

Foreign Teachers Working Illegally In English Medium Schools

The founding of a school calls for a tremendous commitment by the owner. But responsibility does not begin and end simply with the provision of education and a school must have an environment conducive to a child's mental growth. Unfortunately the unsupervised and uncontrolled growth of private English medium schools has encouraged owners to bend the law regarding the employment of foreigners as teachers. Schools offering O-Level and A-Level courses under the London University and Cambridge University were thus asked to register with the general education boards and the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education. Kindergartens were asked to register with the Directorate of Primary and Mass Education in Dhaka.

Some time back the chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board said that against the backdrop of numerous allegations of exorbitant tuition and admission fees, comes non-compliance of rules of the education boards. That being so, the government took the decision to establish a separate education board to oversee the activities of the private sector English Medium schools and kindergartens. And apart from preparing a uniform curriculum for all English-medium schools and kindergartens, this education board fixed the qualifications and salary structure of teachers. One of the highlights of the policy for English medium kindergarten and preparatory schools is that they must obtain government approval through a process of registration. One stipulation is they cannot appoint foreign teachers.

Although undoubtedly one of the requirements of a good school is the presence of a good teaching staff, the fact that many schools in the city and elsewhere are reported to be employing foreign teachers in preference to local equally qualified people is discouraging at best and incomprehensible at worst. Some owners of private schools appear to be under the impression that foreign teachers not only add glamour and prestige to the school but attract students. Many of the foreign teachers being employed do not hold a valid work-permit. Reports say they get around this requirement by leaving the country at regular intervals and return back on a new visa.

That foreigners are finding it easy to take up employment in these schools is of concern because it indicates two things - a total lack of respect for our own teachers and a haughty disregard for the ban on employing foreign teachers. This is further aggravated as many of the foreign teachers are reported to be earning fabulous sums of money in foreign exchange, which is taken out of the country when they leave or transmitted abroad. If there is indeed a large number of educational institutions at various levels that employ foreign teachers, and an even larger number of foreign teachers working in them, disciplinary action must be taken against them immediately. This open flaunting of the law must cease. The truth of these allegations is easily determined through means of a simple survey of staff in all the private English Medium schools. Unless the government takes action against the foreign teachers and their employers, the feeling that foreign teachers are working here at the expense of local teachers, cannot be dispelled.

In March 2005, the government made it mandatory for all types of non-government educational institutions to recruit women to 30 per cent of the teaching positions. No doubt the private English Medium schools have fulfilled this requirement and more but not, we fear, out of concern for women but because the schools can legally get away with paying less. While the private sector is contributing significantly to the development of human resources with the emphasis on raising a force of highly skilled workers who can meet the challenges that this technology driven world needs, it should not be above reproach in all matters including the