

EDUCATION'S STANDARD

The crisis in our education has deepened. No aspect of our education which is now free from malaise of one sort or the other.

To start with, guardians of young ones under their charge are faced with hurculean problems of finding schools to admit their children. There are no more assurances that children wanting to take admission in schools can actually do so despite their being fit for admission. A place for a child in a school in Dhaka is becoming something like a privilege to be bought with money. Many schools these days will only admit a child in the elementary grades on paying of a fat donation by parents. The donation ranges from Taka five to Taka ten thousand or even more and this condition is creating financial strains for parents struggling to meet the various educational costs of their children. Not only donation but the complaint is rampant these days that school children need expert coaching outside schools and colleges. In most cases, the expert coaches are the teachers of these educational institutions or coaching centres run by them which mean that apart from school fees and donations, the hapless guardians are more or less compelled to pay another round for the tuition of their children. Transportations are provided by too few schools and as a result education expenses are climbing alarmingly all the time on account of donations, private tuition, coaching centres, etc. for school and college going students.

The point of worry is that in spite of climbing costs of education, the students of the present genre are not proving to be more meritorious or dedicated than their predecessors. As a matter of fact, students of the present generation who are increasingly getting caught up in a sort of system where education is becoming a short cut and a commodity to be bought and sold through a myriad of selfish services outside the class rooms, are found to be generally superficial and occasionally immoral in their studies and contrast poorly with past generations. All shades of concerned opinion now tend to agree that the standard of education at all levels has fallen and education is increasingly going into the hands of self seekers and that the missionary type dedicated teaching, which used to be the hallmarks of a class of teachers in days gone by, is a completely vanished ingredient in today's crassly self centred realms of education.

Financial adversities suffered by teachers are cited as the grounds for their obsession with money making at the costs of sound teaching. But teachers in the past too faced great hardships on account of very modest salaries and other forms of financial and physical deprivation. But many of them nevertheless remained steadfast to the cardinal ethics of their profession completely unlike the present day money snatchers masquerading as teachers who are scandalizing and vandalizing the calling of an otherwise respected profession.

It indeed seems absurd when teachers of schools and colleges these days shift the blame for their indulging in private teaching on non-remunerative salaries they receive from their organizations. There cannot be a worse case of distortion of facts. Over the last decade, teachers have been one group of professionals whose salaries and other monetary benefits marked steady rises whereas such increases for other professionals have been minimal. The salaries received by teachers in government schools and colleges these days are substantial and quite good compared to salaries of civil servants in other branches of the State's services. The benefits of increased salaries and allowances are more or less similarly enjoyed by private schools and colleges too since most of them are private in name only and are the regular recipients of hefty government financial grants.

Increased salaries and benefits should have created contentment and resumption of greater interest in teaching in schools away from private teaching. But hardly anywhere this expectation was fulfilled. In most cases, teachers are happily pocketing the extra money in the form of higher salaries and allowances but are feeling not obligated at all that they have a moral and professional duty to correspondingly earn this additional money through more dedicated teaching at school and college class rooms. As things are, teachings in the class rooms of educational institutions nowadays are of little or no help to students because of the shallow and poor quality of such teaching. The students practically find that they have no choice but to go after expensive teaching assistances offered outside the premises of their educational institutions in order to be able to hope even of passing, not to think of scoring good results in examinations.

Our query is why we cannot rely on the standard of instruction actually imparted in the class rooms even though teachers should now be sufficiently motivated from receiving ample emoluments. The fair rules of the game anywhere are take as you give. Why should our teachers be exempt from observance of this basic fairness?

The main problem as we see it is the lack of accountability. Teachers are having their pay and other facilities increased automatically or are getting the same done almost effortlessly through some agitation. But they are hardly accountable to anyone to show what better or greater work they are doing to justify these increases. It is high time that they are made really accountable in a foolproof and transparent way.