

EDUCATION QUALITY IN SCHOOLS

Survey shows grim picture

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Around 51 percent of eighth graders do not have expected level of competence in English and 46 percent of them lack proficiency in mathematics, according to a government survey.

The picture is also dismal when it comes to Bangla as more than 45 percent of them cannot gain expected competence in the subject, shows the Learning Assessment of Secondary Education, 2015.

The report however found that sixth graders did better than the eighth graders. Around 71 percent of class VI students achieved the desired level of competence in English and 77 percent in mathematics.

In Bangla, 70 percent of them gained competence, adds the survey report launched at a national workshop at the Residential Model School and College in the capital yesterday.

Teachers and education officers of different tiers were present at the programme.

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) wing of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) conducted the survey on 31,620 students -- 15,810 each from class VI and class VIII -- of 527 education institutions in 32 districts.

The assessment survey was finalised on October 27 last year.

The students took "item tests" on each of the subjects on a single day across the country. The questions, prepared on the basis of class curriculum, were based on multiple choice format and constructed response, said officials of M&E Wing.

"It was not a typical test," M&E Assistant Director

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Shameem Ahsan Khan told The Daily Star.

He said the survey results show the students are doing better.

The survey set five bands of competence in each of the three subjects. Every band demonstrates a certain level of competence and current standard of learning.

Band-4 and Band-5 show the national average scale score or the desired level of competence achieved by class VI and class VIII students in Bangla, while Band-3 and Band-4 reflect the expected level of competence in English and Mathematics in both the classes.

Band-6 shows the higher than the expected level, while Band-2 shows subsequent low levels of competence.

There has been a debate over the quality of education for several years although the pass rates in public examinations are getting higher every year.

Educationists on different occasions pointed out that a number of students fail to gain the desired level of competence due to flawed teaching systems, lack of skilled teachers, inadequate teaching and infrastructural facilities, and insufficient budget allocations.

According to the survey, girls lag behind in terms of gaining competence in mathematics in both class VI and class VIII. However, the competence level of boys and girls is almost equal in English in both the classes and the class VI girls have rather done slightly better in Bangla.

The survey also points out students of which divisions gained adequate competence.

Both class VI and VIII students in

Rajshahi are ahead of others in the three subjects. In Rajshahi, around 81 percent of class VI students have adequate competence in English against 68 percent of eighth graders.

Students of Sylhet are at the bottom of the chart, as 56 percent of sixth graders achieved the desired level of competence in English, while only 42 percent of eighth graders have proficiency in the same subject.

The report observes that there are a number of students whose competence level are below the level they achieved in previous grades. On the other side, some students have gained competence more than expected.

"Students in the rural areas showed poor performance compared to those in the cities," it says, suggesting supplying more educational apparatus and increasing more facilities to the rural areas.

Students' age also puts an effect in their learning process, as those who are older than the general ones are found to have performed poorly, it adds.

Speaking at yesterday's programme, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the survey report revealed both good and bad sides and will help find out the problems in the education system.

"We will take adequate measures to solve the problems, he said, asking the education officials to keep regular supervision of the education institutions.

He also said there were allegations that many college teachers prefer coaching rather than taking regular classes.

"Students and teachers are not seen at many colleges after 11:00am, coaching is going on but no classes," he observed.