

Universal primary education

Implementation of any plan is really difficult because it requires adequate fund, proper time and energy. But nothing is impossible if the needed endeavour is made with all sincerity of purpose. Ours is a poor but developing country. Therefore, it will be our duty to see that the time at our hand, the fund available for the purpose, and the energy we need to spend do not become fruitless. In this article DR. MD. AZHAR ALI writes about our efforts at removing illiteracy from our national life.

Need is sincerity of purpose

The Two-Year Plan has mainly been designed to complete the incomplete works of the First Five-Year Plan and do some innovative works for all aspects of national development. For primary education the Two-Year Plan has designed programmes of work in the following manner:

- Objective:** To set the stage for attaining universal primary education at an early date and eradication of illiteracy through non-formal education.
- Finance:** For financing primary education Tk. 22.32 crore will be spent and this will constitute 13.22 per cent of the total amount earmarked for education.
- Strategy:** Projects which are nearing completion would be fully funded and works of these projects would be completed during the plan period.
- Programmes:** Development of 20,000 primary schools scheduled to be completed during the First Five-Year Plan would be completed by 1980. When completed it would be a major step towards introduction of universal primary education. Besides, the programmes for primary education include provision for the establishment of new primary schools for the children of tea garden labourers, community schools, and crea-

tion of facilities for organisation of rural games for primary school children.

A sum of Tk. 22.32 crore has been earmarked for primary education in the Two-Year Plan which will cater for 4.69 lakh additional children at primary schools.

A look at the total programme of the Two-Year Plan for primary education will inject a hope of success in our mind. If the works under the programmes for primary education are materialised, the introduction of compulsory primary education will not be too difficult as almost 74 per cent of the children of school going age will be in primary schools. This achievement will pave the way for introducing compulsory primary education in near future.

The plan period is very short and the works under the programmes of plan are not at all light in nature. The heaviness of the programme will need a timely start, proper allocation of fund and above of all the sincerity of purpose of the implementing agencies.

Task Before the Plan: The most difficult task before the Plan will be to reduce the drop-out rates. To develop and identify about the drop-out rates in our primary school, one may consult table 1.

An interpretation of table 1 reveals that the children who begin primary education from class I, a bit more than 25 per

cent of them reach class V. If this trend continues the introduction of compulsory primary education will be meaningless because, if the children, who come to primary schools for being literate, drop before completing the primary education with success they will lapse into illiteracy. Therefore, without imposing any suitable measure for the retention of children upto the last class of primary school the compulsory primary education will produce nothing effective as the prevailing rate of illiteracy will remain unchanged. As the removal of illiteracy has been accepted as the most important aim of compulsory primary education, the retention of the children in primary schools to finish primary education successfully should be treated as the most vital point if illiteracy is to be eradicated from

Class	Total	Boys	Girls
I	22.8 Lakh	14.2 Lakh	8.6 Lakh
II	15.2 "	9.0 "	6.2 "
III	10.2 "	7.0 "	3.2 "
IV	7.8 "	5.6 "	2.2 "
V	5.0 "	4.2 "	1.8 "

the soil of Bangladesh.

A good number of works for primary education under the First Five-Year Plan had been left incomplete or untouched. Within two years those works must be done to see the objective of the Two-Year Plan in action. Therefore, the planning and evaluation system should be developed to narrow down the gap between the words and deeds. To do this, the inspecting system should be strengthened to evaluate the works of the implementing agencies.

As an worker in Open Air Primary Education Project (First Phase) I had the opportunity to visit a good number of primary schools where teacher-student ratio was 1:2 or 3, the environment for teaching-learning was not at all encouraging and the expenditure incurred for the purpose seemed

to be ineffective. If no care is taken, these schools will remain in the list of primary schools with the false number of students with the pretention for doing works for the removal of illiteracy.

The preparation of the curriculum for primary education and the writing of textbooks for primary classes are almost over. Hence, it is the time for the implementing agencies to see whether the curriculum and the textbooks fulfil the expectation of the Plan.

Implementation of any plan is really difficult because it requires adequate fund, proper time and energy. But nothing is impossible in this world if the needed endeavour is put to action with all sincerity of purpose. Ours is a poor but developing country. Therefore, it will be our noble duty to see that the time at our hand, the fund available for the purpose and the energy we need to spend do not become fruitless. The Two-Year Plan (1973-80) is composed of many good plans and programmes for primary education and if these are implemented the introduction of compulsory primary education will be possible within a very short period of time and as a result the removal of illiteracy from our national life will not remain far from reality. Let all of us be optimistic about our success and join hands with our government to make the Plan successful.