

# DOERS TODAY, NATION BUILDERS TOMORROW



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## The Need for Counselling ...

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Even though we can address many problems that students face in the context of Bangladesh through proper guidance and counselling services, we also have to understand that the lack of resources, incompatible teacher student ratio, lack of proper supervision and accountability are



IMAGE: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

impediments to introduce an effective counselling system in schools.

Moreover, Bangladesh still follows certain traditional methods when it comes to addressing challenges faced by the students. The teachers report to the head instructor or to the parents for

any undisciplined act or any significant problem of the child. However, for disruptive behaviour such as fighting with peers, stealing, and plagiarising, schools provide physical or mental punishment instead of strategically and empathetically solving the issue or giving remedial guidance.

In primary schools, students enter into a new environment leaving behind the security of their homes. Secondary school students, on the other hand, are at a transitional period, moving from childhood to adulthood. They need counselling to understand their emotions, clear their doubts and conflicts; they need someone to share the special experiences and feelings. In such cases counselling can help children to assess their abilities, interests, and needs and find solutions to personal social adjustments at their school and home.

Gradual steps and proper awareness programmes are necessary to make everyone related to the counselling programmes understand the need through seminars, posters, films, school trips, panel discussions, FGD, puppet shows as well as print and electronic media before introducing entire counselling programmes in schools. There should be national level guideline about school guidance and counselling and a curriculum that would incorporate counselling as a part of the teaching-learning system. Furthermore, guidance and counselling courses should be included in teachers' training programme. In every school, a guidance and counselling department should be opened which will provide different services such as orientation to the school, educational and vocational guidance, students' information, reme-

dial, referral and follow up services. This department can be entirely in charge of awareness programmes and trainings on counselling which would closely work with the school management to address different issues. Further strengthening of this department can be done if the counsellors are actively involved in research to find the best possible practices for different situations.

When I started JAAGO Foundation in Dhaka's Rayer Bazar slum area with only 17 slum children, my goal was to provide quality education to the underprivileged children of Bangladesh who were deprived of even the basic needs. Currently, JAAGO stands with 13 schools in different parts of Bangladesh. The road has been far from easy as with each step I was faced with different challenges.

With each passing year, I have learned that only providing quality education will not help the underprivileged children to overcome the challenges that they daily face in their lives. These children who are the students of JAAGO schools are vulnerable to domestic violence, sexual harassment and child marriages due to the socio-economic environments they grow up in. Due to these challenges, many of these children struggle to adjust with the school environment. Some of them have difficulty to understand instructions, have shorter attention span with slow cognitive development, or different behavioural issues. All of these made me realise the importance of ensuring the holistic growth of the children that JAAGO is catering to. Currently, in all JAAGO schools, JAAGO has a community officer who provides necessary guidelines to the parents to ensure that their children are looked after. Each officer is chosen from the communities that JAAGO schools are

Incorporation of counselling programmes in schools is still a very new idea in Bangladesh and most of the programmes are run with a "same size fits all" idea.

working on. The idea behind the role of these officers is to ensure that parents feel comfortable in sharing the issues of their households which might be hampering their children's education and overall development. Besides the officers, JAAGO has a dedicated Child Welfare Team which looks after the issues behind a child's consistent poor performance at school. As JAAGO takes cases of students dropping out and their holistic development very seriously, this team has been effective to ensure that the children of JAAGO schools are taken care of. Although JAAGO works towards addressing the issues of a child's development, there is no denying the importance of having professional counsellors in schools to specifically address a child's struggles in a methodical manner. Currently, JAAGO's Rayer Bazar and Banani school branches have access to mental health

experts who work diligently to look into the issues faced by the children. In the schools which are located in remote areas, the students and their parents are connected over Skype with a counsellor to identify the issues and possible solutions. There have been cases where JAAGO's school management had to send a counsellor to the school branches to directly talk to the students and assess the situations to provide concrete solutions. From my own personal experience of working with the children, I understand how indispensable it is to appoint professional counsellors who can cater to the needs of children and young adults. Like JAAGO, other institutions can slowly start to implement counselling as an integral part of their education system.

It is understandable that an educational institution alone can't bring the above-mentioned changes. Without government support and funding, it is difficult to bring overall perspective change about counselling in educational institutions. Education ministry and academics need to understand the importance of introducing counselling as part of the education policy for primary, secondary and higher secondary school systems. Students' social, emotional, and academic behavioral issues need to be targeted through educational efforts to help them adjust better in their home and school life. Educators and school administrators may consider this issue to reduce high dropout rates at the secondary level in schools. Awareness towards emotional and behavioural adjustment needs of students and its association with academic performance should be created among the teachers, parents, educators, administrators and community.

Korvi Rakshand is the Founder and Chairman of JAAGO Foundation

**Picnic TIME**

**FANTASY KINGDOM**  
THEME PARK  
CONCORD

VARIETY OF QUALITY FOOD & BEVERAGE

\* Applicable for minimum 10 persons

**FANTASY KINGDOM**  
Entry + All Rides (Per person)  
School/College - Tk. 400  
Corporate - Tk. 500

**WATER KINGDOM**  
Entry + All Rides (Per person)  
School/College - Additional Tk. 180  
Corporate - Additional Tk. 220