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Colleges At Fault

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The authorities have at last made a serious attempt to curb the adoption of unfair means in the country's public examinations and related irregularities. As many as 130 colleges have already been served notices upon—33 of them show cause notices—as to why examination centres in them will not be cancelled—for various reasons. While this punitive action against colleges, found guilty of different educational aberrations, is in the process, a move is also in progress for the reform of the question papers both at the SSC and HSC examinations. In the next year's examinations the questions will be partly analytical in nature and in the year 2001 the entire set of questions will be analytical. The purpose is to prevent students from copying from books.

These are undoubtedly good moves to contain the massive copying and other foul means as adopted by candidates at the SSC and HSC level. Yet these are nothing more than a typical reaction to a problem that has continued for long and eaten into the vitals of our education. True, the opportunity to have recourse to unfair means opens the floodgates of educational corruption, and the urge to teach well and learn well for teachers and students respectively simply vanishes. It has even a strong negative impact on good and meritorious students who would like to appear at the examinations in a quiet and congenial atmosphere of an examination centre. The overall dampening impact on education is for all to see now.

The influence is so strong that today the candidates, guardians and even teachers have made an unholy alliance to give copying a sure chance to succeed at the public examinations. Copying or for that matter other gross educational irregularities exist or thrive because most people—if not all—in society either directly or indirectly support the evil practices. When teachers are involved in supplying copies to candidates, fake registration and other criminal practices like illegal change of centres or answer scripts of candidates to have their results unnaturally improved or even directly manipulated for a fat bribe, these options for stemming the degeneration of education may prove too little and too late. They must be given the punishment they deserve.

At the same time reshaping the answer scripts would not solve the problem unless the mode of teaching and the whole system of education are remodelled and reformed. Unfit and ineligible teachers must leave the profession in the national interest. Even good textbooks and other educational implements would not bring any desired change in the education sector unless a good crop of teachers are there to teach well. Already there are complaints that the students of rural schools are at a further disadvantage as a result of the introduction of some new text-books, including the English one, at the class IX and X level. The books as such are not at fault but there are hardly any teachers who can teach them properly. So, here is a strong case for employing good teachers in the rural schools in particular and at a higher salary. A thorough reform must be brought about within a reasonable period, say, 10 years—by which time the ground has to be prepared. Nothing can be imposed when at issue is education.