

# Education At The Lower Levels Needs Reforms

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**E**DUCATION over the years, and particularly during post-independence period, has suffered serious set-backs. And this is due to some obvious reasons. Scholars, educator and thinkers have only cast a helpless look over the turbulent phases the education is passing through for years.

Education, in the real sense of the term, is not something that simply prepares the learners to meet the claims of a particular profession, it also equips them with all that is needed to lead meaningful social, cultural and spiritual life. Hence it is our duty to make education a preparation for life. Set-backs in educational arena may be linked with a dozen other socio-political factors which are directly or indirectly responsible for this unfortunate state of affairs. But here we shall try to reasons out, of course, entirely from the professional point of view, why or how some factors have stealthily contributed to ever growing apathy among the learners; especially at the lower level of education.

## Strategies

One of the major causes for such set-backs can be attributed to our teaching/learning processes which have failed to keep pace with the new attitude and the promising developments brought on in the field of teaching/learning strategies.

There is an underlying truth in the maxim that education begins at home. But is also equally true that every home cannot provide just the man the kids need for their nurture. The man who is not properly attuned to the task of teaching is unable to further the cause of education. And one can possible imagine how things really go on with the vast majority of learners over the rural Bangladesh both at pre-school and primary stages.

Education and Attitude. Formal education in rural Bangladesh begins with the primary level. But though unfortunate, it is true that rural Bangladesh is not, in most cases, free from the attitude and treatment that characterised teaching during the early decades of the present century.

Let us imagine a learning situation in which a person responsible for teaching is rather hide-bound pedagogues-austere and invective in the event of learners making any mistakes-and where the sound of a long flexible can has caused panic and made everyone stand frightened and helplessly mute with eyes near tearful. A reminiscence of what probably

troubles many of us ever after. In this context let us consider what W.O. Lester Smith, noted Oxfordian educationist and psychologist feels about it: "In the bad old days of canings, birchings, sarcasms, impositions and other customary forms of torture many acquired in their school days a permanent dislike of their teachers, and this led them to hold a poor opinion of teachers in general....If one of our most illustrious citizens (teachers) could in the twentieth Century take that vindictive line, founded on a traditional view....it is reasonable to suppose that others, less enlightened, are equally ready to adopt an ungenerous attitude to teachers for much the same reasons."

Learners both at the primary as well as the secondary levels still are, in many cases, subject to such an attitude and treatment. The act of teaching or learning cannot progress and the learners cannot be held responsible for their poor performance in such a harsh and joyless situation. Experience has shown that the learners failure is due more to the attitudinal or methodical blunders and less to the intellectual ability of them. Teachers' lapses here are usually due not to deliberate choice of the worse, but to failure to think of the better. One of the greatest shortcomings of such attitude is that it adversely motivates the young learners by imposing undue complications in class-room situation and eventually, as it is found, a large number of them opt out of it. It presents a real gloomy picture for a country in which forty thousand primary schools are unable to ensure the entry of even forty per cent of the total school-going children. Thus learning through traditional system is contrary to the plan for universal education.

## New Attitude and Psychology

There is a good deal of psychology involved in teaching-learning strategies. It is often said that "means justify the end." Hence a thoughtless approach to teaching will not produce good results, especially at the lower level where the learners are entirely dependent upon teachers. Teachers should remember that they are not united with the rest

of the class by ties of consanguinity, it is their attitude, the gesture and the mode of teaching that contribute much to creating an ideal teaching-learning environment which itself inspires and generates good learning spirits among the learners.

Psychology reveals that harsh treatment causes inhibitions in the learners and which ultimately tends to suppress their curiosity and the learners showing little curiosity will always learn the least. For education consists in the cultivation of the instincts, and not in their suppression. Hence it is essential that the methods through which the act of teaching is carried out be attractive and the learning materials for such learners be carefully designed so that they adequately respond to the learners curiosity and queries on subjects that immediately concern them. Teaching is an art and as long as a teacher finds it difficult to make a learning situation more enduring and attractive than the reality outside it, he will find it tough to get the meaning of something across. Hence modern tendency is to make the learners feel that the class-room is not a durance, rather it is a place where the needs of the learners are equally and carefully attended to, and that a teacher is not only a guide here but also an equal participant in the act of learning. Such an attitude undoubtedly encourages the learners' act of participation. The maxim "silence is golden" is not applicable to such a situation. Talk and be talked to should be the guiding principle here, because silence covers up the wrongs of the learners. This practice is more effective in case of a language learning situation to break down the initial inhibitions of the learners. By conniving at it, one will root it too deeply in them that is ever to be eradicated.

## Ideal Situation

An ideal situation is one which provides the learners scope to overcome their fears and dispel doubts. It is an atmosphere of free and fair exchange of ideas where a teacher, by showing unnecessary pedagogy, is no to set a contrast between teachers and the taught, rather try to conciliate them for the sake of creating an uninterrupted teaching environment.

These seems no reason to doubt the most widely accepted theory, as has been tested and shown by the psycho-analysts that the act of learning that takes place in a helpful and cordial situation will immediately attract the learners and they will rehearse and practise the activities and which they will perform in earnest later on. Let them feel that they are to act on their own and not under constraint.

Need For Reform. The needs of a modern society are so vast and varied that it can no more rely upon the traditional system of learning for a better purpose. The world has advanced too far with the advancement of science and technology and we have to shape our learners' abilities to meet the needs of a modern society. Only by updating the course-curricula at the tertiary level we may not achieve the expected results unless a change is initiated of the very lower levels of education. For education should aim to develop individual abilities which should be in consistent with the immediate needs society. A reform in the field of education is therefore a crying need of the day and the government should initiate a national debate on educational issues, involving teachers, administrators, parents, employees and the trade unionists. And the reform, in any case, will always anticipate a substantial change and progress in teaching at the lower level. We sometimes allow prejudice to stand in the way of reforms essential to bringing education in line with the needs of the day. We must fix the objectives first and then pave the way in order to attain those objectives.

Any educational reform cannot possible preclude such questions. What should education aim at? What sort of human beings should it produce? The country can no more suffer from the aimlessness and spoil human resources right from the beginning. It is time to see if our children grow up with a basic understanding of the economy and the activities which are necessary for the creation of the country's wealth. And the able pupils should be encouraged to prepare for careers in productive industry. The curriculum should be balanced which will provide scope for liberal, scientific or vocational education and training. For education is not only a preparation for life but also for living.

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