

Exam Shops

The education sector in the country is booming in more senses than one. Not only are kindergartens and coaching centres proliferating; all kinds of wares are available to help our "scholars" through ordinary school and college exams. They come in the form of "Notes" (invariably by a Board of Professors), Essays that can be gotten by rote, English Grammar made easy, Answers to set questions and what not.

According to a recent news item in a contemporary, question-paper-publishers in Dhaka are doing brisk business catering to both students and their teachers. So dependent are both groups on these help tools that neither feel able to cope with anything other than their note book questions. There have allegedly been instances where teachers were forced to alter specific questions during actual exams because they were not on the "suggestions list" or "question-answer" handbooks.

The amazing thing is, questions set within the syllabus are not considered fair by the examinees if they are not "common" to the mass-produced notebooks they had used. The fact is, most of the country's educational institutions and the teachers who man them find nothing wrong in the getting-by-rote method of instruction. Unlike selected private institutions that stress on the importance of independent thinking and creativity during the learning years, most schools and colleges and even universities in the country are happy to employ mindless teachings methods that are good only for producing herds of certificate-earning morons. Under the circumstances, is it any surprise that the general standard of education should sink lower and lower in Bangladesh?

The cumulative effect of this glaring intellectual poverty is apparent virtually in every sector of national life. A Master's degree holder from the average institution today does not measure up to even a Matriculate of the 1920s. To arrest this decline we need nothing less than a total overhaul of the education system, starting from the primary up to the secondary and tertiary levels.

This calls for bright and bold minds at the policy making as well as in the working field, so to say. Let us try to give real education and get the thinking faculties moving.