

AN ONLINE TEST BATTERY TO ENSURE ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR LEARNING

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NSS LP Kappu was established in 1964 as a rural private-aided school in the Ernakulam district of Kerala. The school teaches students from grades 1 to 4. Dr Nair observed that though schools claim to keep a record of the learning achievement of learners, most attempts at data tracking fail to demonstrate any sort of positive impact on learning. The assessments in schools do not cater to the larger objectives of fostering learning, but succumb to serve external demands like parental pressure and scrutiny from leadership, among other factors.

The examinations which are summative assessments happen three or four times a year and these exercises give the results not the feedback. Most of the examinations publish results long after they take place. The results are translated into grades or numerals which do not reflect what the learner has really learnt.

NSS LPS Kappu became a digital school in 2013. Though infrastructural development and pedagogical digitalization were achieved, basic operational skills of students like writing, numerical ability and basic arithmetical consciousness were



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below the desired levels. A study was conducted to evaluate the basic skills like writing, listening, observation, comparison, classification, analysis, synthesis, application of learning in new contexts of life and basic arithmetic operations. Discussions with Ms Naimisha Parmar, Head Teacher of Kalyanji Nu Paru primary school of Adalaj Moti, Gandhinagar, Gujarat led to the insight that fixing of learning achievements at micro-levels and parental involvement put together effectively would help. She and her colleagues had fixed all the curricular objectives from grades one to four at the micro level. Learning from this, an Android mobile application was developed with the help of a 16 year-old student in Trivandrum, Kerala. The application was installed in the parents' cell phones. Personalized and qualitative day to day reports of learning achievements level of each learner were sent to each parent for a trial period of 28 days. A post test was administered on the learners to evaluate the effect of the parental involvement and the reflective pedagogical practices of teachers after the launch of the application. The results of the post-tests were highly encouraging. This challenged the teachers to take up novel endeavors to involve the parents further.

“Know my child” served as a disseminating platform to record formative assessment needs. The success of this platform motivated Dr Vidhu and her team to bring about changes of the same pattern, in the summative form of assessment pattern too. Quizzino, the assessment software, was developed incorporating the ideas thus evolved. The online assessment battery has been administered on a sample in four schools (NSS LP School Kappu in Ernakulam district, Bharathiya Vidya Mandir in Kottayam district, Government LP School Cheriyaakkara in Kasargod district, all in

Kerala; and in Kalayanji Nu Paru Primary School, Adalaj, and Gandhinagar Gujarat). The results were better than in the control group with which the conventional approach was used.

This innovative online assessment tool helps learners, teachers and parents to get a vivid and analytical note on the achievement of each learner in the target area of assessment. The results are available as soon as the assessment is done. The result is qualitative and descriptive defining what the learner has learnt and how much she has to go further, in accordance with the objectives fixed by the curriculum in the respective target area.

Quizzino was launched on a regular basis in November 2018. Regular updates were made whenever there was a demand.

Restructured Quizzino as a complete learning management system called Darpan: May 2020
“Darpan” mobile application was set up to combat the impediments caused by the COVID-19-induced lockdown and unlock days. The application had modules for both synchronized and asynchronous learning modes with interactive spaces for learners to respond to learning creatively. This supported formative assessment. “Quiz me” a module in “Darpan” can be used to give slip tests and feedback periodically. Quizzino found its permanent space in Darpan as there is inevitable demand for online assessment in the scenario of pandemic. Darpan has as many as 16 modules which aim at fostering distance learning. Classroom’ has video lessons, “Connect me” gives possibilities for realtime interventions and “Whiteboard” has options of live classroom settings. Darpan found its inspiration from Quizzino’s success.

The analysis of the experience led Dr Nair to make the following observations:

- Learning becomes a meaningful exercise when there is emphasis on the process skills rather than on the product: viz. concepts and content.
- Teaching learning process becomes more effective when teacher, learner and parent get informed of what each child acquires. How much each child acquires, how far each child should be lifted along for reaching at the desired level of each curricular objective and when the teacher should resort to customized, personalized and multi-level learning systems, are important issues.
- Immediate and personalized feedback gives the learners opportunities to

reflect and reconsider their learning styles, getting facilitated by the teacher to scale the higher steps of learning.

- Process-oriented classrooms have more relaxed atmosphere when compared to those where conventional methods are practiced.
- The strategy of immediate feedback resulted in improved learner progress on a continual basis. Teachers build on their professional skills to give immediate and quality feedback.’
- The programme has helped for a shift in rationale towards researching continuously for clear evidence about how to drive up individual attainment of learners; provide clear feedback for and from pupils to ensure clarity on what needs to improve; and how best it can make happen. This practice thus creates a meaningful and logical link between learning and lesson planning.
- Personalized learning is the demand of the hour and assessment for learning is at the heart of its philosophy.
- The test battery and the inbuilt feedback exemplifies effective assessment and lesson planning; and on its basis, establishes the learning goals, how to communicate the assessment criteria and how to create a learning ethos.

Current situation

The online tool has been restructured and reprogrammed as a platform for online learning and synchronized assessment as schools are forced to remain closed due to the pandemic outburst. The developed platform has slots for creative expression for learners and for teachers – it serves a customized online medium to interact and address the learners critically and inspiringly. The android application thus evolved has been catered to the stakeholders on Play Store.

Reach of innovation

The success of the online test battery in fostering the achievement level of learners inspired Dr Nair to try the innovation to frame assessment tools for language and math. One of the basic language skills, listening has ever been left unaddressed by the conservative examinations. The online test battery could bridge this gap, finding slots for assessment of listening skills as well. The introduction of innovation in the assessment of math has been highly useful to diagnose



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the problems of acquisition of skills like basic arithmetic operations.

The introduction of the innovation has urged teachers to use appropriate language and terminology which learners have developed and communicate the learning goes and assessment criteria and thus promote self-assessment through effective use of the assessment criteria.

These has been remarkable introduction of learning ethos in all the four schools, demonstrating the use of value-added data, fostering trust in professional relationships, and demonstrating that learning is valued and celebrated.

Dr Nair has received the National Teachers' Award from the Hon. President of India; Innovative Principal of the Year Award (International School Awards, Dubai); Outstanding Head Master Award (International Educational Summit and Awards, Bangkok); Outstanding Academic Leader 2018

(World Education Summit, Mumbai). She has also been honoured by the Kerala government for the mobile app "Navaprabha" for centralized consolidation of data, and for the monitoring of the programme by RMSA, Kerala.

Quizzino has been adopted as an aptitude test for students of Standard IX in all the schools in Kerala. The extended innovation of this software, called Darpan is being cloned for Student Police Corps programme, a project of Home Department, Kerala to conduct in-house training for 50 000 cadets in schools across the state. Darpan is used in seven schools to ensure learning during COVID.

School achievements

The school's research-based learning project as a part of "Sargavidyalaya" a government programme has been selected as the best in the district. The school has been recognized as one of the best 28 schools in the state by SCERT. The work has been presented in various venues such as the Conference on innovation in Grassroots, held at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, Indian Council of Social Science Research: National Seminar on Educational Innovations; the Prime Minister's Office has also recommended the school as a model. Other places where the work has been presented include Children's University, Gandhinagar, Central University of Gujarat, AG Teachers' College, Ahmedabad, HM Patel College, Anand, DIET Daryaganj, New Delhi, and Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal.



QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. What are the benefits of education testing?
2. How will testing change the teaching-learning process?
3. How will the test become a chain link to engage parents with school processes?

QUESTIONS FOR TRAINEES

1. How do different seminars help increase the effectiveness of the teaching process?
2. How does having information of children's knowledge change the teaching process?
3. How does testing become necessary to know and improve academic achievement?