

The monthly pay order or MPO from the government is synonymous with official accreditation and recognition. Getting registered under the MPO means that a teacher is recognised and acknowledged for having the necessary credentials and unsurprisingly a few thousand teachers are newly inducted into the MPO system almost every month.

This investigation finds that not a single teacher is inducted under the MPO without having paid bribes to certain officials at the regional offices. The report begins with a rather revealing conversation that had been stealthily recorded where an official clearly indicates that he wants money for the work and once the money is deposited, MPO inclusion should not be a problem.

The report essentially describes the process of getting inducted into the MPO with bribes through the experience of different teachers from across the country in the course of which it becomes quite clear that regardless of which area or region the teachers are from, no one can get away from the bribes. In other words, each of the hundreds of thousands of teachers working in Bangladesh's government schools have not been registered without a bribe.

The report is illuminating in terms of how this system evolved and emerged. It describes how the system was more centralised and was later decentralised to avoid the obvious bottlenecks and prevent central officials from becoming heavy handed. Now, however, it appears the decentralised system has also fallen prey to the very situation that policymakers were trying to avoid.

The director general of the education directorate acknowledged this harassment of teachers as does the education minister. They pledge that rogue officials will be investigated.

The report clearly demonstrates that there had been substantial research behind this exposé. All relevant officials, that is the offenders as well as the higher officials in the regions have been held to account without favour. The storytelling is crafty and despite the fact that just a handful of teachers agreed to be quoted by their name, the story does not seem to lack authenticity at any point, such is the depth and breadth of its research.