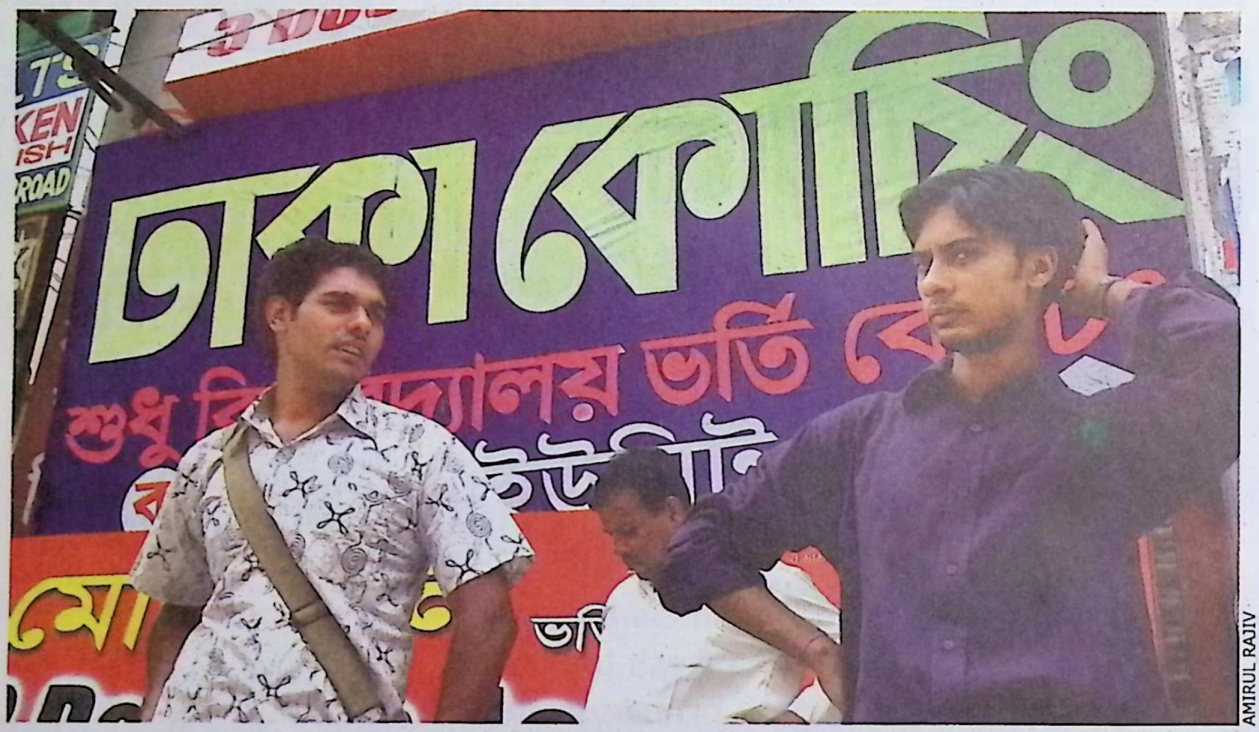
where love of learning is not instilled at an early age. Learning is, instead, a chore. Things are not made interesting and contextual for children so, by the time they reach higher levels, the excitement of learning is gone. This is combined with the problem of insincere teachers in the field of higher education -- in that physician's case, it was the medical educators who are too busy making money in private practice to discharge their teaching responsibilities honourably.

The problem of substandard education appears to be pervasive in ordinary institutions from primary to tertiary level, but, unfortunately, most of our children have to rely on these "ordinary schools" to receive their education, and then attend coaching classes to achieve the desired examination results. We want Bangladesh to produce stellar students who can compete globally (it is a small world) for further development of this country, like some of its peers in South Asia. This is not going to happen unless something major is done with the school education system.

The system, as it is, fails to produce thinkers. It generates a profusion of high scoring students; all with a GPA of 5.0 (all of whom of course have been to coaching classes) with no discriminatory powers between them. It boosts income of the teachers who run coaching classes, places an inordinate and unhealthy burden on the students, and makes for major stresses on parental resources. The same students who scored perfect GPAs will again need coaching for entrance examinations to institutions of higher learning! Where does it stop? Can the calibre of all students with GPA 5.0 be the same? I can't imagine it is, but there is no way to tell at present.

Students are not encouraged to be multidimensional in the present educational system, there are no college entrance interviews, or other forms of evaluation which might reflect a candidate's talents. What this does is create a lot of frustration among students when they are denied admission into an institution of their choice; after all they got a perfect GPA -- so why didn't they get in? The stress from this experience alone is formidable, and definitely unhealthy for the youngsters and their families.

This brings into question the role of coaching classes in helping to create this plethora of high scoring students who are elated with their school final results, only to have their hopes come crashing down in the hard reality of the subsequent process of admission to college. Maybe the question setters should not be setting similar questions year after year, which makes it is easy for students in a coaching class to get hold of the material that is always going to be asked. Instead, the questions should be more thought provoking and less focused on rote learning, which might actually put a brake on the runaway phenomenon of "GPA 5.0." I can recall actually learning new things from the questions that were asked in the GCE O and A level examinations when I had to do them, and I see similar trends in the higher examination questions of developed countries now.



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