

### National Education Policy

Sir.—The present education system as a whole is a legacy of the British rule. No real effort has been made at any reformation of the system since British rule ended in 1947. Now particularly when free and independent Bangladesh emerged after long 25 years it is imperative that a suitable education system should be forged soonest possible befitting an independent sovereign nation which should expedite our social and economic uplift. Many valuable opinions have been and are being expressed through various media lately and many pertinent suggestions have been made. We also know that a well constituted body has been working to the same end. We hope we shall shortly know the result of the deliberations of the august body but meanwhile, I, as a citizen of Bangladesh would venture some points through these columns of your paper.

The total education system from primary to university level may be divided into 3 broad stages:—Basic Education, Vocational Education (High School level) and Higher Education (University level). In a poor country like ours where almost 90% of the population are illiterate our utmost effort should be to remove the scourge within shortest possible time and therefore major emphasis must be placed upon basic education. This basic education should be imparted covering a period of 8 to 10 years with general curriculum with a bias for elementary science and mathematics. Because students have generally greater absorption power during early years Teaching method, during this period should be very intensive.

The present grouping at Secondary and Higher Secondary level into Science, Commerce and Humanities has proved not very helpful. It has been found that course selection on the basis of students' potential at secondary level (up to 16 years of age) is very difficult. This system is very wasteful and should be dispensed with as soon as possible and should be substituted for an integrated course upto Higher Secondary level.

Another most important aspect of National Education Policy should be that all exclusive Private English medium Kindergarten Schools/institutes must go. These institutions are creating an exclusive class who can never get along with the main stream of the nation. This also conflicts with social justice. There is of course nothing against learning English rather this language should be taught as a compulsory subject upto High School level with much more seriousness than at present. We must never forget the importance of English language and should take more care in teaching our boys and girls this internationally used language of this age which will give them the unique opportunity to enter the storehouse of higher education and knowledge. It will be a folly if we neglect to teach English to our students properly and better.

Second stage of education e.i. Vocational (High School level) education should be of 3/4 years' duration and should be job oriented so that on completion of this phase, if one cannot either make the grade or cannot afford higher education, one may be able to enter the job market. But the door for further education should never be closed to any one and there should not be any time limit or age limit for going in for higher education. The curricula of Higher Secondary Education should mainly consist of technical subjects and there should be provision for at least 6 months practical training in the particular subject a student is studying.

Present certificate examination system should be replaced by gradual evaluation during course period and Degree/Diploma should be awarded on the basis of performance in class room rather than on the basis of a final examination. Students should be continually informed about his deficiency or otherwise at regular intervals to afford him opportunity to rectify if necessary.

Another important aspect at this stage is that in case due to any reason whatsoever a student is compelled to drop out temporarily if he subsequently re-enters studentship he should get full credit for the completed portion of his earlier studies, in other words he should not be compelled to start all over again. This will prevent much financial loss as well as loss of time for the student who unfortunately had to drop out.

Higher education at University level should be very intensive and standard should be set at international level. But the door for higher studies should also be kept open for whoever is interested and can qualify. This will keep the aspiration alive in the minds of those who have genuine craving for higher education but is handicapped otherwise.

In fine we must immediately introduce some revolutionary and dynamic system replacing the old one. For this we should not hesitate to spend for importing necessary materials, modern technical aids such as audio-visual equipment and should start a crash programme for education. We must give priority to improvement of the quality of our people at any cost. We must not consider our people a liability, they can very well be turned into valuable assets with proper policy and adequate investment.—Yours etc.  
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