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Education—Solving The Drop-Out Issue

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STUDENTS' drop out is the burning question of the day. It has tremendous negative effect for the nation in every aspect. Drop out in schools, on the one hand, hinders the smooth increase in the rate of literacy and on the other hand, it accumulates the inefficient and unemployed part of the population who are deprived of education and treated as a burden for the economy.

The gradual increase in enrolment in schools is at present satisfactory enough and the more optimistic picture is one of ensuring a high percentage of children's enrolment in primary schools. But the problem of students' drop out before they pass high school or even primary school is a great loss or mal-utilization of resources for the nation. Statistics suggest that the enrolment in formal primary schools in the early 1970s was around 40,000, which increased to more than 50,000 in the early 1990s. The number of enrolled students increased to 1,30,35,000 in 1990-91, which was only 64,17,000 during 1972-73. The number of enrolled students has increased to a great deal since the compulsory Primary Education Programme (CPEP) was introduced. The scene of enrolment, although it shows some optimism, is still being hampered by the drop out of a large number of students every year. A table of drop outs can illustrate the picture:

Drop out (In percentage of 1990)	
Class	Drop out
One	19.4
Two	12.0
Three	15.6
Four	15.1
Five	11.5

The drop out rate remained in an absolutely disappointing situation upto the 1990s. Almost 50% of the enrolled children used to drop out between class one and class five. This sharp rate has recently been decreasing due to some special policies and programmes undertaken and implemented both by the government organizations and by the NGOs. According to statistics of the Annual Report on Primary Education, 1992, Dhaka, the drop out at government and non-government primary schools is around 10 per cent. The root causes to drop out can be explained in the following terms:

Most of the people because of poverty cannot afford to have their children continue studies. They cannot even manage minimum educational materials like books, papers, pen, school dress and other necessary requirements. This picture is more common in the rural areas and the slums in the cities.

Due to unawareness about the necessity of education, a lot of pa-

rents often remain careless about their children. They don't send their children to schools in time. They cannot keep supervision on their children as to whether they are carrying on with their studies properly. These students ultimately cannot adjust their ages with studies and they gradually become detached from schools.

Social superstition influences illiterate parents, mostly in rural areas, into thinking that female students have not that much necessity to be educated highly. They believe in the prejudice that the tradition of hierarchy cannot be maintained by the female sex. As a result, they become reluctant to have their daughters continue schooling. It often happens that female students fall into a situation to be drop out because of not getting cooperation from their families.

Child marriage is one of the most usual causes of dropping out. In the peripheral areas, most parents have a wrong idea that if they once get any marriage offer from a suitable candidate's guardian for their daughter, they think that they should not miss it in case such an opportunity doesn't come again in future. This kind of impractical thought provokes them to compel their daughter to get mar-

ried earlier. When such daughters go to their husband's houses, it becomes no more possible for them to continue with studies. In most cases, they give birth to the first issue immediately after marriage. So they become totally disconnected from schooling. Although the government has enforced the law of prohibiting child marriage, it is yet to be implemented properly.

Social insecurity is also a major cause of drop out for female students. They are harassed by nefarious elements. They are sometimes under threat. As a result, parents for fear of social blame stop their female child from going to school, especially if it is a bit away from home.

Polluted social environment often fascinates children into fraternising with naughty fellows. Instead of going to school, they feel happily to kill time through enjoying with their fellows. They gradually become reluctant to go to school due to aversion to learning, developed over a period of time.

It is a common scene in the villages that school-going boys and girls have to help their parents in household work. Boys carry food to their fathers working in the field. As a result, they gradually become detached from school.

(To be continued)