

SSC Results

For the first time the education boards of the country had the same set of question papers for the first of the public examinations—Secondary School Certificate (SSC), that is. So when the results were declared, the occasion added some extra significance to the usual enthusiasm and celebration. The country's highest scorer had to his credit 959 marks out of a total 1,000. This is no mean achievement and can be cause for celebration but for the overall percentage of unsuccessful candidates who could not manage even the minimum required number of 33 in a number of subjects. More than 52 per cent students have thus failed to pass the SSC examinations this year. A few unsuccessful candidates went for the ultimate decision of ending their lives. Yet another significant fact is the continued gap between the city-based elite band of schools and the village educational institutions. The high-achievers are mostly confined to a handful of famous urban schools.

So the mood of celebration for the spectacular success by a few star students is bound to lose its shine because of the monumental loss the nation sustains each year in terms of merit, money and energy. The policy makers are yet to recognise this wastage in human-resource and economic terms. But happily the top students themselves have almost unanimously pointed at the defects in the system. Their considered opinion is that this is no system by which to judge the merit of the students. The more a student can get things by rote the better the chance for scoring high marks. If this is the view of the high scorers themselves, one fails to understand why our educationists, academicians and the ministry of education must continue with the system. Why cannot they think of something better to minimise the huge yearly loss?

It is a pity that the standards of schools vary so much and nobody could care less. Even the difference in the rate of success between the boards is quite intriguing. Comilla Board has the highest rate of success at 52.87 per cent whereas the newly created Chittagong Board finds itself at the bottom with only 33.23 per cent. It shows that not only the standard of educational institutions varies but also the checking of answer scripts allegedly suffers from discriminatory judgment.

Motijheel Ideal School seems to be right when it complains that answer scripts of two subjects were grossly undermarked and that cost the school a few placings in the science group. So teachers' or teaching quality matters indeed. When good teachers have to migrate to cities for a handsome or fat income leaving behind their village schools to incompetent and below-par teachers, such is bound to be the consequence. The worst sufferers may be the individual students or their guardians but the overall loss to the nation mounts with every passing year. The falling standard of education has a cumulative chain effect—one that now appears to pull down the whole educational edifice of the country.

The sooner we start realising this the better for the nation's educational prospects. We need to completely reorganise the system. The draft education policy has indeed made a few suggestions in that it wants to do away with the centrally conducted public examinations. Instead of 'marking' it recommends a grading system to judge the merit of the students. However bright the idea may look, the problem is that all this requires putting in place the right kind of infrastructure and more importantly the orientation and finetuning of the teaching standard. Money, although a material concern, is also very important in this case. Since the aim is to take a fresh look at the system, it has to be done in full. No half-hearted attempt will do. Let there be enough money to carry out the reorganisation programme of our education.

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