

American School Practices And Our School Education

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IT is generally recognized that the study of the educational systems of other nations, and of their successes and failures in meeting the problems they encounter, can show the way to a better understanding of one's own national system, its merits and drawbacks, its strengths and weaknesses. In the present article, an attempt has been made to highlight briefly some useful practices of American school education and their significance for development of school education in Bangladesh.

Districting Of School Communities

In the USA the local school districts are creatures of the State, deriving their powers from it as well as operating legally as its educational divisions for the purpose of organization and administration of public schools. Each local school administrative district is an area that is served by a single system of local school administration under the jurisdiction of a single Board of Education. There is a sharp distinction between a local school district and a school attendance unit or area. A school attendance unit or area is the territory served by a single school, while a local administrative district consists of a number of school attendance areas — a few high schools and the rest elementary schools.

Each elementary school attendance area serves a neighbourhood whereas a high school attendance area serves a community. Through out the USA, tremendous importance is attached to the size of a school district, because if school districts are to function as units of local control, they must be able to provide the scope and quality of educational service, which the people of the State as a whole desire for their children. Some of the criteria used for determining the size of an effective school district are as follows:

1. The school district provides a full twelve-grade of schooling and has a scholastic population of 1,200 to 10,000.

2. The school district offers, in addition to a usually strong education programmes, certain supplementary programmes, such as, adult education, guidance and counselling, education of handicapped children, industrial and agricultural education, vocational education, supervised work experience, health services, school transportation, remedial reading, lunch programme,

psychological services, school-community libraries and adequate school-buildings.

3. Each elementary school has a desirable number of scholastics of 3000 and above; and has enough pupils so that a minimum of one grade per teacher is possible, with a ratio of 25 to 30 pupils per teacher.

4. Each high school has an average of minimum of 75 pupils in each age group and a faculty of minimum of 12 teachers.

5. School centres are so located as to necessitate transportation of the smallest number of pupils. No elementary pupil is required to walk more than $\frac{1}{3}$ rd of a mile to or from the school, or ride on a school bus for more than 30 minutes one way. Similarly, no junior or senior high school pupil is required to walk more than one and half miles one way, nor are they required to ride more than one hour either to or from the school.

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ate Unit is not a substitute for local school districts nor the latter are subordinate to the former. It is a service agency comprising two or more local districts and its size is best determined by the services it is required to render. An effective Intermediate Unit consists of a board of education, a qualified superintendent, and competent professional staff. It is flexible and fiscally independent. Some of the wide range of specialized services performed by the Intermediate Unit are as follows:

Pupil personnel services — testing, attendance supervision, guidance and counselling services for exceptional children — gifted, retarded, home-bound, and physically handicapped; special consultants — speech correction and reading improvement; instructional materials services — films, books, exhibits, recordings and curriculum laboratory, trade and industrial education; pupil transportation services — driver recruitment, bus maintenance and consultative services; school building

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Bangladesh is that many of them have grown up like mushrooms all over the country, with scant regard to the valid criteria for their existence. It is imperative that the problem of districting school communities should be tackled immediately throughout the nation according to a master plan embodying the necessary economic and sociological data in order to lay the foundation for efficient schools. Because small schools like small agricultural holdings are simply uneconomical.

Intermediate Unit In America

An Intermediate Unit functions as an administrative arrangement between the State Department of Education and the local school districts. It plays a dual role by assisting local school districts to improve the scope and quality of education on the one hand and helping the State Education Department in the administration of a State System of schools on the other. The Intermedi-

services — architectural services, planning and maintenance of clinics; financial services — reporting, auditing, accounting, and financial counselling; instructional supervision and co-ordination; psychological and psychiatric services; research services; communication services — radio, television, reports, handbooks and public information.

We Need Intermediate Unit

There is no Intermediate Unit as such in Bangladesh. In view of inadequate financial resources of many school communities, some sort of Intermediate Unit will be of great help in supplementing and enriching various school programmes. Besides some of the co-operative services mentioned above, it might be possible to operate high schools through the Intermediate Unit among school communities who will be unable to afford some kind of secondary education even after a sound districting of school communities has been achieved.

Equalization Formula: Public schools in the USA are mainly financed through a State — local partnership arrangement known as the Equalization Formula. This formula consists of the following four parts:

A Measure Of Need: Each child is termed a unit and the units of need are weighted to make allowance for certain more expensive levels of education as well as for differences in local cost factors existing between small and large communities — an elementary child is taken as one unit of need while a secondary child a decimal multiple of one unit.

Foundation Programme: This programme is the minimum level of support guaranteed each unit of need by the State. Through this means the State enables every school district, no matter how limited its taxable wealth, to provide an educational programme as a minimum level of adequacy. This placing of an adequate floor under the education programmes of school districts constitutes the test of the State's success in equalizing educational opportunities.

Local Contribution To Foundation Programme: This contribution is in the nature of a fixed rate upon the measured sum of local ability based, preferably, upon full valuation of local property under the supervision of the State.

Local Effort: This signifies freedom allowed to each school community to obtain revenue upon a broad enough tax-base so as to enable it to make an effort beyond the foundation programme.

Provision For School Plants

In the USA, the State recognizes the importance of establishing reasonable standards for school plant construction as well as for providing competent consultative services for local schools through surveys or studies in the selection of school centres or sites and the preparation of plans for buildings.

Sometimes the State financial assistance for capital outlay is provided through a special fund as part of the Foundation Programme. But as a general practice, local schools are authorised by the State to sell school bonds in the national money markets for financing capital outlay of the public schools.

(To be continued)