

## The School Based System Of Assessment

Assessing the capability of a student is no easy task but assessing future capability is even harder which is why parents and guardians leave it to the teachers. This was basically the idea behind the School Based Assessment (SBA) programme the government wanted to introduce along with its unitrack system that fell foul to critics. It, as we recall, most of the criticism was not against the unitrack system per se as about the timing and capacity of the government to change the system without proper preparation for it, including funding. Whatever the truth may be the result was to suspend its implementation for a year after facing severe criticism from the media and educationists. But the directorate of secondary and higher education now seems determined to install the SBA as a 'possible.' The government has, reportedly, asked schools across the country to carry out the SBA of students from Class VI to IX, instead of the existing evaluation based solely on the examinations. Whereas some schools have begun to implement the instruction, many schools, especially those outside of Dhaka are yet to receive the directive.

The SBA system that sets 10 criteria for evaluating student's performance and allots 30 marks for this procedure, reserving the balance of 70 marks for semester examinations is, on the face of it not bad but it does raise the question of a teachers' ability to judge a child's worth at the final result of a student's performance will be calculated by adding the two scores together, people may be forgiven for being apprehensive as it offers scope for manipulation. However as the 30-mark evaluation will be based on attendance, interest in learning, performance in solo and group assignments and presentation, behaviour, values, honesty, leadership quality, punctuality, participation in cultural functions, achievements in sports, etc. it does not seem all bad but it does place a good deal on the integrity of a teacher.

The question is why, when schools are already months into the current academic session, the Directorate of secondary and higher education thought it right to announce that the system would be implemented as quickly as possible in all government and non-government schools across the country. The circular stated that (although) the government had postponed its decision to introduce a unitrack curriculum for secondary school students for one year, it had not included the implementation of the SBA system in that decision and on March 28, the Secondary Education Sector Improvement project director sought the education ministry's further instruction to proceed with the SBA system as per the previous notification. But although a number of officials attending an education ministry meeting on the issue on February 9 recommended the SBA system should be deferred for one more year along with the unitrack curriculum, the project director of the SESIP expressed the view that the SBA could be introduced under a unitrack or under the existing multi-track system, of education and after the meeting, the ministry instructed the secondary and higher education directorate to issue a circular, stipulating that all schools should implement the SBA system as early as possible.

So why the fear? Some say because the SBA system would make way for widespread corruption. For their part schoolteachers fear they may come under attack if they do not give full or a high assessment to certain students which is a revelation in itself. But the bottom line is that most of the teachers are yet to receive the training necessary for implementing the SBA system.

The Chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, Gazi Mohammad Ahsanul Kabir is reported to support it and said the SBA system would ensure the proper evaluation of a student. Moreover, he said the system has been successfully implemented in many countries like New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia and will dramatically improve the quality of classroom education in Bangladesh maybe so! Maybe not! Only time will tell but the greatest challenge a developing country can face is how to bridge the gap between them and the developed ones. It is therefore very important to help low-income students achieve, their potential so that they too can participate in the economy and society. This acquires added importance as the poverty rate for families headed by dropouts is more than twice that for families headed by high school graduates.