

No more of PEC examinations

THE introduction of the Primary Education Completion Examinations, in 2009, has now come to prove itself to be a misstep in the national education as it has made learning examinations-centric for young children and pushed up the educational expenses at the level where education is considered free. As results in the PEC examinations have become a prime consideration for all – students, their guardians and the state – giving them a false sense of pride, the system keeps students off real learning, based on experiences, and, instead, promotes learning by rote, which educationists, educationalists and managers of education have all these years tried not to make the basic premise of primary education. Education at this level, after all, builds the foundation for students to move forward towards secondary, higher secondary and tertiary education. While doing this, the system has also inculcated into guardians and teachers, and even the educational institutions in most cases, the idea of doing whatever they can for good results. While doing this, yet again, the system creates an outlook in society that considers children having talent but not good at regurgitating what was crammed into them to be inferior students. All this has to be changed.

Mired in all this, guardians need to shelve out more money, even beyond their means, on the primary education of students. Family expenditure on Class V students increased, as New Age reported on Thursday, to Tk 8,212 in 2014 from Tk 7,991 in 2008 while the expenditure on coaching and private tuition increased to Tk 3,056 in 2014 from Tk 1,902 in 2008, the year after which primary students started taking PECE examinations. They needed to send their children to private tuition, which cuts down on expenses under other heads in families, buy them guidebooks, which discourages students from reading textbooks that are prepared with plans for certain level of competence for students to achieve after the course, and have them prepared for the examinations based on notes and suggestions of well-written answers to a limited number of questions, which encourages students to learn by rote. In such a situation, about 87 per cent primary schools themselves hold coaching classes, which, according to the report, 81 per cent of the PECE candidates attend. This also speaks of an apparent failure of the education managers in that classroom teaching is not enough for students to prepare for public examinations. It shows that either classroom teaching is flawed or public examinations, at least at this level, is way too much for the students.

Under the circumstances, critiques that there is no logic in education managers continuing to force PEC examinations on primary students at this tender age are justified: Doing away with the PEC examinations, we believe, will unburden students, parents and teachers all of undue pressure – educational, financial, or social. This is time all of them came up to mount pressure on the government to abolish the system of PEC examinations so that students get care-free time for real learning.