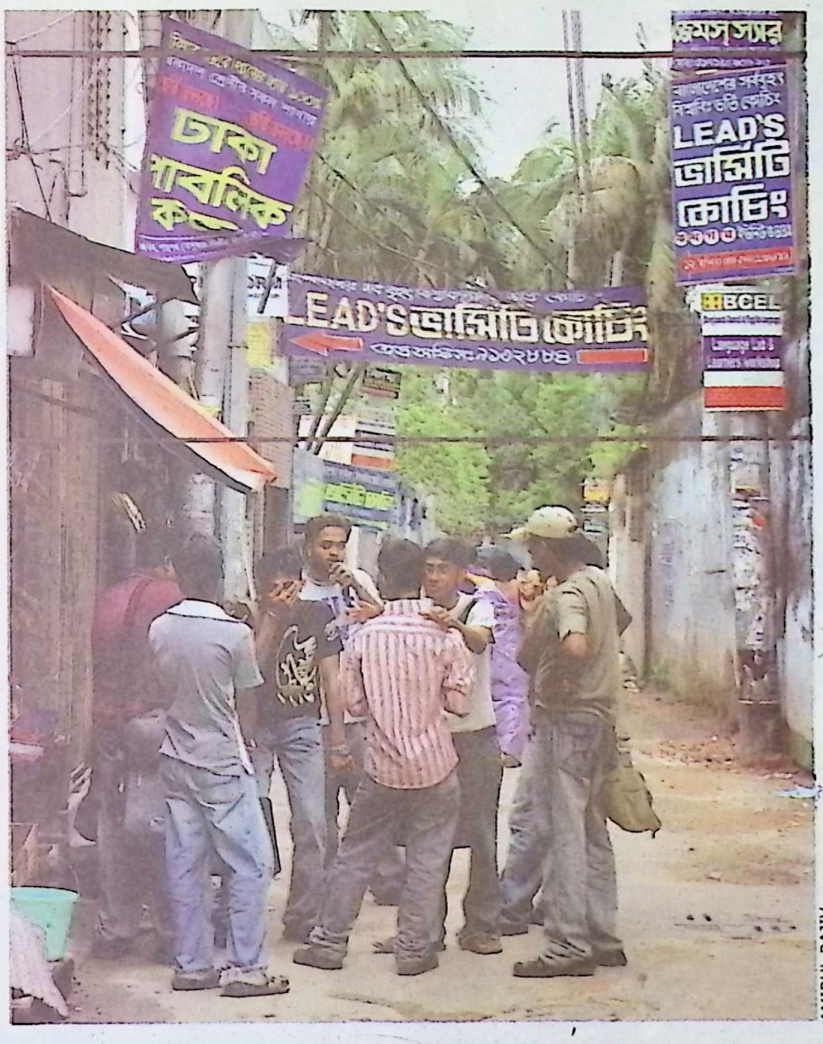


AMIRUL RAJIV

What is the solution? I can't pretend to have the answer to this very grave and real problem in our society. However, we can try to look at this in several ways. First, there needs to be a consensus in the Dept. of Education about what is an acceptable curriculum for schools, and what the teachers should be teaching. This curriculum can be a blend of the different types of methods, encouraging higher standards and critical thinking with less emphasis on rote learning. It might be beneficial to actually look at what is being taught elsewhere in the world, particularly in countries where our children might aspire to go to for higher studies, and incorporate some of their curricula in the Bangladeshi system. Teams of educators from Bangladesh could visit countries with this aim in mind. It is a small world, and we should be emulating the laudable aspects of the education systems in foreign countries to make progress and be competitive. Students should be given the opportunity of learning hands-on the relevance of the concepts taught in the classroom, and their minds should be enriched through educational field trips and experiences. Teacher training is of paramount importance, not only for delivery of the curriculum but also for preparing students with test taking strategies; practicing for examinations should be part of the curriculum, without people having to trek through Dhaka's unforgiving traffic to reach the coaching classes!

A teacher who normally teaches a student in his/her classroom, should be banned from coaching that student privately for remuneration -- that is a big conflict of interest. If that teacher helps the student after school, without taking money, that is fine and is to be commended. It goes without saying that to abolish coaching classes teachers need an incentive -- that of a higher salary. Parents may not object to higher school fees if they were assured that their children would receive the appropriate educational materials to succeed, while abolishing the "coaching class racket;" that is what it is, if we are to call a spade a spade.

Teachers need to be evaluated on their performance, given feedback, and afforded the opportunity for professional development. High performing teachers need to be recognized with awards, and maybe bonus payments. The saying "teachers make all professions possible" should be honoured, and teachers given their due compensation for doing what is right for the students. Institutions should fire incompetent teachers, and reward the good and dedicated ones. Once we fix the school curricula so that these "routine" coaching classes are no longer required, we can then expand the offerings for individual students who are struggling and need one on one tutoring, as well as for the brighter gifted students who need to be challenged with courses beyond their class level.

Perhaps some of the country's revenue that is being recovered from corrupt politicians and their cronies could be put to good use in the education sector, for grants to schools to improve teacher training, to upgrade facilities, build science laboratories, expanding library holdings, computer laboratories etc. The younger generation is our biggest asset -- we should take their education seriously and focus on their multidimensional development.

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