Meghanathan (2011) conducted a study on 'Language Policy in Education and the Role of English in India: From Library Language to Language of Empowerment'. The study dealt with an extensive study of the language policy in school education of different states of India as first language, second language and also third language, the languages taught in the school curriculum and the medium of instruction at all levels of school education and the place of English in the schools. The findings reveal that material development (especially textbooks) has not been

professionalised. This does not help the students as their needs are not met. Schools lack in infrastructural facilities and competent teachers which add to the problem.

METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive in nature. For this study, extensive literature review has been done. Data for this study has been collected from the secondary sources like books, journals, articles, dissertations and newspapers. The review of literature consists of the recommendations of various education commissions namely—University Education Commission of 1948 – 49 and Kothari Commission of 1964 – 66 with regard to the place and importance of English in the country and national policies like— NPE 1986 and NEP 2020 on education have been studied. Articles written by Meghanathan (2011), Khamari (2014) and Sarkar and Yadav (2019) have provided new dimensions to the study. Ph.D dissertations of Whiso (2006) on 'English for the undergraduate students of Nagaland' and M.Ed dissertation of Sothu (2020) on 'A study on the problems of teaching and learning of English as a second language at secondary level in Jakhama block in Kohima district' of Nagaland have been reviewed which provided an impetus for this study. Books written by T.C. Baruah (2010) and N.P. Pahuja (2009) *The English Teacher's handbook'* and *Teaching of English'* respectively were of immense help for the researcher to delve deep into the position of language

teaching in India. Some articles in the local newspapers of Nagaland state like Nagaland Post and Eastern Mirror were taken into consideration for this study. Apart from these, the researcher's own experience as a teacher of English in the state of Nagaland is also presented in this paper.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Language system in Nagaland involves the use of English, Nagamese, and the Naga dialects. "Keeping in view the rich plurilingual Naga society, it becomes imperative that the students learn English language well" (Whiso, 2006). This makes it essential to choose English as a common language system in Nagaland for official as well as educational set up. However, the teaching and learning of English is confronted with multiple problems in the state. So, this study attempts to identify the problems of Teaching English in Nagaland and thereby come up with some suggestions so that the problems with regard to English language teaching can be solved.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

India had been under the British rule for a very long time. This has resulted in the growth and expansion of English language in India. English is not an Indian language as it is not the mother tongue of any Indian state. When the Indian constitution was adopted on 26 January 1950, it was decided that Hindi will be

declared as the official language of the Union. But due to the objections raised by some of the states, English was to be continued for 15 more years (Languages with official status in India). However, there was continued dissatisfaction and protests by several states in India over the use of English for only a specified period and as a result Parliament enacted the official language Act, 1963. This provided for the continuation of use of English for official purposes along with Hindi, even after 1965. In India, it enjoys the status of an associate language. "In addition to Hindi language English language may also be used for official purposes" (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, GOI). Next to Hindi, it is used as a link language for inter-state and intra-state communication. It has greatly impacted both the educational system and national life. Growing importance of English in India is based on the following aspects— "as a national link language, as an international link language and as a library language" (Baruah, 2010). Owing to the practical utility of English in multifarious activities, it is a revered language.

Despite having the status of first language, the teaching of English is not found to be satisfactory in Nagaland. Teaching of English is influenced by a number of issues which need special attention. The findings of the study reveal that some major challenges lay ahead of the English language teachers.

The problems and challenges are as follows—

1. Problems Related to Teaching — learning Resources

It is a known fact that teaching-learning resources reinforce better teaching — learning process. In the absence of those resources, teaching of English is never fruitful. The problems related to teaching-learning resources are as follows—

(a) Lack of library facilities— Insufficient library facilities fail to develop proper reading culture among the students of English language. It causes hindrance for better learning opportunity for the students as well as the teachers as it limits the students' knowledge and understanding of the language. Library facilitates the students to gain access to a wide variety of books which helps them in extensive reading, increased fluency, improved vocabulary, better comprehension and thus, they develop higher order thinking skills. Libraries should be well equipped with sufficient journals, periodicals, books, reference materials, etc. But in many schools of Nagaland there is dearth of library facilities. Most of the school libraries do not have sufficient and updated reading materials.

(b) Lack of audio-visual aids— Lack of audio-visual aids in language classroom does

not stimulate learning. "The availability of right type of teaching materials and audio-visual aids can certainly make the teaching of English in India quite effective" (Pahuja, 2009). In the absence of right type of materials students miss the fun for learning new and abstract concepts. Audio-visual aids make learning of English easy by making the concepts interesting for the learners of English language. Aids like the blackboard, the roll-up board, charts and tables, flashcards, cut-outs, the flannel board, wall pictures, the clip-charts, advertisements etc. are the minimum requirements of an English classroom. Absence of these aids may not give the expected outcomes of learning. Most of the schools do not have these aids.

(c) **Lack of teacher's instructional material**— Material for developing communicative activities, development of skills, practice materials for phonology, grammar games and activities, teacher's manual, puzzles, computers, podcasts, multimedia components, etc. play very important role in English classrooms. Teachers need to be equipped with good instructional materials for learning to be maximised. Lack of instructional materials can create gaps in teaching English.

2. Problems Related to Classroom Teaching

There are numerous problems that a language teacher comes across in the classroom. Some of them are discussed below—

(a) **Lack of interest—** Interest is an internal factor that draws the learner towards learning. Lack of interest in the learner is a major cause of failure in the attainment of the objectives of teaching and learning English language in India. Teachers need to create a need in the children to learn the language otherwise they will not develop interest in learning the language.

(b) **Less interactive classroom—** This is yet another problem which needs to be addressed. Creating an interactive classroom environment is very important for a teacher. "The teacher and the taught are the active participants in the process of education" (Safaya et al., 2010). Unresponsiveness of the students can make the class dull. Hence, failure to create learning environment will lead to less interaction in the classroom which will hamper active participation of both the teacher and the taught.

(c) **Mispronunciation—** The sound system as well as the spelling system of different languages vary. The style of pronunciation of one's mother-tongue if applied to English may lead to faulty pronunciation. In a complex sociolinguistics state like Nagaland, where various languages and dialects are used for communication, pull of the mother tongue while speaking English is evident. For example, the letter 't' is pronounced as 'd' in some tribes, while 'b' is pronounced as 'p'. This creates a problem for both the teacher as well as the students to understand each other.

(d) **Overcrowded classrooms—** Each student learn at different pace. Some students learn fast while some are slow learners. This demands individual attention. Overcrowded classrooms can restrict the teacher from giving individual attention to the learners. An overcrowded classroom will never allow the teacher to cater to the needs of the students with diversified needs. Many of the private schools in Nagaland are overcrowded which is a problem in teaching-learning process.

(e) **Lack of proper strategies—** Improper strategies on the part of the teachers can lead to the failure of teaching — learning process and make it monotonous. Teachers need to equip themselves with some proactive strategies like classroom management skills, teaching skills, time management skills, managerial or leadership skills. Proper strategies help the teachers to be ready for any kind of situation.

3. Lack of parental support for English language education

Lack of support from parents is one of the most recurring factors in the rural areas. Students belonging to those areas, generally lack motivation and support from their family to learn language. Sometimes there is lack of awareness on the part of the parents to identify the benefits of language learning. Parental attitude towards learning a language also affect the child's learning.

4. Lack of proper objectives of teaching English language

Many a time it is found that teachers do not understand the real objectives and importance of teaching English. Teaching of English is not objective-based. "The most unfortunate aspect was the lack of any clear-cut and attainable aim of teaching. This aimlessness was primarily responsible for the deplorable standard of achievement in English" (Baruah, 1991). In addition to this, the teachers are many a time overloaded with the syllabus. Timely completion of the syllabus puts pressure on the

teachers so much so that the teacher is helpless and real aim of teaching the language gets lost.

5. Use of old methods

In the rural schools, the old methods of teaching English are being used which is not student centered. Teachers still use, total-physical response approach, translation method and other old methods in their classroom. This limits the exposure of the students to the new and innovative methods of teaching English and restricts the students learning in a fruitful manner.

6. Teacher's own limited language proficiency

Teacher's limited language proficiency can never be an input for language learners. English teachers should be well equipped with the recent trends and practices of teaching. Teachers need to be updated with the recent trends of teaching English. It will help the teacher to acquire the required skills in the language. One who dares to teach must be a good learner first. A teacher must constantly seek knowledge.

7. Allotment of English classes to unspecialised teachers

It is a matter of great regret to find that teachers who are even without any specialisation are allotted English classes. It is found in some private as well as government schools. Government had appointed several teachers who do not have any specialisation in English and are specialised in subjects of Social Sciences. In many schools, teaching of English is taken up as a subject which can be taught by anyone and does not need any effort or specialisation from the part of the teacher. A teacher who does not have sound knowledge about English language fails to do justice to language teaching.

8. Proxy teachers

The menace of proxy teachers is well-known in the teaching fraternity of Nagaland. The case of proxy teachers in the village government schools is an open secret (Avina, 2022; Khrozhoh, 2021). The government appoints qualified teachers for various subjects but many of these teachers do not go to their posting places mostly if they are posted in some remote areas or villages and they themselves hire some teachers who readily takes up the job. The proxy teacher is generally a local inhabitant of the village who is unemployed. They take the place of the appointed teacher in lieu of a meagre amount of money. Proxy teacher is a big threat to the education of the children as he may not be adequately trained for the job and may not have adequate qualification to teach the subject.

9. Teaching and learning of English as a subject and not a language

The treatment meted out to English is that of a subject and not a language. This is a grim fact which probably hinders the language learning. Many a time students learn it for getting

good marks only and teachers teach it only as any other subject like Science, Maths, Social Science etc. and aims for the completion of the syllabus. The communicative aspect of English is also neglected. If the teaching of English is considered only as a subject and not as a language, the beauty of the language will be lost.

10. Disparities in the quality of English language education

Educational disparity exists in the rural and urban schools of Nagaland. Disparity can be found in terms of not so improved quality of education in the schools of rural areas which may be due to poor infrastructural facilities, lack of resources and facilities. The system of education in the urban schools is more advanced as compared to the rural schools. The teaching method also differs. Technology embedded teaching methods used in the urban schools is reflected in the students' performance. Infrastructural facilities in the rural areas are poor as compared to the urban schools. This limits students' exposure and affects learning. Digital divide is yet another concern. Due to poor connectivity or poor network the students fail to make use of the internet to access for information whereas, in the urban areas the students can make use of the digital devices for their assignment, projects etc.

DISCUSSION

The various problems related to teaching of English in the state are related to lack of teaching-learning resources like library facilities, audio-visual aids and teacher's instructional materials; not so interactive classes, overcrowded classrooms, mispronunciation and improper strategies; lack of parental support, lack of proper objectives of teaching English, use of old methods, teacher's own limited language proficiency, allotment of English classes to unspecialised teachers, proxy teachers, teaching and learning of English as a subject and not as a language and disparities in the quality of English language education.

The findings of the study indicate that although the growing need and importance of the English language is being felt at all levels yet no tangible step is taken for the elimination of the problems. No proper method is applied for uprooting the causes of its failure to meet the needs of the society at large. The importance of English language is the main reason for people to pursue English education with great enthusiasm than ever before and thus it has occupied a place of prime importance in the educational scenario of Nagaland. However, unfortunately owing to various reasons English language teaching remains under developed in many areas of the state. Out of the numerous problems of education at the primary as well as elementary levels, language is the major issue in the state of Nagaland. English

is the first language at all levels of education in Nagaland. But the learner's chance of hearing English language is limited to the classroom. The first language which is offered at the Secondary level of education is English. The second language offered is Modern Indian Languages – Hindi, Bengali, Ao, Lotha, Sumi, Tenydie and Alternative English. Nagaland is "the state with the largest number of medium of instruction at the primary level" (Meghanathan, 2011). This makes students encounter various difficulties in the English language classrooms. The findings of this study reveal that the growing number of private educational institutions is a witness to the disparities in the quality of education provided in the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the role and importance of English language in the development of education system of a country, the syllabus, curriculum, teaching methods etc. have to be framed in such a manner that it serves the students' learning in the best possible manner. A myriad of strategies is required to optimise learning of English language which can be implemented according to the need and demand of the situation. This will definitely help the students as well as the teachers to overcome the difficulties faced during the teaching and learning of English. Some of the major recommendations are—

1. Educational institutions should strive to make provisions for improvement of the teaching-learning resources. Library facilities need improvement so that more and more relevant and quality books are stored.

2. Every school should look into the matter of overcrowded classrooms. The pupil teacher ratio should be checked.

3. Language has an important role to play across the curriculum. Strong emphasis on language naturally leads to the improvement of other areas of learning as well. It strengthens the foundation for several other subjects. Teachers need to adopt proper strategies for making the English language classrooms more interactive so that students find it interesting to learn the language.

4. A wide variety of new and innovative methods will create interest in the teaching-learning process. "The first and foremost quality of a language is its communicative aspect" (Sarkar and Yadav, 2019). Effective communication is a fundamental component of good teaching. New teaching methods like communicative teaching method need to be adopted so that our students gain communicative skills.

5. Technological facilities need to be improved in the schools so that language learning can be more interesting. Integration of ICT in English classrooms would maximise learning outcomes.

6. Schools need to appoint teachers with specialisation in English for teaching the language.

7. The system of proxy teachers in Nagaland is really a matter of concern. Stringent action has to be taken against the regular teachers who hire them on payment basis for their own benefit leading to the poor quality of education in the government schools of the remote places of the state. Government has begun the work to stop the menace. However, it has to go a long way to eliminate the problem. Strict biometric attendance has to be taken for this purpose.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Evaluation in the form of in-depth study of the existing problems of teaching English will surely give new direction to the policy makers, educators and school administrators for the betterment of the situation. Education, being a subject of the concurrent list demands the active role and participation of the Centre as well as the state in matters related to education.

Keeping in mind the role of teacher's preparedness in the teaching-learning process, institutions need to arrange special training programs like refresher courses, in-service training programs, workshops and seminars for the teachers irrespective of whether they are professionally trained or not. This will keep the teachers updated about the latest developments in their fields. The educational institutions should be equipped with the basic infrastructural facilities so that the needs of the students can be fulfilled. English is a global language. The rapid development of English across the world can be attributed to globalisation. Globalisation has impacted the English language so much so that once called as the "Queen's language" has become a "Common – man's language" now.

Globalisation has both positive and negative effects on language. In this situation, proper care and attention need to be paid for its development so that our students are competent enough to meet the challenges that may be posed in due course of time. Only setting up English medium schools or converting schools into English medium will do no good for the future generation of the students.

CONCLUSION

Proper initiatives need to be taken for the teaching of English. The question arises "Is language teaching helpful?" Answer to this lies in the fact that comprehensible input is the basis for learning any language. Although English is the first language of Nagaland, yet the students' hearing of the language diminishes once they are out of the classrooms, Nagamese, the local language, other tribal dialects of the state and several languages take over English. In this case, it is imperative that language inputs are thoughtfully given to the children. Teaching, when consciously and deliberately planned is a kind

of input for the language learners. A teacher needs to plan the right kind of teaching-learning materials which will serve as inputs and will cater to the needs of the language learners. This will facilitate and optimise language learning.

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