



EVALUATION PRACTICES FOLLOWED FOR THE HEARING-IMPAIRED STUDENTS: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Lalita Vartak, Ph. D.

Principal

Ms. Gauri Varade

Assistant Professor, Adarsha Comprehensive College of Education and Research, Pune 04

Abstract

The present study was conducted to reveal the teachers' perceptions regarding the evaluation used for the hearing-impaired students. Qualitative research method was used for the research. The data was collected by using focus group interview technique and was summarized. The study group consisted of eight teachers who were dealing with the hearing-impaired students. Majority of the interviewees were seemed to be unaware about the concept of formative evaluation and importance of it for the hearing-impaired students. While they rightly pointed out the limitations of the current evaluation system followed for the hearing-impaired students. All of them suggested required modification in the evaluation system to fulfil the special needs of the hearing-impaired students.

Key Words: *evaluation, hearing-impaired students, focus group interview, formative evaluation, special needs.*



[Scholarly Research Journal's](http://www.srjis.com) is licensed Based on a work at www.srjis.com

Introduction:

Human being experiences evaluation process every day in the form of one or the other. Evaluation process holds an important place in our lives as the purpose of life may be vanished without it. This is the process through which we can judge between good and bad. Thus, the whole process of social development revolves around it. Therefore, in the field of education, the progress of a child can be revealed through evaluation. According to the needs of the society educational programmes are developed and evaluation assess its achievements and helps to improve its effectiveness in the future. (Mani, 2016)

Right to Education Act (RTE) is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted on 4th August, 2009. The Act made education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 to 14. (RightToEducation.in, n.d). As it is mentioned here all children means including children with special needs. They also have all right to the education which should be appropriate to their needs. Education should be according to their abilities, enable them to live full and independent lives. Only then they can contribute to their communities, cooperate with each other and continue to learn throughout their lives. These special need children are classified into Sensory,

Neurological, Physical, Intellectual, Cognitive and Psychiatric. Under these categories, there are again some sub categories of disabilities. Visual impaired and hearing-impaired children are the sub categories of the sensory disability. (Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs): Resource Manual for State Government – Part 1, n.d.)

Hearing-impairment is commonly known as ‘deafness’. Children with hearing-impairment have difficulty in hearing, understanding and using spoken language. The Persons with Disability Act (1995) states that “Hearing Impairment means loss of 60 decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies.” Hearing-impairment is classified according to the level of dB audible to a child that is Mild, Moderate, Moderately Severe, Severe and Profound. Thus, the needs of the hearing-impaired children are different. (Section One – About Disability, n.d.)

To justify the needs of the different students, the teacher needs to plan the teaching-learning activities effectively to achieve the fruitful learning of the students. Evaluation helps the teacher to check their learning and the feedback again assists him/her for the future planning. Thus, along with the teaching strategies evaluation is also an important aspect as it shapes the educational and vocational future of millions of people worldwide. It means teachers need to be skilled and informed in this area. As said before the hearing-impaired students also have different needs, the teacher should have variety in evaluation tools and techniques to fulfil their needs. (Lamprianou, 2009)

Review of Literature:

Conceptual Review:

Evaluation:

It is often seen that the word ‘evaluation’ is confused with testing and measurement. If a test is given to the student, they will think that they are evaluating their achievement. So, testing just collect evidence regarding the pupil behaviour. Measurement on the other hand is limited to quantitative description of the pupil behaviour. While evaluation is a more comprehensive term which includes testing, measurement and also qualitative description of the pupil behaviour. It includes value judgement regarding the worth or desirability of the behaviour measured or assessed. Therefore, Grounlund (1981) has indicated this relationship in the following equation:

Evaluation = quantitative description of pupils (measurement) + value judgement

Evaluation = qualitative description of pupils (non-measurement) + value judgement

Thus, evaluation may not be based on measurement alone but it goes beyond the simple quantitative score. (Mani, 2016)

According to Mary Thorpe, "Evaluation is the collection of, analysis and interpretation of information about any aspect of a programme of education or training as part of a recognised process of judging its effectiveness, its efficiency and any other outcomes it may have." (Ellington, 1988)

There are many types of evaluation. They are formative, summative, placement and diagnostics evaluation.

- 1. Formative Evaluation:** The evaluation which is done during the teaching-learning process to assess the ongoing termed formation of knowledge and understanding of the students is called as formative evaluation. It is a monitoring type of evaluation which is used to monitor the progress of the students during the class, course or session. Feedback is given to the students so that they can work accordingly. The aim of the formative evaluation is the improvement in the quality of teaching-learning process.
- 2. Placement Evaluation:** The entry behaviour is assessed by placement evaluation. Admission is given to the students to new courses according to their intelligence, attitude, motivation, aptitude etc. The aim of placement evaluation is to determine for each student the position in the instructional sequence and the mode of instruction that is most beneficial.
- 3. Diagnostic Evaluation:** It is regarding the persistent learning difficulties that are left unresolved by the corrective prescriptions of formative evaluation. The objective is to identify or diagnose the weakness of the students in a given course of instruction. Diagnostic evaluation involves the use of specially prepared diagnostic tests and various observational techniques. It then develops a plan for remedial action.
- 4. Summative Evaluation:** The name itself indicates that summative evaluation is done at the end of a course semester or a class or topic. It is meant to evaluate the quality of the final product and to find out the extent to which the instructional objectives have been achieved. Remedial teaching is not given after summative evaluation. (Mani, 2016)

Hearing-Impaired Students:

Hearing-impairment is commonly known as 'deafness'. Children with hearing-impairment have difficulty in hearing, understanding and using spoken language. The Persons with Disability Act (1995) states that "Hearing Impairment means loss of 60 decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies." Hearing-impairment is classified according to the level of dB audible to a child that is Mild, Moderate, Moderately Severe, Severe and Profound. Thus, the needs of the hearing-impaired children are different. Generally, these children are educated taking care of their needs i.e. Total Communication, Oralism Method (oral-aural) and Indian Sign Language methods of teaching are used for them. (Section One – About Disability, n.d.)

Focus Group Interview:

Focus groups "capitalize on the interaction among the group members to enhance the collection of deep, strongly held beliefs and perspectives" (Carey & Asbury, 2012). Farnsworth and Boon (2010) pointed out that focus group is a "deceptively simple methodology" which involves group processes that are "unstable and unpredictable". It is observed that the group's dynamics and interactions it helps to put light on such point which are often remains unspoken. It helps to make the work of the facilitator crucial. The guidance of the group facilitator can enhance spontaneity. (Yao, 2015)

Research Review:

'Formative Evaluation Techniques' conducted by Buelin, Jennifer, Ernst, Jeremy, Clark, Aaron, Kelly, Daniel, DeLuca and William (2019) indicate that formative assessment can adjusted to meet the needs of the students which results in a classroom environment of support, engagement and achievement. Formative assessment gives many opportunities to teachers to learn about individual students' needs and accordingly design the plan of instructions and assessments to support student achievement. It is also said that the frequent formative assessments benefit both students and teachers. When teachers regularly have quick checks into lessons, students become accustomed to the procedures and benefit from frequent feedback and more tailored instruction.

A study was carried by Pizzo, L. & Chilvers, A. (2019) entitled 'Assessment of Language and Literacy in Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing'. It explored the details about the theoretical orientations and practical applications for the assessment of Deaf and hard of hearing children. The study talks about different types of assessment and their benefits for

the deaf and hard of hearing children. The effective assessment approaches discussed here are informal assessment approaches. In which they have discussed about Naturalistic, Play-Based Assessment, Performance Based Assessment, Portfolio Assessment and Dynamic Assessment (Test-Teach-Test). All these assessment approaches can be used effectively for hearing impairment students. All these share documentation strategies such as rubrics, checklists, rating scales, observation notes, student work samples and portfolios. This combination of informal assessment and documentation approaches can promote learning, impact instruction and also can modify educational programming to meet the language and literacy needs of children with hearing impairment.

An article entitled, ‘Formative Assessment: A Tool for Closing Achievement Gaps in Diverse Classrooms’ was written by Tibbitt (2020). In this article, Tibbitt discussed how formative assessment can be a building block for success of the hearing-impaired students of every age and cognitive level. Here it was suggested one way with the help of which the teachers can improve individual performance through the use of formative assessment. Assessment or evaluation or testing should be incorporated throughout the learning of each lesson. “Formative assessment” simply means assessing students at intervals as they tackle specific goals rather than waiting to administer an assessment when the lesson plan proclaims that a goal should have been reached. The article concluded that through ongoing evaluation and guidance, formative assessment allows teacher to reach and educate every single student. It is up to teachers to not only provide fair and thorough assessment to ensure appropriate education, but also to take a step further and use formative assessment to elevate the teaching and learning experiences, especially for students with special needs.

Need and Significance:

Students with special needs are called special because of their special needs. Students with hearing impairment also face lots of problems as they are living without being able to communicate with people which must be causing a huge void. As discussed before, the process of teaching-learning and evaluation plays a very important role to overcome this void. It was observed that different teaching methods are used by different students considering the level of the hearing impairment. The researchers were curious in knowing about the different formative evaluations which can be helpful for the hearing-impaired students.

Thus, the study was designed to find out the evaluation practices followed by the teachers for the hearing-impaired students.

Method of the Study:

Focus group approach was used to obtain the opinions of the teachers. This approach was selected as it has the potential for participants to interact and generate ideas beyond what each individual can contribute. (Carey & Asbury, 2012)

The Interviewees:

Eight teachers were involved in the present study. Out of which four of them were female and the other four males. All of them were special teachers of the hearing-impaired students. One of them was senior member while most of the teachers on the team were around 35 years of age. The team was selected as they were dealing with the hearing-impaired students.

The Interview Process:

Permission was taken by the head of the school by the researcher to conduct the interview of the team. Researcher herself conducted the interview. During the interview, the researcher acted as a facilitator, asked questions and encouraged the team members to elaborate on certain points. The focus group interview was smoothly done. At the beginning the teachers were a bit reserved but as the discussion went on, they became more relaxed. Later on, there was a heated discussion. The opinions were found same for few questions where few questions they had totally different opinions. Later on, the different ideas expressed by few teachers were appreciated by the other teachers.

Results:

The data was collected with the help of focus group interview. The researcher immediately summarized it. It was sent to the teachers to verify to confirm the truthfulness. The credibility was checked by showing the draft to the teachers. The group confirmed the summaries that the researcher prepared and clarified their responses. Total six questions were put by the researcher during the interview and the summary of the responses that the team of eight teachers provides is given below:

What do you mean by evaluation?

At the very beginning of the interview, the researcher asked about the concept of evaluation. It was also made clear that they need to tell their understanding about the word evaluation and not the definition given in the books. Many of the participants told that it means examinations or tests. One of them also told that it means the things used to check the students' learning. Few of them mentioned the home work given to the students. A senior teacher described the activity of asking students to write down questions and answers in their notebook.

What type of evaluation is followed by the school to assess the Hearing-impaired students?

The second question was asked about the evaluation followed by the school by the school. Here the teacher's responses were found similar as they only mentioned about the evaluation of the hearing-impaired students is done in a regular manner which is used for the neurotypical students.

What do you know about the formative evaluation?

The next question was regarding the formative evaluation. Majority of them mentioned that whatever questions are asked during the lecture means formative evaluation. One of the teachers told that it means to ask students to write down the questions and answers of the lessons in the notebook. The same person again mentioned about the assignment given to the students is a part of formative evaluation.

Which tools and techniques do you use for formative evaluation for the hearing-impaired students?

After talking about the meaning of formative evaluation, the researcher asked about the tools and techniques used by them in the classroom for formative evaluation. The senior teacher indicated that questions are asked orally and that's it. Several teachers in the group joined with his response and were agreed that all of them follow it. After that one of them told that she asks the students to write down the questions and answers given on the black board. Immediately two more teachers also nodded their heads and told that they also follow this practice. When researcher again asked them mention any specific tool or technique used by them for formative evaluation of the hearing-impaired students, they were unable to tell a single tool or technique used for formative evaluation.

What limitations do you find in the current evaluation pattern used for the hearing-impaired students?

When asked about the limitations found in the current evaluation pattern used for the hearing-impaired students, they suddenly seen charged up. A heated discussion started at that time. The senior fellow immediately mentioned that the hearing-impaired students face lot of problem as the examination pattern is developed considering the neurotypical students. Rest of the teachers were also agreed with his statement. Another teacher said that the needs of the hearing-impaired students are not taken into account while developing the evaluation pattern. The basic skills like communication, interaction or conversation should be the focus of the evaluation as it is the basic need of these students. The response of the teacher got support

from the other team members and they also added same points while discussing about the needs of the hearing-impaired students. One of the team members talked about the format of the question paper which is not suitable for the hearing-impaired students and they are not able to tackle the long answer questions. They also pointed that the hearing-impaired students face difficulty regarding the abstract thinking because of which they can't justify that kind of questions. Many of the team members were agreed with his response where one of them immediately said that few tricks can help them to tackle the evaluation pattern. Training can help them to deal with these kind of evaluation questions. At the same time the senior teachers tracked a joke saying, "For that we should know those tricks". There was laughter in the group and the teachers agreed that they really need a training to train the hearing-impaired students to deal with the regular evaluation system.

What suggestions would you like to give to improve the evaluation used for the hearing-impaired students?

The last question asked in the interview was a kind of brain storming for the group as lot of discussion was done. When the teachers were asked about the suggestions to improve the evaluation used for the hearing-impaired students, they came up many solutions. One after another they were giving input in each other's responses. The very first teacher gave suggestion regarding the nature of the evaluation and to that particular point many other members added their views. They talked about the nature should be according to the needs of the hearing-impaired students. Format of the question paper can be modified due to the limitations found in the hearing-impaired students. One of the team members suggested to keep weightage to the daily assignments done by the hearing-impaired students. Another teacher opined that the skills should be assessed of the hearing-impaired students like communication, interaction and conversation as it is the special need of the hearing-impaired students. Immediately other teachers also added their views regarding it. Skill development and vocational skills are very important for the hearing-impaired students. This aspect should not be neglected and evaluation system should be modified for them which will help them to shape their educational and vocational future.

Conclusions and Discussions:

Focus group interview was used to find out the opinions of the teachers regarding the evaluation practices followed by the school for the hearing-impaired students. Following are the finding of the study:

Summary of Findings:

Most of the participants in the focus group believed that evaluation is used check the students' learning. Majority of the team members revealed that evaluation means just tests and examination. They all were not clear about the concept of evaluation. Even they were found less aware about formative evaluation, different tools-techniques and its importance for the hearing-impaired students. The team was not satisfied with current evaluation system followed for the hearing-impaired students.

The team of the teachers rightly pointed the limitations of the current evaluation system used for the hearing-impaired students. The team of the teachers were able to locate the limitations in the current evaluation system used for the hearing-impaired students. The discussion indicated that the evaluation system is unable to fulfil the special needs of the hearing-impaired students which should be the priority. At the same time, they all constructively suggested modifications in the present evaluation system which directly can fulfil the needs of the hearing-impaired students. The special needs can be enhanced with the help of these modifications. They all were found keen to learn to train the hearing-impaired students for the normal evaluation system. The team of the teachers were ready to learn new formative evaluation strategies which will be useful for the hearing-impaired students. Thus, the hearing-impaired students will be able to live their lives independently. As discussed before evaluation is very important aspect as it shapes the educational and vocational future of people, it is also applicable to the hearing-impaired students.

Implications for the Teacher Education and Professional Development:

Almost all the members of the focus group were positive towards the evaluation system of the learning and for the learning. Still they were unable to define it exactly. All of them were not found to be aware about the different types of evaluation tools and techniques which can be used for the hearing-impaired students. Thus, it becomes important for the teachers to know the exact concept of evaluation as it is the basis for the teachers to use evaluation to support learning and also for the learning. (Stiggins, 2010) Some of the teachers were supporting the group work as well as the projects. In both the activities students learn by

constructing their own knowledge. The knowledge is also created and skills get developed. These activities can provide the hearing-impaired students a platform to discuss and interact with each other. They also get opportunities to express their views and opinions. All these things can help them to develop the special needs i.e. conversation, communication and language development. Such benefits would be possible only when the teachers will apply the variety of formative evaluation tools and techniques. Thus, the researchers realized the need to train the teachers regarding the formative evaluation which will be useful for the hearing-impaired students.

Many of the teachers in the focus group were not satisfied with the current evaluation system used for the hearing-impaired students. According to them the major problem was the tradition evaluation system followed for the hearing-impaired students. The evaluation system was found rigid which puts a large pressure on the teachers as well as on the hearing-impaired students. Still formative evaluation can train the hearing-impaired students to face the traditional evaluation system. Use of different tools and technique can enhance the learning of the hearing-impaired students.

The discussion done in the focused group interview showed that the teachers were aware and were talking about the evaluation of learning where the evaluation for learning is more important for the hearing-impaired students. Evaluation should be planned in such a way so that learning should take place effectively. Teacher should not expect that learning takes place at the end of the lesson instead it should take place during the teaching-learning process. It is an ongoing process. Therefore, evaluation should not be used at the end of the lecture but it should be a part of teaching-learning process. The teachers may find it very difficult but actually it is not so. Once they will come to know about the types and development process of different formative evaluation tools and techniques, they will enjoy the process of development as well as implementation of those.

The views of Greenstein (2010) indicated that the teachers and the pre-service teachers need support in developing such formative evaluation skills, through professional development activities and teacher education programmes. Here the teacher education programme plays a vital role in ensuring that the pre-service teachers will have comprehensive knowledge about formative evaluation and skill to implement that formative evaluation for learning of the any special need student.

Implications for Future Research:

Research can be done by involving the hearing-impaired students. The focus group consisted of the teachers teaching the hearing-impaired students. Teachers teaching any other special students can be involved. Other special need students could be a part of the study. Future research can be done on the other aspects of evaluation. Comparison could be done between the evaluation of learning and for learning.

References:

- Buelin, & Jennifer, etc. (2019). *Formative Evaluation Techniques*. Retrieved from [https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Formative+Evaluation+Techniques%e2%80%99+conducted+by+Buelin%2c+Jennifer%2c+Ernst%2c+Jeremy%2c+Clark%2c+Aaron%2c+Kell+y%2c+Daniel%2c+DeLuca+and+William+\(2019\)&id=EJ1203704](https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Formative+Evaluation+Techniques%e2%80%99+conducted+by+Buelin%2c+Jennifer%2c+Ernst%2c+Jeremy%2c+Clark%2c+Aaron%2c+Kell+y%2c+Daniel%2c+DeLuca+and+William+(2019)&id=EJ1203704)
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plans DAIPs Resource Manual for State Government.pdf*. (n.d.). Retrieved on October 2, 2020, from https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/getmedia/f3ffe0ee-3b48-4175-b436-1bead61c7e08/Disability_Access_and_Inclusion_Plans_DAIPs_Resource_Manual_for_State_Government
- Ilgaz, S. (2019). *Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Views About Teacher Training (Focus Group Interviews)*. Retrieved from [https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Pre-Service+Social+Studies+Teachers%e2%80%99+Views+About+Teacher+Training+\(Focus+Group+Interviews\)+Sel%3%a7uk+%c4%b0lgaz+Correspondence%3a+Sel%3%a7uk+Ilgaz%2c+Education+Faculty%2c+Ataturk+University%2c+Erzurum&id=EJ1210777](https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Pre-Service+Social+Studies+Teachers%e2%80%99+Views+About+Teacher+Training+(Focus+Group+Interviews)+Sel%3%a7uk+%c4%b0lgaz+Correspondence%3a+Sel%3%a7uk+Ilgaz%2c+Education+Faculty%2c+Ataturk+University%2c+Erzurum&id=EJ1210777)
- Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative. Implementing Learning Technology*. Retrieved from <http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/lti/implementing-it/eval.htm>
- Mani, A. (2016). *Measurement and Evaluation in Education*. Retrieved from https://www.tripurauniv.ac.in/Content/pdf/Distance%20Education%20Notice/Measurement%20and%20Evaluation%20in%20Education%20_%20MA-Edu%20_%20ED-804%20E%20_%20English_21072017.pdf
- McMillan, J. H. (2010). *The key to improving student achievement*. In J. H. McMillan (Ed.), *Formative classroom assessment*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Pizzo, L., & Chilvers, A. (2019). *Assessment of Language and Literacy in Children Who Are d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing*. *Educ. Sci.*, 15.
- Section One – About Disability*. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://radiologicalcouncil.wa.gov.au/publications/daip/training_package/fscommand/Disability.pdf
- Tubbitt, J. (2020). *Formative Assessment: A Tool for Closing Achievement Gaps in Diverse Classrooms*. Retrieved from [https://eric.ed.gov/?q=%e2%80%98Formative+Assessment%3a+A+Tool+for+Closing+Achievement+Gaps+in+Diverse+Classrooms%e2%80%99+was+written+by+T+ibbitt+\(2020\).+&id=EJ1268293](https://eric.ed.gov/?q=%e2%80%98Formative+Assessment%3a+A+Tool+for+Closing+Achievement+Gaps+in+Diverse+Classrooms%e2%80%99+was+written+by+T+ibbitt+(2020).+&id=EJ1268293)
- Yao, Y. (2015). *Teacher Perceptions of Classroom Assessment: A focus group interview*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083125.pdf>