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Evaluating School-based Assessment (SBA): Primary School Teachers' Perception and Practices in West Bengal

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Abstract

This descriptive survey study has been conducted to learn the perceptions of primary school teachers in West Bengal, India about School-based Assessment (SBA) and the approaches they employed to implement it. A survey of 118 teachers in Purba Bardhhaman district, West Bengal, India, was conducted, using a questionnaire to collect data. The results were analysed using inferential statistical analysis and non-parametric tests due to the abnormality of the dependent variable. According to the study, a Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed a statistically significant difference between the teacher's perception of SBA and their educational qualifications. Also, the study found that the teaching experience of teachers makes a difference in implementing and adopting SBA practices in primary standard school curricula. Finally, this paper includes a brief discussion of the study's findings, a few limitations and some suggestions for the future.

Introduction

"Evaluation is the process of determining merit, worth, or significance; and evaluation is a product of that process" (Scriven, 1991, p. 53).

Education is an investment in human resources, with the Twelfth Five year Plan of India emphasising the expansion of education, improving quality and providing opportunities for all segments of society. The examination system in India plays a crucial role in determining students' ability to pursue higher degrees and boost self-esteem. Specifically, the educational benefit of testing is that it encourages students and teachers to perform better, and it

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improves support, resulting in more significant achievement (Adediwura, 2012). The current system of evaluation relies on instructors, neglecting students' planning and experimentation skills. It is a reward system without considering individual abilities, including better decision-making, soft skills and mental abilities. Assessment should support diversity in learning (National Steering Committee for National Curriculum Framework, 2022). Also, different assessment techniques should be utilised to promote inclusive education in our education system (Mufeed, 2018).

The term 'assessment' refers to the procedure used by teachers to collect information, measure student aptitude, and educate both students and teachers on what has been taught and what still needs to be improved (Mahmud, Halim and Drus, 2020). For teachers as well as pupils, assessment as a component of learning has several implications. From the perspective of the teachers, assessment refers to the information gathered about students' education. Similarly, from the students' perspective, assessment is a procedure that informs them about what they are learning (Cotton, 2013; Mahmud, Halim and Drus, 2020). However, it is debatable whether examinations that solely yield grades and marks should be used as standardised measures of knowledge and abilities. Therefore, the educational system should encourage individual intelligence and potential, considering each student's special skills and potential for learning and academic success (Adediwura, 2012).

Besides, the new National Education Policy of India suggests that assessment practices should be altered and that schools should emphasise 'Assessment for Learning' as a crucial component of the cycle of learning, teaching and assessment. For this reason, multifaceted evaluation methodologies would be helpful because they can help to reveal the crucial aspects of a student's personality, which is impossible to do with quantitative exam results.

Additionally, to assess a child's overall and holistic development, the scholastic and co-scholastic areas of their development should be prioritised (Mufeed, 2018). Moving ahead, we are experiencing a paradigm shift in the educational assessment system of our nation from a psychometric to a more comprehensive model, from a testing and examination culture to an assessment culture (Gipps, 1994). The outcome of this recent adaptation in our system is a School-based Assessment System. Acquiring measured data and applying that data to increase the capacity of people or institutions are the two key components of this SBA (School-based Assessment) (Mahmud, Halim and Drus, 2020).

The benefits of SBA assessment are—SBA in teaching English involves stable, continuous and pressure-free assessment; reducing reliance on standardised examinations;

improving test item reliability; reflecting students' abilities; promoting leisure reading; fostering teaching; enforcing independent learning; facilitating learning autonomy; and empowering teachers. It focuses on school standards and information, avoiding state-wide or nation-wide comparisons. Teachers play a vital role in this new assessment system, utilising various teaching approaches and techniques to impact assessment outcomes (Mansor et al., 2013).

Review of Related Literature

A study conducted by Gulshan Mufeed in 2018 in Delhi found that students support assessment tools and techniques for improved learning, collaborative tasks and reduced rote learning. Peer assessment fosters cohesive relationships, and enhances creative thinking, reflective thinking, critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills. However, teachers argue that it may reduce fear of examinations to the extent that students may not take examinations seriously.

Moving ahead, another study conducted by Veloo, Krishnasamy and Md-Ali in 2015 in Malaysian schools examined teachers' knowledge and readiness for implementing school-based assessments. The findings showed that many teachers possess expertise in conducting, assessing, procedural knowledge, and implementation. However, teachers lack sufficient knowledge and do not employ some practices. Further, in 2013, a study conducted by Othman, Salleh and Norani (2013) on the adoption of School-based Assessment (SBA) in Malaysian primary school standard curriculum examined teachers' readiness for SBA integration. Results showed respondents are ready to integrate SBA, but negative perceptions of implementation time remain.

In 2014, a study by Talib et al. found that Malaysian primary school teachers lack sufficient knowledge and practice of School-based Assessment (SBA). To ensure successful implementation, training should be continued through briefings, seminars or workshops. Adediwura's (2012) study found that teachers are aware of the advantages of SBA, but struggle to implement it in practice. In 2011, Faizah A. Majid conducted a study in Malaysia using the revised SoCQ to examine the phases of concern for SBA among Malaysian English teachers. The results showed that respondents had various concerns about the innovation, regardless of their expertise.

In 2014, a study by Hashim et al. found that teachers need detailed information on the SBA system to address fears and negative attitudes. Addressing issues like heavy teaching hours and large class sizes is crucial for effective implementation. Moving ahead, in 2008, Begum and Farooqui's study revealed that many teachers lack proper training, causing poor understanding and inability to give marks effectively. A similar study was undertaken in 2020 by Mahmud, Halim and Drus

to determine the prevalence of SBA among the primary school mathematics teachers. The study found that teachers of primary mathematics had a strong overall mean score for SBA practice. A one-way ANOVA test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between SBA practices and teaching experiences.

To conclude, the current assessment system in India needs to be refocused on evaluation as a tool for learning and teaching (Adediwura, 2012; Mufeed, 2018). A School-based Assessment programme such as self-assessment can help determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Adediwura, 2012). School-based assessment encourages peer and individual evaluation, promotes ownership, and challenges views in cultures like India. It involves teachers in programme design and final judgments (Yussufu, 1994; Adediwura, 2012). This study's main objective is to examine primary teachers' levels of SBA knowledge and understanding, as well as the SBA practices they employ to improve the efficiency of the teaching and learning process.

Research Questions

What are primary school teachers' perceptions of the implementation and practices of school-based assessment in the curriculum?

Objectives

1. To compare perception of teachers' understanding of school-based assessment implementation in primary school standard curriculum across the four groups of teachers with different educational qualifications
2. To compare perception of teachers' understanding of school-based assessment implementation in primary school standard curriculum across the four groups of teachers with different teaching experiences
3. To compare school-based assessment practices across the four groups of teachers with different educational qualifications
4. To compare school-based assessment practices across the four groups of teachers with different teaching experiences

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference among the mean ranks of perception of teachers regarding the School-based Assessment implementation in primary school standard curriculum across the four groups of teachers with different educational qualifications.
2. There is no significant difference among the mean ranks of perception of teachers regarding the School-based Assessment implementation in primary school standard curriculum across the four groups of teachers with different teaching experiences.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean ranks of School-based Assessment practices

across the four groups of teachers with different educational qualifications.

4. There is no significant difference between the mean ranks of School-based Assessment practices across the four groups of teachers with different teaching experiences.

Methodology

The researcher studied knowledge, preparedness and primary school teachers' practices for implementing the School-based Assessment. This is a quantitative study that employed the descriptive survey method. The total population was 9,847 primary teachers who were teaching in various government primary schools in Purba Bardhhaman district, West Bengal, India. The sample size was 118 teachers, who responded to the questionnaire from 10 primary schools selected through simple random sampling by the researcher. Questionnaires were distributed in the 10 schools through their respective headmasters. Two standardised questionnaires were used in this study to find the teachers' perceptions, implementation and differences in the practice with an overall reliability value of α = 0.79. Another one is a 5-point Likert scale for practices of SBA among teachers.

The reliability value of this questionnaire is Cronbach's alpha (0.74). Data were analysed by using inferential statistics. Due to the abnormality of the data, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test were used to test the differences in SBA practices and teachers' perception regarding school-based assessment in primary school curricula based on their gender, locality, professional qualification and teaching experience. Data were analysed by using SPSS.

Data Interpretation and Findings

As shown in Table 1, a Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed that there is a statistically significant difference among the four group of teachers having different professional qualifications; H (3)=8.409, P=0.038. Pairwise comparison shows that

Table 1
Professional Qualification-wise Comparison of Mean Ranks of Understanding of Teachers Regarding the School-based Assessment Implementation

Professional Qualification	Mean Ranks	N	df	Chi-square	Kruskal-Wallis H	Remarks
Teaching Certificate	57.43	29	3	8.409	0.038	P<0.05
Diploma in Education	87.86	7				
Bachelor's Degree	54.47	29				
Masters' Degree	59.64	53				

teachers with master's degree have a better understanding compared to teachers with bachelor's degree (P=0.03<0.05).

In Table 2, the Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the perception of teachers regarding School-based Assessment's implementation among the four groups of teachers with different teaching experiences—H (3)=8.344, P=0.039. The pair-wise comparison shows that teachers with teaching experience of 11 to 20 years have more understanding of school-based assessment implementation compared to teachers with less than five years of teaching experience (P=0.04<0.05).

In Table 3, a Kruskal-Wallis H test demonstrates that there is a statistically significant difference in the implementation of SBA among the four groups of teachers with different teaching experiences—H (3)=9.390, P=0.025. The pair-wise comparison shows that teachers with teaching experience of 10 to 20 years have more mean ranks on practices of SBA used by teachers for implementation of school-based assessment compared to teachers with less than five years of teaching experience (P=0.016<0.05).

Discussion and Conclusion

The study reveals significant differences in the perception of school-based evaluation among teachers with different educational qualifications. Teachers with master's degrees have a

Table 2
Teaching Experience-wise Comparison of Mean Ranks of Perception of Teachers Regarding the School-based Assessment Implementation

Teaching Experiences	Mean Ranks	N	df	Chi-square	Kruskal-Wallis H	Remarks
Less than 5 years	73.84	25	3	8.344	0.039	P<0.05
5 to 10 years	63.66	31				
10 to 20 years	52.41	52				
Over 20 years	47.60	10				

Table 3
Teaching Experience-wise Comparison of Mean Ranks of Practices of SBA Used by the Teachers

Teaching Experiences	Mean Ranks	N	df	Chi-square	Kruskal-Wallis H	Remarks
Less than 5 years	43.98	25	3	9.390	0.025	P<0.05
5 to 10 years	57.47	31				
10 to 20 years	68.90	52				
Over 21 years	55.70	10				

better understanding of School-based Assessment concepts. Teachers with teaching certificates and master's degrees are more likely to employ school-based assessments in their schools. Further, teachers with teaching certificates and diplomas in education are more likely to believe that school facilities are good for implementing school-based evaluation. Moving ahead, teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience have a better understanding of conducting assessments than those with less than five years of experience. This finding is in line with the result of a study conducted by Adediwura in 2012 and Brookhart in 2002, which also showed that teachers have mixed feelings about SBA implementation, and experienced teachers are more comfortable with putting SBA in practice in a real situation.

Interestingly, a study conducted by Mahmud, Halim and Drus in 2020 revealed that teaching experience does not make a difference in the practices used by the teachers. Elsewhere this study found that the practices of SBA used by the four groups of teachers, who come from different teaching backgrounds, differ significantly in how they conduct SBA. Teachers with 10 to 20 years of teaching experience have higher mean scores on the SBA practices than those with less than five years of experience. A study conducted by Abdullah et al. in 2015 also found a similar result and supported this study's findings. In addition, teachers' educational qualifications made no difference in the practice of SBA in primary school standard curriculum settings, which depicts that regardless of their different educational qualifications they all are using some SBA practices in schools.

The introduction of school-based evaluation will enhance both teacher-teaching methods as well as students' academic accomplishments by boosting their self-confidence (Mansor et al., 2013). It was emphasised that students and teaching styles can both be significantly impacted by the implementation of SBA (Mitchell, 1992). To evaluate each assignment and analyse students' learning in class, teachers need to use several techniques rather than just traditional written tests.

Without a doubt, teachers' sound knowledge and best practices improve the teaching and learning of the relevant SBA subjects (Talib et al., 2014). Teachers' low level of knowledge is an impediment in implementing SBA in the school classroom (Brookhart, 2001). To help students learn more holistically, teachers must employ SBA in the classroom successfully and openly. Only then will the introduction of SBA in India have a positive impact on the growth of education in the country (Mahmud, Halims & Drus, 2020).

With the support of the teacher results, in this study, we were able to better appreciate the effects of SBA and the approaches they employed,

which helped us to comprehend the current state of SBA in West Bengal, India. A few limitations of this study need to be addressed in the future—firstly, the quantitative methodology of this study, which relied on strict scores and figures, has flaws. Second, future research should include students as a key stakeholder and a comprehensive grasp of teachers' perspectives and difficulties. Despite its flaws, the study is one of few that has offered results from one of the key stakeholders—teachers—regarding their perceptions of School-based Assessment. Given the global move towards integrating evaluation of learning and assessment for learning, this study is also timely in this context.

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