Continuously and Comprehensively Evaluating Children

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Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation is a key educational reform in assessment proposed by the Central Board of Secondary Education for primary and upper primary classes in affiliated schools. This article makes an attempt to analyse the teachers' manual for class sixth to eighth. The premise of such an evaluation framework is sound but the manual actually goes against its very spirit. CCE is not so much about assessment per se as it is about understanding the ways in which children learn, reflecting on the teaching-learning processes employed in schools and empowering both students and teachers in processes related to schooling.

The Indian school education system has often been subjected to severe criticism, ranging from its inequitable and hierarchical nature to the poor quality educational experiences that children go through in its classrooms. Among the several limitations pointed out, the nature and manner in which students' learning is examined has also been a central and oft-repeated concern of educationists, policymakers, teachers and parents alike. At the moment, India is at a crucial juncture with education having been made a fundamental right for all children in the age group 6-14 years. Concerns are simultaneously being expressed about providing uniform good quality educational experiences to all children, irrespective of their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

The need for meaningfully assessing children's growth in schools features in the recently enacted Right to Education Act (RTE) (Ministry of Human Resource Development or MHRD 2009) as well. It states that a "comprehensive and continuous evaluation of the child's understanding to knowledge and his or her ability to apply the same" will now be made. While the need for meaningful examination reforms can hardly be understated, it is important to exercise caution in proposing reforms and in understanding their potential, both in terms of addressing the malaise associated with the existing examination system and implications for facilitating enriching and equitable teaching-learning processes in classrooms.

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) is a term currently being used in the context of educational reforms, particularly reforms in assessment. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) proposed it for students in the primary classes (first through fifth) in 2004 and upper primary classes (sixth through eighth) in 2006 in schools affiliated to it. In 2010, the 10th class board examination was also made optional for students continuing in the same schools. Several other school boards are now emphasising the importance of CCE and have taken measures to implement it with the cooperation of state education departments.

The CBSE has been publishing CCE manuals and sourcebooks on different subjects for teachers teaching at different levels. This article makes an attempt to analyse their Manual for Teachers Classes VI-VIII, with particular focus on understanding the assessment of the co-scholastic components of the student's personality. The article has been divided into following sections: one, the historical backdrop of examination reforms; two, CBSE's articulation of CCE; three, implicit assumptions and potential achievability; four, shifting focus and skewed emphasis and five, reflections on the way forward.

It must be stated at the outset that the scope of this article is limited to an analysis of the CBSE manual alone, which was prepared with inputs from Australian Council for Educational Research. The manual is in the nature of guidelines for teachers to implement CCE; the way it will actually unfold in schools located in differential contexts still needs to be examined to fully understand the implications. Recently, CBSE also tied up with Pearson, a private education company, to set up a Centre for Assessment, Evaluation and Research, which will evaluate its examination system, carry out research on implementation of its schemes and develop resources to help teachers. Though the implications of this partnership with Pearson need to be examined, one thing that is clear is that initiatives of this kind willy-nilly set international standards for assessment that may not always be sensitive to the diverse social contexts in which they are meant to be uniformly applied.

1 Backdrop

Assessment of students' learning has always been an important concern, featuring centrally in almost all policy documents. Committees and policies such as the Kothari Commission 1966 (Ministry of Education 1966) and the National Policy on Education (NPE) (MHRD 1986) have in the past outlined the futility of an examination system that caused stress for students and essentially tested their ability to rote memorise the content of prescribed textbooks. *Learning without Burden*, popularly known as the Yashpal Committee Report (Department of Education 1993) pointed out ways in which a skewed examination system aggravated the academic load on school children, burdened as they already were with the incomprehensibility and joylessness of learning situations that the formal schools placed them in.

The more recent National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) position paper on examination reforms (2005) also criticised the present system of examination, particularly the boards. It reiterated Kumar's (2005) views that examinations have their roots in the colonial system of education introduced by the British. This not only converted testing into a screening device for eliminating students but also made it textbook-centric. It took away teachers' autonomy in assessing students, placing them instead in the hands of anonymous examiners. The National Focus Group further noted that besides failing to test higher-order skills like reasoning and analysis, the system was inflexible and unjust and did not make any allowance for different types of learners and learning environments.

One common thread running through all these important policy statements and documents is the expressed need to have a regular and comprehensive school-based assessment of all the aspects of students' personality, interests and attitudes, which could then be meaningfully used by teachers to help in all facets of their growth. It is interesting to note that whereas in the western context, debate around assessment reforms essentially revolves around formative and summative forms of assessment, in the Indian context, one often comes across the term school-based, continuous and comprehensive assessment. Desforges (1989: 6-7) explains these concepts as follows:

> Assessment aimed at influencing how and what is learned as a course proceeds is called formative evaluation ...assessment aimed at summarising a pupil's achievement at the end of the course is called summative evaluation.

In the Indian context, even though CCE is proposed as a panacea for all examination-related ills, there is no clear explication of its meaning and the way it is to unfold in an actual classroom setting. Therefore, examining its first clear articulation by CBSE becomes even more important. While recognising fully the challenges involved in this task, one must not lose sight of the fact that since the manual is being used as a template/blueprint by other state education departments as well, its implications need to be carefully understood.

2 CBSE's Articulation of CCE

CCE refers to a system of school-based evaluation of a student that covers all aspects of a student development. It is a developmental process of student which emphasises on two-fold objectives. These objectives are continuity in evaluation and assessment of broad-based learning and behavioural outcomes on the other (CBSE 2010:7).

CCE thus places "teacher judgment" at the heart of assessment. They are regarded as the key enforcement agents of these reforms. There is also an implication that an assessment of this kind is not only about assessing learning as an end in itself, but also as a means for improving teaching-learning processes in schools and assisting students to optimally develop their potential in both scholastic and non-scholastic domains. "Evaluation not only measures the progress and achievement of the learners but also the effectiveness of the teaching materials and methods used for transaction" (CBSE 2010: 5).

CCE has three parts – scholastic, co-scholastic and co-curricular activities, presented in a tabular format (Table 1). The scholastic domains are to be assessed on a five-point scale, grades for which vary from A (4.1-5.0) to E (0-1.0). Formative assessments (FA) and summative assessments (SA) are to be used for assessing the scholastic components. Under the scheme, formative assessment refers to using techniques like assignments, quizzes, projects, debates, elocution, group discussion, etc, and summative assessment refers to written, end of term exam including both objective and short and long answer types.

Table 1: The CCE Matrix

Subjects	Overall Grade (average calculated on the basis of four formative assessments (FA) and two summative assessments (SA) in a year (i e, two academic terms))	
Part 1: Academic Performance: Scholastic Areas		
Language I		
Language II		
Language III		
Mathematics		
Science		
Social science		
Additional subject		
	Descriptive Indicators	Grade
Part II: Co-scholastic Areas		
Life skills (10)		
Work education		
Visual and performing arts		
Attitudes (3) and values (10)		
Part III: Co-Curricular Activities (any two)		
Literary and creative skills/scientific skills, information and communication technology/organisational and leadership skills		
Health and physical education		
Work education		
Visual and performing arts		

Source: Based on CBSE (2010).

The co-scholastic domains are to be assessed on a nine-point scale, grades for which vary from A1-(91-100) through E2-(0-20). Each student has to be graded on each of the 10 life skills, work education, visual and performing arts, three attitudes, 10 values, two co-curricular activities and any two health and physical education-related activities. Each of these domains has descriptive indicators against which the students are to be continuously observed and allotted marks. An average then needs to be calculated by dividing the total score obtained by a student by the number of items in that component. Finally, the average score in each domain is to be converted into its corresponding grade.

If one were to differentiate between conventional systems of assessment and the CCE as articulated by CBSE, one would perhaps come across the differences outlined in Table 2 – both manifest and implied (*given in italics*).

Table 2: Differences between Conventional Assessment System and CCE

Conventional Assessment	CCE
Assessment on a quarterly, half-yearly and annual basis, with disproportionate weightage to annual exams	Continuous and periodic (multiple ways and occasions of assessment) with even weightage across them
Scholastic abilities	Scholastic and non-scholastic
Limited tools of assessment	Multiple tools
Marks allotted	Grades awarded
Assessment of what has been achieved over a period of time (essentially summative)	Assessment of an ongoing process of growth (includes summative but is largely formative)
Mechanical task for teachers-assessment on a clear set of defined criteria	*Creative endeavour which can be supported with training and materials.*
Stressful for students	*Non-stressful*
Assessment as an end in itself	*Assessment used to both improve one's teaching and enhance support given to students – identification and classification of learners for requisite support.*
Skewed development of scholastic abilities, limited to rote memorising	*Overall growth and personality development*

Source: Based on CBSE (2010).

While the first five variables emerge as the manifest differences, the last four are implied in the manual and will be examined in the discussion below.

3 Implicit Assumptions

3.1 Reducing Stress on Students

CCE hinges on certain assumptions. Some of them are implicit, while a few others are more explicitly stated as goals. One of them (both an implied and stated objective) is that (CBSE 2010: 5):

> when evaluation is seen as an end of the learning exercise, both teachers and the learners will tend to keep it outside the teaching-learning process, rendering assessment broadly irrelevant and alien to the curriculum. Further such a perception associates anxiety and stress with evaluation for learners. On the contrary, if evaluation is seen as an integral part built into the teaching-learning process, learners will not perceive tests and examination with fear.

The multiple modes of assessment proposed are supposed to reduce the emphasis on recall-type questions (which usually causes stress) and enhance emphasis on questions which test higher-order thinking skills of students. The manual further asserts (CBSE 2010: 14),

> Overemphasis on examination marks that focus on only the scholastic aspects in turn makes students assume that assessment is different from learning, resulting in 'learn and forget' syndrome. Besides encouraging unhealthy competition, the overemphasis on SA system also produces enormous stress and anxiety among the learners.

Reduction of stress on students is also linked to the fact that under the RTE, no student can be detained till class VIII. While it is possible that these measures may reduce stress for children, it is also possible that CCE may throw up new challenges for them. This is because it is possible that the focus may now shift from teaching-learning to continuously assessing students in varied ways. One must be careful in not confusing substitution of middle/end term summative kind of exam with a series of small and multiple assessments as a fundamental reform in education that will be less stressful for students. Whereas CCE may reduce the pressure of memorising textbooks for one big exam, it is possible that it may aggravate the pressure on students to develop all aspects of their personality. Especially in the context of co-curricular arenas, all spaces will now become public spaces and anytime may be a good time to observe and record students' behaviour. As Bernstein (1978) would say, that under the new regime, the whole child is now being exposed, subject to observation, surveillance and control. The fuzziness of previously bounded spaces along with the emphasis on the "whole" self being examined may actually aggravate stress for students.

3.2 Grades are Non-oppressive

Another assumption behind replacing marks with grades is that grades are innocuous, non-evaluative and non-judgmental. However, the validity of this argument needs to be re-examined. All grades have values attached to them in terms of marks and that is common knowledge known to students as well. CCE dossiers with grades mentioned have as much of an evaluative dimension as report cards with marks. Grades are likely to be differentially perceived and rewarded in institutions of higher learning or any other space where the child needs to show a proof of his ability/performance. Getting an A would have the same implication as a score of 90 and above and it is difficult to fathom how grades would be less threatening or less oppressive for students than marks.

3.3 CCE Does Not Label Children

The manual also cautions the teachers against labelling students as "bright" or "dull". However, there are suggestions in more place than one that indicate classification of students into these categories so that they could be given requisite support (CBSE 2010:35).

> Schools shall diagnose learning difficulties through formative tests right from the beginning of the academic year and bring it to the notice of parents at appropriate intervals of time... Similarly, especially gifted children should be provided with further reinforcement by giving them additional assignments, enrichment material and mentoring.

Having a sense of where different children should be placed in terms of

their growth is not problematic per se because one would assume that this would help in facilitating appropriate support/guidance for the learner. However, one is not clear about the way in which CCE with its system of differential grade allotment would not lead to labelling of students into closed and damaging categories of "good" and "dull".

3.4 CCE Facilitates Overall Growth

It is assumed that "multiplicity in assessment tools" may give a complete and more realistic picture of each student. While this may be a valid hypothesis, it is not quite clear how this focus on multiple assessments alone will lead to enabling and supporting teachers in facilitating their students to learn in multiple ways. The manual in one of its appended circulars asserts that (CBSE 2010: 115):

> The objective of this exercise is to shift the focus of academic activities towards enrichment of the total personality of the learners and to facilitate learners to address to various facets of learning encompassing the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

While this assertion is made rather emphatically, the manual does not discuss or even suggest ways in which this could be achieved. For instance, there is an assumption that the schools will have abundant resources, skilled personnel and will be able to provide opportunities to students to support their growth in multiple dimensions. Similarly, there is an assumption that teachers will have the requisite competence, time and resources to help students develop in all these respects.

3.5 Diagnostic Strength of CCE

The manual states (CBSE 2010: 10):

> Continuous evaluation serves to diagnose weaknesses and permits the teacher to ascertain an individual learner's strengths and weaknesses and her needs. It provides immediate feedback to the teacher, who can then decide whether a particular unit or concept needs a discussion again in the whole class or whether a few individuals are in need of remedial instruction.

In the very next paragraph, it continues (CBSE 2010: 10):

> by continuous evaluation, children can know their strengths and weaknesses. It provides the child a realistic self-assessment

of how he/she studies. It can motivate children to develop good study habits, to correct errors, and to direct their activities towards the achievement of desired goals.

It is quite possible that an already overworked teacher by sharing the reports with students and parents may actually place the responsibility on the child for improving their study habits, as is implicit in the suggestion, rather than proactively trying to help them. While one would assume that both parents and school have an equally important role to play in the child's education, in the context of providing equal opportunities for children, one cannot deny the need for a relatively greater role for the formal institution of school, an agency with clearly the monopoly and wherewithal in imparting education to children. This is particularly so in the case of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, where the school cannot shirk from its responsibility and put the onus of not learning on the learner and his background.

4 Shifting Focus: Skewed Emphasis

In its attempt to shift the emphasis from lopsided and stressful rote memorisation by children, CBSE's focus has now oscillated to the opposing but extreme direction of constantly assessing just about everything that a child does. As the discussion below will show, this has implications for learning and assessment, the aims of education, the construction of the ideal student and the understanding of teachers' role.

Citing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (NCERT 2005), the Manual asserts that underlying CCE is an acceptance of a theory of learning which recognises that (CBSE 2010:2), "All children are naturally motivated to learn and are capable of learning. Children learn in a variety of ways." They also express this learning in manifold ways. Therefore opportunities must be given to allow both for learning and its expression. However, the manual's sole focus seems to be on identifying ways of assessment and determining behavioural indicators for these. The centre of attention seems to be the quality of data and information collected. There is detailed description

of the type of tools which could be used for collecting data on students.

Questions such as how a comprehensive assessment of students will ensure the development of well-rounded personalities, how opportunities in schools will be created, how and when teachers will find space and time to engage with students, the nature of feedback and support teachers need to give students, especially those belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged sections of society, the ways in which teachers themselves need to be supported in this exercise find no mention in the manual. Besides these, the manual in its understanding of CCE and apparent thrust suffers from several lacunae, which violate the very spirit of CCE, as illustrated in the next section.

4.1 Celebrating Behaviour

The manual asserts that (CBSE 2010: 39), "Learning in Scholastic and Co-scholastic Areas is demonstrated by change in behaviour in the learner". This assertion and its further elaboration reminds one of the behavioural objectives model of teaching – "the rationale for developing this type of curriculum model was to provide clarity of purpose where none previously existed" (Scott 2008: 21). As Tyler (1949: 106) argues:

> Since educational objectives are essentially changes in human beings, that is, the objectives aimed at are to produce certain desirable changes in behaviour patterns of the student, then evaluation is the process of determining the degree to which these changes in behaviour are taking place.

The manual further asserts that (CBSE 2010: 39), "Behaviour is of two kinds – covert and overt...As a teacher you can judge a student only by his/her overt behaviour". It makes a rather simplistic distinction between covert and overt behaviour (CBSE 2010:39) "when the student explains to you the concept, you know for sure his/her level of understanding. In this example, 'explain' is the overt behaviour and 'understand' is the covert behaviour". Besides this fuzzy distinction, this assumption even fails to address the possibility that the explanation given by the student could be a memorised response and not a reflection of any deeper understanding on his/her part.

Tyler's model also reiterates the need for periodic assessment and gathering valid evidence through a series of methods and tools. "This means that we must find situations which not only permit the expression of the behaviour but actively encourage or evoke this behaviour" (Tyler 1949: 112). The manual asserts the need to repeatedly assess students' behaviour. In the same vein it states that (CBSE 2010:39), "Overt behaviour of a student provides us evidence to assess his/her level of learning. Evaluation is all about collecting evidence and interpreting the human behaviour based on the evidence". From a cognitive framework, this would imply that all assessments are approximations and interpretations to a large extent, based on available evidence and in that sense, are a little less definite.

"An assessment is a tool designed to observe students' behaviour and produce data that can be used to draw reasonable inferences about what students know" (Pelligrino, Chudowski and Glaser 2001: 42). However, the manual gives a new meaning to this understanding and states (CBSE 2010: 40):

> If a student is courteous to you most of the time, and courteous to all your colleague teachers most of the time, you can safely conclude, 'the student is very courteous', is not it?

Even if one were to interpret "most of the time" rather cautiously, it is quite possible that the student knows that he is being evaluated and may deliberately choose to display a certain kind of behaviour.

There is an overwhelming emphasis on identifying and assessing the displayed behaviour. For example, as regards the measurement of life skills, the manual states (CBSE 2010: 43), "Although all or most of the Life skills can be measured by standardised tests and inventories, such skills can also be reasonably assessed on the basis of displayed behaviour by the student".

These are to be observed and recorded in a diary, whenever the teacher observes such instances, for example (CBSE 2010: 43-44), "Sarbari differed with my viewpoint; she argued but never got irritated; but Shanti got angry because Sarbari was arguing with me ...In the above case, Sarbari gets five, but Shanti gets two or one". Here, 5 stands for desirable and 1 for undesirable behaviours.

It is important to point out the difference between Tyler's use of the term behaviour and behaviourism, a learning theory. Tyler talked about measuring achievement of learning objectives to assess the efficacy of curricular and pedagogic plans and making changes thereby. Specifying student behaviours for Tyler (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001: 13):

> was intended to make general and abstract learning goals more specific and concrete, thus enabling teachers to guide instruction and provide evaluation for learning. If the teacher could describe the behaviour to be attained, it could be recognised easily when learning occurred.

An overwhelming emphasis on identifying behavioural objectives as ends and measuring "displayed" behaviour as has been done in the manual takes us back to a conservative approach. This is an approach that views the learner as passive, teaching as a definite unilateral transmission and learning as a dull, assimilative process of incorporating and manifesting desired behavioural expressions.

4.1.1 Not Measurable, Not Worthy?

This kind of a reductionist framework for identifying objectives and assessing behaviours in accordance with them reeks of a technicality in procedure, with little space for understanding teaching-learning as dynamic processes. The idea behind stating objectives unambiguously is that it leaves no scope for misinterpretation. Willy-nilly, this also implies exclusion of those behaviours which may not lend themselves to being measured and practically verified (Scott 2008). A clear articulation of manifested behaviour as evidence precludes the possibility of noticing, leave alone assessing behaviour or growth which could be similarly expressed.

4.1.2 Measuring Behaviour: Bordering on the Absurd

Besides the fact that the CCE brings into focus the primacy of identifying and developing overt behavioural indicators and the validity of such an approach, it is also next to impossible to meaningfully assess learning in terms of indicators specified. Indicators such as "knows the difference between assertive, aggressive and submissive manners of communication", "is decisive and convincing", seem to be a bit far-fetched. One is left wondering whether a teacher could be trained to make such fine distinctions between such behaviour, whether a child that young should or will know the difference between them, and whether a child will display such behaviour consistently. Similarly, one is left wondering about ways to assess students' "step by step approach to solving a problem" and "has a clear understanding of the output to be generated" (CBSE 2010: 49).

It is difficult to imagine how children studying in classes VI-VIII could be gauged and assessed on ideals (CBSE 2010: 54-56) such as "takes interest in the national freedom struggle", "stays alert and raises voice against divisive forces", "takes up issues in case of indignity to women", "does not affiliate to groups and communities who believe and promote violence"; "remains cool and calm under adverse conditions", "is able to identify different stress-related situations" (pp 48-49). While the NPE (1986) recognises that knowledge and respect for values associated with our national freedom struggle and those enshrined in the Constitution should form part of the core curricula, the need is to think of more meaningful ways of assessing children on these concerns. In any case, they can only be "framed as a guiding principle and not as a statement of behaviour that can be identified after the event" (Scott 2008: 27).

4.1.3 Measuring Behaviours Devoid of Their Context

Most descriptors identified in the manual view situations as unidimensional and devoid of any context. As Scott (2008: 27) notes: "The language used in the framing of the objective therefore has to be of a technicist nature, which means that the language itself has been stripped of all the elements that refer to context". Descriptors such as "confronts anyone who criticises school and school-based programmes" are really tied down to

specific situations, and for students to express such behavioural traits such situations must either be created or observed by the "omnipresent" teacher as and when they arise. Other descriptors (CBSE 2010: 47-48) "finds it natural and easy to share and discuss the feelings with others", "shares his/her feelings with peer group, teacher and parents, confides problems with teachers"; "feels free to ask questions", "respects opposite gender and is comfortable in their company" (pp 51-52) are dependent on interpersonal dynamics. Relationship between school boys and girls are often laced with sexual undertones, and relationships between teacher and students are often unequal and hierarchical. To expect a child to confide with ease in a teacher or be comfortable in the company of the opposite gender are, therefore, not unilateral behavioural expressions of a student's personality. A few others are rather bizarre and ambiguous in terms of expectations placed on students: "deals with aggressive behaviour (bullying) by peers tactfully". It is difficult to explain the tact that an 11-13 year old child is supposed to exhibit when being bullied by others.

"Participation and initiative in organising an event" are again contingent on several factors. Very often, school teachers decide which student will participate in which programme and the nature of their participation. Student assessment for parental participation in school programmes also often has gendered implications. It is the mothers who are often pressurised by students for participating in the same.

4.1.4 Relevance of Valued Behavioural Manifestations

The relevance of some of the traits identified is also suspect. Asking that a child be "able to identify his/her emotions, manages his/her emotions and remains cool and calm under adverse conditions" again sounds a bit preposterous. Qualities such as these often have class, caste and gender dimensions and may be used to subvert dissent and discomfort experienced by children belonging to the socially disadvantaged sections of society. "Uses gestures, facial expressions and

voice intonations to emphasise points" does not seem to be quite relevant or sensitive to children coming in from different socio-economic-cultural contexts and children with special needs.

4.2 Designing Ideal Learners

Underlying the CCE framework is an image of a desirable learner. The presence of such traits is specified and graded highly, and its absence is given poor grades. This also hints toward a human capital theory (Schultz 1963) which regards investment in education of humans as being economically more fruitful for society than investment in physical capital. Specification of skills, attitudes, dispositions and knowledge, etc, which supposedly have a high economic premium are specified; a prototype for children to emulate is created. Similar learning expectations are placed on everyone, irrespective of their worth and oblivious of the pluralities that children belonging to different communities may represent.

An assessment framework favouring certain kinds of skills and attributes perforce is also favourably inclined towards children belonging to the socially affluent sections of society. At the same time, it excludes parents from socially disadvantaged backgrounds who lack the requisite cultural and social capital to pass onto their children.

While the standard system of summative assessment with its skewed focus on memorising bits of information focuses on development of a particular facet of a student's personality, the all-encompassing framework of a CCE has a certain vision of a complete learner it aspires to develop. This learner is

> cheerful and friendly, exhibits fine etiquettes and other social skills, finds it natural and easy to share and discuss the feelings with others, understands the importance of colour, balance and brightness and displays artistic temperament in all his/her actions in school and outside.

One would imagine that a document that supposedly celebrates diversity of learning styles would also celebrate differences and not aim at homogenising individuals. Among other things, the student is graded on whether he or she (CBSE 2010: 50-51) shows aesthetic

"sensibilities", "generates computer animation", show "awareness and appreciation of works of artists", "reads and shows a degree of awareness of particular domain of art", "displays artistic temperament"; "composes poems and lyrics", "writes literary criticism", "shows a high degree of awareness in the field of literature", and "appreciate well-written or spoken pieces representing various genres" (p 57). These requirements are clearly biased towards a privileged few.

This kind of comprehensive assessment is likely to put pressure on parents to groom their children in ways that are considered desirable by the school, furthering the divide between those who can socialise their children in these assessed and valued ways and those who cannot. The pressures to place children in school early and expose them to a variety of scholastic and other hobby classes, including English language, diction, pronunciation, etc, are not unknown. Parents are even known to spend huge amounts of time, money and energy in making and even hiring professional help for fancy and elaborate school projects for their children.

The social class position of the child therefore will have a bearing on the way in which the child will be assessed, ensuring the exclusion of some parents from their children's learning. Despite its several limitations, the earlier assessment model was at least understood by all parents. This new emphasis on innumerable dimensions of a child's personality is likely to cut off many more parents from understanding the "whys" and "ways" in which their children are being assessed. (Bernstein 1978).

The image of this ideal, well-rounded and wonderfully integrated child also has implications for those children who do not belong to the urban metropolis, and even within this class, those that

belong to the 25% reserved from socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the society. How these children, bereft of the valued social and cultural capital that their more privileged counterparts bring, will fare in this glorified, well-rounded imagination of CCE is not difficult to imagine.

4.3 Perceiving Teachers as Skilled Technicians

CCE brings the teacher to the centre-stage, establishing her or his legitimacy in assessing the students. It claims to make a transition from an anonymous examination situation, which is distrustful of the teacher, to a situation in which the teacher is in command and trusted for her or his ability to assess those whom she or he teaches. Though the manual acknowledges the possibility of subjectivity on the part of teachers, it does not really address it. In fact, it oversimplifies the problem (CBSE 2010: 40):

> For example, a student expresses his/her difference of opinion to a stated view/position with respect to a concept or a practice in the class. A 'classical' teacher will construe it as indiscipline and ask her to behave, whereas a 'neo-modern' teacher will construe it as divergence and enter into a discourse with an open mind. The latter will rate the same behaviour as very positive and creative.

One is not quite sure whether this kind of categorisation of teachers into "classical" and "neo-modern" represents the diversity. Second, it also implies the possibility of a smooth transition, perhaps with training, from being classical to a neo-modern type of teacher. The reality of such a change may seem a bit far-fetched.

The issue of fairness is a valid concern, especially when teachers and students belong to two different cultural backgrounds and needs to be addressed sensitively. Pelligrino, Chudowski and Glaser argue that (2001: 240):

> In particular, differences between the cultural backgrounds of the teacher and the students can lead to severe difficulties. Teachers... may make self-confirming assumptions that certain children will never be able to learn, and may misinterpret or ignore assessment evidence to the contrary.

However, the manual does not address this issue but instead focuses on the "technique of measuring" as if that would alone take care of the probable biases that may creep into this kind of an assessment system. There is an assumption that if the teachers are trained in the philosophy and technique of CCE, then it will automatically ensure its successful implementation and the achievement of the underlying objectives, irrespective of the severe constraints under which most teachers work, including the large numbers of students in their classes and the lack of proper infrastructure.

4.4 Increased Workload

Teachers are expected to keep a "watchful eye" (CBSE 2010:43) on their students and record any significant behaviour that may shed light on the various descriptors under different domains. The entire CCE evaluative framework is quite exhaustive and elaborate. The various steps outlined for assessing the co-scholastic aspects of a student by teachers include identifying qualities, specifying behaviours/indicators, collecting evidence, recording, analysing, reporting, converting marks into grades, averaging them and finally putting them in a report card. Very clearly, all this has implications for not just the workload of teachers but also their perceived role as skilled technicians capable of implementing the reformatory scheme with finesse.

The manual in its Preface asserts that (CBSE 2010: vii):

> It is necessary to discuss the salient features of the CCE scheme with the teachers and convince them that assessing children is not a separate activity nor is it an extra burden which requires additional effort and time. It needs to be woven into the teaching-learning process as an integral part.

While one may get the impression that this scheme empowers teachers to assess their students, in effect, it highlights the shortcomings of their situation. Another reform is thrust upon them, with preparation geared to convince and train them so that they can manage, implement and execute the scheme.

The CCE scheme does create the additional pressure of constantly requiring teachers to be on the lookout for those proposed indicators against which relevant information on students has to be collected and the extra task of filling up those elaborate formats. It is possible that they may either resort to doing these jobs mechanically, and not as the creative exercise they are imagined to be, or do it at the cost of actually teaching in class. The logic of the behavioural objectives model has been commandeered to produce a performance framework "in which teachers are held accountable for both the production of good ends and the efficient following of means (teaching approaches) specified by outside bodies" (Scott 2008: 28). It is also quite possible that the CCE dossiers are in fact used to assess teachers' performance by the authorities above them.

5 Reflections: The Way Ahead

So where does one really place the CCE in the context of progressive reforms in assessment? One would like to place on record here that this article is not a critique of CCE per se but of (1) CBSE's understanding and explication of the CCE and guidelines for its implementation, and (2) the positioning of CCE as the polar opposite. There is no denying the fact that CBSE's intention in proposing CCE is laudable and that the conventional system of assessment is replete with problems and in need of fundamental change. The premise on which the CCE is based is sound. There are enough valid reasons to redesign the conventional system of examining students. However, besides examining CBSE's articulation of CCE and the premise on which it is based, one also needs to exercise caution against the tendency to place alternatives to educational problems in polar categories and in both suggesting solutions which are diametrically opposite to the prevailing practices and also presuming that the assumed features will materialise on their own.

Having said that, the central focus of this article is on explaining ways in which the CBSE manual actually goes against the very spirit of a CCE framework. Though the manual makes explicit references to the NCF 2005, it appears to contradict both the spirit and the manner suggested for its execution. At the outset, one needs to recognise the fact that CCE is not so much about assessment per se as it is about understanding

the ways in which children learn, reflecting on the teaching-learning processes employed in schools and empowering both students and teachers in processes related to schooling.

One must also recognise that isolated reforms in techniques of measurement will not have much meaning unless accompanied by concomitant changes in the classroom culture, where they are no longer seen as places for delivering textbooks or competitive spaces where children compete with each other. Changes are necessary in the ways in which one views learning, teaching and assessing, for example, the notion of "wait time" or giving extended time to students to think about any question posed, asking them to discuss their ideas in pairs, before being asked to respond, not labelling answers as right or wrong, but instead asking students to explain their reasons (Black and William 2004).

Indian schools need reasonable teacher-student ratios and changes in the nature of the teacher-student relationship, from an unequal, hierarchical relationship to that of co-participants in a joint process of knowledge construction. So also the creation of adequate resources and opportunities in schools for the development of the multiple facets of students' personalities, involving students and parents both in understanding the aims of assessments and ways of achieving it. It is critical to resist the tendency to use assessment results for multiple purposes, especially as a tool to evaluate teachers and schools. Most importantly, the key is not simply training teachers to implement the framework, but empowering them by involving them in all aspects related to teaching, learning and assessing and having a realistic understanding of the conditions under which they work.

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