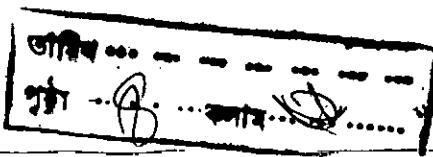


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Improving teaching skills

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Education is a vital sector in a nation's life because it deepens understanding and enriches people's minds by broadening their vision and thought process. It also strengthens people's ability to contribute to productivity by enabling them to acquire different skills.

It must be admitted that those nations which placed education and human resource development on top of their national agenda achieved spectacular growth.

In the case of Bangladesh, the country has, to be candid enough, failed to respond to the need of time and clung to the outdated education system that is yet to be need based.

So far the country has ignored the contribution of the skilled teachers for imparting quality education. Our education system is in a virtual mess, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The rate of effective literacy is still at a low level which is reflected in the Education Minister's statement in the Parliament in the last week of June this year that the dropouts were still 35 per cent and 51.1 per cent at primary and secondary levels respectively.

A congenial environment could not be created to encourage students to continue in schools. Food for Education and similar other programmes are piecemeal steps which could not improve enrolment and reduce dropouts. At the grassroots level Union Parishads must be compelled to enhance school enrolment and induce children to go to schools on a regular basis. A strong committee must be established at the Union level to motivate parents to ensure that their wards enrol in primary and secondary schools and provide incentives to the poor parents. If concrete measures are not taken it will be well nigh impossible to increase the literacy rate and stop huge dropouts.

What is of utmost importance is to improve the quality of edu-

cation. The standard of education in Bangladesh is deteriorating fast due to system of copying in public examinations and lack of initiatives in updating curricula and improving skills of teachers.

Realising the gravity of the situation four major steps are required for improving quality of education. First of all, the government should take practical steps to improve enrolment in schools and reduce dropouts. It is learnt that in many countries governments provide support to parents for keeping their children in schools up to high school level. But the moot question is : Is it possible in Bangladesh with its limited resources. The Food for Education Programme was introduced in Bangladesh to attain success in retaining students in schools. But the programme has been introduced at a limited scale. Hence it could not reduce dropouts. This programme should be reviewed and expanded in a phased manner on a priority basis.

Secondly, the presents curricula should be drastically changed to make education need-based. Still, the major emphasis is on general education. But it must be realised by the education planners and policy makers that the present day world is a knowledge-based one and in the knowledge driven development initiatives, people with technical education are in high demand.

Technically skilled people can immensely contribute to the national economy as well as obtain foreign jobs.

Thirdly, the examination systems should be drastically changed to stop copying in public examinations. Thousands of students pass out from schools and colleges by using unfair means in the examinations. And it has been observed that in practical life such students do not qualify for any job. If this trend continues, the number of unemployed and educated youths will continue to rise.

Finally the government should take immediate steps to improve skills of teachers. There were media reports that a large number of teachers with third division at primary schools are being recruited at public examinations. One experienced school teacher, preferring anonymity told this writer that if investigations take place, it may be revealed that these teachers might have passed out by copying in the examinations.

Education in reality strengthens the basic needs of the people that is required for socio-economic transformation. But if the students are imparted education by unqualified or under qualified people, then the former will never be able to face stiff competition in today's world of high technology.

Hence the teacher and the taught will both suffer. This an abnormal and unwarranted situation should not be allowed to continue any further. If required funds from other sources should be diverted to set up more training institutes for the teachers to improve their skills.

It is universally recognised that only good teachers can really produce qualified students. For this the recruitment procedure has to be changed. At this juncture, the government should hold central recruitment examinations for draing up a teachers panel to stop the recruitment of under-qualified teachers. The under-qualified people purchase the jobs but miserably fail to deliver due to lack of requisite skills.

Without improving teaching skills through recruitment of dedicated people, the education sector will continue to suffer and the ultimate loser will be nations. Half-educated people in the education sector have caused havoc and polluted the entire academic environment. There is still time to adopt fresh action plan to improve teaching skills and those looking after recruitment should be people of integrity and much above petty politics.