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Abstract

In order to better understand the assessment process, analyze the certificate awarding system in non-formal and basic education, and review the diagnostic, summative, and formative assessment strategies used by teachers, the study "Assessment Practices for the Students of Non-Formal and Basic Education in Punjab, Pakistan" was conducted. Fifteen teachers and five administrators from Punjab's non-formal and basic education departments participated in interviews for this phenomenological study. Through the use of purposive sampling, content analysis exposed conventional techniques for formative and diagnostic assessments. With an emphasis on students' lower cognitive abilities, a deficiency in pre-service and in-service teacher assessment training was found. The study discovered lost chances to hone higher-order thinking and skill sets. With an emphasis on the necessity of efficient assessment instruments, the single national curriculum seeks to promote these abilities. Prior to fifth grade, the distribution of result cards is emphasized as a tool for student motivation.

Key Words: Assessment, Evaluation, Non-formal Basic Education, NFBE

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Title

Assessment Practices for the Students of Non-Formal and Basic Education in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

In order to better understand the assessment process, analyze the certificate awarding system in non-formal and basic education, and review the diagnostic, summative, and formative assessment strategies used by teachers, the study "Assessment Practices for the Students of Non-Formal and Basic Education in Punjab, Pakistan" was conducted. Fifteen teachers and five administrators from Punjab's non-formal and basic education departments participated in interviews for this phenomenological study. Through the use of purposive sampling, content analysis exposed conventional techniques for formative and diagnostic assessments. With an emphasis on students' lower cognitive abilities, a deficiency in pre-service and in-service teacher assessment training was found. The study discovered lost chances to hone higher-order thinking and skill sets. With an emphasis on the necessity of efficient assessment instruments, the single national curriculum seeks to promote these abilities. Prior to fifth grade, the distribution of result cards is emphasized as a tool for student motivation.

Keywords: [Assessment](#), [Evaluation](#), [Non-formal Basic Education](#), [NFBE](#)

Introduction

NFBE, or non-formal basic education, provides marginalized and underprivileged populations with an accessible and adaptable substitute

for traditional formal education systems. A variety of educational activities outside the conventional school system (instruction in life skills, career development, and literacy programs) constitutes



non-formal basic education (NFBE). Learners facing hindrances (socioeconomic status, geographic, cultural) may encounter trials in accessing formal education. non-formal basic education addresses the diverse educational needs of such individuals. It plays a crucial role in raising lifelong learning and attaining inclusive education goals through its focus on learner-centered approaches, real-world competencies, and community involvement. The latest research shows the significant influence of non-formal basic education in narrowing scholastic disparities and offering equitable learning scenarios (UNESCO, 2022; UNICEF, 2021). NFBE contributes to sustainable development and enhances social empowerment by tailoring educational interventions to suit the specific needs of learners,

Alternative methods to traditional elementary education include non-formal education (NFE). It is intended to educate children and people who lack the opportunity to pursue formal education as well as those who left the formal school system before mastering reading skills (Eshach, 2007). The definition of non-formal education is ambiguous and encompasses all learning outside of the conventional educational system without regard to time or place (Shiror, 1995). It covers any education and training that occurs outside of formally authorized educational institutions. A 20th-century invention is the concept of non-formal education (NFBE). It has its roots in the formal schooling that gave rise to it. It refers to an organized sequence of learning experiences that happen outside of a formal system but are typically a part of another program or organization. Non-formal education has been described by Khawaja and Brennan (1990) as a movement that specifically evolved in the second half of the 20th century as a result of issues with general economic, political, and social growth with regard to nations and individuals. Daycare for children of working parents and adult education classes are both examples of non-formal education. Shiror claimed that there is a need for non-formal education (1995).

Since non-formal education is reasonably priced and adaptable enough to meet the needs of its students, it is growing in popularity. Since the formal education system is unable to meet demand, Daswani (2001) claims that many developed and developing countries are in favor of expanding education through non-formal channels. "The formal system has failed to

enroll all children between the ages of five and fourteen without dropping them.". If all children of school age could have been accepted into the formal system, there would not have been a need for non-formal education. According to Akpama (2001), the main goals of non-formal education are to create incentives for the development of life skills and to make curriculum and vocational programs accessible to students who engage in extracurricular activities.

People will be able to realize their greatest potential as a result, and both local and national development will benefit from their socioeconomic advancement.

As the Sustainable Development Goals emphasize, non-formal basic education (NFBE) is essential to attaining inclusive and equitable quality education. Offering flexible learning opportunities catered to the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged groups, who frequently lack access to formal education systems, plays a significant role in addressing educational disparities. The goals of NFBE programs are to empower people individually and as a community by fostering lifelong learning, improving literacy and numeracy, and developing practical skills (UNESCO, 2022). These programs are especially

crucial in situations where socioeconomic, geographic, or cultural barriers prevent people from accessing traditional schooling. Additionally, by concentrating on their individual needs and encouraging social and economic engagement, NFBE promotes the holistic development of students (UNICEF, 2021). Because of its flexibility and community-based approach, NFBE is a vital tactic for closing educational gaps and advancing sustainable development. Jumani and Khadija (2011) contend that Pakistan's official educational system is insufficient to meet the nation's growing educational needs. There are not enough schools in terms of both quantity and quality. Teachers with inadequate expertise must handle classes that are too large and materials that aren't appropriately suited to the needs of the students. To close the gap, non-formal basic education programs have been developed under the auspices of a National Action Plan.

Every stage of the teaching process involves evaluation. (Source: Willson, Livingston, and Reynolds, 2005). It is the third phase in the instructional cycle, and it comes after training preparation and delivery. Russell and Airasian, 2012). As a result, during the 20th and early 21st centuries, assessment—which had been long neglected—was among the subjects in the field of education that attracted the most attention. This globalization of evaluation interest has generated a lot of discussion around the world. Nevertheless, the majority of assessment experts agree that using a variety of instruments to gauge students' learning quality will produce more accurate results and more valid interpretations, despite differences in opinions regarding the benefits and drawbacks of various assessment methods. This is due to the fact that no single instrument or method of assessment can offer all the data required to produce an accurate assessment. The goal of the current study was to shed light on Punjab, Pakistan's non-formal and basic education assessment system. Many techniques were used by all departments to evaluate students' past knowledge and abilities. The assessment method used by the NFBE department teachers to evaluate and enhance their student's learning will be examined in this study. This will assist in identifying any weaknesses in the NFBE department's assessment procedures. This will support the researcher's recommendations for filling in the gaps.

Aims of the Study

1. To review the assessment strategies (diagnostic, summative & formative) utilized by the teachers of non-formal basic education
2. To explore the assessment process of non-formal and basic education
3. To find out the certificate awarding system of non-formal and basic education

Significance / Contribution of the Proposed Research

The study "Assessment Practices for the Students of Non-Formal and Basic Education in Punjab, Pakistan" is important because it has the potential to improve and inform educational practices in a field that is important but is frequently

disregarded. This study fills a significant vacuum in the body of knowledge on educational assessment by examining the assessment techniques used in non-formal basic education (NFBE). Studying the assessment techniques (diagnostic, formative, and summative) utilized by NFBE educators can enhance comprehension regarding their impact on student educational quality and learning outcomes. Moreover, the analysis of the NFBE credential granting mechanism and evaluation process in the research offers insights into the organizational and procedural aspects that expedite the efficacy of non-formal education. The obligation of enhancing capacity building and professional development in assessment literacy is underlined by traditional approaches and teachers' inadequate training. This is crucial in a situation where educators play a vigorous role in nurturing students' critical thinking and cognitive skills for their personal and academic progression. The conclusions from the study concerning the lack of opportunities for students to develop advanced cognitive and analytical skills highlight the importance of aligning evaluation approaches with the goals of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), which aims to promote these proficiencies.

Research Methodology

The study, entitled "Evaluation Practices for Learners in Non-Formal and Basic Education in Punjab, Pakistan," employed a phenomenological methodology within a qualitative research design. The rationale for selecting this approach was to systematically explore the real-life experiences and perspectives of administrators and educators of non-formal basic education (NFBE) in the region. Phenomenological research aims to gather data to grasp the core essence of participants' encounters. The purpose of the research was to comprehend the ways in which educators engaged in NFBE perceive and implement assessment procedures. To attain this, fifteen teachers and five administrators of the non-formal and basic education department of Punjab interviewed the researchers through a semi-structured questionnaire. A purposive sampling technique guaranteeing the participation of participants with vital experiences related to the research subject has been employed in participant choice. Open-ended questions were utilized to provoke intricate responses to teachers' implementation of assessment techniques

(diagnostic, formative, and summative). Through this process respondents could freely express their experiences and visions, leading to a reflective comprehension often unachievable through quantitative methods. Participants have been prompted to reveal the interviews by the means by which interviews have been carried out.

Participants of the Study

To investigate the research problem, data has been collected from fifteen serving and experienced teachers of the non-formal and basic education department of Punjab Pakistan. The researcher has also interviewed five administrators of the NFBE.

Sampling Technique

In order to select the sample from the population for this investigation the researchers have implemented the purposive sampling technique. This method was designated because it makes it possible to select the participants who encounter certain criteria or have appropriate experiences that are vital to answering the research problem. In this case, the researchers recognized and selected as a sample fifteen serving teachers and five administrators functioning in the non-formal basic education (NFBE) sector of Punjab Pakistan. It warrants that participants selected in this study can deliver the utmost insightful and relevant data. The purposive sampling technique is especially operational in qualitative research. The researchers obtained in-depth and context-specific data regarding the assessment procedures employed in this educational environment by concentrating on people who are directly involved in the NFBE system. The fifteen educators were chosen on the basis of their participation in NFBE programs as active teachers. These educators were selected due to their direct involvement in the daily application of assessment techniques, which puts them in a unique position to offer insightful commentary on the difficulties and efficacy of these methods. Understanding how assessment techniques are used in the classroom, how they affect student's learning, and what adjustments might be required requires an understanding of the perspectives of the teachers. In the same way, the five administrators.

Tool of the Study

The data has been collected by individually conducted structured interviews of the participants. Interviews were recorded digitally after getting the consent of the participants. These recordings helped the researchers in a thorough analysis of the data obtained. The researcher started each interview with a pre-written sequence of questions (including probes) across the interviews. Questions have been written in great detail so that they can be used verbatim during the interviews. The researcher's experience helped them a lot to structure the valid questions addressing the objectives of the study. The researchers also adopted the journal entries method for the thorough squeezing of information.

The Procedure of the Study

The researchers visited the headquarters of NFBE and conducted individual interviews with the officers and mobilizers for the sake of data collection. (research ethics have been taken into consideration)

Side by side the researchers have attained the addresses and contact details of the teachers of NFBE from the headquarters of this department situated in Lahore. The researchers have contacted the teachers and scheduled meetings with them for data collection. The researchers conducted individual interviews with the teachers and tried to squeeze the information addressing the objectives of the study. Data have been collected in face-to-face meetings.

Data Analysis

The content analysis method was used for data analysis, which entails methodically classifying and coding the qualitative data in order to find important themes and patterns. By using this technique, the researchers were able to analyze the data in a meaningful way, identifying common assessment practices and emphasizing areas that required development.

Results

Almost every participant revealed that they are receiving continuous professional development on behalf of the non-formal basic education department. Training duration is mostly less than one week. A full day is assigned for the training of a single subject but assessment/evaluation-based

pieces of training are not being provided do the teachers of non-formal basic education. Teachers also said that they hadn't received induction pieces of training while joining this department.

During the interviewing process, the researchers came to know that the teachers of NFBE are qualified and experienced (especially those who are working in the vicinity of urban areas) but they lack a sufficient knowledge of assessment techniques. Teachers are using traditional methods of assessment to measure the learning level of their students. A number of teachers responded that they use the formal paper pencil technique and question-answer method for assessment purposes. Some of the teachers use storytelling and group discussion methods for ongoing assessment.

Teachers narrated that they measure the learning level of their students by conducting daily weekly and monthly written tests. For ongoing assessment purposes, they merely rely on question answers and take oral responses from the delivered content. Their knowledge and practices are confined to traditional methods.

NFBE department session ends after eight months (it took 8 months to complete a grade level). NFBE department takes the midterm and final exams of the students. For this process test papers are sent to the teachers in hard form teachers conduct their exams and quantify the performance of the learners. Demarks assigned by the teachers uploaded on the website named real-time monitoring system information regarding summative evaluations have been taken from district education officers of NFBE.

DEOs (district education officers) mobilizers and teachers revealed that certificates are provided to those students only who complete the 5th grade level. These certificates of primary pass are considered of equal worth to the certificate of any formal education system. After getting this students of NFBE can get admission to any formal institute for further studies. The certificate is also valuable for job opportunities.

Conclusions and Discussion

The NFBE provides a chance for the underprivileged and disadvantaged segments of society. Instructors at NFBE are making every effort to fulfill their students' educational requirements. However, as with anything, there is always room for

improvement. The researchers have found some weaknesses in the NFBE assessment procedures. It is necessary to upgrade teachers' ongoing assessment methods in particular. For the students' formative and diagnostic assessments, traditional methods are employed. Teachers in NFBE who have not received training related to assessment, either in-service or preservice. According to Christie and Khushk (2004), specific skills are needed in order to assess the learning outcome. Their primary focus is on addressing the learners' lower cognitive levels (Khan, 2006). They are passing up the chance to help their students acquire higher-order and critical thinking abilities. It is believed that high-order thinking skills, as opposed to low-order thinking skills, must be evaluated by question types in order to gauge students' comprehension. To find the answer, students will need to use only low-order cognitive skills and read outside of the assigned text and between the lines. in order to become proficient and autonomous readers. Additionally, they will learn how to effectively engage with a range of text types, such as expository, argumentative, persuasive, narrative, and informative texts (Khan, 2011). The new curriculum, known as the single national curriculum, was created with improvement in mind.

Recommendations

Researchers are able to suggest that assessment/evaluation-based training programs be introduced for NFBE teachers after carefully examining the data provided by the instructors and administrators. This can greatly aid in achieving the goals set forth in the most recent curriculum. Furthermore, innovative approaches to teaching and learning can be facilitated by the use of the most recent and improved assessment techniques. Instructors can deliver the lessons in contexts that are more logical, engaging, and representative of everyday life. Instructors are able to see how crucial assessment and evaluation are to meeting learning goals. The distinction between "assessment of learning" and "assessment for learning" can be recognized and addressed by teachers. The distribution of result cards following completion of each grade level (first through fourth) is another area that requires attention.

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