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No headteacher in 2 of every 3 govt secondary schools

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TWO in every three government secondary schools have not had headteacher, forcing assistant headteachers or others to fill in which hampers normal academic activities, education officials said.

There have been no headteachers in many of the schools for quite a few years. Assistant headteachers and assistant teachers, where there are no assistant headteachers, are doing the job of headteachers, teachers' leaders said.

There are 317 government secondary schools across the country and there are no headteachers in 214 of them.

Leaders of the teachers said that there are 450 positions for assistant headteachers in the schools and 235 positions have been vacant for several years.

The schools are also short of 1,000 assistant teachers, secondary and higher education directorate officials said.

The shortage of teachers in the three positions continue to hamper academic activities, teachers and education officials said.

'Acting headteachers cannot make many decisions,' an acting headteacher of a school in Dhaka said.

Teachers said that they had to work almost double to make up for the teacher shortage and this was harming the quality of education.

They said that because of other problems in addition to teacher shortage, government secondary schools fail to make their mark and to compete with other non-government or private schools in public examinations such as those of Junior Secondary Certificate and Secondary School Certificate.

Headteachers have roles to play in almost everything in schools — the management of members on the staff, the implementation of the academic calendar, the oversight of school discipline, co-curricular activities, daily schedule and the general atmosphere of the institutions, they added.

The Campaign for Popular Education executive director, Rasheda K Choudhury, said that it was unfortunate that two-thirds of the positions of head teacher had been vacant for several years. 'It means that the schools are running without administrative leaders in planning and implementing school programmes,' Rasheda, also a former caretaker government adviser, said.

Insan Ali, the general secretary of the Bangladesh Government Secondary Teachers' Association, said that many of the positions had been vacant since 2005.

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education director (secondary),

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No headteacher

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Sajal Kanti Mandal, told New Age that a process was under way to fill in the positions.

There are 2,28,242 students enrolled on the 317 government secondary schools across the country.

The Bangladesh Government Secondary Assistant Teachers' Association's secretary general Mujibur Rahman said that positions of more than 1,000 out of the 9,600 in government schools were vacant.

Teachers' leaders said that all the 12 government schools in Noakhali were running with acting headteachers, almost all government schools but for zilla schools were running with acting headteachers.

At least six out of the 24 government schools in the capital Dhaka are running with acting headmasters, the acting headteacher of a school in Dhaka said.

'Teachers feel pressured as they need to take double classes. In some cases, a teacher of Bangla needs to take classes of mathematics,' he said.

The leaders said that government would in the past appoint 20 per cent of headteachers directly and 80 per cent through the promotion of assistant headteachers.

But in 2005, the government decided to appoint a half of the headteachers directly, which teachers opposed as it stopped the promotion of assistant headteachers.

Rasheda said that the long bureaucratic process of teacher recruitment and promotion had resulted in the positions of headteachers in government schools falling vacant for which students suffer most.

Teachers alleged that teacher shortage also was also reflected on the education as results of the junior secondary certificate exams 2012 showed that no government schools could be in the top three positions under the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Rajshahi.

One each under the Dhaka education board, the Jessore education board, the Chittagong education board, the Sylhet education board and the Dinajpur board was in the top three of the boards.

Results of the Secondary School Certificate 2013 show that no government schools under Dhaka and Dinajpur education boards were in the top five.

Sajal said that the government had relaxed the conditions for the appointment of headteachers to fill in the vacancies.

'In the past, an assistant headmasters working for four years were eligible for promotion to the position of headteacher. Now we have decided that assistant headmasters having worked the capacity for two years will be eligible for promotion. So in a few months, the positions of headteachers would be filled in,' Sajal said.

He said, 'We are also taking steps to fill in positions of other teachers that are vacant.'