

# The Bangladesh Observer Academic Corruption

62  
131

The latest manifestation of academic corruption, as we may call it, is the appearance of pressure groups drawn from the student community who reportedly go round visiting the houses of examiners to induce, or force them to mark papers in a certain way. They come armed with accurate and detailed information about the identity of the examinees and the names of the particular examiners who have received their scripts for evaluation. How they find all this out is no longer a mystery. They are said to collect the data they want for a consideration from officials of the education boards which conduct public examinations and have little difficulty embarrassing teachers who decline to cooperate.

There is, we regret to say, good reason to believe that the evil is not limited to secondary or higher secondary stages, but has, as reported, spread to the universities. Now that most universities have switched over to the course or semester system in which examinations are the responsibility of the teachers themselves, confidentiality about either question papers or methods of evaluation is impossible to maintain. We have no wish to level summary accusations against all universities or all departments; there, we hope, are many exceptions to the practices we have mentioned. But it cannot be denied that public confidence in the value of certificates and degrees has been so sharply eroded that they are seldom regarded as a true testimonial to students' real achievements or deficiencies.

It is the good students who do not believe in cheating and are earnest about their academic work who suffer the most. The outsider has no means of distinguishing between a student who has achieved distinction by dint of his own merit, and another who has obtained a certificate by dishonest means. It is this section of the student community who in their own interests ought to band together to stamp out the evil. Fear of reprisals from the dishonest has been known in many cases to deter the honest from protesting or supporting measures calculated to eradicate evil practices. But it is a fear they must conquer lest greater evils overwhelm them.

But the situation also calls for an overhaul of the examination system. The system of grading students according to their performance no longer seems to be working. Why attempt any grading at all? This is done in our country on the basis of the overall performance of a candidate, and those who fail to achieve a certain minimum in a certain prescribed subject are declared failed in the examination as a whole regardless of what they may have done in others. The upshot is that a student who has no intention of proceeding beyond a particular stage and may have concentrated his attention on an area in which he is interested cannot avoid the stigma which attaches to failed students. His prospective employers are influenced by what is recorded on his certificate rather than by his achievement in the subject which should concern them most. A student may, for instance, have obtained high marks in chemistry, but he would still not succeed in finding employment in a pharmaceutical industry because of his failure in, say, a language subject.

Whatever the merits of the old methods of evaluation, they no longer seem suitable in a growing economy. The degree of waste which is caused by the repeated attempts made by failed students to qualify or succeed is a national loss, and there is very little to justify it or compensate for it.

We are fully aware that academic corruption is one aspect of the decline in moral values which is everywhere. It is idle to hope that students who are in a social environment riddled with corruption can be immune from the virus. But we must at the same time courageously reform what has grown out-moded and longer working.