

Deteriorating Standard Of College Education

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AT present the greatest problem in Bangladesh at the college level is educational wastage chiefly surfaced in the failures and third divisioners at the Intermediate and Degree (Pass) public examinations. It is an indicator of the deteriorating standard of education at all levels of our education from the primary to the university. Therefore, it has emerged as a great national educational problem. The deterioration, I think, is the greatest of all the problems facing the colleges. This is reflected in the number of failures and the number of third divisioners at the H.S.C and Degree (Pass) levels. Poor performances in the interviews, tests/examinations either for admission or jobs is also an index of this state of things. All taken together may be considered as colossal educational wastage consequent upon the worsening educational standard.

An analysis of this should first focus on the failures and the divisions for proper perspective and realization of the miserable performance of our students at the final H.S.C. and Degree (Pass) & Hons and Post-Graduate examinations. Failure or good performances at interviews/tests will ultimately refer to them.

At the H.S.C Examinations the average percentage of failure in all the groups is 54.35% over the period from 1981-1989. Only 3.71% were successful in the first, 21.04% in the second and 21.33% in the third division. The degree (pass) level results present a dismal situation. The average failure is 65.86%, a colossal wastage. And a great majority secures a third division which is devastatingly greater at the B.A. examination. The B.A. results of Chittagong University of 1989 are an example where 87.51% of successful candidates got the third division. What can be more grievous than this?

However, the state of things at the honours and post-graduate levels reveals a different scene. On an average over a period of six years 20.17% of students of B.A. (Hons), B.Com. (Hons) and B.Sc. (Hons) fail in the final examination. And a majority of them get a second class. 13.34% of the post graduate students in the three groups about seven per cent less than that in the degree (Hons) do not come out successful. Here also a large number obtain a second class. For this situation students of the colleges have greater share than the universities. There is no doubt of it. Yet the average 20.17% and 13.34% failures at the honours and post graduate levels are really regrettable and undesirable because the courses are generally taken by the selected and meritorious pupils.

It is natural now to investigate into the reasons for such wastage. I have not sought them because many factors are responsible and the share of their respective contributions is very difficult to dissect and determine. But I think my recommendations for remedy can help to understand them by implications.

However, such wastage is not only a huge wastage of resources/energy and time. It is also an instigator of moral apathy, moral transgression, a creator of frustration, indiscipline and violence which are undoubtedly rampant among our young men. Painful is the landscape projected here. But more painful is our indifference and neglect. I have asked a good number of teachers and principals of colleges (both govt. and non-govt.) about the problems of their institutions. Most of them did not mention the wastage. Most of them are not even aware of its gravity and almost none seems to take proper measures against it. Most of them, however, have heard about the deteriorating standard of our education being talked of frequently and widely but are not conscious of the intimate relationship of it to educational wastage. If the percentage of failure from the HSC to the post-graduate examinations is to be brought down to zero, at least to the minimum and the failures at the degree (Hons) and post-graduate levels are regarded as unpardonable; if there is no third divisioners and if most of the intermediate students get the first division, the educational loss will be the minimum and this will be an indication of some improvement in the quality of education.

The objective can be carried out to some extent in the present circumstances of the colleges if we begin by some prompt administrative measures. The system of internal examination test exists in the colleges. Pupils should not only be motivated to take them, periodical tests and examinations should be more frequent. Performance reports in the periodical tests, half yearly/annual examinations are to be sent to the guardians of the students. Public examinations at the college are to be so arranged that nobody can adopt unfair means in the examination. The conduct of 1989 H.S.C. Examination brought down the percentage of pass to 24.84% while the average pass over the period is 45.64%. Undoubtedly the stringent and suitable action checked the unfair means and acted as a deterrent to lowering the standard of examination. Tutorial classes do exist, yet in many of the college, due importance is not given. Pupils do not take them seriously. Nor is the attendance to tutorial classes ensured. It will be fine if remedial measures for the

backward students can be taken by was indispensable, no provision was arrangement of separate classes. If it made for it in Second and Third Five is not possible, then particular care Year Plans of the country. So it has should be given to them in tutorials of become imperative that some development programmes with priority

Teachers are instruments for given to colleges offering honours and teaching, tutorials and counselling. It post-graduate courses are inserted in is unfortunate that many of them do the Fourth Five Year Plan.

not stay for more than two or three Development programme is also hours in the colleges. The teachers required for the gradual removal of have to remain in the college for at the existing gap between the govt. and least 5 hours and pass some of their non-govt. colleges in respect of finan- time in the library. But neither they cial support and physical facilities. nor the students are serious about Out of about 817/840 colleges, there library work. A committee with some are 630 private colleges which form senior members of the staff may be the core of the H.S.C. and degree formed to motivate and supervise education in our country. Salaries and their activities particularly of the stu- allowances etc. of teachers and em- dents. Its chief task would be to help ployees and physical facilities avail- them form reading habit and improve able in these institutions are far from as far as possible the library facilities being satisfactory, unless they are with the limited resources. Co- brought at par with those of the govt. curricular activities are no less impor- colleges, the educational standard can tant than the library work as they are not be raised and the number of an essential part of education for all failures and third divisioners cannot round development of the students be minimised. The achievement of but then they are neglected in the these goals will moreover, demand colleges. Due attention and care are in-service training/refresher's course necessary. The college authority for the college teachers. One may go should chalk out programmes and to the extent of saying that college schedules about them and see that teachers must receive pre-service their observance is ensured. No one training like that of the school can disagree that these steps will keep teachers. But I think, the strengthen- the students engaged in activities ing and expansion of in-service train- much of the time, resulting in barring ing/refresher's course/summer courses them from unacademic activities and for them call for priority over the in-improvement of the environment of establishment of a training college. the institution.

The above suggestions are fit for The long term measures proposed immediate action with possibilities to are not exhaustive. The existence of materialize them within a short congenial educational atmosphere. period. But they are inadequate to expansion of inspection and academic meet them complex problem of quali- supervision, staff development for ty improvement and prevention of colleges having honours and post- educational loss. The first long term graduate courses, development of strategy needed is the improvement of some govt. colleges as autonomous library and laboratory, particularly institutions with degree awarding sta- for colleges which offer honours and tus, updating of curriculum, impro- post-graduate courses. In many col- ving assessment and evaluation sys- leges, the conditions of library, the tem, suitable teacher-student ratio, stock of books, journals and reading expansion of pre-primary education space are not at all satisfactory. The and ensuring of quality education and conditions of library and laboratory in prevention of educational loss at pre- colleges which offer honours and post college level are pre-requisites. graduates course, are no better.

The results from the materialization Bangladesh National Education of the pre-requisites are a matter of Commission, 1988 (page-218) reports time. And it is heartening to note that that every where there is want of measures to materialize some of them library accommodation. The fund for are already taken and some progress books, journals, the number of qual- is made. Now what remains to be ilied library employees or the furni- taken up are the suggestions made for ture are so inadequate that one can administrative action and other long say that library does not exist in most term strategy recommendations and of the schools and colleges. When the to pursue them with vigorous and libraries are in such a pitiable condi- sustained efforts to achieve the cher- tion, when it is acknowledged by all- ished goals of quality education and of that a spacious and well-equipped library is an essential pre-requisite for putting an end to the colossal educa- tional wastage.

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