



Campaign for Popular Education

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ETHICS AND VALUES IN EDUCATION

28th December 2017

Azimur Rahman Conference Hall
The Daily Star Centre, Dhaka

Jointly organized by

The Daily Star



Campaign for Popular Education

In association with:



European Union

CSEF

Civil Society Education Fund



Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and The Daily Star jointly organised a roundtable titled "Ethics and Values in Education" on December 28, 2017. Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, Professor Emeritus of BRAC University chaired the meeting. Here we publish a summary of the discussions

Ethics and Values in Education

Manzoor Ahmed, Professor Emeritus, BRAC University



It is generally expected for the education system to instill ethics and values in students. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Bangladesh, as the education system has become corrupted and politicised. In April

2010, five eminent educationists of the country issued a joint statement on the eve of finalisation of the education policy. They were late Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, Late Prof. Zillur Rahman Siddiqi, Late Prof. Jamal Nazrul Islam, Prof. Anisuzzaman and Prof. Serajul Islam Chowdhury. They urged the ruling party to sever ties with its student wing to save educational institutions from mindless politicisation. They also called for an increase in the education budget, and diligent implementation of the education policy. This message, I believe, is more relevant today than ever.

Tapon Kumar Das, Deputy Director, CAMPE



CAMPE has been campaigning for the last 6-7 years to incorporate a sense of peace and values in the education system. We found it particularly important to listen to students' opinions about these

issues. After the Holey Artisan attack, we put special emphasis on school-based campaigns and held consultations in schools with students, teachers and guardians.

Students have identified various issues as reasons behind young people's lack of motivation, and their involvement in criminal and anti-social activities: detachment from parents, domestic violence, unwelcoming environment in the school, ill-equipped classrooms, burden of books, unfriendly attitude from teachers, lack of recreation facilities, misuse of internet and mobile phone and so on. Parents expressed their frustration over failure of schools and education curricula in motivating students towards study. Teachers spoke of question paper leaks in public examinations, excessively marks-oriented education system, poorly equipped classrooms are seriously affecting the quality of education. These opinions point to ways to finding solutions to the existing problems of our education system.

So far we have conducted campaigns in five districts. We want to reach all the students across the country.

Professor A A M S Arefin Siddique, Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Dhaka



The way we provide religious education to our students creates division and communal disharmony. It goes against the secular spirit of our Liberation War. Religious education can be a required course,

but the marks obtained in this course should not be added to the overall result, because students should not be evaluated on the basis of a differentiated curriculum. There should be a single subject on religion and ethics where students, irrespective of their religious background, can learn moral teachings of every religion and respect every belief system.

We should prioritise teaching of ethics and values in implementation of the education policy.

Question paper leaks are a curse. Earlier, the main motive behind such acts was profit making. Now it seems like certain quarters are leaking questions and spreading those on social media to sabotage the education system of the country. The concerned authority is only exacerbating the problem by denying its existence. They should go all out to stop this menace.

Professor Hannana Begum, Former Principal, Eden Girls' College



Improvement in education is related to a broad spectrum of things. We claim that mothers do not give quality time to their children, but we do not ask whether there are adequate facilities, such as daycare centres which

can ease work-load of working mothers, in place. Most often than not, the people who head schools or college management committees come from questionable backgrounds. Teachers are also involved in making quick money by adopting illegal means such as publishing guide books, establishing coaching center etc. What will students learn from such people? Our teaching style also needs to be changed. It should be participatory, where students will actively contribute to teaching and learning, rather than passively receiving information from teachers.

Md. Ziaul Kabir Dulu, Freedom Fighter and President, Obhibabak Forum



Students are forced to take tuitions beyond school hours in schools. We filed a writ petition to stop the coaching business. The High Court issued a rule asking the government to explain why it should not be directed to stop teachers

from working in coaching centres. Instead of putting a ban on the coaching business, the government came up with a compromise solution and formulated a guideline with the provision that teachers can provide tuition at their residences to a maximum of 10 students of institutions other than their own upon receiving prior permission from their respective heads of institutions. Unfortunately, this policy has failed to bring about any positive change.

Similarly, we also tried to stop the "admission business" in private schools, but failed due to political interference and corrupt practices of teachers and school authorities. Although the government formulated a policy regarding admission policies of private schools, it is hardly ever followed. Unless and until we stop such blatant commercialization, we can't improve our education system.

We urgently need a comprehensive education law, which will address the above-mentioned issues and ensure proper management and quality of education. Moral education should be included in our national curricula.

Momtaz Latif, Curriculum Specialist, ECCD Specialist



The first education policy of Bangladesh, known as Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission Report, highlighted the importance of incorporating moral education, instead of religious education, in the curricula. The Report

suggested unified courses on moral education at the primary and secondary level, which would include teachings of every religion. This policy was imbued with a spirit of secularism which we should always uphold.

Public exams at early levels, such as PSC

and JSC, should be stopped immediately. It is creating excessive pressure on children and impeding their progress. It is also encouraging corruption at the inception level of the education system. Earlier, there was a liberal promotion policy at Class I and II in Bangladesh, something that is widely practiced in developed countries. This should be reintroduced in our country.

We can't stop students from using cell phones and the internet. We should instead create innovative digital contents and give young people a widerange for recreation choices. Schools should regularly organize cultural and sports events.

Last but not the least, members of political parties, particularly MPs, should not be made heads of school or college management committees.

Shafi Ahmed, Former Professor, Jahangirnagar University and Dhaka University



When we were students, there was no course on religious education. We learnt language such as Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit, and this enriched our learning. Religion is not the only source of ethics and

morality. We can learn a lot from the lives of great people like Vidyasagar and Begum Rokeya. Apart from books, there are many other media, such as television and internet, through which we can impart moral education. We shouldn't burden students with textbooks and private coaching.

It is truly unfortunate that even though the education policy was passed in the Parliament, it has not been properly implemented.

Professor Syeda Tahmina Akhter, Director, IER, DU



We should always keep in mind that charity begins at home. Parents have to instill good values in children from the very beginning of their learning process. Children should be taught moral education at the primary

education level, through creative means such as drawing, games and storytelling. Quality education depends on quality teachers. To impart moral education, our teachers also need to practice moral behavior in their everyday life so that students can learn from them.

Unfortunately, there is wide prevalence of corruption in the teacher recruitment process of the country. Applicants have to pay a hefty amount to get a teaching job. After being employed, they also become involved in corrupt practices to get back the money they invested. We must break this vicious cycle and make the teacher recruitment system transparent.

Earlier, school inspectors, academic supervisors and ATEOs used to visit classrooms to assess the performance of teachers. They used to guide teachers on how to improve their teaching styles. Today, although there are designated officers to monitor school activities, it appears that they are not carrying out their professional responsibility with competence and diligence.

The government has prepared lesson plans and teachers' guide to improve teaching method. But teachers do not follow these directions. School authorities, particularly head teachers, should play a proactive role in ensuring that teachers follow the directives of the teachers' guide in classrooms. Teachers also need to be trained on how they can relate moral education in their class activities.

Children shouldn't be exposed to

violence in TV and movies, as this can lead to aggressive and anti-social activities.

Sheikh Shahana Shimu, Research Associate, BRAC Institute of Education Development, BRAC University



We should focus on improving the assessment system in schools. The existing system prioritises marks over learning and knowledge. To identify merit or assess the performance of a child, we need to base it on a

logical, fair and equitable assessment system. It also needs to be creative so as to inspire imagination of children and develop their thinking capacity.

Shyamal Kanti Ghosh, Former Secretary, Government of Bangladesh



All the good things we are talking about are included in textbooks. For example, in the text book of class V there is a chapter on human rights which includes all the rights of a citizen. But how many students are aware about these

rights? Our teachers are failing to transmit such knowledge to students. Unfortunately, parents in the country are also not very conscious about teaching values to their children. Parents who are buying leaked question papers and indulging their children to adopt unfair means to get higher marks in exams are only corrupting their kids. Thus before overhauling the assessment system, we should reform the existing teaching methods and change the mindset of parents.

Md. Salim Uddin, Secretary, Obhibabak Oikko Forum



Unfortunately, parents themselves push their children into the rat race. They don't care what their wards are learning. Moral education holds hardly any importance to them. They are just pleased to see good report cards. Unless we change this attitude towards education, very little can be achieved through reforms in teaching or assessment systems. Civil society can play a big role in changing this mindset.

There are many examples where teachers themselves hold fake certificates and get appointed by adopting unfair means. What values can they teach students? Media has exposed many such criminals. They should continue to do so and probe into all other corrupt practices prevalent in the education sector.

Nazrul Islam Khan, Former Education Secretary, Government of Bangladesh



When we introduced the creative question system, we faced severe criticism and protests from various quarters, including teachers. At the beginning, many schools fared badly in the exams. We discovered that teachers

had failed to adopt the creative education system, as they were not eager to learn new things. After we took action against those schools, things took a positive turn. Our teachers need to invest more time in building their capacity and improving their teaching methods.

I fully agree that instead of a traditional exam system, class-based assessments need to be introduced at the beginner's level. However, we should implement this gradually, so that teachers also learn how to

execute their responsibilities properly.

A big barrier to the improvement of our education system is a corrupt political environment. We must stop political interference in the education sector.

Md. Abul Kalam, Research Fellow, BRAC Institute of Education Development, BRAC University



I have to visit classrooms regularly for research. In most cases, teachers just read out from textbooks or ask students to do so instead of explaining the topic or relating it to practical examples. This may develop some

cognitive skills and memorizing factual information, but does not help in improving analytical skills of student. Equal emphasis should be given to the latter in our education system. Our exam system should also prioritise assessments of the analytical capability of students over their memorization skills.

Most schools do not hold regular assemblies or sports events. Many do not even have adequate space for that. Extra-curricular activities are equally important for the overall development of students, as social skills are as important as academic skills.

Syed Abul Maksud, Eminent Writer and Social Activist



The spirit of the Liberation War was to establish a secular democratic social system which must be reflected in the education system. The Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission Report was formulated in the same spirit.

Unfortunately, successive governments have abandoned the Report, which suggested a unified and secular education system. We have completely failed in establishing that. I am fully aware that this can't be done overnight, but we should continue our efforts to find out ways to introduce these changes, considering the socio-political context. The life of great personalities, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar and Nelson Mandela, should be taught in every educational institution. Even during the Pakistan regime, the life story of Mahatma Gandhi used to be taught in schools. We must overhaul our education system; otherwise we will not be able to consolidate our position.

Moreover, the government should put the highest priority in making the teacher recruitment process transparent. The officials of the Education Ministry should also follow the basic ethical and moral values.

Manzoor Ahmed

The symptoms of the problems in our education system are vivid. We must work together to save our education system. We need long-term planning for the education sector. There should be political commitment across all parties that no political interference will be allowed in the education sector.

We should incentivize our teachers, and train and manage them properly to get the best out of them. Teaching should be made an attractive and honourable profession. Five eminent educationists of the country recommended a national education corps, for which brilliant students would be selected from the undergraduate level and nurtured to be teachers. In every district, there could be one or two degree colleges, properly equipped and staffed, which would train the future teachers. If we can implement such a plan properly, it can bring dramatic changes to our education system.

Education Watch, a civil society watch group, is preparing a research-based report on promoting ethics and values in the school system. It is expected to be published shortly, which will be an occasion to consider further what can be done on this vital issue.