

Inside The Schools And Colleges In Bangladesh

Reports that we receive from time to time, either from our own correspondents in outlying areas or from our readers, about actual conditions inside many private schools and colleges point to a much grimmer state of affairs than general talk about the deterioration in educational standards would suggest.

Most of these institutions are understaffed. A high school, teaching the humanities, commerce and science, may not have more than six or seven people to take care of a variety of subjects and at least five classes from the sixth to the tenth. Science and commerce boys have to meet separately, so that the actual number of classes needing to be handled usually ranges from seven to eight.

The same teacher may be required to teach English as well as the Social Sciences, Mathematics as well as Bengali. Some on the staff may have a work-load of 36 hours a week. The reason is that many of these private institutions—and this is true also of colleges—cannot afford to appoint as many as they need for lack of funds.

All our official surveys are concerned with the number of schools and colleges; this is regarded as the best barometer of progress. The greater the number the greater the cause of self-satisfaction.

But we are afraid self-satisfaction of this kind is dangerous and is helping to aggravate the deterioration; that we all deplore.

This, we must repeat, is not the outcome of any flaw or lacuna in the rules. Affiliation for private institutions has been made conditional on their capacity to fulfil certain minimum requirements. But the painful truth is that these rules are circumvented in many ways, once affiliation has been obtained. A school or college may initially recruit as large a staff as the rules insist on, but soon they get rid of as many as they can in order that the institution may be financially solvent. Grants, it is alleged, are also obtained in the same way.

The continuance of this state of affairs is threatening to bring about a complete collapse of the structure of secondary and higher secondary education outside a few state-run institutions. The enormity of the situation may be guessed from the fact that even today private institutions outnumber state-run schools and colleges. They need to be helped out of the crisis to which we have referred.