

HSC results and the spectre of English

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HIGHER Secondary School Certificate (HSC) results have been published, with record-breaking GPAs and passes. There were more than 10,000 GPAs, and they are the real gems. Three cheers for them. I shall not, however, say anything about them except for wishing them continued success.

I am rather more inclined to talk about the 37.73 percent who failed in the same examination. Had they all passed we would have felt happier, because it is not groundless to expect the success of those who had been considered eligible to sit for the exam. Many of them surely were borderline candidates but the effect was the same, failure. They have failed for various reasons, maybe their own, or of somebody else's. We should try to dig out the causes for their failure and treat them with proper care.

We should not feel reassured by the performance of the so-called top ten colleges of the capital, or of the Boards or the like. Their success is just an optical illusion. They help those who are already capable of doing so to achieve out-

standing results. This is like the proverbial "carrying coal to Newcastle."

Had they been able to improve the quality of the mediocre students, let alone the students of low caliber, we could have appreciated them more. Even now, they should be given the credit they deserve. But our main concern should be to continue to increase the number of passes, or to decrease that of failures.

Now we come to the crux of the problem. The concerned quarter has discovered that failure in English is the root cause of the problem. Among 37.73 percent who failed, 20 per cent failed in English. In other words, English is the chief determining factor with regard to failure in the HSC examination. Most of the students almost invariably suffer from English Fear Syndrome (EFS). The rate is alarmingly high in the rural areas. That the fear has reached the intermediate level in one jump is not true.

It has, rather, originated from the primary level of education and passed through secondary education. As a matter of fact, the students, particularly of the rural

areas, are afraid of learning English when they embark on their early education. Our father's and grand-father's generations had had fairly adequate English learning, very likely because of the "spare the rod and spoil the child" policy being fully implemented upon them.

But that regimentation has nowadays been an object of huge discouragement. But it's no loss. Proper motivation in lieu of corporal punishment may exert a tremendous influence on the young and impressionable learners. But where is that motivation? There is no expert teacher as such for English at both primary and secondary levels. The inexperienced ones teach the students a little English, which later, in most cases, becomes dangerous, at least to the point of causing failure in the English exams.

These students with this little knowledge of English are getting admitted into the poor village colleges or into the substandard suburban or district colleges. Admission to the top ten is impossible for them. In those village colleges, especially in the non-government ones, English teach-

government colleges should also undergo compulsory training for English teaching.

Because of the different questions of the Education Boards, the overall quality is being jeopardised. There should be uniform questions for all the Boards, at both secondary and higher secondary levels, to ensure equal justice to all students. This may help to find out the real causes of the crisis, and work out a tangible solution.

Above all, there should be a unified, definite, and workable education policy, ranging from primary to high school level and, most importantly, the implementation of the policy should be a must.

English is a window to the world. Our boys and girls need to learn English, not only to get a pass in it but also to reach a wider world of knowledge. If we want to see the world sitting at home, we need the window of English. The spectre of English has kept the window shut over the years. We must drive it back by all means.

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