

Quality Of Education In English Medium Schools

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— Editor

THE other day I was talking over telephone to one of my junior friends and I informed her with pride about some of the recent achievements of my office (being a development organization) as all the national dailies had given wide coverage to it. Now that friend of mine very casually, as if it was something very usual and rather a matter of credit, said, "I don't read newspapers," as if it was something like saying, "I don't eat sweets." I don't know about her but I was embarrassed to the last and didn't know what to say and I am sure you would also reserve your comments on this. It is simply unthinkable to us that a sane person supposed to be doing a responsible job doesn't read newspapers. That lady is one of the oldest teachers of a reputed English medium school of the city! If the teacher enjoys her ignorance about national and international affairs, can you just give a thought about the knowledge she is giving to her students?

The concept of the kindergarten has come from abroad only in name, not in practice. Webster's encyclopaedia says that a kindergarten "is a school for furthering the intellectual, physical and social development of young children by means of games, creative activities, nature study, etc." Kindergarten comes from a Greek Origin, which means *children's garden*. Now I would put this question to the guardians who have children studying in these so-called kindergartens: do you think your children are anywhere near garden? On the contrary, the atmosphere of these schools is only hindering the intellectual, physical and social development of the children. By intellectual development we don't mean the knowledge they receive from books, rather the capacity of the brain to solve and create things on their own. The Children are under so much pressure in memorising things, the meaning of which they hardly know, that their brains are seldom put to use. And gradually they lose interest to use their own intellect. One can hardly expect any physical development of the children in the most unhygienic condition of these schools. The classrooms are small, stuffy, dark and overcrowded with very little or no ventilation at all. If a

child accidentally drops a pencil or a sharpener on the floor, he loses it forever because there is hardly space for him to bend and pick up his lost treasure! On the one hand, the child is severely admonished by the teacher (who has no time to listen to the child's explanation) for coming to school without his pencil or sharpener and, on the other, he spends the rest of the day waiting to go home and get punished once again for the loss of the treasure. The condition of the toilets (only two or three for the whole schools) is terrible and as such the children, who are used to healthy toilets at home, fear to use them and finally end up suffering from kidney problems. These schools fail to offer any facilities for games or sports because there is no open space or field and neither are there facilities for indoor games. The authority is not concerned with the welfare of the children or the facilities offered to them, they are concerned only with how much profit they are making, which ensure extension of another section the coming year. The last and a vital development, i.e. social development, these school offer is only horrifying and disastrous. Of course, if thought in a positive way, one would say it is tremendous and unthinkable. The development is such that the child starts to think that he has become so superior and this feeling prevents him from mixing with the other children, considering them inferior. Would you feel happy if your child after studying in an English medium school becomes a social outcast and instead of playing cricket or football out in the open field, sits back at home in the afternoon listening to English music at full volume, spoiling the peace of the neighbours? And then, for no fault of his he is considered to be a nuisance by the neighbours, whereas the other children of the same age are being treated with affection by all.

Now have you ever considered as

to why these schools fail to offer the minimum facilities to the children? Most of these school buildings which were once meant to be residences for single families have now been turned into a full fledged "English Medium School Of International Standard" offering education from Playgroup to 'O' Levels. In so doing, the authority has but little option than to utilise each and every nook and corner which does not exclude the dressing-room, store-room, kitchen and even all the verandas. Maybe the store-room is transformed into a classroom for 30 to 40 students, with no ventilation and a single fan hanging in the middle of the room or a verandah facing the scorching heat of the sun is considered to be most suitable to be a classroom as it has a lot of ventilation (which saves the expense of putting a fan) add to the misery, it is given a fence of tin painted in bright blue or green colour. As soon as the bell rings at the end of the day, the doors of the classrooms open and the miserable children, or should I call them prisoners, come out full of sweat and exhaustion, but relieved to be out into the open, fresh air. This sight only reminds me of a hen-pen. When opened at early dawn it releases the chickens out into the open daylight, the number of chickens quite unbelievable considering the size of the pen. I am sure the guardians don't want to confine their children in a "hen-pen" for the whole morning in the name of schooling and then also after spending a substantial amount of money which may be equivalent to the monthly income of lakhs of people of Bangladesh.

The other days, one of my colleagues was looking very gloomy and depressed. I asked her what was wrong. With great concern she said that the teacher had complained that her four year old daughter, a student of nursery, was very non-cooperative in class. Now tell me, how can a child of four be non-cooperative? Any-

way, I told my colleague to cheer up and said that things would definitely improve as her child grows up a little more. Needless to say, I have always found her daughter to be extremely intelligent and an extrovert. Isn't it the teacher's failure to be able to handle the child properly and also a matter of shame to make a complaint about a four-year-old child? An ideal teacher is supposed to bring out the inner talent of the child and nourish them with other virtues of life, besides regular education. On the other hand even if a child has some God-gifted talents, it is buried under the admonitions and unkind behaviour of the teacher. We as parents teach the children, "Next to parents, thy teachers", and as such the teachers are supposed to play the role of parents during school hour. I am sure a guardian would remain ever indebted to a teacher who showers love and affection on her child along with ideal education. Still then, why do teachers burden the children with homework which they cannot solve by themselves and keep them tied up leaving no time for relaxation? Why do the teachers take it for granted that there is a private tutor to help the child in solving the homework? Is it the teacher's silent strategy to trap the guardians to go to them for private coaching? Because many a time it has been seen that the solution given by the guardian or the tutor from outside is also not accepted. Neither does the teachers bother to write the correct answer in case the child gets them wrong. It has also been seen that a child, who is not even getting below average grades, suddenly becomes the first boy. The reason? Very simple, the child has started taking private coaching from the class teacher. On the other hand, another child may fall victim to the teacher's wrath in case his guardian refuses to accept the teacher's direct proposal to send the child to her for private coaching. However, intelligent this child, is as she/he falls out of the good book of the teacher, the results are never up to the mark. Teaching has always been considered to be a noble profession. I am at a loss trying to understand the 'nobility' of teachers of these kindergartens.