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HSC Course, In Govt Secondary Schools"

Sir,

I fully endorse the views expressed by Mr. Humayan Kabir in his letter under the above caption published in these columns on 21.02.99. Extending the primary education upto class eight and the secondary upto 12 has been suggested since the independence of Bangladesh. The suggestion has been on the policy makers' table since the Bangladesh Education Commission Report was published in 1974. The last democratic BNP government was said to have taken a decision to upgrade the secondary schools to the so-called intermediate level (i.e. the HSC course) and a few high schools were selected for the purpose. But the realisation was not known to the public. The present democratic AL govt. perhaps, did not discard the plan. Therefore we are eager to see implementation of the said upgradation scheme.

The upgradation of both the primary and secondary schools may have a number of advantages. I would like to add some new ones to the list given by Mr. Kabir. These are as follows:

1. The UNO-prescribed compulsory schooling upto 14 years. Our present primary education upto class five signifies schooling at best upto 11 years. Thus, if the primary schools include studies upto the eight grade, the provision would fulfil the UN requirement of schooling upto 14 years.

2. The compulsory and universal primary education upto class

eight would enable the boys and girls to leave the schools better prepared for leading a meaningful life.

3. Since primary schools are located mostly in the students' own villages, they (especially the girls students) may have a decisive advantage of completing studies upto the eight grade without much hurdles (the present case) on the way to high schools at a distance.

4. Most girls attain puberty at the age of 15-16 and many adolescent males become adults at 16-17 years. Co-education at this preliminary stage of adulthood proves dangerous for both the groups. If the secondary schools have classes from 9 to 12 and co-education remains strictly prohibited at this stage (as is the case now in all govt. high schools), the students might have overcome this dangerous age without any immature love affairs. When they will enter the co-education degree colleges or universities at the age of 18-19, they could better manage their life affairs.

5. The so-called lower and higher secondary (on intermediate) stage of education would cease to exist and may conform to our well-publicised stages, i.e. the primary, the secondary and the higher education.

6. The complexity of the dual system of examinations in colleges of the HSC under Boards and the degree (and upper) under the National University would be simplified. Thus, the graduation (both pass and honours) and post-graduation courses at the district level colleges would have smooth and efficient studies in the absence of the HSC exam, vacation (and also the immature love affairs!).

To relieve the colleges of the "extra load of HSC" classes (and exam) and for saving the HSC from being "neglected", the government is to annex the HSC courses as early as possible to the efficient high schools, especially the government ones (as Mr. Kabir suggested).

Many educationists would fear that HSC level studies at high schools would be hampered due to lack of efficient teachers. But that worry is unfounded. Since 1991, the government high schools recruited many competent post-graduates whose expertise remains largely underutilized in teaching upto class 10. This point has been described well by Mr. Kabir. So, now no point remains against the annexation of 11-12 classes to the efficient high schools. The division of teachers of such upgraded high schools does not also arise if the post-graduate teachers are satisfied with the present salary and status.

The government primary schools do also have graduate and even post-graduate teachers. These later recruited teachers are more than capable of teaching upto the eighth grade. However, the salary of the teachers of such upgraded primary schools should be increased because the present salary is unbelievably low.

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