

Response to distance education encouraging

Times Report

With four applications received against each seat advertised for the first-year distance education course, the response of learners to the programme of the Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education (BIDE) appears to be very encouraging.

BIDE recently advertised the admission to 3,000 seats of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) course under its distance learning programme. So far about 12,000 applications have been received by the Institute. Secondary School teachers with Degree certificates and having two year's teaching experience were eligible to apply for admission to the course.

Those who will be admitted to the course will complete it in two years. The 3,000 seats have been distributed among the ten Teachers' Training College through which the learners will be admitted.

The 2-year course will be divided into four semesters, and for the first semester each learner will have to submit admission fees of Taka 320 each.

BIDE has already announced the schedule for admission of learners from among the applicants. The Teachers' Training Colleges of Comilla, Feni, Rangpur and Khulna will take in learners in the course on June 24 and 25; those of Mymensingh (women's), Mymensingh (gent's) Chittagong, Rajshahi and Jessore on June 27 and 28; while the Dhaka Teachers' Training College will admit learners on

the 26th and the 27th of the same month.

Immediately after the admission, the learners will be given initial instructions through video cassettes, and be supplied the books, cassettes, and modules for the first semester.

The ten Teachers' Training Colleges through which the learners are going to be admitted will act as the regional centres of the Institute and provide tutorial services, distribute course materials, organise summer schools, and conduct the semester examinations.

Arrangement of regional centres of BIDE was felt necessary to reduce financial burdens of the learners who would otherwise have to have direct contact with BIDE in Dhaka.

The distance education programme is being launched in the country keeping in view the ultimate objective of establishing an "Open University" in the near future. The move is meant for reaching education, especially higher education, to a maximum number of learners at the least possible cost and time.

Under such an education programme learners need not be brought to a campus. Instead they can pursue their learning by remaining at their own places of work under the supervision of the central institute or university.

Such a system can reach the opportunity higher education to every corner of the country rural or urban, and help those who could not take up higher education at the early stage of life

due to financial or other constraints but intend to do so in future. The only precondition for such an expanded system of higher education is the existence of an efficiently organised and managed central institute or university resourceful enough to provide modules for courses that are in demand.

In some countries like the United Kingdom and Thailand, Open Universities have not only proved to be success stories, the programmes of such institutions of higher learning have also been expanded to meet the in-service training needs of various government and financial organisations like police and banks on a "no-loss" basis.

In our country, the education authorities have taken the teachers as their first target group to be reached by distance education programme. The future of the programme depends on the success of the course being taken up initially.

The only thing to be expected of the organisers of the distance education programme is that under no circumstance should they compromise with the quality of the course. They have taken adequate time in launching the course after preparing modules. The learners should get regular guidance without any hindrance whatsoever, and the supplementary course materials on time. The performance of those who are going through the first course should turn out to be an example to inspire others in future.

For even if a full-fledged "Open University" with courses of study that are in demand in the country is not set up in the country in the very near future, a distance education programme capable of meeting the training needs of at least the teachers of primary and secondary schools of the country would be of great service to the nation.

It is gathered that the existing 47 Primary Training Institutes (PTIs) and the ten Teachers' Training Colleges (TTCs) cannot complete the current training needs of teachers even if these institutions run to capacities for 10 to 15 years. An efficient distance education programme on the other hand can shoulder that task even at less than a quarter of that time.



Applications for admission to the B.Ed. course under the distance education programme of BIDE being scrutinised.