

Are teachers failing, or is the system failing them?



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Recently, Education Minister Ehsanul Haque Milon told the parliament that 60,295 teaching posts are currently vacant in about 26,000 MPO-listed (government grant-receiving) secondary schools and colleges in the country. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) reported that Bangladesh lags behind most in terms of qualified teachers in secondary schools in South Asia. Only 55 percent of the teachers at the secondary level in Bangladesh were considered qualified, whereas the Maldives rated 98 percent of its teachers as qualified. The rates were 97, 92, 80, and 68 percent, respectively, for Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

A manageable class size to teach is a basic working condition for a teacher to perform adequately. The average teacher-student ratio in Bangladesh's secondary schools is reported to be about 1:35 compared to a standard of 1:15 in a well-performing system. The average hides the fact that many high school classes in Bangladesh have 60-70 or more students. This reality is reflected by the government's rule for the MPO grant that allows a school to open a new section only when enrolment in the class exceeds 55 students. Due to MPO budget limitations, this rule is not applied often, and the enrolment reaches even higher. More critically, remote schools find the bureaucratic process and requirements of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Education for hiring additional teachers difficult.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), a 2024 report found that of around 59,700 designated English teachers in secondary schools, a quarter had not studied English beyond 12th grade, and only 17 percent held a degree in English at honours or master's level. The situation in mathematics is even more precarious. Of 61,700 mathematics

teachers in secondary schools, 57 percent had not studied mathematics at the college level, and only 17 percent had mathematics as a subject at honours or master's level. It is not surprising that low scores in English and mathematics are a major contributor to low pass rates in public examinations. The MPO rules for teaching staff allocation set a standard pattern. As noted above, the permitted staffing is often inadequate for the number of enrolled students, especially in the core subject areas.

A consultation committee appointed by the Ministry of Education in 2025, under the interim government, to recommend reforms in secondary education devoted a chapter of its report to teachers. The committee identified eight major obstacles to good teacher performance: First, there is no clearly defined framework for teachers' responsibility, effort, and performance standards for assessment and incentives. Second, the current allocation of teaching posts is fundamentally inadequate for maintaining manageable student-teacher ratios, ensuring subject-specific instruction, and facilitating co-curricular activities. This systemic deficit is further exacerbated by a high volume of vacant teaching roles. Third, delays and inefficiencies in the selection, appointment, placement, promotion, and transfer of teachers are a common feature. Moreover, frequent complaints are voiced about corruption, nepotism, the role of syndicates in controlling decisions, and the lack of recourse for wrongdoing in personnel management.

Fourth, pre-service professional preparation, in-service professional support, and a culture of mentoring of new teachers in school are absent. Teaching quality is also severely hindered by poor foundational training at private teachers' training colleges

and Open University distance courses, coupled with infrequent, impractical on-the-job training. Fifth, there is no career path for teachers. Most teachers appointed as assistant teachers end up retiring as assistant teachers—a serious disincentive to teacher professionalism.

Sixth, teachers of only a few government secondary schools (three percent of total) are placed at the government salary level of grade

in behaviour and attitudes; however, a study found that two-thirds of high school students do not see their teachers as role models, and half of the teachers do not see themselves as role models for their students.

The problems described are not a discovery of the consultation committee. In fact, various initiatives to improve teachers' performance have been taken over the last two decades by the two ministries of education with technical

achievement has been from the multibillion-dollar investment of government and external funds for over two decades in enhancing the quality and performance of our teachers. Certainly, much less than expected if the criterion is the learning outcome of students. A newly elected government has pledged better performance of the education system and has raised people's expectations once again. Development partners are willing to help. The ball is in our court; the government has to take the lead in setting priorities and strategies, and establish a result-focused implementation process and mechanism. This is where we have largely failed so far. Can we now move away from the rut of unfulfilled promises and unrealised expectations?

The consultation committee report on secondary education (and a similar report on primary and non-formal education) has put forward a set of recommendations on the eight issues noted above about teachers' role and performance. The committees have underlined the importance of early and medium-term actions, largely within the present structure of a large and complex system (because the system has to be kept running). They have also emphasised the need for a longer-term view to bring about transformative change in our schools and the role and performance of teachers, attracting the "best and the brightest" to the profession. They have urged "out-of-the-box" thinking about teachers and the education workforce in the 21st century. They also underscored the need for systems thinking, rather than isolated remedies for symptoms of the disease.

The system is now failing both students and teachers. The diagnostics and remedies indicated by the consultation committees are not necessarily the last words on education reform. But their ideas merit serious consideration, particularly the suggestions about the process of initiating and carrying out reform. They emphasise that a devoted and specially designated task force of experts has to be assigned the task of initiating and guiding the reform effort holistically for the entire school education, pre-primary to pre-university, supported by strong political backing. Personnel in the existing organisational structure, mostly risk-averse and inclined to maintain the status quo, are not likely to be up to the task.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

10 (out of 20 civil service grades). The salary starts at a basic level of Tk 16,000, with 60 to 70 percent more added as benefits. The MPO-listed teachers (in 97 percent of the schools) are paid the basic salary and roughly a quarter of the benefits. The non-MPO teachers paid from the schools' own funds receive substantially less. Primary school teachers are placed at grade 12 (basic starting salary of Tk 11,300). Bangladesh school teacher salary is the lowest among the South Asian countries, while the average salary level is two to three times higher in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Seventh, there is no system of forming teachers' organisations. Multiple organisations exist, often linked with political parties, mostly engaged in bargaining for material benefits, with little attention to improving the quality of education and system performance. And eighth, teachers are expected to be role models for their students

and financial support from international development partners. Notable among them are the Teacher Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Projects (TQI 1 and 2 carried out between 2005 and 2020); Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP, 2008-2017) and ongoing Learning Acceleration in Secondary Education (LAISE, 2023-2028)—all at the secondary level. Under the Primary Education Development Program phases 1 to 4 (PEDP 1 to 4, 1998 to 2026), teacher capacity building and training have been a major strategy for quality improvement in primary education. PEDP5 is expected to begin in July this year. Multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF, UNESCO, and various bilateral aid providers have been associated with these projects.

A legitimate question is what the

When mobile journalism crosses the line into public shaming



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Journalism is meant to hold power to account, and mobile journalism, using smartphones for reporting and storytelling, should have ideally taken that mission to new heights. In too many corners of Bangladesh, however, we are witnessing a rather disturbing reality where mobile journalism is used as a tool for moral policing and public shaming of the vulnerable members of our community, especially women.

For example, imagine a woman attending a public event; she takes a moment to adjust her saree, stands in a crowd, or walks down the road. There is a good chance that somewhere nearby, a phone camera has already decided that she—not the event—is the focal point. The result? A barrage of clickbait content that exposes moral degradation masquerading as public-interest journalism.

There was a time when mobile journalism felt like a democratic breakthrough. A phone in a reporter's hand meant speed and reach. Stories could be told from places where professional cameras did not have access. It was supposed to expand the boundaries of reporting, but somewhere down the line, that idea was lost. However, the problem here is not the cameras. Journalists must film public events. Citizens, too, record public moments. The problem arises when the angle is chosen not to inform but to expose; when the selected frame does less to explain and more to embarrass; when the caption exists not to provide context but to direct the viewer's gaze towards a woman's body, clothing, or posture. And at that moment, the woman becomes consumable content.

YouTube channels, and pseudo-portals trading in degradation. Even some recognised media outlets have, at times, published clips and still shots of women that had less to do with public interest and more with spectacle. Pseudo-portals operate without standards, and recognised media outlets sometimes betray the very standard it claims to uphold. In the end, the result is the same: women exploited to increase traffic. Let us not confuse this with

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journalism. It most certainly is not. A page attaching words such as "TV" or "news" to its name does not automatically become a credible source of news simply because it has learned how to upload humiliation.

Recently at TSC, students confronted a multimedia reporter for inappropriately filming a female activist during a protest. A video

showed the woman asking him why he had taken such clips. This newspaper also came across a handwritten undertaking on the letterhead of Dhaka University Journalists' Association stating that the reporter had been caught unnecessarily zooming in on a woman while filming. He admitted wrongdoing and was released on a bond.

The same trend exists elsewhere as well. At police checkpoints, routine checking often turns into a show, as reporters gather around with cameras or phones and continue to film long after all the public interest justification has disappeared. The same thing happens during police raids, especially in hotels, where people are recorded in vulnerable moments. Their faces are exposed without consent, whether or not they are guilty of anything. Then the clips go online with outrageous captions, and the trial by media begins.

The damage does not stop with the sexualised framing of women. According to reports published by *The Daily Star* and *The Business Standard*, four people were assaulted by a mob in the evening of April 10 in the capital's Shahbagh area following accusations of being members of the queer community. The victims later told *The Business Standard* that people identifying themselves as mobile journalists obstructed their movement, filmed them without consent, and subjected them to embarrassing, indecent, and suggestive questioning even as the violence unfolded. What is being normalised in all these incidents is not merely bad journalism but a broader instinct to treat vulnerability as content. The camera culture has digitised and monetised harassment.

It is also about law, regulation, and state responsibility. Section 509 of the Penal Code states that anyone who, intending to insult the modesty of a woman, utters any word, makes any sound or gesture, exhibits any object, or intrudes upon her privacy can face imprisonment for up to one year, or a fine, or both. Yet we rarely see

that seriousness applied to media-branded actors who trade in women's humiliation. Cyber security laws and digital enforcement mechanisms often become visible when politics is involved or when powerful interests are affected. They seem far less apparent when the dignity of women or vulnerable community members is under question. Bangladesh's legal framework has already been criticised for failing to provide effective protection when it comes to online violence against women. If the present framework is too weak and far too easy to evade, there is no question why it should not be amended.

Here, the state's responsibility begins with registered media houses. If the government grants registration, it cannot then pretend it has no role when that legitimacy is abused.

It can issue warnings, demand explanations, impose sanctions through proper channels, and, where warranted, move towards legal action. Registration cannot become a shield for predation.

The state's responsibility is even clearer when the offender is not a registered newsroom, but an unregistered page or portal using the word "News" in its name. Such actors do not carry the protections of a recognised media institution, yet they exploit the name of journalism to prey on people for clicks. The government should not wait for victims to speak up—many may not even know their images have gone viral. It should create a working mechanism for rapid reporting and warning issuance and takedown requests alongside strengthening platform coordination

and repeat-offender tracking through law enforcement agencies.

I write this as a journalist because I know what this culture is doing not only to women, but also to the profession. Every time humiliation is packaged as content under the label of media, journalism is tainted. Every time a woman is reduced to bait beneath a news logo, the public learns to trust journalism a little less. That is also why this cannot be brushed aside as a matter of press freedom. Protecting a woman or any vulnerable member of society from predatory lenses is not a restriction on the press; it is the enforcement of a citizen's right to dignity. And, if we continue to excuse this in the name of media, journalism might become part of the very problem it should work to expose.

বাংলাদেশ গম ও ভুট্টা গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট

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e-Tender Notice (Goods)/2025-2026

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of

Sl No	ID	Name of Goods	Last selling Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
01	1260280	Procurement of Compact Optical Sorter Machine for Hybrid Wheat	27-Apr-2026 09:55	27-Apr-2026 12:00

This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no Offline/ hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The procuring entity deserves the right to accept or reject any/all tender(s) without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

19/04/2026
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