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Unskilled teachers, textbooks blamed for poor performance

Ershad Kamol | Published at 12:10am on November 03, 2019

Primary school students in the country do not acquire expected competencies in Bangla and English languages as most of their teachers are not capable of teaching them properly, revealed a study carried out by the National Academy for Primary Education.

The study titled 'Weaknesses of Grade Three Students in Bangla and English: Causes and Remedies', published in June, also identified substandard teaching methods, used by teachers in the classrooms, for not developing desired skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing of primary students.

Along with lack of skills among teachers, educationists blamed, scarcity of standard books as well as use of wrong methods for evaluating the skills of the children are also responsible for the situation.

The textbooks, they said, taught at the schools and madrassahs are not appropriate for teaching language skills or motivating students to read supplementary books on the subjects.

The parents and school authorities, on the other hand, are preoccupied more with the results of their children in the public examinations instead of with the development of their language skills required for higher education and thus in careers, they said.

'Adopting a wrong policy, the government has made the education system public examination results-centric where the pupil's competency development has no importance,' Dhaka University's retired professor and thinker Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque told New Age.

'Textbooks taught at the classrooms are not appropriate for developing skills in Bangla and English languages when the teachers are not capable of teaching the languages,' he added.

Dhaka University's professor emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said that qualified people did not take primary school teaching as profession as such teachers did not command respect in society and sufficient salary for surviving with dignity.

'In a capitalist-bureaucratic system, inefficient students who do not get jobs in other sectors take teaching at primary schools and madrassahs as profession,' he said.

'They do not get proper training and lose their motivation for inadequate salary and low dignity,' he added.

The developed countries, he said, invest more in primary education as students develop their basic skills at this level.

The National Academy for Primary Education study reveals that teachers are not only unskilled but also reluctant to apply the training they receive in the teachers training colleges.

They also do not follow the guidelines set by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board on teaching the textbooks for achieving the targets stipulated in the curriculum.

The study was carried out among Class-III students and their teachers of a selected sample of 16 government primary schools between July 2018 and January 2019 to find out the gaps between the results of the PEC examinations and the national student assessments both of which were conducted by the directorate of primary education, academy director general Md Shah Alam said.

The results of the PEC examinations show that the pass rate is over 95 per cent but when the annual student performances are assessed in alternate years the assessments present a very poor picture of student's skills in Bangla and mathematics.

The pass rate in the PEC examinations 2017 was 95.18 per cent while the national assessment in that year showed that only 12 per cent Class-V students could secure band 5 in Bangla reading, 74 per cent Class-III students obtained band 3 to 5 in Bangla reading, according to the study of the academy.

The mathematics skills of the students were also found to be poor at the national assessments, which, however, did not evaluate English language competencies.

The situation is worse in rural schools compared to their urban counterparts, said the study.

The research found that pupils scored better in knowledge areas compared to understanding and application, Shah Alam said.

'It indicates that teachers basically emphasise on students memorising the textbooks for the examinations rather than making them read correctly by understanding the meaning or speaking on given topics,' he said.

While assessing students' language skills, academy researchers found that pupils performed better in listening and speaking skills than in reading and writing.

They scored poorly in the unseen texts, revealed the study, adding that most of them were not able to identify all the letters in the alphabets, make words with letters, make or break the conjunct letters or construct meaningful sentences.

It also found that both teachers and parents pressed the students for achieving good marks in the examinations rather than acquiring the language skills.

The study also found that teachers had no plan and preparation for the language classes and used dialects instead of standardised Bangla and English.

Frequent absence of students from the school and lack of awareness of the parents are also other underlying causes of the deficiencies identified by the study.

Teachers admitted to the researchers that they did not pay attention to developing speaking, listening, reading and writing skills of the children for limited contact hours, inappropriate teacher-student ratio, preoccupation with carrying out various government instructions.

Scarcity of materials like supplementary books and multimedia in the classrooms were also responsible, they mentioned.

The study recommended introducing an assessment policy for the primary schools, especially for language-related subjects, recruiting subject-based teachers, appointing one teacher for each subject from Class 1 to 5.

Primary and mass education secretary Md Akram-Al-Hossain said that the 'continuous assessment system' would be introduced in the primary schools up to Class 3 from the next year and there would be no examination-based assessment system.

‘An instruction has already been passed to the schools so that hundred per cent students acquire the Bangla reading skill by 2020 when the nation would celebrate the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,’ he claimed.

He also said that the government was appointing ‘qualified teachers’ and focusing more on monitoring the classroom activities, he said.

He also said that the government was developing new curriculums and textbooks.



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