

Other Side Of SSC Exam Must Not Go Out Of Sight

There is indeed a general mood of rejoicing over the secondary School Certificate (SSC) results. Two achievements in particular have helped gather wind into the sail of celebration. First, it is the percentage of pass which has hit one of the highest mark in recent times at 59.47 per cent; second, it is the number of GPA (grade point average) 5 achievers whose total has exceeded expectations to reach 24,384—almost equal to the total of last five years. Sure enough, there has been improvement in the results and if this trend continues, people can be optimistic about the largest public examinations in the country.

However if this is heart-warming, there are also causes for concern too. No examinee from as many as 217 schools passed, a number of schools from where fewer than 10 examinees passed is 102 and the number schools from where fewer than 20 students passed is 468. The jubilation of the students of a handful noted schools in the city or towns should not keep out of sight the agony and frustration of the examinees, teachers and wardians of these unsuccessful or not so successful schools mostly in villages. The first thing that strikes us is the difference in the standards of education of the village and town schools.

How much credit the schools in cities and towns can claim is a debatable subject. Unless the students are brought under intensive private coaching requiring the services of some highly technically sound or otherwise gifted teachers, such a large number of students cannot achieve such excellent results. Ironically, it is the teachers' worth their name and profession in villages who, driven by financial compulsion, crowd in urban schools and prepare the candidates for the examinations. Except a rare few, the village schools cannot keep them and get their services. Villagers do not have the financial muscle to engage private coaching for all subjects for their sons and daughters. The brain drain within the country has not drawn attention of our policy makers and educationists. If this exodus of teachers from villages to towns can be stopped, results of village educational institutions will improve dramatically. A few politicians who either care for education of their localities or established schools or colleges from political consideration have missed the point. Their generosity in investing money in their educational institutions—notwithstanding their motive to consolidate their hold in their constituency—has paid rich dividends.

The point is that the village students are not less meritorious. If they receive proper guidance and care, they too excel in the examinations. What needs to be brought under rigorous scrutiny is the method followed to help students achieving excellent results. Critics are of the considered opinion that in this method students are turned into robot-like machines. They do not develop their own appreciation of subjects. Knowledge remains an elusive thing to most students. They are taught to get some selective question-answers by rote and reproduce them in the examination scripts. How many of the GPA-5 achievers can do justice to their reputation in higher studies? Why does the debacle happen? It happens because for higher studies, it is not possible to get into the subjects without understanding them and getting them by rote is simply ruled out. Therefore the need is to reorganise the entire education sector.

While that task looks daunting, the more immediate concern is about the admission of so many GPA-5 achievers. There are not enough reputed colleges where they can get admission. This points to the fact that education has to be decentralised and must attract brilliant people into the teaching profession with adequate remuneration.