

Non-formal education :

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In January 1984, in the primary education conference held at Dhaka, the President stressed the need of non-formal and adult education of the age group 10-30 because mass literacy programmes had failed to tackle the problems of illiteracy. The announcement has so far, gone unheeded by the education department taken to materialise the proposal :

In fact, for the last 30 years, has been no consistent national policy on adult and non-formal education except a Pilot Project on adult education in 8 upazilas under the adult education division (1963-64-1978-79) which has been kept suspended on the plea of introducing mass education which ran for two years (1980-82) through administrative channel resulting in lamentable failure. The urgent need of the day is a definite national policy with a determined political will.

IMPACT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Minimum national educational needs are generally met from primary education which, though implemented free since 1934-35, could not, unfortunately raise the percentage of literacy more than 19.7% of the total population during the last 50 years. It was 17% in 1961. In 20 years it speeded up in snail's pace at 19.7%. The department of education cannot claim to have achieved success so far, although, in recent years, foreign aid poured in crores of dollars from World Bank, UNDP and other aid giving agencies and expert advice was offered by a good number of foreign agencies. But with what result ?

The primary education directorate expanded from one A.D.P.I. for primary education in 1964-65 to 59 Class I officers in 1985, headed by a Director General with a huge number of officers for facilities section.

All this is for 1.45 crore 6-10 year-old primary school going children with a dismal picture of 89.20 lakhs enrolment in 5

classes in 1985 with 7.34 lakhs only class V and 80% dropped before the 5th grade. All the financial investment for children within 10 and for 5.05% in class V, is anything but a colossal waste.

On the other hand, the un-schooled and the dropouts form the bulk of 10-30 year olds numbering 3.42 crores of whom 2.73 crores are illiterate, if given functional education and proper skill training they will prove productive assets. And they need non-formal education most and now.

Education should always be need-making and not ideal seeking and be based on the realities of life. Problems are : O there is low percentage of literacy, O huge illiterate unskilled unproductive manpower-10-30/31-45 age-group, O poverty and unemployment. Whereas, country's need is stable economy and better society. A clear cut assessment of the needs of different sections in different fields for proper planning and programmes making is of prime importance. Present economy of the country depends on the earnings of the youths and skilled man power. They are nature, full of energy capable of undertaking laborious jobs, risk hazards for national cause. They need education, understanding and guidance. Their needs and demands should be singled out, they must be made self-reliant. So they need education. They are left neglected and mass illiteracy is the cause of mass poverty. Education is indeed the key to development and education itself is development.

The youths-10-30 year-old are our targets.

a) The youths, men and women, literate or illiterate need work-oriented life centred education to acquire self-confidence and be made self-reliant.

b) Education for illiterate women of the above age group whose overall percentage of literacy is 16% and 13.2% in rural areas. Their education will give

triple benefits (i) educated mothers will ultimately educate the family (ii) they will keep population control to the minimum and (iii) give proper schooling to their children which will boost up primary education.

(c) Training and education of the group will make their idle hands active, idle brains alert and the dark minds enlightened. Next comes how to materialise the objectives of the proposal.

Planning and target setting is a pre-requisite for any development programme. Unplanned programmes often fail causing loss of time, money and energy. Like target groups, there should also be target periods. Education of 6 crore illiterates of age-group 10-45, is challenging affair.

There should be two target periods, one short term upto 1990, the TFYP, and the other long term from 1991-2000 years. The first term will cover 2.73 crore illiterates of the age-group 10-30, main objective is to eradicate illiteracy from this group with education, information and knowledge and preliminary training for economic activities.

Second period 1991-2000, will fully be devoted to continuing education to stabilise the earned knowledge and experience for economic activities by proper utilization of human as well as physical resources in various areas.

CATEGORIES OF AREAS

Illiterates are spread all over the country in different areas. They may be categorised as follows :

a) Largest number, about 80% are in rural areas belonging mostly to agriculture sector, both men and women and more of women (13.7% literacy).

b) In urban areas, where 15% of the population now live and on average percentage of literacy is 40.7, the municipalities and corporations with better educational and economic advantages, can tackle the problems of illiteracy in a better way.

(c) There are industrial states, units, large and small, all over the country where illiterate labour force suffer from the curses of illiteracy and their education will help them stand better in life and their managements will also get better benefits from literate labourers.

d) There are still the 4th class illiterate employees in government and non-government establishments and organisations who also need literacy and education.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACHES

Approaches for implementing the non-formal literacy and education programmes in different areas, will also be different, many and varied. No single approach is considered appropriate. They may be :

1) Intensive approach in compact areas whether rural or urban, say a village, a union or a upazila or a 'basti' area, is the most fruitful. Stray attempts do not give good return and do not last long.

2) Institution based approach, such as educational institutions Primary and Secondary schools, Colleges and Madrasahs in rural areas with a zone for operation.

3) Cooperative societies, both for men and women, the only economic units in the villages under good managements, can play significant role, if properly guided.

4) Registered organisations and clubs under social welfare and youth ministries, can have their own programmes under general guide lines.

5) Mosque based projects should be selective and they may be given good scope but under departmental regulations and guidance.

6) Registered non-government organisations which have their own plan and programmes and which accept the conditions of the government, may be given

A national need

financial assistance with supply of regular reports of their activities.

A COUNCIL FOR ADULT AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

A council (it existed before) be set up at the national level with representatives of education, agriculture, cooperator, social welfare, family planning and youth ministries and also representatives from outside with the Education Secretary. The council will spell out policy, principle and methodology of operation. Each department will have a plan and programme and all-out co-ordinated effort be made to eradicate illiteracy within target periods. Administration : The nation needs a full fledged directorate of adult and non-formal education for 6 crore illiterates and why ? There are :

a) Directorate of Primary Education for 1.45 crore-6-10 year olds.

b) A directorate of secondary Education which entrolled 27.30 students (SSC, HSC and College) in 1985.

c) A Board for Madrasah education which had 6.38,926 students in 1985.

Then is it an unreasonable demand for a directorate of adult and non-formal education for cross of adults whose education and skill training will yield 3-4 times returns of the investment, in five years ? Statistic of different countries bear the testimony.

At the district level, the district education officer for secondary education, will remain in charge and at the upazila level, there will be two organisers—one male and one female—for non-formal education.

There also must be an independent Institute of Adult and Non-formal Education (an Institute of Adult Education in skeleton functioned during Pilot Project period (1963-79) for—

a) training of personnel of all categories.

b) preparation and production of publicity materials, text books, follow up literature and publication of periodical reports, magazines and others.

c) experiments, research and continuous evaluation and to keep national and international relations. In implementing the programme, upazila administration will have to play a vital role as needs of each area will vary from place to place. Finance; Investment in education is no doubt the best for creating an educated nation. Government now spends Taka 268/- for each primary school student, Taka 1500/- for a high school student and Taka 4500/- for a madrasah student annually. But the need to make one illiterate, literate and educated is Taka 100/- to 150/- only. Government should not hesitate to spend this little amount for the education of the illiterates.

Generally, finance should come from education budget. But as the beneficiaries belong to various sectors of the population, inter departmental allocations should also be provided. Besides, money should also be made available from aid giving agencies.

URGENT NATIONAL NEED

Recognition of the needs, problems and miseries of the 6 crore illiterates and more particularly 10-30 year 2.73 crore olds who are unproductive and state liabilities and on whose education depends not of socio-economic benefits. The government should at once take a firm and bold decision to promulgate and Ordinance or issue a Decree to eradicate illiteracy under short and long terms as indicated above, by the year 1990 and 2000 respectively.

The greatest need is a determined Political will.

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