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Falling education standards

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At present the greatest problem in Bangladesh at the college level is educational wastage chiefly surfacing in 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 from the primary to the university. Therefore, it has emerged as a great national educational problem. The deterioration, is the greatest problem 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 interviews, tests/examinations either for admission or jobs is also an index of this state of things. All taken together may be considered as a colossal educational wastage.

An analysis of this should first focus on the failures 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. In HSC examinations the average percentage of failure in all 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 get 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 case. 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 gets 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 obtains 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 contribu-

tions is very difficult to dis-

sect and determine. But I think my

recommendations for remedy can

help to understand them by impli-

cations.

However, such wastage is not

only a huge wastage of re-

sources/energy and time. It is also

an instigator of moral apathy,

moral transgression, a creator of

frustration, indiscipline and vio-

lence which are undoubtedly rampant among our young men.

Painful is the landscape project here. But more painful is our in-

difference 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 al-

most none seems to take proper

measures against it. Most of them,

however, have heard about the

deteriorating standard of our edu-

cation being talked of frequently

and widely but are not conscious

of the intimate relationship of it to

educational wastage. If the per-

centage of failure from the H.S.C. 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 admin-

istrative measures. The system of

internal examination/text exists in

the college. Pupils should not only

be motivated to take them, period-

ical tests and examinations should

be more frequent. Performance re-

ports in the periodical tests, half

yearly annual examinations are to

be sent to the guardians of the stu-

dents. 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

24.81% while the average pass

over the period is 45.64%. Un-

doubtedly the stringent and suit-

able action checked the unfair

means and acted as a deterrent to

lowering the standard of examina-

tion. Tutorial classes do exist, yet

in many of the college, due impor-

tance is not given. Pupils do not

take them seriously. Nor is the at-

tendance to tutorial classes en-

sured.

It will be fine if remedial mea-

sures for the backward students

can be taken by arrangement of

separate classes. It is not possible,

available in these institutions are

far from being satisfactory, unless

they are brought at par with those

of the govt. colleges, the edu-

cational standard can not be raised

and the number of failures and

third divisioners cannot be mini-

imized. The achievement of these

goals will moreover, demand in-

service training/refresher's course

for the college teachers. One may

go to the extent of saying that col-

lege teachers must received pre-

service training like that of the

school teachers. But I think, the

strengthening and expansion of in-

service training /refresher's

course/summer courses for them

call for priority over the estab-

lishment of a training college.

The long term measures pro-

posed are not exhaustive. The ex-

istence of congenial educational

atmosphere, expansion of inspec-

tion and academic supervision,

staff development for colleges

having honours and post-graduate

courses, development of some

govt. colleges as autonomous

institutions with degree awarding

status, updating of curriculum,

improving assessment and evalua-

tion system, suitable teacher-stu-

dent ratio, expansion of pre-pri-

mary education and ensuring of

quality education and prevention

of educational loss at pre-college

level are pre-requisites.

The results from the materiali-

zation of the pre-requisites are a

matter of time. And it is hearten-

ing to note that measures to mate-

rialize some of them are already

taken and some progress is made.

Now what remains to be taken up

are the suggestions made for ad-

ministrative action and other long

term strategy recommendations

and to pursue them with vigorous

and sustained efforts to achieve

the cherished goals of quality edu-

cation and putting an end to the

colossal educational wastage.

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then particular care should be given to them in tutorials of different disciplines.

Teachers are instruments for teaching, tutorials and counselling. It is unfortunate that many of them do not stay for more than two or three hours in the colleges. The teachers have to remain in the college for at least 5 hours and pass some of their time in the library. But neither they nor do the students are serious about library work. A committee with some senior members of the staff may be formed to motivate and supervise their activities particularly of the students. It's chief task would be to help them form reading habit and improve as far as possible the library facilities with the limited resources. Co-curricular activities are no less important than the library work as they are an essential part of education for all round development of the students but then they are neglected in the colleges. Due attention and care are necessary. The college authority should chalkout programmes and schedules about them and see that their observance is ensured. No one can disagree that these steps will keep the students engaged in activities much of the time, resulting in barring them from unacademic activities and in improvement of the environment of the institution.

The above suggestions are fit for immediate action with possi-

bilities to materialize them within a short period. But they are inade-

quate to meet the complex prob-

lem of quality improvement and

problem of educational loss.

The first long term strategy

needed is long term strategy of

library and laboratory particularly

for colleges which offer honours

and post-graduate courses. In

many colleges, the conditions of

library, the stock of books, jour-

nals and reading space are not at

all satisfactory. The conditions of

library and laboratory in colleges

which offer honours and post

graduates courses, are no better.

BANGLADESH NATIONAL

EDUCATION COMMISSION,

1988, (page-218) reports that

"everywhere there is want of li-

brary accommodation. The fund

for books, journals, the number of

qualified library employees or the

furniture are so inadequate that

one can say that library does not

exist in most of the schools and

colleges". When the libraries are

in such a pitiable condition, when

it is acknowledged by all that a

spacious and well-equipped li-

brary is an essential pre-requisite

for and an index of quality edu-

cation, concerned authorities have

not focussed on it. Even though,

Bangladesh Education Commis-

sion, 1974, pointed out that library