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English schools mushrooming with inadequate facilities

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The so-called English medium and kindergarten schools with inadequate qualified teaching staff, libraries and laboratories are mushrooming in the city and getting increased number of children admitted to their institutions. In fact, they are doing brisk business instead of serving the cause of education.

There are over 200 English medium schools in the city, of them only 23 are affiliated with the British Council as candidates from these schools appear to 'O', 'A' levels and Senior Cambridge examinations each year. The exact figure was not available at the Ministry of Education.

Admission to these schools remains open almost throughout the year provided full payment of the prescribed annual charges, tuition fees and other charges are paid.

At present annual charges and tuition fees of these schools have increased abnormally. Annual charges of each student from Play

group to Class X now range between Taka 5,000 and Taka 10,000 which was Taka 3,000 last year. While, the monthly tuition fees for each student from Play group to Class VII vary from Taka 600 to Taka 1,500 compared to Taka 500 last year.

Tuition fees for each student from Class VIII to Class X with computer facility are between Taka 2,000 and Taka 5,000 up from Taka 1,500 on an average last year. Besides it is mandatory for the students to buy books, study materials, dresses etc. from their respective schools or from shops referred by the institutions at a cost usually two or three times higher than the actual market price.

Another interesting feature is that annual promotion of a student in these schools is seldom denied for pleasing the parents and guardians. Although some students cut a very sorry figure at their examinations scoring less than the usual pass mark, the school authorities have innovated

an "eye wash" provision for these types of students. After almost a month of the annual examinations, the authorities make special arrangements to hold trial examinations with 25 to 30 marks on each of the subjects the students could not pass.

If any student fails to come out successful in the trial examinations, the authorities even gladly permit him or her to take admission into the next higher class for fear of losing students.

Despite shortage in teaching staff and other limitations authorities in some important Bengali medium schools of the city are now opening the English medium units with a view to gaining greater financial benefits.

A vast majority of the teaching staff of these English medium schools are not acquainted with the 'O' level syllabus of London University and lacking adequate educational qualifications, teaching experi-

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ences and necessary training.

A good number of teachers of these schools teach in more than one school as the authorities do not pay them adequately. As such, most of the teachers do not have any formal appointment letters. In some schools fresh pass-outs or mere 'O'/'A' level students are found working as teachers.

Many English medium schools affiliated with the British Council do not have books on various subjects. The school management committees put this burden on the guardians who move heaven and earth to get the books. The schools use the Bengali medium books and the guardians engage tutors on every subject to get the Bengali books translated into English.

The authorities frequently search for smart and good looking young girls and boys as teachers, who can well please the anxious parents and guardians. They also go for appointing the relatives of the powerful bureaucrats and influential people of the society so that their institutions can run without any trouble", said a source.

Authorities of a number of these schools also mislead the simple minded parents and guardians by using vague affiliation. A good number of these English medium schools are housed in the rented buildings in the city's posh areas including Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara. Most of these school buildings lack playground and laboratories. As these buildings are built for residential purpose the rooms are not suitable for class-rooms. Over 40 kids of a section attend in a room that can hardly accommodate 20 students.

Moreover, once a student is admitted into an English medium school, he or she becomes isolated from the society and local culture. "Students are given books imported specially from India. The syllabus of these schools seldom cover any chapter which truly depicts our society and culture. This is really ironical that from vulnerable young ages, our children are learning about a different society and culture", the sources added.

It is also very difficult to find out the exact number of the English medium schools and kindergartens in the capital as there is no particular department of the government to look after or control it.

The schools affiliated with the British Council are Willes Little Flower School, Bangladesh International Tutorial, Scholastica School, Dhanmondi Tutorial, Maple Leaf International School, Onnesha International School, The Aga Khan School, Saint Jude's Tutorial, Manarat International College, Oxford International School, Loreto School, Sun Beams, Dhaka Grammar School, SFX Green Herald International School, Lyceum International School, Holy Child International School, South Breeze Siddiq's Tutorial, Blooming Buds School, Green Gems International School, Mastermind School, Dawn Grammar School and Omni International School.

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