PEDAGOGICAL INVERSION

It is not altogether cynical to see teaching and learning as opposed to each other. Indeed, we can look at education in terms of a variety of tensions, as for example, between the individual and society, freedom and authority or continuity and change. But in the classroom situation, it is largely a tension between teaching and learning. Children want to learn. They are full of curiosity; they want to explore the world and their own powers; they are enthusiastic adventurers. But things they want to explore are often not the things which their teachers are trying to teach them. This is what causes tension. To want to learn but to dislike being taught may be part of human nature. But this confrontation is being generated these days largely by our methods of organizing classroom instruction based on a formal curriculum and a rigid examination system. So formidable are these constraints that what students want to learn becomes manifestly unimportant.

The institutionalization of examinations has removed the impression of naivety from this assertion. It has at the same time multiplied the risks involved. But we must distinguish between formative and summative...

evaluation. The former comes as a natural and inseparable part of instruction, which is not ritualistic, employs no formal tools and is aimed entirely at the improvement of pupil achievement or teachers' instruction. It is comparatively less harmful than summative evaluation which has the avowed objective of passing judgement, employs formal tools and is more concerned with certification rather than improvement. It is this summative evaluation that comes in the form of the public examination or end-of-the-course assessment which is the villain of the piece. It impinges on everything that happens in education and creates a pedagogical inversion. Ironically, the destructive effects are felt in the very communities in which a child's educational opportunities are the greatest. For it is in them that parents are more apt to pay dearly in taxes to make their elementary and high schools the finest in the land. Yet it is these parents and often the schools themselves that push the communities' youngsters into a debilitating marathon. Like racers chasing a mechanical rabbit, they pursue grades and test scores in an endless circle. The thrill of learning and the curiosity to know are lost in a deadly grind. In an age in which all of us so badly need wisdom, many of our college bound youth may count as their greatest educational achievement the perfection of testwiseness.¹

6.1 The Underlying Assumptions

The pedagogy has been inverted through certain assumptions about the measurement of educational achievement implied in public examinations. The assumptions dealing with the nature of educational measurement - prominent among which is Thorndike's axiom: Anything that exists, exists in some measurable quantity - are less questionable. But those dealing with its interaction with pedagogy have vitiated the entire teaching-learning situation.

For instance, the current system of examinations assumes that the value of the learning experience is indicated by increased ability (skill or knowledge) to cope with some situation or class of situations. This inevitably leads us to the conclusion that the end of education is to increase the abilities of pupils. That is why it invites the criticism of treating education as banking with pupils serving as more or less passive depositories of knowledge. Is education not much too complex to be reduced to simple formulae to suit the needs of testers? Any sane educator would say that it is. The easiest approach may be to treat education as a change in the behaviour of students in desirable directions. But our present public examinations.

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1. Ibid., p. 567.
if not completely useless, are incapable of measuring the change in behaviour in its entirety. They touch, if at all, only its insignificant fringe.

Another assumption implied in examinations is that the value of a learning experience is indicated by growth in those directions towards which the learning (or teaching) activities are specifically pointed. This also takes too simplistic a view of teaching and learning. Indeed, it neglects the fact that the 'whole child' is involved in the learning process. The effect of any learning experience will vary from student to student depend as it does on his readiness, experiential background, interests and attitudes. All this becomes too difficult for our examinations to appraise.

It also appears to be assumed that the value of a learning experience may be inferred, from measures of the outcomes evident at some particular moment after learning, typically at the conclusion of the learning experience. This is even theoretically objectionable as we know that learning is a form of growth the path

1. Ibid., p. 568.
2. Ibid., p. 567
of which is curvilinear rather than linear. We try to extrapolate this curve by just locating one or two points which is mathematically impossible.

Stangely enough, the current examination system assumes that appropriate measurement is independent of one's theory of learning and of education, that the system fits all current theories of learning and of education or that there is only one acceptable theory of learning and of education.¹ But unfortunately most of the testing is geared to the 'associationist theories' as compared to the 'field theories' of learning. Not only that public examinations are confined just to the cognitive domain, even in that they largely provide a test of memory rather than of higher objectives. Even if we take a very broad view, the present public examinations treat education as a preparation for life rather than training for intelligent living.

To cap it all, there is the psycho-educational hypothesis underlying all examinations, which states that: anything that is tested is learnt better. It gives them not only the pretence of an educational necessity but also a pride of place as incentives for learning. But more about its futility later.

¹. Ibid., p.571.
6.2 The Examination Perspective

As most of the teachers and educators are born and brought up in an academic situation based on the above assumptions, they are not even aware of their perniciousness. If the school educates for obsolescence, as John Gardner says; if it is based on fear, as John Holt says; if it avoids the promotion of significant learnings as Carl Rogers says; if it induces alienation, as Paul Goodman says; if it punishes creativity and independence, as Edgar Friendenberg says; if, in short, it is not doing what needs to be done, we may say, it is because of these wrong assumptions. With external examinations having become paramount because of the process of institutionalization and with the above mentioned assumptions providing the foundations of the instructional strategy, it is not surprising that the perspectives of students, teachers and others concerned with teaching and learning have been perverted. But it would be worthwhile to understand the nature of the perversions.

The academic situation these days is characterized by the predominance of examinations with test results as the chief form of institutionalized value and the

institutional basis of punishment and reward in academic pursuits. We may designate such a perspective as the examination perspective. It thrives on the relentless emphasis on results. In fact, it conditions every element of the academic situation: the way the students work and the rewards they expect and the way they judge their own and others actions in various circumstances.

In general, this perspective specifies marks in examinations as the criterion of academic excellence and impels students to undertake those actions which will bring good marks. To say the least, this is a complete negation of the fact that learning for learning's sake is something that must begin with the students' motivation and not with any institutional pressures.

We can identify the major features of the examination perspective as follows:

1. The educational institutions are so organized that students' continuance and graduation entirely depend on their performance in the examination. Furthermore, a number of other rewards that students desire cannot be achieved without sufficiently high performance.

2. Doing well in academic work can be measured by the formal institutional rewards one wins. Since the major academic rewards are examination marks or grades, success consists of getting them in good measure.


3. Intellectual or other interests may suggest rewards other than examination marks to be sought in academic experience. But where the actions necessitated by the pursuit of examination results conflict with other interests, the latter may be sacrificed.

4. To be successful, a student should do whatever is necessary to get good marks, not expending effort on any other goal in the academic area until that has been achieved.

5. Since any student, who wants to, can score good marks, failure to do so is a sign of immaturity and incompetence. Examination marks can, therefore, be used as a basis of judging the personal worth of other students and of oneself.

6. Faculty members may be judged, among other ways, according to how well their students are able to perform in the examination.

It cannot be gainsaid that the institutionalization of examinations in India has brought about a consolidation of the above syndrome. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-3) had felt that the system of education in India laid exclusive emphasis on the intellectual attainments of the pupils as measured by examinations and this was mainly responsible for their inordinate importance. The situation has not much improved over the years. The examinations determine not only the contents of education but also the methods of teaching; in fact, the entire approach to education. They do permeate the school as to become the mainspring of all effort on the part of pupil as well as teacher. It is not often clearly

realized that a pupil's effort throughout his education is concentrated almost wholly on how to get through the examinations. If any school activity or subject is not related directly or indirectly to the examination, it fails to evoke or enlist his enthusiasm. As regards methods, he is interested in only those which secure an easy pass rather than in those which may be educationally more sound but which do not directly concern themselves with examinations. It is a typical examination perspective with all circumstances conspiring to put an undue and unnatural emphasis on examinations - especially the external ones. They have come to exercise a restricting influence over the entire field of Indian education to such an extent as almost to nullify its real purpose. They dictate the curriculum instead of following it, prevent experimentation, hamper the proper treatment of subjects and sound methods of teaching, foster a dull uniformity rather than originality, encourage the average pupil to concentrate too rigidly upon too narrow a field and thus help him to develop wrong values in education. Teachers, recognizing the importance of examinations to the individual pupil, are constrained to relate their teaching to an examination which can test only a narrow field of the pupil's interests and capacities and so inevitably neglects the qualities which are more important though less tangible.  

1. Ibid., pp163-4.
Inevitably, a plethora of 'keys' and 'guides' continue to swamp the book market and are ostensibly intended to help the pupils who setting aside the textbooks prescribed, are firmly attached to these sconcrete books. It is because of this examination perspective that there is a mushrooming of 'coaching colleges' and 'academies' in all big towns of the country. Those who join them do not advance educationally but perhaps learn the tricks of the trade to do well in examinations. This is an inverted perspective in which unreal is disguised as real and in which the trivial is magnified as important.

Indeed, even the school and college campuses are organized only to subscribe to the examination perspective. They aim at better results. They guide or goad their students to offer subject combinations that are more 'paying.' They organize their work keeping in mind the examinations. They even go to the extent of arranging special or merit classes for those who they think can show better results.

Not only this, examination results have become a yardstick to measure the prestige of an institution as any Principal's annual report would testify. Schools do not fight shy of advertising their examination results if they are good because of the high value attached to them by society. Recently a circular of the Central Board of
Secondary Education inviting sponsorships for national awards for teachers stipulated that in order to be eligible for an award, the school should have sent seven batches of its students for the Central Board's Secondary/Higher Secondary Examinations or should be permanently affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education. Furthermore, at least 75 percent of the candidates appearing in the Board Examinations should have passed in at least six out of the seven batches.¹

Perhaps we share this perspective with some of the most developed countries. For example, in the USA, the perspective has become so alarming that some schools turn to coaching rather than teaching several weeks before important examinations are to take place. Other schools do not modify the teaching in the regular classes but arrange for special coaching for those students planning to take the examinations. In some American communities where no provisions for coaching are made in the schools, some parents arrange for special coaching classes or for tutoring in the belief that this will aid their children

¹ Central Board of Secondary Education, Delhi, Circular No. 7736-77405 dated May 6th 1978 on the subject: 'National Award to Teachers 1978-Recommendation' from Independent Schools Affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education.
to make a better showing on the examinations. A quick survey of book stores and advertisements in America also provides an indication of demand for coaching. Books and pamphlets purporting to help students to pass important examinations are widely sold.

It is high time to recognize that it is an inverted perspective. The traditional examination which it glorifies, we must know like Pierre Bertaux\(^1\), only reveals the final result of an educational process without explaining it or drawing the consequences. It teaches the examiner next to nothing. To the examinee, it appears as a kind of judgement of a medieval god, arbitrarily selective and uncertain. The examination, a filtering process, allows, in the present state of affairs, neither the student to learn better, nor - what is more serious - the teacher to teach better or to correct his aim according to the actual results of his professional activity.

6.3 Misdirected Learning

While listing some of the tenets in education which go unchallenged, Illich\(^2\) points to the shared belief

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that behaviour which has been acquired in the sight of a pedagogue is of special value to the pupil and of special benefit to society. This is related to the assumption that social man is born only in adolescence, and properly born only if he matures in the school-womb, which some want to soften by permissiveness, others to stuff with gadgets, and still others to varnish with a liberal tradition. The dependence of formal learning on public examinations has also become a fundamental feature of the schooled society. Fortunately, this has not gone unchallenged in spite of the dominance of the examination perspective.

Both the good and bad effects of public examinations on learners have been documented since the beginning of the century in U.K. But since the examination system in India is patterned, as earlier, on the British lines, the thinking is very much applicable here even today. On the positive side, it has been argued that:

1. they make the pupil work up to time by requiring him to reach a stated degree of knowledge by a fixed date;

2. they incite him to get his knowledge into reproducible form and to lessen the risk of vagueness;

3. they make him work at parts of a study which, though important, may be uninteresting or repugnant to him personally;

4. they train the power of getting up a subject for a definite purpose, even though it may not appear necessary to remember it afterwards;
5. in some cases they encourage a certain steadiness of work over a long period of time; and

6. they enable the pupil to measure his real attainment (i) by standards required by outside examiners, and (ii) by comparison with the attainments of his contemporaries in other schools.

There is, of course, a matching number of ill effects too.

It may be asserted that public examinations produce a bad effect on the pupil's mind by:

1. setting a premium on the power of reproducing other people's ideas and other peoples' methods of presentation, thus diverting energy from the creative process;

2. favouring a somewhat passive type of mind;

3. rewarding evanescent forms of knowledge;

4. giving an undue advantage to those who, in answering questions on paper, can cleverly make the best use of, perhaps, slender attainments;

5. inducing the pupil, in his preparation for an examination, to aim rather at absorbing information imparted to him by the teacher than at forming an independent judgement upon the subjects in which he receives instruction; and

6. stimulating the competitive (and at its worst, a mercenary) spirit in the acquisition of knowledge.

The arguments are well-matched but only superficially. The hollowness of the case for public examinations is almost self-evident. For instance, the main argument is that they

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2. Ibid.
are good incentives for work both for continuous effort and for undertaking uninteresting studies. But, using examinations as incentives which may persuade indolent youth to strenuous effort is a patently pessimistic approach to learning. With new ideas of social organization, the hypothesis that examinations act as incentives in addition to predicting future does not stand to any test.

The so-called motivational value of examinations is the root cause of misdirection in education. It leads to misconceptions and wrong attitudes among students. It makes them acquire the obvious attitude that studying is a process of absorbing as much information as possible for regurgitation in examinations; the more examinations passed, the more successful the education is judged. This is miseducation. The system of public examinations discourages earnestness about things which are important in life. As a consequence, students start believing that the serious activity of youth is going to school and getting at least passing grades. All the rest—music, driving, dating, friendships, own reading, hobbies, need for one's own money—is treated by adults as frivolous. Paul Goodman rightly laments that 'at least in the middle class, this technique of socializing is unerring, and the result is a generation

not notable for self-confidence, determination, initiative or ingenuous idealism. It is a result unique in history: an elite that has imposed on itself a morale fit for selves'.

In this regard, Tibble's views are quite relevant to Indian situation. According to him, the incentives embodied in traditional examinations do not encourage the appreciation of the intrinsic value of learning. We have such elaborate systems for awarding marks, giving prizes and for promotion to next classes that no bit of work at any point can be done for the fun of it, because it is interesting or because the pupil sees some intrinsic value in doing it. Indeed, pupils who enjoy work have to exercise some ingenuity to avoid being labelled 'swots' and as such incurring approbrium. 'It is, as if, institutions designed for the pursuit of learning do not themselves at bottom have much faith in the value of the product they sell'.

A little thought will reveal that the traditional public examinations have, on the contrary, in-built disincentives for learning - particularly life-long

3. Ibid., p.350.
learning. They give their users the impression that having achieved the ultimate qualification, there is no further need for learning. The degrees and certificates tend to become either ends in themselves or intermediate stages in the pursuit of a further award. Some may argue that the positive incentives built in the degrees are preferable to negative incentives like the fear of disapproval and punishment upon which the traditional schoolmaster relied; and that they do indeed provide some ground for cooperation between those who traditionally were enemies, teacher and pupil working together against a common enemy, the examiner. But this extrinsic motivation and this limited form of cooperation between teacher and learner do not achieve anything. In any case, it does not ignite the process of life-long education.

The whole theory of examinations acting as incentives is based on the effect of their results upon a student's self-perception. He derives it over the time from continuous interaction with his environment. It is based in part on the judgment of his parents, teachers, employers, friends and enemies as well as on objective information such as a test score. What should not be ignored is that while it is reasonable to expect test results to have an influence on these relationships and perceptions, the score is not the only factor or in many cases at least not the most important
one. Even if we agree with the hypothesis that 'specific information about one's intellectual abilities will lead to more accurate self-perception and, in turn, to more adequate social adjustment on the part of the individual possessing this information', it is not certain that it might improve learning. The reverse also might happen. The estimate of one's ability generates different patterns of achievement motivation at different ability levels. Those individuals who are informed that they are of low ability may consequently manifest less achievement motivation than equally low ability individuals who are not aware of their ability level. This may not happen at higher ability levels.

The myth of motivating learning through examinations, therefore, stands completely exploded. We can agree with Becker that under some circumstances, students making use of the examination perspective will, instead of raising their effort to meet requirements or looking for alternative forms of actions, actually lower their level of effort substantially, leading to the paradoxical result that an emphasis on grades leads to decreased effort to achieve


2. Ibid.

3. Howard S. Becker, op. cit., p. 95.
them. This perspective does not, therefore, always intensify students’ academic effort. In fact, it can depress the level of effort a student puts forth, if he feels that he is already in such serious trouble that no conceivable amount of effort will get him put; when he sees his situation this way, he may stop working altogether.¹

Besides, the examination perspective reduces the quality of learning through the erosion of educational objectives which we shall discuss in a later section. Students do not care for the real objectives but tend to have an eye on the mundane but tangible test-scores. Thus, the examination itself acts as a block to learning. It shifts the emphasis from learning to the winning of grades. Paul Goodman believes that it is almost demonstrable that, for many children, it is precisely going to school that prevents learning because of school’s alien style, banning of spontaneous interest, extrinsic rewards and punishments.²

We may, therefore, reaffirm that examinations prevent learning. The chief obstacle to a more scholarly approach by students to their academic studies is their belief that they must give first priority to the pursuit of grades

¹. Ibid., p.102.
². Paul Goodman, op.cit., p.27.
or scores. If we de-emphasize or abolish grading systems, the calculation of divisions and their use as a way of discriminating students, we shall destroy a major obstacle to academic activity.

But more serious than the hampering of learning is the question of the mental health of students which is also threatened by examinations. The dominant position given to them in education has the potential of causing a severe neurological disorder among school or college students. The spirit of competition that the present system involves far from being an inducement to industry, proves harmful as it arouses emotions of hostility and ruthlessnes.

Since examinations involve the measurement of the personal worth of individuals and its consequent comparison with others, they cannot be undergone without considerable emotional strain.

Feast of tests and examinations is one of the tortures that makes school work a nightmare to many children. Among the causes of the child's fears are threats of teachers to give hard examinations, or warnings of the consequences of a poor examination result. The fear of disgrace, the ridicule of playmates, the displeasure of parents and invidious comparisons with brothers and sisters, all tend to accentuate the evil. The result is confusion of thought, inability to remember, preoccupation with the idea of failure and the almost inevitable dislike of school work.


2. Ibid., p. 109.
We are making nervous wrecks of our students through the use of tests. A similar situation prevails, no doubt, in other countries too which have an examination perspective. It was reported from America that anxious New Jersey parents were dosing their children with tranquillizers before sending them to school. The Health Department paediatrician assigned to the State Education Department said the parents apparently were trying to protect the children from cracking under pressure for good grades. The net result of the present examination-oriented educational system is to produce not only syllabus-bound students who are 'more oriented towards examinations than other students and are less likely to be governed by strong personal interests and commitments' but also students with strong neurological disorders rather than good mental health.

6.4 Unprincipled Teaching

The present academic orientation gives so much importance to examinations that they adversely influence the philosophy and methodology of teaching. The strategy of the teacher who is the kingpin of the education system gets vitiated by the examination perspective. While it is difficult, if not:


impossible to show immediate, tangible and measurable results with regard to the intangible efforts of a good education such as character training, well-rounded personality, a wholesome social adjustment and a proper development of the power to appreciate the finer values of life, it is much easier to show results in intellectual attainments and academic progress. Perhaps, that is why, the latter becomes the focus of public examinations. On the top of it, if society sets greater store by these attainments than by what is conducive to character building and sound citizenship, how can the teacher help paying attention to these measurable attainments?¹

As in the case of students, the effects of examination on teachers - both good and bad - have been well documented since the beginning of the century. Examinations may be said to have a good effect upon the teacher in that

1. they induce him to treat his subject thoroughly;

2. they make him to arrange his lessons as to cover with intellectual thoroughness a prescribed course of study within appointed limits of time;

3. they impel him to pay attention not only to his best pupils, but also to the backward and the slower amongst those who are being prepared for the examination, and

4. they make him acquainted with the standard which other teachers and their pupils are able to reach in the same subject in other places of education.

On the other hand, the effects of examinations on teachers are bad in so far as:

1. they constrain him to watch the examiner's foibles and to note his idiosyncrasies (or the tradition of the examiner) in order that he may arm his pupils with the kind of knowledge required for dealing successfully with the questions that will probably be put to them;

2. they limit his freedom in choosing the way in which he shall treat his subject;

3. they encourage him to take upon himself work which had better be left to the largely unaided efforts of his pupils, causing him to impart information to them in too digested a form or to select for them groups of facts or aspects of the subject which each pupil should properly be left to collect or envisage for himself;

4. they pre-dispose him to overvalue among his pupils that type of mental development which secures success in examinations; and

5. they make it his interest to excel in the purely examinable side of his professional work and divert his attention from those parts of education which cannot be tested by the process of examination.

The case above - both for and against - is well made out.

The basic question is that of the quality of education. What has to be seen is in what way examinations influence the


2. Ibid.
teachers so as to contribute to the betterment of this quality. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-3) did not realize the fallacy when they argued that public examinations provide a goal and a stimulus to the teacher. They went on to add that without these his work may lose in precision and direction. According to them, the external examination gives the teacher standards common for all and therefore universal and uniform in character. It also removes him from the responsibility of making wrong judgements about the work of his pupils.¹ This is not really the case. It is well-known that most of the best qualities that should be in focus in schools and colleges cannot be tested through written examinations - particularly through the traditional type coming at the end of the course. When external examination is taken to be the goal, it would only divert attention from the real goal. The non-examinable frills which are important will just be ignored - as at present. If it ends up in anything, it is in giving them uniformly low standards.

What can be agreed is that examinations are useful

in providing information to teachers about how far some of the specific objectives have been attained by each individual pupil or by the class as a whole. They are also useful in so far as they reveal the nature of pupils' errors and misconceptions, their strengths and weaknesses. The teacher needs this kind of information both to continue the teaching of each pupil in a way appropriate to his needs and also to know what modifications in his teaching are desirable when dealing with future classes. But all this refers to diagnostic testing which, anyone will agree, is a part of instruction itself. If has, however, nothing to do with public examinations, which can provide little, if any, feedback. Only formative evaluation, continuously interlinked with instruction as it is, can ensure this.

The pseudo-measurement of public examinations is unfortunately just useless from the teaching point of view. Examinations in themselves may have some inherent worth which can be exploited for the improvement of teaching and learning. But we have lost it by designing them without any regard for their diagnostic value. The whole area of diagnostic testing has been largely neglected, as have been 'mastery tests' - tests which are not designed to rank students in order, but to sort out those who know certain basic facts, principles or operations from those who don't.¹

In passing, it may also be mentioned that the whole exercise of public examinations in India is highly wasteful, both economically and pedagogically. The total cost of examining would be simply enormous. One may have an estimate of it from the fact that the universities in India alone are spending over Rupees One crore just for getting their question papers set. Academic wastefulness in regard to teaching and learning is no less serious either. It involves wastage of about 30 per cent of the teaching time. It is a well-known fact that several weeks before public examinations are scheduled, all activities in educational institutions tend to cease. An examination conducted by a university or a board of school education takes over five weeks for its conduct and another over five weeks for the valuation of answerbooks and the preparation of results. Furthermore, as the tradition goes, just before the examination, every school or college gives about five weeks off to its students so that they may prepare themselves for a better showing. Thus, the total erosion into teaching time as a result of the present system of public examinations will not be less than 15 weeks in a year. And whatever time is left out is spent by teachers on unprincipled teaching - not aimed at real education but competencies which are easy to be assessed through public examinations.
6.5 Crippled Curriculum

Another specific ill-effect of the examination perspective is the reversal of the cardinal principle: 'Examination should follow the curriculum and not determine it'. The situation in India very much resembles that in U.K. where the examination has become an end in itself because it is the dominant pre-occupation of the master instead of what is his natural vocation: to awaken the intelligence and conscience of the pupil. There is a strong incentive to identify the teaching syllabus with examination syllabus. Since the former is normally much wider and more comprehensive than the latter, this equivalence between the two syllabuses coupled with the dominance of external examinations leads to a constrictive influence on the curriculum.

The examination perspective proves counter-productive in so far as operationalization of curriculum is concerned. It leads to a pedagogical erosion - a truncation of the objectives as well as the content of curriculum. The teachers and institutions are not able to carry out the original objectives. The curriculum operates only in accordance with the dictates of examinations. This may be partly attributed to some abilities being tested directly and others

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indirectly. According to Gasking, among the important objectives of any educational course is the development of a group of capacities A, which are very hard to measure directly. There is, however, another group of capacities B, which may or may not itself be part of the objectives of the course, but which can easily be measured directly. Further, there is normally a quite high degree of correlation between A and B. So the examiner seeks to measure the attainment of the objectives of A (or of A and B, if B is also a part of the objectives) by a test of B alone. This has the effect of diverting the efforts of schools away from the teaching of A (the true or main objective) to B (either not an objective or only a part of the whole objective). This has the further result of destroying the correlation between A and B, so that examination ceases to be even an indirect test of A. As a result, many who have to no great extent achieved excellence in A are able to pass the examination and the examiner gets disturbed by the low standard. He then tries to remedy this by making his test of B more thorough and searching. This diverts the schools from A even more, and makes his examination an even less valid measure of A.

The whole situation created by the present examinations is thus paradoxical. On the one hand, they try to measure certain abilities indirectly with the help of measures of other abilities on the basis of the high correlation between the two. On the other hand, because of this process, the correlation tends to break down. The net result is that those abilities which are hard to test are eased out of the educational scene. This happens not because some abilities are amenable to direct measurement while others are not but because we have decided in our wisdom to do it through public examinations which perform depend on only one tool in the form of written test to measure them all. Specific tools for testing various abilities can, no doubt, be developed. But our concern for administrative convenience, and perhaps a lack of faith in teachers prevents us from doing so. Internal assessment which can take care of all aspects of academic achievement is pedagogically a viable alternative. Whatever its practical limitations, if we can dare to introduce it, we can ensure the conservation of educational objectives of the curriculum.

This has to be seen in relation to another consideration as well. Generally speaking, those capacities which are easiest to measure directly are also the easiest for teachers to impart and pupils to acquire. Capacities that it is hard
to devise direct measures for are generally those hard to acquire or impart. This sets in an erosion of educational objectives at the level of teaching referred to earlier. The results are simply disastrous when the examination perspective demands the getting of good results to be given the first priority by learners, teachers and institutions. The interplay of all these forces leaves the curriculum in a truncated shape. The examiners, in their indirect tests, demand the display of capacities which are easier to measure than those which it is the real objective of the course to impart and pupils to acquire. The easiest way, therefore, for teachers to get good results is to concentrate on imparting capacities which are directly measured in the examinations, even when these are not the real objectives of the course but are merely capacities which the examiners are trying to use as indirect measures. Thus, the curriculum is crippled by diverting it away from its real objectives and on to those which examiners use as indirect measures.

It is worthwhile to submit that one of the salient features of the present curriculum introduced by various school education boards on the recommendation of the National Council of Educational Research and Training is flexibility

1. Ibid., p.14.
within a framework of acceptable principles and values. It has been suggested that in order to develop a curriculum which is socially and personally relevant, it is necessary to make it flexible and dynamic. Otherwise, with the rapidly expanding frontiers of knowledge and the changing socio-economic conditions, the relevance of any curriculum is likely to be short-lived. This principle which has been accepted by most boards will be threatened by the present external examinations unless we modify them to suit the new curriculum. It cannot be gainsaid that excessive dominance of education by external examinations introduces an element of rigidity. To those, therefore, who value flexibility and diversity in an educational system, the traditional examination must appear as a stumbling block. It makes the situation somewhat unfavourable for everyone for suiting education to the particular aptitudes and bent of individual children, for teachers who want freedom to experiment with new methods of approach and to develop their teaching along individual lines and for individual schools or localities to show initiative in developing their own peculiar and distinct traditions and styles.

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6.6 Conclusion

In brief, the present system of examinations is based on misconceived assumptions and anachronistic ideas. Most of the teachers and educators are not even aware of the inverted perspective about the academic work with test results and grades being seen as the chief form of institutionalized value. The result is that learning has become misdirected with examinations providing disincentives rather than incentives; teaching has become unprincipled with teacher's attention being diverted from the real objectives which are important for the total growth of children; and the curriculum is crippled.

We agree with an earlier investigator that evidence available with regard to examinations in India as well as other countries goes to show that they have adversely affected education. Instead of serving as a useful tool in the service of education, they dictate what shall be taught. Even the organization of education and administration of our schools reflect their cramping influence. There is absolutely no doubt that public examinations have become a dead weight which has 'tended to curb teachers initiative, to stereotype the curriculum, to promote mechanical and lifeless methods of teaching, to discourage all spirit of experimentation and to place the stress on wrong or unimportant things in education.' It is, indeed, a total inversion of pedagogy.
