

Towards a new education policy

Let it be attuned to the time

THE education ministry seems all geared up to place before the nation a new education policy within the next three months. A 16-member committee is working at it. As stated by the education minister, the new policy would aim at improving the present state of education at all levels, giving special emphasis on setting up institutions for providing vocational education at all upazilas across the country. Theoretically, all this sounds good, but we wonder whether he is living up to his own criticism of the culture of frequent shifts in policies by himself initiating yet another policy.

We know there are some good reports, like those of the Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission of 1974 and Shamsul Haque Education Committee of 1997, and we also know that these have been collecting dust in some closets, never getting to see the light of the day. A great deal of discourse on the efficacy of these two reports has taken place over the decades but no government of the past came forward to implement them. There is a common perception among the education experts of the country that had these recommendations been implemented, most of the malaise existing in the system would have been nonexistent by now.

We believe before formulating any policy, opinions of various stakeholders should be taken into account and reflected on the final documents that are adopted. For example, there are opinions in favour of integrated primary education under a unified core curriculum to ensure solid foundation for quality higher education. Then there are suggestions to make primary education scientific, unitrack and compulsory up to class eight. In a broader sense, there is demand for an education policy that is need-based and would help students acquire modern knowledge and become creative in thinking. The underlying principle is that there should be a one-stream education system in schools that would ensure very high standards.

We believe any policy that does not get implemented is not worth the paper it is written on. We have seen in the past that by the time a policy gets formulated, the tenure of the government will have come to an end and the next government would throw it into the bin. Therefore, we hope, this time around the government will be able to glean the salient elements from the Qudrat-e-Khuda and Shamsul Haque reports and incorporate them in the new policy with need assessment and forward looking vision.