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DEDICATED TEACHING

There was a time when teachers of this country, particularly teachers of primary and secondary schools, were considered a rather poorly paid lot. Yet, surprisingly, in those days, teachers and teaching did not suffer from a poor reputation as many of them do today.

In marked contrast to the past the salaries and other benefits of teachers at primary, secondary and college levels, have notably improved, in recent years. Compared to even a decade ago, teachers of primary and secondary schools receive substantially increased salaries and other financial benefits. The higher pay is not limited only to government operated educational institutions. The number of government run educational institutions were not many in the past but the number of such institutions rose significantly in the recent past with the result that a larger number of teachers are the beneficiary of higher pay and other facilities. Besides, a large number of private educational bodies are also receiving financial grants these days from the governments and plans have been adopted to provide all or nearly all such private bodies with government grants as soon as possible. As a result, most of these private bodies too are being able to pay their teachers at the same or nearly the same rate as in government institutions and the rest should also feel inspired that similar financial assistances for them are being planned.

The above should establish that insufficient remunerations, a major alleged source of discouragement for teachers, was acted upon within the limitations of this poor country. But it seems that the higher incomes of teachers from educational organizations where they serve are not translating into incentives for better teaching, or more dedicated teaching. Too many students and their guardians complain bitterly that the standard of education in schools and colleges, have actually fallen notwithstanding attempts to create greater incentive for teachers through higher salaries and financial benefits.

From the side of the students and the guardians, the main dissatisfaction appears to be the quality or standard of teaching in classes. There was a time in the past when things learnt in the class-rooms formed the basis of the preparation of students for examinations. Students who hired teachers privately in those days benefitted from the extra effort and spending. But on the whole, students in that past era could at least expect to pass in their examinations by relying on what they learnt directly in class rooms. But this is possible no longer. The standard of teaching in class rooms is so casual and devoid of seriousness these days that most students are obliged to seek the help of private tutors in order to simply pass in the examinations not to think of earning good grades. Allegations also exist that this lack of dedicated or sincere teaching in class rooms is purposeful so that the students feel persuaded to approach these same class teachers to teach them privately by paying good amounts of money to them. Allegations also exist that some students are deliberately poorly graded as a sort of unstated punishment for their failure to engage their class teachers for private tuition.

The charges against the teachers are too grave to be ignored. The authorities must devise ways and means for making teachers accountable for their performance. The purpose of higher allocations for the education sector will not be served by rearing a class of professionals who are unpardonably neglectful of their professional and ethical duties.