

Save Secondary And H. Secondary Education

Conditions in which the S.S.C examination has been held at the different centres, point incontrovertibly to one thing : it is yet another national failure requiring to be tackled on an emergency basis, which means a lot more than stitches here and there. The rant is as wide as the whole fabric of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, to separate it, for now, from higher (University) education. (Problems besetting primary education are as numerous needing equally serious and urgent answers).

Relatively speaking, the secondary stage (out of the primary stage with all its own long-running imperfections) represents the first most vital pre-college studies providing the foundation of education for the pupils to build on as they move up the line. Now, that very foundation is in real danger of falling apart. Either do your best to shore it up from total collapse or be prepared to preside not merely on an education scenario in total ruin with all it would imply inevitably for the nation as a whole for now and for the future.

The temptation is to blame the failure and chaos on the system of examination that has been in vogue right from the beginning, as has been done in newspaper leaders on the SSC examination irregularities or in seminars on education and the examination system.

The simple point missed is : It is not the system, which of course would need to be updated in part, but the working of the system that has been most unconscionably reduced to a shambles over the years. The greater pity is that almost the entire hierarchy of education authority, from the Boards up and down the line in their respective ways of dealing with education, has more helped pull it down rather than up to improved viability and standard. It is fashionable to blame systems rather than the public institutions running them together with the efficiency and integrity of the people involved. Abuses ranging from question-paper leakages to supplies to examination halls to sale of pass-certificates show the nadir it has reached.

Start with the performance in the class rooms. Direct dealing with students starts with the teaching in classes plus home-work both for teachers and pupils—yes, the time-honoured-or-worn exercise. Your first attack needs to be on this very pragmatic aspect of the question : It is as shambolic as can be—which is also an open secret.

Add in the standard of discipline applicable to both teachers and pupils. For perspective compare the current loose management of things with the old tight one as well as the results.

Instead of following this very simple and sensible way of dealing with the problem, 'experts' and their 'committees' have given more attention to the system. Several changes including the quiz question one as an examination reform have been tried in vain. Address the basic causes of decline as mentioned above and begin with their removal, first.

From class-room obligations you can move to other numerical and qualitative needs (the number and quality of teachers). Next comes the question of order and coordination down the pecking order from the Ministry to the Education Directorate to the inspectorate to heads of institutions and so on plus the annual revaluation of performance and results of individual schools for reallocation of funds or resumption of grant-in-aid.

You have to attend to these gaps at all these points in any real bid to save the country's secondary and higher secondary education.