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Education And Employment

Agricultural diploma institutes in the country were reported last month to be facing a threat from their students that they would not be allowed to function unless they could guarantee suitable employment to their graduates at the end of the courses they teach.

We do not have enough information for comment on the rights and wrongs of this particular case. But the demand that no courses, not even vocational courses, should be introduced and taught unless the trainees could in advance be promised jobs seems to us to create a situation, which is bound to impede the country's progress.

The logical corollary which ought to apply to all institutions is that admission to courses in any kind of education should be limited to the number of jobs which need to be filled. We are aware that demands of a similar nature are sometimes voiced from medical colleges and even general universities. We also agree that there must be some relation between the number of trained people that a country can absorb and the number admitted. If for instance, a country like Bangladesh with no aerodynamics industry were to open an institute to train five thousand people each year in that science, the result is bound to be disastrous.

But the question which deserves to be calmly pondered by both students and the authorities is whether it would be desirable to close down an institute unless the government could provide an advance guarantee of employment to all.

That might be theoretically possible where every aspect of collective life is controlled by the state. But should countries which rely on private initiative as a means of advancement follow the same policy?

That would mean throttling private initiative and precluding the possibility of any individual receiving any training which he might turn to account on his own.

Lack of education and training has hitherto been regarded as the main stumbling block to Bangladesh's progress. The theory that the country must first plan jobs and proceed to increase facilities for education and training afterwards could prove most counter-productive.

We have already said that we cannot afford to be unrealistic. Some people think that the proportion of high school graduates admitted to universities in this country is higher than in Western Europe and America. But that argument need not and should not be carried to a point where the opening of any institute would depend on jobs being available in advance.