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Public Examinations

As reported in the press, about eight hundred thousand students are appearing in the Secondary School Certificate examination under four Secondary Education Boards in the country. Figure-wise this is encouraging and it reflects the intent of parents who send their wards to schools, despite financial constraints. These examinees have come from schools that existed for long and also from schools that have since been authorized to teach up to the secondary level. The number of schools have increased and enrollment therein has shown an upward trend. The same is reflected in the number of examinees.

It is common knowledge that schools in this country have been set up by philanthropic persons, who donated land, building etc. Part of the cost for physical facilities of those schools plus the pay of teachers and staff has been met from government grants and fees of students. With increase in expenditure, some private schools have raised fees paid by guardians. These are the same persons who as tax-payers also pay for the official grants received by all the schools. Thus, one may say that schooling is dependant on earnings of parents.

Cost of education, including that for purchase of books and materials has been on the increase. Some guardians in cities and towns have to bear the cost of conveyance which is also on the rise. And, if one accounts for fees for private coaching, one may conclude that education has become costlier now than what it was in the past. Many of the guardians of the youngsters often hard pressed to pay for the increased cost. As a result many students join in the rank of drop-outs with consequent uncertainties for their life.

The realities in the educational field are that overall management in schooling and conduct of examination have become ineffective. The tendency on the part of students not to prepare lessons and to attend classes as per class routine is widespread. As a result, they are found adopting unfair means to pass examinations. The tendency to copy is increasing and the expelling of quite a large number of examinees reflect the failings in the academic scene.

The overall impact of poor schooling will also be felt in future, when the inadequately prepared youths will join the ranks of those who manage the economy and the statecraft as a whole. Their present day failings will render them ineffective for the role they will be called upon to play in future. Corrective measures have to be taken now not only to prevent mismanagement in conducting examinations, but also to ensure effective participation of those passed in the employment scene in future.

One needs to remember that public examinations are designed in a careful manner. The decision on the number of subjects taught, the total marks assigned and the scheduling of examinations are of tremendous importance to students and their guardians. One would like that public examinations were held during the winter, instead of the summer, as in the present academic year. Problems faced by examinees have to be tackled and examinations have to be set in such a way as will ensure proper assessment of students and their merit.