

Some Thoughts On Improvement Of The Standard of Education In Bangladesh-II

A. S. Islam

Some books followed by students in both Bengali and English medium schools, contains a large number of mistakes, and reprints of famous books like Wren and Martin's grammar book published in India are not free from obvious errors. How would a poor student detect those mistakes? Even their house teachers, unless they are experts in English, would miss them. I think it is incumbent on the part of the Ministry of Education to ensure that the books with such mistakes are withdrawn from circulation until such time as, they come up with revised edition free from previous errors. In "aker bhitaray panch", I came across several mistakes in certain portion of the book, particularly in the section under 'translation'. In one place, 'angel' has been misspelt as 'angle' and in the Bengali translation of the same passage, 'Mukhootro' has been misspelt as mukhopatra. What is very interesting about Wren and Martin is that hardly there are mistakes in the old editions of the book but in the recent one mistake such as, "Uneasy likes the head which wears the crown" instead of "Uneasy lies the head...". In the same page the word 'taught' replaces 'thought' making the sentence meaningless.

In my opinion books should not only be free from errors but they must be attractive so that when they are in the hands of students, they feel the yearning to browse over the book immediately on looking at it followed by their reading it seriously. If some students find it difficult to afford to pay a little extra for such attractive books, there should be arrangement for payment of subsidy to them by the Government. Investment on this head is amply justified considering the dividend it will pay in the long run by creating well-educated youth.

I think that the system which was in the vogue in pre-partition days should be reintroduced. Under that

system, publishers were invited to publish books on different subjects on the prescribed syllabuses and asked to submit them to the Director of Public Instructions. Only those books were prescribed by the DPI which conformed to the standard; usually 2-3 books used to be selected in each subject for each class and it was up to the school authority to choose among the recommended books. Foreign publishers may also be invited to compete in the bid.

Moral Values : To make the school children educated on moral values, it can be done as a practical and corollary course to "Islamivat". The books on "Islamiyat" followed in different classes may be revised to give it a bias on moral values by choosing relevant verses from the Qur'an which are related to uplifting moral values. A book entitled—Naitik Charitra Gathaney Quraner Shiksha—published by the Islamic Foundation has been written with that objective. It contains chapters, such as "Amelus-Saleha", "Respecting parents and elders", "Forbiddance of cheating in any form in the examination, selling food stuff adulterated, commodities under-weight", "Taking bribe and its evil consequences", "Importance of fulfilling commitment", "Gap between what is said and the action and its adverse effect on the advancement of the community", "Suicidal effect of back biting" and "Allah's assistance to those nations who help themselves".

Until Islamiyat books are ready on the lines suggested above, the book, "Naitik charitra gathaney Quraner shiksha" can be followed as a rapid reader and the exercises given at the end of each chapter practised in the real life of the students. The Quranic School Society claims that their programme introduced in 1980 has

brought about desired results in moulding the character of the youth in the schools where their programme is in operation, such as in Saint Joseph School, Bowani Academy, Udayan, Kalyanpore Girls' high school, Chandina Pilot High School, Lakshmipur High School Pabna, Dinbandhu Primary School. Moreover, their FAO-financed "Tree Plantation Programme" in 30 schools five years ago have produced the desired results. The tree plantation made by the QSS students of Lakshmipur high school in Pabna pleased the Deputy Commissioner of Pabna so much that he awarded Taka 10,000 to the school for their good work. The above Society's programme should be evaluated by the appropriate body and if found suitable should be introduced with or without alteration at least one in each 'thana' and gradually to all the schools.

For students of other religions, their present text books may be recast to include lessons on the building up of their moral character.

Finding Suitable Jobs : Regarding the third point, namely, to find a suitable job after the completion of a self-contained course. I have a suggestion to make and that is to keep the boys and girls busy in income generating projects like repair of tubewells, teaching in schools, learning dress making, book binding, carpentry during the time when they finish their SSC and HSC examinations and the announcement of their results. In fact, they may be engaged to learn various skills during summer and Ramadan vacation.

In Rajshahi Collegiate School where I was a student in the thirties, students could choose either the main stream or section B. The latter group was taught woodwork, surveying, mensuration, handicraft and

modelling. I think, facilities should be created in schools, wherever possible, so that students can learn the above skills plus many more like computer, nursery making during their vacation and during the period when the teaching is suspended in schools on account of SSC and HSC examinations.

The Education Secretary said that in his village he established some schools and a college with the idea of increasing the educated class. To his utter dismay, he learnt that following the establishment of educational institutions in his village home, the frequency of crime has registered an increase there. Some educated youth in his village home, finding no jobs, have engaged in undesirable acts. The lesson we can learn from the experience of the Education Secretary is that side by side with the establishment of educational institutes, we will have to have plans for such kinds of jobs as will open before them avenues of employment. For instance, every new school should have also arrangement for imparting different kinds of vocational skills and it should be made compulsory for the students to learn at least one income-generating skill. The students of Chandina High School were taught how to raise nurseries and maintain saplings of different plants in their off-time. Some of these students, after leaving their schools, have started their own nurseries and earning their livelihood in a decent way.

The Open University can play a vital role in opening courses on various skills through radio and television and arranging practical classes in the middle and the end of each course. Similar courses are offered very successfully by the Open University of Britain.

The author is retired Professor, Department of Botany, Dhaka University.