

## The Education Revolution

by Mahjabeen Hassan

**L**ET me clear the air right now. When I say *education revolution*, I am trying to focus your minds to foreign education systems in Bangladesh, and mainly secondary school education.

With the advent of the '80s, English-medium schools began to emerge and the concept of smart, English-speaking children became increasingly popular with the parents. Every mother, worth her salt, enrolled her boy or girl into an English-medium school. Others followed suit. It was the "in" thing.

At that time, there were very few English-medium schools but soon (by the late eighties) each and every corner in Dhaka city had an English-medium school. Students in numbers have graduated each year after doing their O'LEVELs. While some went on to do A'LEVELs, others opted for intermediate, the humble Bengali-medium equivalent to A'LEVEL. Come to think of it — not many schools taught A'LEVEL back then.

Enough of the past, let's shift

our attention to the present. Today, Bangladesh, (actually Dhaka) not only has English-medium high schools but also English-medium universities such as North South, East West, Stamford etc.

One aspect remains nebulous, though. All the English-medium high schools in Dhaka follow the British education system (with the exception of the American High School) and the standardised tests such as O'LEVELs are handled by the University of London via the British Council. However, the English-based universities are mostly affiliated with American universities. Pretty interesting!

The classes in almost all these schools and universities are taught by the locals. Very few schools have teachers conducting subjects in which they specialised. In some schools, Biology and Physics are taught by the same teacher. The same is with Geography and Literature. Many teachers are not even graduates! Fortunately, undergraduates are usually

employed in elementary schools.

Most high school teachers know very little about what they are teaching. A person with a degree in Math cannot teach Chemistry to O'LEVEL or A'LEVEL students. No wonder experienced private tutors, who know their stuff, are so much in demand. However, this is a problem established schools usually don't face. Because most old schools dated back to the mid-seventies, have experienced teachers, impressive backgrounds and excellent results, along with a good international reputation.

Hardly any school these days follows the overall British system. High schools don't look and feel like high schools. There are no lockers, no drama or music clubs and no school sports teams. So, when they say that they follow the British system, they only mean the education part.

Many faculties in English-medium universities consist of teachers recruited from the Dhaka University or other Ben-

gali-medium universities. The biggest joke of all is the atmosphere and the premises of the universities. I know of a university which is a few-storey tall and is in the middle of a road. The university building is squeezed between shops on either side of it. There is no campus!

The lack of proper English-medium universities are the cause of hundreds of students going abroad for higher studies. Most students opt for universities colleges in the United States require TOFEL and SAT tests for admission. This is where coaching centers come in.

They guarantee high scores, but how much this is true? Very little.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this piece is impersonal. It was not written to offend any organisation or any individual, so nobody should take offense. Furthermore, all opinions expressed here are general and have been verified by a survey.