

DAILY STAR

# Revolving an Education System Relevant to Our Needs

by Shahabuddin Mahtab

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We have the following three colleges in the field of technology: (a) Bangladesh College of Textile Technology; (b) Bangladesh College of Leather Technology; (c) Institute of Graphic Arts. None of the colleges are held in high regard by the prospective employers, because those graduates are not very useful to them. All the three sectors mentioned above will have great demand in the country itself, if the knowledge and skill of the graduates are upgraded, and they receive intensive training while undergoing their studies. All these three institutes are alleged to have administrative and discipline problems.

Higher Education and Research: The Commission observed that higher education as it exists at the College and University level has failed in the area of learning, understanding and meeting the present challenges of life. Most of our teaching is mechanical and habitual repetition, which is otherwise known as ROTE learning. This kind of learning is a total wastage of time and energy without any contribution to the national economy. The number of general colleges are increasing each year, which again is a total wastage of our meagre resources.

The Commission specifically recommended that, we have first to ascertain our total national requirements and thereafter make the education sector plan for the Five-Year Plans. The Commission recommended for the upgradation of the colleges and the University in terms of real learning and the application of knowledge that has been acquired.

The Commission further pointed out the extreme paucity of books and libraries throughout the country. Similarly there was a total lack of appreciation for research work in our educational institutions at the appropriate levels.

Engineering and Technology Education at the Degree Level: The four Engineering Colleges in Dhaka (Joydebpur, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna), were under the Director General, Technical Education. In the year 1986, it was decided to have an autonomous body for these four Engineering Colleges with the Minister for Education as Chairman of the Board. The Colleges are now designated as

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In the past decades the important Commissioners were appointed to give their recommendations regarding an education system which would meet the needs of our lives, and each person, male or female, will be a productive unit of the society. The Commissions appointed were: (a) Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission (1974); (b) National Education Advisory Board (1979); (c) Maliz Commission (1989). Each of the three Commissions have given their thoughtful recommendations in each case, and we could have made giant strides, if the recommendations were faithfully and sincerely implemented.

In the second, third and the fourth plan periods massive doses of money were injected into our educational system, but in the actual field neither the number of educated persons, nor a qualitative change could be observed.

The main causes of our failure in the educational arena is not due to the absence of financial resources but it is due to non-commitment, wastage of public funds, in such things as buildings, furniture etc. etc. The whole system was not geared to achieve the objective set forth in the five-year plans, but met the needs of specific people, for their enrichment. This led to the total failure of most of the educational projects.

Some of the causes for the failures may be indicated as below:

(a) The primary need was to create a cadre of dedicated and well trained teachers, which we failed to do.

(b) Necessary curricula were not developed according to our condition and requirements. We failed to perceive that, education was needed so that we could meet the requirements and challenges of life.

(c) The type of education that was imparted at the primary stage was not attractive to the poor section, (90%) of our people. They thought that the time

spent as such was a mere wastage to them.

(d) During the last two and half decades the Ministry of Education had engaged a huge number of consultants in different fields of education such as general education, technical education, vocational education, trade courses etc etc. The benefit that we received was almost nil.

(e) During the past decades, some expensive projects were undertaken such as the Bangladesh Education Equipment Board Project in Mirpur and the Leather Finishing Centre in Hazaribagh. Like most other projects the above two projects were totally unproductive and a sheer wastage of public fund.

(f) The Ministry of Education, was unable to devote itself to important, urgent and nation building activities. The Education Secretary and his officers at the Ministry were engaged in most unproductive activities such as the transfer and posting of officers, obtaining grants for schools and colleges, foreign trips for the officers etc etc. Creative and constructive work in the Ministry was almost impossible. To be very blunt, the entire Ministry was rather preoccupied with "Tadabir".

Some Comments on the Report of Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission (1974)

The Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission that a child should learn only one language, our mother tongue. The learning of English will start from Class-VI. It recommended that to be a good citizen of the country, eight years of schooling was necessary. The reason that they had given was that, in a highly competitive and technological world, schooling for at least eight-year period was necessary. The primary education was taken as the minimum requirement.

In view of the fact that the female children were coming to the schools in lesser numbers

this could only be rectified by employing greater number of women as teachers. Poor attendance of girls in the primary stage in present day Bangladesh is the main factor which is retarding the progress of education. In comparison, neighbouring India has made enormous progress in female education. Reflecting on the Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission Report, it is seen that while literacy of men was about 31 per cent, the literacy of women was only 13 per cent.

If we look into the facilities that are available to the boys, the facilities for the girls are far less. This imbalance is an important factor which has to be taken into consideration by our leaders, administrators and planners in the greater interest of the country. Our main thrust in the five-year plan should be oriented towards female education. If a girl is educated, the whole family is educated. The Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission recommended that the intermediate colleges be merged with our school system. For most of the students, the secondary school should be their final stage of general education. For only the most talented students, the higher education would be made available. The recommendations of the Commission was that, after completion of studies up to the eighth class, the general students should acquire specific vocational training, through which they could be productive to the society. For the extension of vocational training we could follow the system set in India which is called "Learn and Earn".

The Commission recommended a three-year period to get a pass degree, and four years of study for the honours graduate. The Masters degree should be for one year only, for the honours graduates and two years for the ordinary graduates.

The Commission was of the view that in order to reduce our present poverty level, and to move towards economic emancipation there was no better alternative to vocational education and training. The Commission was fully aware of the fact that large amount of machinery, equipment, books and highly trained teachers were necessary. Keeping this in view, the books, and machinery are required to be produced within the country.

The Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission was of the view, that we should have a trained manpower. The trained Diploma holders in technical education can be the most effective working manpower who would be working with their hands and be an important part of the productive process. To make the best use of the Degree Engineers we need an adequate base of Diploma holders. For training the Diploma Engineers, at least 50 per cent of the teachers in the Polytechnics should be Degree Engineers with the additional qualifications of B Ed (Technology). Our technical education must be geared towards the need of the country, and for maximum productivity in a highly competitive technological world.

Teacher Training: The Commission recommended for

the predominant and fundamental role of teacher training. It clearly stated that the physical facilities etc had only a secondary role to play. The most important things were the quality and number of teachers.

Our experiences for the past twenty-six years have been that there was a tremendous fascination for new school buildings, addition of a room, toilets, tables and benches etc. The core need for having trained and efficient teachers has been neglected over the years. The best candidates were often not appointed, for extraneous reasons, at the cost of primary education itself. The actions taken by the Facilities Department and the Directorate General of Primary Education were not transparent and above board.

The eight-year period of primary education, and the provision of training of teachers were ambitious ones, but nevertheless this could have been possible if there were firm political commitment, dedication and transparency. Whatever programme we undertake it is bound to fail unless there is honesty and sincerity at all levels.

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It may be further mentioned, that the project relating to trade courses for the school dropouts,

would further suggest short time refresher training for our teachers during their long holidays.)

In their report the Commission have suggested long term training for each class of teachers. We have resource constraints.

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