

Competence must take priority over results in edn planning

ABOUT a half of Class VIII students falling short of expected competence in English and Bangla and of necessary competence in mathematics, as the Learning Assessment of Secondary Institutions 2015 report published on Tuesday shows, brings up the failure of the managers of national education in having a close match between what is expected of the students as set out in the documents and what is achieved by the students in reality. The students were examined in interpreting details and identifying shared features or attributes across different sections of different texts, knowing simple language conventions and retrieving information from dense text for English and in being queried on fractions in familiar context, calculating factors, multiplying given numbers in context, using estimation and percentage, solving problems of ratios in real-life context and converting between smaller and larger units for mathematics. And the survey shows that only a half of the students have achieved either the expected competence or the necessary competence. The survey, by way of which the monitoring and evaluation wing of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education 15,810 Class VIII and an equal number of Class VI students of 527 schools and madrassahs, further shows that 65 per cent of Class VI students have failed to earn the necessary competence in English and 23 per cent have failed to do so in mathematics.

The survey has put such poor performance down to the absence of qualified and trained teachers and the lack of appropriate educational environment. It also blamed poorly educated guardians contributing to the failure in cases of many of the students. The survey has also held field-level education officials to account, blaming the situation on their poor oversight. The reasons given lead to an obvious conclusion that the national education managers need to put in efforts in making good teachers and creating an enabling environment with the similar importance across the country. The survey, if done on the rural-urban divide, could paint a bleaker picture for students in rural areas compared with their urban peers. The poor state of competence of students, as established by the survey, is distressing especially in view a growing pass percentage in public examinations such as Primary Education Completion and Junior School Certificate and their equivalent examinations. This lends credence to public perception that the state of education, as it is now, is examination-centric and not at all focused on the achievement of competence by the students in contravention of the objective of the national education curriculum.

The government, under the circumstances, needs to plug many of the holes, the foremost of which is to create good teachers with the arrangement for teacher training at regular intervals and to create and maintain a good academic environment in all educational institutions. The government must also hold accountable education officers who are supposed to monitor the academic situation of the institutions and seek and prescribe measures so that students achieve the competence that they are required to, keeping to the education curriculum.