

Restoring standard of education

It is a pity that standard of education has gone down to the lowest ebb in time that maximum consideration is given to this sphere and an all-out effort is made to give at least a facelift, writes A.M.F. QUADIR

Why do we send our children to school, is a question I often feel like asking myself. Abinradanath Tagore did not attend any school. So many great men followed his footsteps. But were they in any way less educated? The primary intention, as I feel, is to impart theoretical and practical education to them in every sphere through a disciplined system.

Before the children receive education most of the parents are required to educate themselves in the art of bringing up children. Filial love and care can do miracle in shaping the life and destiny of children. According to Islam to properly bring up a child is an "Ibadat". It is indeed a Herculean task which needs to be backed up by enormous sacrifice and one who has achieved this is among those who are highly blessed. I am quoting below a few lines that I jotted down from a doctor's clinic. I am sure it will give a guideline to many.

- If a child lives with shame
He learns to feel guilty.
- If a child lives with tolerance
He learns to be patient.
- If a child lives with encouragement
He learns to grow confidence.
- If a child lives with praise
He learns to appreciate.
- If a child lives with fairness
He learns justice.
- If a child lives with security
He learns to have faith.
- If a child lives with approval
He learns to like himself.
- If a child lives with acceptance and friendship
He learns to find life in the world.

Dedicated parents will have to make colossal sacrifice to achieve the goal and ultimate blessing of the Creator. So will need the dedicated teachers who toil hard to see their students crossing the hurdles one after the other to success. Parents and teachers have almost similar jobs to perform in respect of their children and students, and dedication and sacrifice are keys to their success.

The education which does not make a person a man is no education at all. Education starts from cradle to grave. At what age the child should be in a proper school is a debatable issue. Some say it is at the age of 4, some say the child should not be in a school at an age earlier than 7. A Swedish teacher who made research on the subject, tells me that if a child goes to school at an age earlier than 7 his mental development does not synchronise with his physical development and consequently he becomes dull.

KINDERGARTEN SCHOOLS

We see kindergarten schools have sprung up like mushrooms all over Bangladesh, particularly in its principal cities. It is a German word. Kinder means children and Garten means garden. Garden of Children. Here the children are treated as plants of the garden where a teacher's job is to take a very special care to see these plants blossom. Kindergarten school is for children between the ages of 3-6 years and teaching is done while the child plays. Children use their sense-organ and receives everything through highly sensitive antenna. To refine sense organ through

sense training is the base of child education. To this has been added audio-visual training. It is a very highly specialised job and persons with simple B.A. or M.A. degree can never handle this.

It is for the Ministry of Education to put its foot down to bring it on proper lines before it plays with the fates of our children and make tons of money in the process. The quality of teaching has gone down to the lowest ebb. The parents are happy because their proteges come with bag full of books and heap of home work books. They are

We have inherited so many bad things from the British. But even their worst enemy will agree that their system of education stands out as one of the best in the world.

Karachi Grammar School was established in mid-nineteenth century. On my return to Karachi in 1958 I had to wait for months to put my children in the school. At one point my wife thought that the children will not have any school education for months and years to come. Yes, I was selective and choosy. Big palatial building with air-conditioned school bus etc. never impressed me. I was particular about two things — one the method of teaching, and two, how disciplined were the boys.

I applied for admission of my son in Karachi Grammar School. He was asked to appear for the admission test and after he had qualified for the admission my wife and I were invited to discuss things with the Principal, Rev. Glazebrook over a cup of coffee. The interview lasted for about 30 minutes. After so many things were discussed, Rev.

Glazebrook told me not to engage private tutors for the boy, for the tuition the school would give would be enough and further tuition would not be necessary. Moreover, it would make the child very dependent. He said, "Don't you think that because you have put your child in a good institution your responsibilities are over. The child out of 24 hours stays only 6 hours in the school and for the rest of the period he stays at home with parents and the family, and it is from them he will pick up everything good or bad."

happy because their children can mine so many things and write a few words at the age of 3/4. But it affects them in the long run and as they grow up they lag behind in the run. Even to get admission into one of such mushroom schools parents are to run from pillar to post and waste time, money and energy.

Ever since his admission the child remains under constant pressure both at home and at school. The teacher does not teach him because he cannot give any individual attention.

for the class is too crowded. The result is obvious. As he grows up he does not understand a thing and is compelled to memorise. He cannot

write in his own language for he does not have a language other than that of the books. At home the parents live in fool's paradise thinking that they have put their child into a school where he pays Tk. 200/- as tuition fee, and since he pays so much money as tuition fee everything will take care of itself automatically. A wise parent will not do a thing like that. He will run miles from these mushroom schools. He will try to teach him at home and try to form a habit of reading in the child by making it interesting.

Finally he told me, "Beg, borrow or steal, inculcate the habit of reading in the child that will help him to achieve 75 per cent of his goal."

That was a school where individual attention was given to every student. One evening at a social event Principal Glazebrook while receiving the guests told my son (7 years old) addressing him by name not to use the gate meant for the guests as there was a separate gate for students. Imagine, what it is to remember name of a student out of a total number of students exceeding one thousand.

School started at 8 in the morning but a student was required to be present at 7-45 a.m. In a winter morning 7-45 is rather early. Because of the pampering of the mother our

son was late on two days and reached at 7:55 a.m. Next day a letter was sent to me. It said that the child was late for two days and if this would continue the authorities would think of removing his name from the roll.

In the same school there was a teacher by the name of Mrs. Turner. I saw her dealing with the young ones in her class. An embodiment of patience that she was, she was very motherly and affectionately fond of every one of her class, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. It is a rare quality today.

I had quite a difficulty in respect of admission of my daughter in a renowned convent. In November 1959 she

English as a subject has been in a deplorable condition in our country but Play Group, Nursery, Kindergarten, English Medium schools have sprouted like wild berries. In the school, discipline is Zero and quality of teaching is minus Zero. What do we gain and where do we go? Why then our boys are allowed to apply for foreign scholarships? Why at all we request foreign governments for scholarships. These are points to ponder.

English for that matter is taught by under-qualified teachers. As a result, it is not taught well, and students develop an aversion towards it. They also pick up wrong spellings and faulty construction. I have checked some of the

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appeared for the admission test and had done well. The Mother Superior of the Convent School wrote to me saying that my daughter had done well in the test but due to certain difficulties she could not be accommodated. Probably the mother superior expected me to bribe her in the form of giving donation of a few thousands or possibly because, that seat had gone to the daughter of some one in the higher echelon. I was very upset and there was just nothing that I could do.

About mid-December I wrote a letter to the Mother Superior,

home-work book where correctly spelled words have been corrected with wrong spellings.

When a student cannot write anything — even a sentence — in his own English, he has to take the help of his memory. We find students memorising (commit to memory) pages after pages before examination.

Teaching is a very specialised sort of job, and one can acquire this specialisation through various training. For moulding the younger students a lot depends on the parents and teachers. If the teacher is good, students do not

lose interest in learning however bad they are. This I have seen in my life. In our college days of late 30s, our professor of Bengali, Babu Janardan Chakravarty used to take our class on "Wednesday" last period from 3-30 to 4-30 to teach 'Meghnad Bodh Kabya' Canto VI—a very dry and drab subject. During the term of two years I did not see a single fellow student slipping off from his class. That reminds about a few incidents of Mr. Subash Chandra Bose that I was told by his contemporaries. One day Mr. Bose was trying to slip away from the class of a mediocre professor in Presidency College. A fellow student told him not to leave. Subash reported saying that "Subash does not stay in the class of those professors whose know-

ledge is limited to a faint equal male parent". Mr. C.R. Das had two disciples in Bengal, one was Subash Chandra Bose and the other was Subash Chandra Bose. Both were stars shining in the political horizon of Bengal. Some of my readers must have read that historic letter Subashwardy had written to President Ayub Khan in 1961. Educated in Oxford, too hated British colonialism. Once while he was holding the chair of Chief Minister Bengal in 1946, the Governor arrived 10 minutes earlier for the Cabinet Meeting. Mr. R. Walker, Chief Secretary, rushed to the Chief Minister to convey to him that the Governor had arrived. Mr. Subashwardy who was standing in front of the mirror said, "Walker, still 10 minutes to go. Don't you see I am dressing. Please tell the Governor to wait". Only Mr. Subashwardy could tell this. We all know how brilliant was Mr. Subash Bose. While I was in Islamabad I had the opportunity of reading book at Pindi Gymkhana. Pindi was the Headquarters of British Indian Army. There read speeches and writings of Subash Chandra Bose. It was a piece of literature too. The way he exposed leaders of the stature of Mr. M.K. Gandhi and the like in his inimitable fluency and jugglery of words is indeed praiseworthy. Again it was Subash Bose who had beaten Mr. Stapleton (I am open to correction if I am wrong) on the stairs of Presidency College for derogatory remarks used against the people of our sub-continent. The again this Subash Bose was seen touching the feet of teachers out of sheer reverence. For the British colonialists he was a firebrand militant person but was humble and respectful towards his teachers and elders. In our days also teachers earned respects — a lot of respects because we got in return affection, sincere and dedicated teaching. Years after the subcontinent was divided in 1947, I met Babu Janardan Chakravarty who was then in Presidency College in front of Albert Hall. I touched his feet. He at once recognised me and held me in embrace for minutes as if he got back his lost son after a decade. I still recall those days when he used to teach us Tagore's "Shahajahan". Half of the poem was automatically memorised by 30 per cent of the students without effort just by listening to him. However bad a student may be, he always gives his undivided attention to a good professor or teacher. It is a pity that standard of education has gone down to the lowest ebb. Degree from Dhaka University is not recognised anywhere in the world. It is high time that maximum consideration is given to this sphere and an all-out effort is made to give at least a facelift. Dhaka University was, once upon a time, full of luminaries, radiating shining light on the university of which the rest of Asia could be proud. It should be taken care of and its lost glory should be restored.

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