

Quality Education For All

120

Increasing numbers of parents and guardians are sending their children and wards abroad for prosecuting studies. Mostly it involves students who have done their post-primary education at home and are set for courses of study at higher-secondary, college or post-college levels. What is remarkable about this movement of students abroad is the fact that not only more and more families are settling for such an arrangement, but the impression is growing that education at home has as good as come a copper for all practical purposes. When facts point to a certain set of results then the most sensible way is to take cognizance of both facts and results.

The facts are really debunking, concerning education from the primary to post-primary to secondary to college and university. Academics, political leaders as well as the administration are aware of this debacle, and the progressive decline that has occurred over the past couple of decades or so. But except for talks of reform done on political platforms, public meetings and or in similar publicity forums nothing tangible has so far emerged. And nothing is likely to in the foreseeable future considering the mess the country's education has got into.

In more than one leader in the past we have tried to point out the lapses ranging from policy errors, priority gaps, corruption in education, examination-rigging, inefficiency and dishonesty on the teaching examining side etc. But not an eyelid seems to have been stirred by such comments in the press. As a result the decline continues making remedial measures increasingly impossible.

As for those trying to save their wards from a calamity inevitable under such circumstances some observations seem due. In the first place, the number of those who are taking advantage of foreign facilities for the education of their children is minuscule compared with the immense crowd left behind in the country of boys and girls receiving the kind of education on offer at home. Among other facts to be noted is that education abroad is not a freelance business that anyone sent abroad will be eligible for admission to the courses of study offered. Prosperity or money can help send a boy to a foreign country, but it is his merit and credentials established by the earlier education grades he made at home only will help him get into a foreign college or university.

If merit is the chief element in the determination of a student's fate abroad and if that is to be acquired while at home, that also presents an equally gloomy outlook. Quality education amid the spreading and continuing decline has been a rare commodity in this country. Familiarity with the rot seems to have taken the edge off what is fundamentally the greatest national tragedy.

The huge number of students accounted for by the schools and colleges spread over the country apart, three-fourths of education imparted in urban institutions is far below the mark. Only a quarter of students enjoying the advantage of doing their studies in the few institutions (cadet plus some very old private ones including the former English-medium ones now converted into bi-medial schools) can be distinguished from the rest.

Mostly, students from among this group have chances of admission in foreign institution depending, though on the ability of their guardians to finance his education abroad. So even here are drop-outs although quite in a different sense from those who annually increase by the thousand. Which shows that merit alone, unaided by financial ability, will not enable a student to avail himself of quality education obtainable abroad.

Morally of course there can hardly be any objection to this kind of selective education for a social group. But socially and from the point of view of administrative justice to which every tax payer has an equal right the need is to improve or upgrade the quality of education generally for all. While the few opportunities found to have a crop, however small, of properly educated citizens should be made the most of the democratic need of quality for all must be the state policy for education.