

Examination, Education And Administration

A two-day workshop on Improvement and Reforms of the Examination System marks yet another specialised discussion on a problem that shows little sign of yielding to attempts at its solution. Education planners and experts as well as governments have over the past decades talked about the same problem only to see it slide from bad to worse.

The latest about examination abuses is the arrest of teachers found to be a party to the practice of unfair means by students. We have also seen in the recent past students taking to the streets demanding full freedom to copy in a public examination. That is something unthinkable anywhere else in the world—in its developed or developing part. So the problem is one that must be approached from an unorthodox style and an unorthodox solution sought.

The remedial measures suggested in the workshop included the need for making examination or the examination system 'attractive,' education life oriented; the improvement of quality of education, objective types of questions or several sets of questions to be printed—and so on.

Facile and familiar as these are, they deal more with the form of the problem. At its core lie concrete factors that have turned public examinations into mockery of both education and examination. They are part of the overall decline that has drawn into its vortex almost the entire gamut of social life.

For a start examinations have never been an attractive thing to a student—from the primary to the university. Neither can it be made so by any special effort. Traditionally, it has been more of a terror made so by the rigours that a student had to undergo. His accountability to his teacher was matched by the latter's accountability to his conscience, authorities, and society.

A modern case, among the many in developed societies, in point is the students in Japanese schools (secondary and post-secondary). Making the grade is a life-and death question for them literally. And Japan owes its enormous technical development and prosperity, since the late fifties, to such a standard of academic discipline, student application to studies and teachers' duty to fit them out for the job of building up the nation's economy and culture. Consider the concrete factors accounting for the unprecedented slide in our case. Barring the few urban institutions more than seventy per cent of schools and colleges across the country are run amid an acute shortage of teachers. A recent report put it at thirty thousand teachers for colleges. Hundreds of schools, madrasahs and colleges have been running with no English teachers. In Bangladesh education like much else has stayed more an urban affair.

The teaching position remains one with no one to take care of. Teacher attendance, class-teaching, tutorial guidance, home-work for students and teachers and so on are a thing of the past.

Blaming examination abuses on the (examination) system alone is hard to defend by reality. Tens of thousands of outstanding scholars, teachers, and academics in the subcontinent owe their educational and cultural upbringing to a 300 years old education and examination system. Once you remedy the abuses it will be an enormously different scenario.

Start with Education Boards with a probe into how they are working: there have been public charges of leakage of question papers and other irregularities.

Text-books and their selection is another subject worth close administrative enquiry. By alleged deals between publishers and schools or through other questionable means standard books are often kept out of selection and substandard ones find their way into schools.

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