



Assessment and Evaluation in Social Sciences

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1. Introduction

Assessment and evaluation are one of the important tasks in the teaching learning process of Social Sciences. The constructivist approach to teaching learning in Social Sciences emphasizes assessment as an integral part of the process of teaching and learning and using assessment for the enhancement of student learning. Therefore, the focus on 'assessment of learning', which is hitherto emphasized in evaluation of student performance has now shifted to 'assessment for learning'. The present article deals with the concept of assessment for learning.

The article starts with discussion of the purpose of assessment in Social Sciences and proceeds with description of various forms of assessment and their use in assessing scholastic as well as co-scholastic abilities of learners in Social Sciences. The important methods of assessment, which are particularly used in constructivist classroom of Social Sciences like Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), peer and group assessment, use of portfolio and e-portfolio, use of open book examination, use of different form of ICT in evaluation are discussed with suitable examples. The discussion also provides you a clear understanding to analyze content of Social Science text for developing an achievement test. As per the content analysis, the topic discusses how to prepare blueprint of an achievement test in Social Sciences and how to write the items as per the blueprint.

2. Objectives

1. explain the purpose of assessment and evaluation in Social Sciences;
2. distinguish among placement, formative, diagnostic, and summative evaluation;
3. discuss the concept of assessing scholastic and co-scholastic abilities of the learners in Social Sciences;
4. critically analyse the process and use of various methods of assessment and evaluation in Social Sciences;
5. discuss the process of analyzing the contents of Social Science text books;
6. prepare achievement test for assessing performance of the learners in Social Sciences; and
7. acquaint yourself with using ICT in assessment and evaluation in Social Sciences.

3. Assessment and Evaluation in Social Sciences

3.1 Purpose

Assessment and evaluation are an important part of every teaching-learning process. The purpose of assessment is not only to carry out assessment of learning but also to focus on 'assessment for learning'. Assessment needs to be an integral part of teaching learning process and a tool for continuous enhancement of student learning. Of course, this is a challenge for teacher. Again, the primary objective of assessment is to ensure that the learning objectives formulated by her/him are achieved through appropriate assessment methods. Keeping in view the above, the purpose of assessment and evaluation may be broadly categorized into two different heads.

(i) Assessment for Instructional Purposes

Assessment for instructional purposes essentially means 'assessment for learning'. The purpose of assessment is not only to certify learners but also to help them understand learning difficulties and the way to overcome these difficulties. As it has been earlier stated, the challenge of teacher is to integrate assessment in the teaching-learning process. For integrating assessment in the teaching learning process, there is the need to implement continuous and comprehensive evaluation during teaching which is formative in nature. In this regard, teacher needs to carry out formal and informal observations in the classroom; adopt learner centered methods and techniques of teaching and assessment like meaningful peer and group discussions in the classroom, inquiry and project-based methods of learning; use of problem-based learning approach, critical analysis of various complex themes in social sciences through debates and discussions, use of portfolios, and carrying out reflections on various contemporary issues. All these activities constitute 'assessment for instructional purposes'.

(ii) Assessment and Evaluation for Certification

The other important purpose of assessment and evaluation in the teaching learning process is to certify learners. For certifying learners, a type of summative evaluation needs to be carried out periodically as well as terminally. The usual practice in the teaching learning process is to certify learners terminally or annually. Therefore, term end examinations or semester end examinations are conducted to know and certify the level of terminal behavior the learners have achieved. It is therefore, both the continuous and comprehensive evaluation and terminal evaluation contribute substantially to the final certification of the learners. Thus, the two important purposes of assessment and evaluation are 'assessment for instructional purposes' and 'evaluation for certification'.

4. Forms of assessment and Evaluation

In the teaching-learning process, teacher uses different forms of assessment and evaluation. Teacher needs to assess learners' performances at different stages of instructional process for achievement of learning objectives. S/he assesses scholastic and co-scholastic abilities of learners. Keeping in view the above, we discuss, in this section, different forms of assessment and evaluation practices in the teaching-learning process.

4.1 Placement, Formative, Diagnostic and Summative

Assessment is conducted in different phases of teaching-learning process. Some assessments are conducted before beginning of the teaching-learning process; some assessments are carried out during the teaching-learning process and other kinds of assessment are conducted at the end of the instructional process. According to the purpose and the use of the assessment strategies, they can be classified as follows:

1. Placement Assessment
2. Formative Assessment
3. Diagnostic Assessment
4. Summative Assessment

Each of four types of assessment serves different purposes. In the teachinglearning process, assessment starts with assessing the entry behaviour of the learners (placement assessment) and ends with certifying the performances of the learners (summative assessment). All four types of assessment are important, and are unique in their nature and functions. The four types of assessment and their functions are diagrammatically presented in Table-1 for your understanding.

Table 1: Types of Assessment and their Functions Areas of Function Types of Assessment and their functions

Areas of Function	Types of Assessment and their functions
After Instructional Process	Summative Evaluation (to certify the learner) 
During Instructional Process	Diagnostic Evaluation (to solve learning difficulties) 
	Formative Evaluation (to know mastery in content) 
Before Instructional Process	Placement Evaluation (to know entry behaviour) 

Table 1 represents different types of assessment which are usually practiced in the teaching-learning process. Generally, assessment starts with measuring the entry behaviour of learners to form judgement about their terminal behaviour. Let us discuss the main purpose and functions of the above types of assessment:

1. Placement Evaluation: Placement evaluation is conducted before the organisation of teaching-learning activities to measure the entry behaviour or previous knowledge of the learners. Another purpose is to know whether the learner is able to acquire the new learning experience which is related to the previous knowledge. The key word which is used for placement evaluation is the “entry behaviour”. Assessment of entry behaviour is done just before teaching starts. In the teaching-learning process, before teaching a new topic, a teacher should know the previous knowledge of students. This helps teacher to organise teaching-learning activities according to the previous knowledge of learners.

2. Formative Evaluation: For the first time in the year 1967, Michel Scriven used the concept of formative evaluation in the field of curriculum evaluation. Scriven (1991) defined it as, “*Formative evaluation is typically conducted during the development or improvement of a programme or product (or person, and so on) and it is conducted, often more than once, for in house staff of the programme with the extent to improve*”. If we analyse the definition, it is clear that the purpose of conducting formative evaluation is to monitor the learning progress of the learner; it is also conducted to know whether the learning objectives have been achieved or not. The key word in formative evaluation is mastery of learning or learning progress. According to Table 1, formative evaluation is conducted during the instructional process. It is considered as the second stage of assessment which is conducted during the teaching-learning process. It is carried out from the very beginning of instruction and continues till the end of the course. The examples of formative evaluation are: regular classroom observation of the teachers, topic end examination, monthly test, quarterly examination, half yearly examination, etc. It provides the teacher feedback about the progress of the learners in the subjects, to know the achievement of the instructional objectives, and also about the effectiveness of the programme. Formative assessment is more popular in the constructivist approach to teaching. It is used to make learners enhance their learning. In the present context, formative assessment is integrated with the teaching learning process. Formative assessment fulfils the needs of continuous development of the learners. Formative assessment is an integral part of continuous and comprehensive evaluation. It also provides data for diagnostic evaluation. Let us discuss the diagnostic assessment.

3. Diagnostic Evaluation: Diagnostic evaluation is conducted along with formative evaluation during the instructional process. It is carried out based on the data obtained from formative evaluation. Diagnostic evaluation is specially conducted for identifying the learning difficulties and to solve them. For example, if it is found that a learner has not understood certain concepts in social science subject or showing poor performance regularly in social science subject, then to help him/her understand these concepts, diagnostic assessment is conducted and remediation is provided. This is conducted by diagnostic remedial test.

The key word in diagnostic evaluation is assessment of learning difficulties. Diagnostic evaluation not only solves learning difficulties of learners but also identifies and provides remedies for personal and psychological problems. To conclude, diagnostic test and remedial treatment helped Saurabh to overcome the learning difficulty that was identified through the formative and diagnostic tests. It is the clear example of formative and diagnostic evaluation practice in the school system.

4. Summative Evaluation: Summative evaluation is conducted to know the terminal behaviour of learners. The key word in summative evaluation is “certification”. Summative evaluation is conducted after completion of the whole course. Feedback provided in summative evaluation is terminal in nature and cannot be used for modification of learners’ behaviour because it is conducted at the end of a term. Learners get certificate or are promoted to the higher class based on summative assessment. Different techniques and tools used in summative evaluation are verbal or non-verbal, tests, and teacher made or standardised tests.

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