



## An Alternative Perspective on Evaluation

**P**rof. E. Annamalai Former Director, CIIL (presently working as visiting Professor Emeritus, Yale University, U.S.A.) was in the NTS for an interaction with the academic staff on 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2008. During his brief stay here, he delivered a lecture on **an alternative perspective on Evaluation**. The transcribed version of the lecture is given below for the benefit of the readers of NTS Newsletter.

*I am happy to have the opportunity to see the growth of National Testing Service from being a Unit of CIIL for Testing and Evaluation of Languages through the Centre for Testing and Evaluation into a multidisciplinary Institution of National Testing Service-India. My happiness comes from my having been its Godfather in its early stages guiding its initial steps as a toddler.*

*The country and CIIL have changed since I left the Institute as its Director in 1995. The need for a standardized evaluation system is self-evident now with the growth of private sector in education at all levels, integration of education with the needs of national and global industry and business and competitive employment options based on learned skills and knowledge of individuals as evidenced by the sought-after campus interviews. All these suggest a need for standardized tools to measure competence of individuals and rank them and also the institutions that train the individuals. What you know is becoming significant in the job market over whom you know. National Testing Service comes to fill this national need.*

*This project has a model in Educational Testing Service (ETS) in USA. But there is a fundamental difference. ETS is a private enterprise serving the needs of educational institutions to select students for admission. NTS, on the other hand, is a public enterprise funded by the government and collaborating with colleges and universities. Further, NTS includes in its agenda service to industries and business for recruiting workers. Testing in Bush administration in USA has come to give accountability a central place in its scheme. That is, testing has come to be used to evaluate the performance of students and the performance of the schools as well. To account for the public money spent on schools they must show higher scores in tests. Thus testing has come to be used to filter the flow of money to public schools. The description in the NTS brochure suggests that evaluation will extend to institutions also, which will have large social and political implications. The current system of accreditation and ranking of universities in India in a star system is based on many criteria, but student performance is not one of them. It is not clear if NTS proposes it to be included by University Grants Commission in its tools of evaluation of universities.*



Prof. E. Annamalai

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*I would like to share with you some perspectives on testing and evaluation that need to be highlighted, but may not have received focus in this project. I mention them to you not to discount the need for evaluation or discredit it, but to make you aware of the implications of evaluation to pedagogy and the society at large. My purpose is to make you aware that standardized evaluation is more than an objective academic exercise and it must be sensitive to the political and social ethos of the country.*

*The first perspective is of the universality of evaluation across various disciplines. There is conceptual commonness at an abstract level shared by the pedagogy of language, of economics, of biology, of physics, and of other disciplines. Knowledge has a unitary base. This does not, however, obviously mean that a student who performs well in one discipline will perform the same in all disciplines. Any standardization across disciplines does not obviate the need for specific evaluation tools for individual disciplines not only for the knowledge of them but also for the skills to understand and practice them. This is true even of language and literature in spite of their close pedagogical relationship.*

*The second perspective is of the reverse impact of evaluation on pedagogy. It has been noted by educationists all over the world that testing the outcomes of education tends to change the nature of education itself. Teachers, through their students, tend to view education not as a learning process, but as a process of preparation for taking standardized tests. This view encourages rote learning of answers to questions rather than critical questioning of answers. This view underscores the need to keep evaluation away from testing the skills of recall. It is necessary to convince the teachers that standardized testing is extraneous to learning done for the purposes of others outside the educational system like recruiters and doing well in tests is only one, not even primary, component of education.*

*The third perspective is about standardization. Standardization is used in the sense of reliability of measured results, but it also means reduction of variation and a dominant one in relation to others reducing their value. A standard dialect is one that does not reflect dialect variation and is dominant. A standard industrial product is one that assures quality by discarding items with a deviance. It is also a product that is suitable for varying situations, like standardized measurement of shirts into large, medium and small. A standardized test must be understood in this last sense. That is, it is a test that could be used with students from multiple learning backgrounds, and social backgrounds. We have first generation students taking these tests with students who come in the line of generations of learning. The standardized tests should not be for discarding the former. This means that, among other things, the content of the tests that measure skills like, for example, inference, must be socially and culturally sensitive. It follows that there must be a wide choice of tests of the same standard.*

*India is noted for its cultural diversity and its commitment to promote it. It is also noted for the different histories and legacies of different cultural groups. Standardized tests in areas like language, literature, culture and society must be sensitive to their plurality in the Indian context. Standardized tests that steamroll diversity do not serve the national goals enshrined in the Constitution. This means that standardized tests must be sensitive to the legacies of students. Plurality in the standard must be the goal in constructing tests. This can be achieved by having a pyramid of tests with diversity at its large base and uniformity at its conical top.*

*I would urge you to keep these perspectives in mind when building a battery of standardized tests for use by the nation. Tests informed by these perspectives will be India's contribution to the discipline of evaluation, which is simultaneously global and local.*

## Research and Development (R&D)

- To undertake in-depth analysis of the concepts of measurement & evaluation in the context of education
- To identify the content inputs & consequential effects of teaching, and learning
- To interrelate the outcome with the objectives of education and the actual needs of the country
- To develop appropriate methodology to meet all the evaluation needs.

### Current Activities

#### Second Scrutiny Committee Meeting

29<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> August 2008

For the purpose of developing training modules in testing & evaluation, NTS has been inviting synopses from interdisciplinary scholars. In response to this call 100s of synopses have been received. In order to examine academic quality of these synopses, a *scrutiny committee* has been constituted. Prof. V.G. Talawar, and Prof. A.S. Dasan, University of Mysore are the external members of the committee. The internal members include the Head, and Co-ordinator of NTS programmes. This committee used to sit from time to time depending on the number of synopses received. The second meeting of this committee was held on 29<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2008 at CIIL, Mysore. The

committee has recommended one synopsis for acceptance and 11 synopses for revision and others were rejected. An orientation programme for the module writers was also suggested by the committee to make them aware of NTS requirements and the specifications to be followed for module writing. Dr. Anandravi and Mr. A.K. Singh JRPs of NTS have assisted them.

## Survey and Documentation (S&D)

Collecting, consolidating, and creating a grid of resources pertaining to : Contents, methods, and purposes of evaluation • Contact particulars of individuals and institutions involved in preparing and using different types of tests • Syllabi of various courses and corresponding question papers at different levels of education.

### Current Activities

1. Dr. T. Janaki and Dr. G. Suseela, JRPs of NTS visited a few publishing houses in Chennai, Puducherry, Thanjavur and Madurai to procure monolingual and bilingual dictionaries of Tamil and English, reference books, old Tamil grammar works in English, etc., for the NTS Library, in August 2008.
2. S&D Database has been expanded by adding the address details of the following.
  - a) *RLCs of CIIL* : Principals & staff of SRLC-Mysore, ERLC-Bhubaneswar, UTRC-Solan, UTRC-Lucknow, NRLC-Patiala, WRLC-Pune, and NERLC-Guwahati.
  - b) *Local Institutions* : Various Departments of University of Mysore, Colleges of Engineering, Arts & Science, Survey Institutions like Anthropological Survey of India, Archeological Survey of India, R & D institutions like DRDO & CSIR units, etc.
  - c) *Premier Law Institutes* : National Law University (Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal), Amity Law School (New Delhi), National Law Institute University (Bhopal, Chattisgarh and Mumbai)

## Consultancy and Training (C&T)

- Evolving a mechanism for periodical training
- Preparing teaching cum training modules
- Producing documentary films
- Creating trained manpower in various branches of evaluation
- Extending consultancy on matters related to testing and evaluation.

### Current Activities

#### Documentary Film on Proficiency

A CD consisting of rough cuts of the documentary film produced by Ms. Usha Rajeshwari (who has been entrusted with the responsibility of producing documentary on the Tests of Proficiency for employment) has been received here and screened before the NTS academics in order to get the views and feedback on the work. The NTS staff including the Head, NTS reviewed this film. A consolidated feedback has been sent back to her to make necessary modifications in the film.

## Regional Field Units (RFUs)

- To disseminate the R & D outcome at the grass root levels
- To ensure wider participation for building up national consensus on materials and methodologies
- To identify scholars and undertake the process of item preparation, test construction, field administration, data collection, and standardisation (of tests) for establishing norms

#### Inauguration of RFU at Sona College of Technology, Salem, TN

8<sup>th</sup> August 2008

1. NTS Regional Field Unit [No.3B] of the Tamil speaking areas meant for higher education, has been established in the campus of Sona College of Technology, Salem. It was inaugurated and preliminary orientation provided on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008 by Prof. Pon Subbiah, the Head, NTS-India. In his power point presentation, Prof. Pon Subbiah explained the NTS vision to the gathering. He lamented on the existing scenario of educational



evaluation while emphasising the need for creating a people's movement on quality assurance in education. The academics of the NTS Dr. G. Sandhya Nayak, Dr. Anand Ravi, Dr. T. Amudhan - JRPs, and Mr. B.M. Lingaraj, Officer (RFUs) of NTS were also present on the occasion. About 200 members including teachers, senior students and special invitees attended the function. Dr. P. Govindarajan, Principal, Sona College of Technology welcomed the gathering and Ms. Renuga, Local Coordinator of RFU, proposed the vote of thanks. This unit has the jurisdiction of Salem, Krishnagiri, and Dharmapuri Districts of Tamil Nadu including the border areas of Karnataka.

**2. Consultancy Meeting :** A three member team of the RFU located at Shri Maharishi Vidhya Mandir, Seelapadi, Tamil Nadu visited the NTS-India headquarters at CIIL, Mysore on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2008. The team consisted of Mr. D. Kothai Selvan (one of the managing trustees of the above institution), and Shri N. Balasubramanian, Local Coordinator of RFU and Shri M.V. Kumar, a senior member of the teaching faculty. They met the Head, NTS-India and the officer RFUs and discussed activities to be carried out by the RFUs.

## Announcements

### 1. Developing Modules

Synopses are invited for developing Training Modules on various topics related to testing and evaluation in education (list provided in the website) from the scholars of any discipline / field of study.

**Language of the module:** English (with an option of translating the module into one of the three languages viz., Hindi, Tamil and Urdu); **Size of the synopsis:** About 700 words (as per specification) on any one of the topics displayed; **Size of the full module :** Maximum 15 to 16 pages including exercises (as per specification); **Remuneration / Honorarium:** For each module with translation in one of the above 3 languages Rs.40,000/- (Rs.30,000/- for main English version and Rs.10,000/- for translated version).

For details such as application pro forma, list of topics, specifications, etc., please log on to [www.ciil-miles.net](http://www.ciil-miles.net) and look for ANNOUNCEMENT (NEW). The pro forma may be downloaded from the website. The duly filled in prescribed application (with synopses) should reach the **Head, NTS-India, CIIL, Mysore-570006**.

### 2. Setting up of Regional Field Units

Applications in the prescribed format are invited from the managements of reputed schools and colleges to establish Regional Field Units (RFUs) of the NTS-India in Hindi, Tamil and Urdu speaking areas of the country. Out of 60 RFUs proposed, 29 are yet to be established in the regions specified. The details are provided in the NTS-advertisements released through National English Dailies and also in the Dailies of concerned Indian languages besides University News (a higher education journal of the AIU, New Delhi). The details have also been uploaded in the Centre's website. Any school or college located in the specified regions is eligible to become an RFU of NTS provided it fulfills the terms and conditions laid down for this purpose. RFUs will be required to assist NTS in matters related to test construction and standardization. All the expenditure incurred in this connection will be borne by the NTS, in addition to the monthly maintenance cost payable to the institution which functions as RFU.

For operational details, terms & conditions, prescribed format of application, geographical jurisdiction, etc., please log on to [www.ciil-miles.net](http://www.ciil-miles.net) and look for ANNOUNCEMENT (NEW). The application format may be downloaded from the website. The duly filled in application should reach the **Head, NTS-India, CIIL, Mysore-570006**.

#### CONDOLENCE MESSAGE



The National Testing Service-India, Mysore was shocked to hear the sudden demise of Prof. V. Ganapathy on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2008. Prof. V. Ganapathy was closely associated with the Centre for Testing and Evaluation (CT&E) since its inception 2½ decades back. He has made significant contributions for various academic ventures taken up by the CT&E especially the activities of MILES & NTS. His demise has caused immense loss to the CIIL, particularly the CT&E. His absence will be felt by one and all forever. May his soul rest in peace.

NTS-India, Mysore

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