ENVISIONING THE USABILITY OF OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS IN LITERATURE TESTING

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ABSTRACT: Explicating the literary works has always been a debatable issue for years now. Traditionally Literature testing comprised of short type paragraph answers and essay type questions, testing its ability to assimilate and retain the piece of literary works. The charge was to instil writing abilities amongst the learners. But with changing facets the yawning gap was witnessed by educators all over. Modern evaluators indulged in the combination of visualization techniques, theme-based questions, or even multiple-choice questions and not subjective questions alone. The motive is to arouse the interests of learners and at the same time establish an evolving groundwork for evaluation. Moreover with the advent of the online teaching and learning system, a balanced approach is necessitated. The research article hereby attempts to evaluate the efficacy of this balanced approach in assessing literary works in line with higher levels of learning and Bloom's taxonomy as put forth by Anderson L.W. and Krathwohl. To facilitate this the study shall critically analyse the question paper sets in the subject of English Literature of various State Public Universities in Maharashtra. It further ascertains the proportion of usability of subjective and objective questions in literature testing under the existing system. The study analyses and presents the proportion of objective type question vis – vis subjective type questions used for literature testing. The paper emphasis the fact that objective questions test an important aspect of students literary competence. The pedagogy used at state universities for literature testing still belongs to old school of thought calling out for inclusiveness of objective type questions in the wake of its effectiveness in assessing learners. The study reveals that currently, we lie at the bottom of the pyramid in terms of usability of objective questions and envisions embracing higher levels of objective testing in light of Bloom's taxonomy to ensure better creation and translation of literary works.

KEYWORDS – Bloom Taxonomy, Objective type Questions, State University, Literature Testing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning and Management System under Higher Education has always been under the radar with the primary focus to ensure quality and sustenance knowledge building. Further Assessment and grading students act as a yardstick in determining whether students have learned what they are expected and to what degree have encapsulated the fundamentals of subject knowledge. Different forms of assessment and testing are vital especially when we are catering to millennials in this 21st Century. Millennials are digital natives who thrive not on hard work alone but smart work, acquiring information is not vital for them but quest for knowledge is something that is looked upon from the educators. With online education occupying pre-eminence in exchange for knowledge, modern methods of evaluation of visualization and objective testing which can be responded anytime anywhere is entailed. This to a very great extent has been infused well while transferring and translating knowledge in fields of commerce, science, and technology but even today remains a debatable issue while explicating literary works.

Tracing down the literature testing during the historical times, Woodford (1980)[1] apprised prior to World War II, it comprised of assessing learners with respect to their grammatical skills, use of vocabulary, assimilation of literary works in forms of essays, and thesis. This continued for years across the globe and still holds a dominant place. However posts 1960's with the era of industrialization and globalization, the need for oral assessment in form of communication and phonological skills became imperative, Hence after decades business communication formed an integral part of literary works but still comprised of short answers, personal responses, and essay type questions. As we progressed the curriculum underwent a paradigm shift with four essentials of literature – Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking but what remained constant was assessment pattern until 21st century. With the advent of online education foreign educators now perceived multiple-choice questions as an cardinal to subjective type questions in literature testing. Though not very popular the efficacy of objective type questions in literature testing cannot be disregarded. Modern evaluators have now indulged in the combination of visualization techniques, theme-based questions, or even multiple-choice questions and not subjective questions alone. But this has been restricted to few foreign universities and competitive examinations alone failing to receive its due credit in undergraduate courses especially in our country. The evaluation pattern under literature testing still belongs to the era of World War II even in the top universities of

the country namely the University of Delhi, the University of Hyderabad University of Pune, University of Mumbai, etc. Even if infused the proportion of objective testing is negligible. This yawning gap needs to be bridged by adopting a balanced approach linking past and future needs of assessment and evaluation of literary works. The subjective and objective type questions need to complement each other rather than substituting one another.
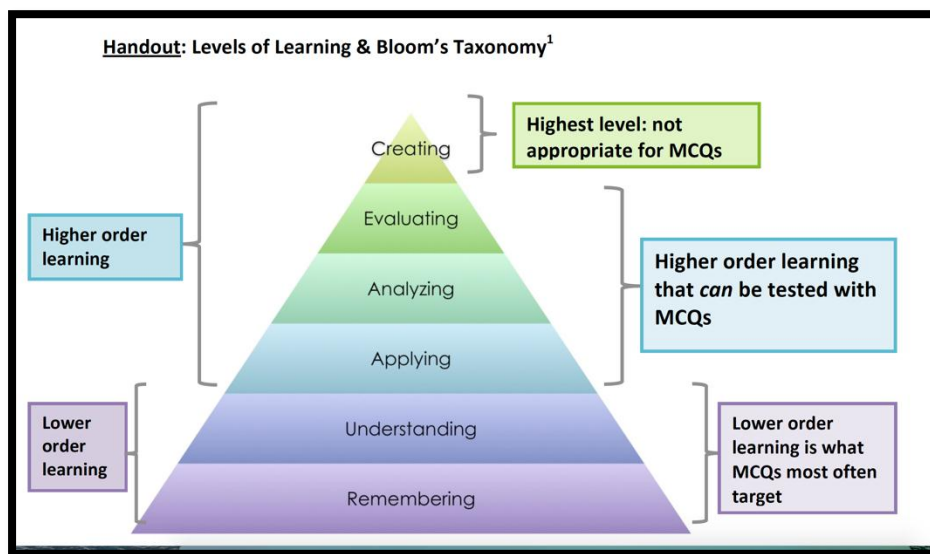
The research article attempts to fills in this gap by investigating and highlighting the lacunas in existing evaluation pattern of literature testing amongst choice based credit system at undergraduate level amongst universities in state of Maharashtra, which accounts for lakhs of students enrolled under Bachelor of Arts (B.A in English). At the same time it proposes for balanced literary assessment for creative and critical thinking in light of Bloom's taxonomy of Assessment as put forth by Anderson L.W. and Krathwohl.

What is Bloom Taxonomy?

Bloom taxonomy was first crafted by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 to steer the educators towards critical thinking, classifying learning outcomes and objectives which continued for more than half a century amongst educators. It aimed at development of cognitive skills of Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation.

However this framework was revised by Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl in 2001 which replaced Synthesis with "Creation" in wake to cater needs of 21st century and millennial population which demanded higher order of not just thinking but creative thinking. It further emphasized use of objective type of questions at each level of learning and evaluation. It aimed to arouse the interest of the millennials towards learning and at same create a ground work for educators to engage and develop critical and creative thinking through advanced phased out evaluation techniques. The framework is represented as below pictography for apt understanding –

Figure 1.1 – Levels of Learning and Bloom Taxonomy with MCQ assessment techniques

Source : Image from Purdue University, Reflections on Teaching and Learning Webpage:

http://blogs.itap.purdue.edu/learning/2012/05/04/review-of-idc-tools-to-assess-blooms-taxonomy-of-cognitive-domain/

Interlocking Bloom Taxonomy and English Literature Testing in the Current Scenario.

The traditional pedagogy of literature study was aimed at " getting things right" in by assessing what was taught to them in form of grammatical questions, synonyms, antonym, phrases without equipping students with the skill of understanding and interpretation. It remained at the lowest level of hierarchy ie. Remembering as correlated today under Bloom's taxonomy. It evolved around testing between right or wrong where most of the students followed the parroting technique with no additions to their cognitive skills. Obviously this pedagogy couldn't sustain on its own any longer. The literature was no longer assessed as getting it right but encouraged to the second level of the hierarchy of understanding in the form of short answers and interpretative skills. However, the magisterial rightness has still not meltdown and forms an integral part of the assessment even today. These assessment techniques need modification by infusing Objective type of questioning for translation and transformation of knowledge into a higher order of thinking as envisaged above. Multiple choice questions

enjoy a higher level of reliability as compared to subjectivity which at times is vague (Özturk 2007)[2]. Additionally, in Turkey the efficacy of using objective type questions in evaluating undergraduate English Literature students has been well comprehended and practiced. Gajjar et al (2014)[3] further contemplated that multiple-choice questions are capable of classifying learners on the basis of the degree of knowledge assimilation by discriminating item wise questions which involves high order of learning. E.g. If a learner manages to score high in the lower order of learning questions pattern but fails to perform well in the analyzing and application of literary works in the current scenario can be marked accordingly and steer educators in the right direction. The positive outcomes can be well integrated into the assessment techniques complementing the subjective and creation of knowledge in literature testing.

Examining the extent of usage of bloom Taxonomy and objective type of questions in English Literature paper testing –

Table 1.1 Type of Questions

Type of Question	B.A. (English) UoM, S.P.P.U and SUK	UGC NET	Frequency	Level of usage of Bloom's Taxonomy *
No of question paper analysed	10	04		
Discuss	22	22	102	**Evaluating**
Analyse	2	4	16	**Analyse**
Comment on	---	10	39	**Analyse**
Comment	7	1	23	**Analyse**
Explain	11	10	25	**Understanding**
Write a note	18	-	18	**Remembering**
Total	116	85	441	

Note : UoM – University of Mumbai, S..P.P.U – Savitribai Phule Pune University, SUK- Shivaji University, Kolhapur and * - Added by Researcher

Source: Ravindra S. Talisdar July 2016[4]

The table 1.1. vividly point out that usage of highest level of order of bloom's taxonomy," Creating" is completely left out across the State Universities while assessing literature students. The type of questions still fail to encourage students to think and rethink to create something novel. The current pattern instil skills of understanding, evaluating and analysing but *not " Creating" and " Applying*" the knowledge in the real time situations. These techniques of assessing needs to be transformed.

Table 1.2 Proportion of Objective type of questions vis-vis Subjective type of Questions

Type of Questions asked	UoM	SPPU	SUK
Subject	19th Century English Literature - I	Advanced Study of English Language and Literature	Literary Criticism and Critical Appreciation
Semester	Sem VI	Annual Term - TYBA	Sem VI
Objective (MCQ) (% of total Marks)	0	0	12.5%
Subjective (% of total Marks)	100%	100%	87.5%

Source: Researcher's Compilation[5,6,7]

Further, Critically evaluating the literature testing amongst choice based credit system at the undergraduate level in the curriculum and paper pattern of The University of Mumbai, Savitribai Phule University of Pune, and the Shivaji University, Kolhapur (Table 1.2) the study observed that despite the recognition of inclusiveness of objective type questions in learners evaluation has been negligible across. Presently Shivaji University, Kolhapur includes multiple choice questions in literature testing amongst students, carrying a weightage of only 10%. Moreover, the syllabus and question papers when studied brew only the lowest order of learning i.e remembering in the form of grammatical questions and synonyms. On the other hand, when the transition from graduate levels to competitive exams is sought in the country the pattern of evaluation is completely reversed with 100% objective type questions. To cite NET / SET examination, one of the most popular examinations amongst literature students is completely objective involving the highest order of learning under bloom taxonomy resulting in the poor performance of aspirants. Under transitional movement towards Massive Open Online Resources (MOOC) the education system has undergone a paradigm shift. Self-learning platforms such

as Swayam and E- Pathshala the inclusion of objective type of testing is inevitable. At higher levels of competitive exams of UPSC, SSC, GRE, TOEFEL at preliminary screening have adopted objective type of questions. But despite the existence of usage of objective type of question in literature testing the ground level has not budge pointing out the defects of learning and evaluation systems at lower grades of education. The failure to soak critical and creative thinking of the learners in the holistic approach towards literature testing needs to be looked out for. Understanding the challenges the discipline faces, there is even more reason willingly and imaginatively to jump outside the authoritarian frame that teachers and students may sometimes still inhabit. Envisioning the proportionate use of an objective type of testing in line with Bloom's Taxonomy is the need of an hour to bridge the gap between imparting education and its employability in the outside world.

II. CONCLUSION

Any program or course so designed aims at the holistic development of the learner with outcome measured in terms of knowledge and its employability in the economic market. The design and implementation fail if the desired outcomes are not achieved largely. Presently in the 21st century where literature testing across the globe and even at a higher level of competitive examinations in the country has undergone transformation blending both the subjective and objective type questions proportionately, the undergraduate learning systems remain rigid. The critical appraisal conducted in the research article, interwinding bloom taxonomy as revised by Anderson L.W. and Krathwohl and the need for objective type questioning proposes policymakers to reconsider the pedagogy adopted at ground levels. Using the principles of strategic decision making to envision the future of literature testing is mandated to avoid the " crisis" humanities studies are facing. There has been a drastic fall in the enrolment of these programs across the country due to its failure to produce the desired results. Matching the needs of millennials, global education, and assessment tools, the study recommends the adoption of objective type questions involving higher order of learning ie. Analyzing and Application of literary works in the evaluation pattern to an extent of 15% - 20% and not marginally.

III. REFERENCES

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