

Misappropriation In Education Sector

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It isn't long ago that our society was almost free from corruption excepting in the lower echelon of the police and the registration departments. The exceptions again, as all students of history or sociology know, were the design of the colonial masters for perpetuating their domination. But these days there is hardly any sphere of national life which is not infested with corruption. The most devastating has, however, been the intrusion in the educational spheres.

The root of the rot lies in the economy. The teachers found it increasingly difficult to meet the ends with their fixed salaries and ever increasing cost of living. They tried to augment their income with private tuition. That set the ball rolling. The teachers leaned towards more lucrative private coaching. Their duties in the class room came to be neglected. The setting was ideal for the growth of the coaching centres which has since mushroomed all over the country not as social service institutions but as commercial ventures. The business has been brisk but in the process came leakage of question papers and mishandling of answer scripts.

The students also did not lag behind their mentors and unfair means in the examination halls crossed all limits. Even then, it was hoped, that the authorities would, though belatedly, call a halt to all these and things would be set on the right keel. But it now seems that the task is not only of reforming a few erring teachers and students. The mischief has gone far deeper. The administration apprehended existence of fake educational institutions in the country and ordered an investigation. The outcome is more alarming than apprehended.

The report submitted by the district and thana officials, according to a contemporary, indicate there is simply no existence of about 20 per cent of the registered madrasahs and about seven to eight per cent of the secondary and higher secondary schools and degree colleges. The entire amount of government contribution for salary of the teachers in these institutions are being misappropriated: There are about 5,000 such educational institutions all over the country and in the name of some 18,000 fake teachers of these non-existent institutions approximately two hundred crore Taka have been misappropriated over the last five years.

There is no mention in the report about any step being contemplated to realise the amount overdrawn or to penalise those associated with the mischief. But as a precautionary measure against recurrence of such incidents, the government has asked the teachers individually to open accounts with the bank.

The rules governing opening of new schools have also been revised and no schools would henceforth be allowed in the private sector without the permission of the appropriate authority. The new rules would govern the procedure for starting schools in the private sector, recognition of such schools, grant-in-aid and also sanctions for development. There should indeed be serious efforts to plug wastage of resources.

A study conducted by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) gives an encouraging picture of education at the primary level. It notes development of a vast network of institutions making attainment of universal primary education in 10 years quite feasible. It quotes official statistics: the enrolment rate in primary schools 92 per cent; the completion rate 61 per cent, the male-female ratio 53:47 and the literacy rate 44 per cent. Quite encouraging. All these have been possible because of higher allocation. But the study also notes wastage of resources of a magnitude that poor country like Bangladesh can hardly afford.