

Open University in

IN Bangladesh, distance teaching activities were started in 1981 with organised school Broadcasting programme. It aimed at improving the quality of teaching thereby improving the quality of education at Secondary level. During the implementation of the programme, the necessity of organising a full scale teaching programme through various mass media was felt.

Reportedly, over a lac of students are refused admission annually in the existing six universities in Bangladesh. The situation in technical and vocational education is still more alarming.

Therefore, in order to find an alternative solution to meet the ever growing need for higher tertiary and non-formal education, the Ministry of Education of the Government of Bangladesh formed a five member committee of experts headed by Prof M A. Raqib Vice-Chancellor of the Rajshahi University. And the committee submitted to the Government a seven years master plan for the establishment of the Bangladesh

Open University (1985-91). This Open University educational programme will start in two phases.

The first phase aims at offering B.Ed. degree for in-service secondary school teachers, depending on the existing facilities available at the National Institute of Educational Media and Technology (NIEMT) and in the 10 Teacher's Training Colleges of the country. This programme will be operated under the academic umbrella of the Rajshahi University from July next. For this the NIEMT had already organised an extensive workshop course for writers, editors and teachers last year, upgrading their basic knowledge and skills in distance learning system. These were in special areas like the tutoring, counselling and guidance evaluation and assessment system.

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Needless to point out that in distance teaching the role of a tutor is of paramount importance. He is supposed to be a key person to facilitate the growth of the programme through his active and sincere service to the relevant aspect of the programme in respect of tutoring or helping tutor counselling and guidance. It is an uphill task as the learners and the tutors are physically separate. The entire instructional process is precisely designed as a system which flows to the learners from the teaching agency through materials and media. Therefore tutor counsellors' pleasant and friendly approach as well as his professional skill in this field is an important factor

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in the final success of this programme. More important factor will be the feedback from the students to whom assignments will be provided in the module and written assignments sent by the distant learners. Results will be communicated to the learners for self-analysis and incentive periodical examinations will also be held to assess performance on practical parts.

Distance learning depends greatly on correspondence as a means of communication between the teacher and the taught.

But a teaching materials itself cannot perform the function of a teacher-counsellor. This is true even with regard to a computer the technological revolution of this century which does many works of a human being but it takes someone to operate the computer itself to make it function.

Therefore use of computer is a must as the number of enrolled students will be large. It will be an arduous job even to keep the records of all students with the help of computer. All the personal records of the students will be stored in the disks. Any information about any student can be obtained from the appropriate disks.

However last January I had been invited by the National Institute of Educational Media and Technology (NIEMT) to deliver a lecture on the 'Role of Broadcasting in National Development before a host of teachers and it was indeed a real delight to meet Dr K M. Serajul Islam, the learned Director of NIEMT.

bubling with ethos for the implementation of his oncoming ambitious project of the distance education.

Elaborating the first phase (1985-87) of distance Education Dr. Islam said that in view of the need of trained teachers, the government had already introduced higher pay scales for the teachers having B.Ed. degrees. As a result the untrained teachers were deeply interested for admission in B. Ed course.

At present there are 90,000 Secondary School teacher of which 70,000 were still untrained. All the 10 teacher training colleges of the country have the capacity to accommodate only about 3,000 teachers annually. That is why the Bangladesh open university will enroll 4,000 trainees in B.Ed. courses on 'first come first served basis' from forthcoming July. Graduate teachers in active service having no B.Ed. degree will be eligible for admission in the course.

The course will be of 2 years duration. And the existing syllabus of the conventional B. Ed course will be followed. The entire course will be divided into four semesters, each of six month's duration. There will be examination at the end of each semester. Summer schools will be arranged for face to face communication at the end of the 2nd and 4th semester. This will enable the students to overcome dislocation.

This will also give an opportunity to the students to avail themselves of the facilities like tape recorders video cassette library and other learning materials provided by the study centres. All the 10 teachers' train-

ing colleges in Bangladesh will be used as regional resource centres for the tutorial services and summer school, enabling students to exchange views and to discuss related course with tutors and fellow students.

In the second phase full fledged open university based on the lines of world famous open universities, particularly at Milton Keynes, England may be run. The academic programmes of the Bangladesh open university will cover four major areas: functional education, general education, teacher education, research and development. The academic courses will be in the following categories: (i) foundation courses (ii) certificate courses (iii) diploma courses (iv) Bachelor's degree courses (v) Post graduate courses.

The second phase may start 1988. So before that, acquisition of land, construction of campus, appointment of staff, acquisition and installation of equipment, preparation of course material for the courses to be offered in 1988, development of student services including tutorial centres, study centres, tutorial service, summer schools, evaluation system should be all complete. All these depend on the successful implementation of the complicated task ahead and on the financial position of the country itself which is at a low water mark now.

The open university will need at least Tk. 50 crores to become a full fledged university with students numbering 60,000.

With the establishment of the open university advantages are many and clear. It will certainly help meet one of the most pressing needs of the nation viz the spread of education in the widest possible scale as the strongest support to the national economy.