

Agricultural Education In Bangladesh

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ECONOMIC development of Bangladesh is largely dependent on increasing the production level of agricultural commodities as well as expansion of agro-based industries in the country. Development of agriculture sector can hardly be achieved without universal introduction of agricultural education from primary to university levels of general education imparted by the Ministry of Education.

Agriculture should be introduced as one of the elective/optional subjects in all streams of Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C.) curricula. The course should include one paper of Agricultural Biology and one paper of general Agriculture. The curriculum is to be designed in such a way so that, it can be accepted as a substitute for Biology for admission to all faculties of Agricultural University, Medical Colleges and in studies of Bachelor level education in Biological sciences.

The students having H.S.C. (Science) with agriculture as an elective or optional subject should be given preference for admission in the Bachelor level of Agricultural and Veterinary education anywhere in the country.

Students of H.S.C. level other than science group will study agriculture as a discipline like any other discipline viz. Home Economics, Geography etc., to gain knowledge (both theoretical and practical) in modern agricultural technology to make them better citizens of Bangladesh and some of them can be entrusted to teach agriculture course in the primary schools as an interim measure.

In order to teach the proposed agriculture course in all streams of H.S.C. curricula, a Department of Agricultural Science is to be established in all Government and Private colleges with the required number of teachers (at least Bachelor degree in

Agriculture) and with ancillary facilities.

To produce adequately trained agricultural technicians, Diploma in Agriculture/B.Tech. (Agriculture) H.S.C. (Agriculture) courses should be introduced in each Government college and some selected private colleges. In the first phase, there should be at least one Government college in each new district having facilities to teach H.S.C. (Agri.)

On completion of the H.S.C. (Agri.) Certificate Course, the candidates will be eligible for admission to the Diploma in Agriculture or Bachelor of Technology (Agriculture) Course.

H.S.C. (Agri.) passed candidates may also be eligible for appointment as Junior Agriculture Technician along with the Two-Year Certificate holders in Agriculture offered by the Agricultural Training Institutes (ATI's) Department of Agriculture Extension. It may be mentioned that, students with H.S.C. (Agri.) certificate produced by the general colleges are appointed as agriculture technicians in the country.

The H.S.C. (Agri.) should be considered as the requisite qualification with one year training from the Primary Teachers Training Institute (PTTI) for appointment as agriculture teacher in each Primary School in the country and at least one such post should be created in each primary school. The H.S.C. (Agri.) passed students can also be appointed in the junior high schools (class VI to VIII) as agriculture as teachers as an interim measure.

A fullfledged Department of Agriculture is to be established in the selected Government colleges to teach H.S.C. (Agri.) course. The minimum requisite qualification should be Bachelor Degree in Agri-

culture.

An Agriculture Department of such a college may be entrusted with agriculture development activities of one Union in collaboration with the district Agriculture Extension Department and allied departments. District Level Subject Matter Specialists of the Agriculture Extension Department may participate as part-time teachers for the Agriculture Course as part of their duties. In this way, such a general college can be developed as a nucleus for the unified agricultural development of a Union in addition to its normal teaching functions. Such a programme will help to expose most of the students of general colleges to modern agricultural technology and create a sense of appreciation for the need and importance of scientific agriculture for the development of rural Bangladesh.

Agricultural production of the country with minimum inputs is possible only through massive expansion of agriculture education integrated with the general education system in the country.

Diploma in Agriculture Curriculum: The term technical education has been a great misnomer in this country. By technical education, only vocational and industrial arts education i.e. Diploma and Trade Certificate Level Engineering education, has been meant till to-date. The Department of Technical Education under the Ministry of Education has completely excluded the diploma level technical education in agriculture. The Ministry of Education has neglected agricultural education and even the elective subject of agriculture in H.S.C. curricula has not been introduced by opening a Department of agriculture in any of the Government colleges, rather, the Deptt. of Agri-

culture has been abolished in some colleges after nationalisation.

In the field of sub-professional and vocational engineering education, 22 Polytechnic Institutes, 35 Vocational Training Institutes, one Technical Teachers Training College, one Vocational Teachers Training Institute have been established resulting in surplus production of Diploma Engineers and Trade Certificate holders, while there exists an acute shortage of Diploma/Certificate holders in Agriculture. A large number of S.S.C./H.S.C. passed students have been appointed as agriculture technicians by Sugar Corporation, BRDB, BWDB, Agriculture Bank, Rural Credit Deptt. of the Commercial Banks, Gramin Bank, Cooperative Department and agricultural teachers in primary and secondary schools.

There is complete absence of diploma level sub-professional agricultural education in the country. But recently the Forest Department has introduced in the Forest Institute, Sylhet, a 2 year Diploma in Forestry after H.S.C. (Science). The Diploma in Forestry is offered by the Technical Education Board, Ministry of Education.

In the crop sector, there are 14 Agricultural Extension Training Institutes under the Deptt. of Agriculture, which impart two year in-service training leading to a Certificate in Agriculture (Diploma in Agriculture) after SSC (Secondary School Certificate). The Certificate is awarded by the Director General, Agriculture Extension which is though claimed as two year diploma in Agriculture, is not recognized by the Pay and Services Commission or any other Academic Institution and Universities.

(To be continued)