

A Separate Ministry For Primary

Education—II

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At the district level, the post of the Assistant District Primary Education Officer and that of the District Primary Education Officer must be made cadre posts included into the BCS (Primary Education) cadre and their salary must be made equal to that of all other district level officers.

Similarly, the posts of the Primary Education Officers at the Divisional level must be made BCS (Primary Education) cadre posts and those must be filled by District Primary Education Officers on promotion.

At the Head Office, the posts of the Education Officers must be filled by upazila Education Officers, those of the Assistant Directors by the District Primary Education Officers, those of the Deputy Directors by the Divisional Deputy Directors, those of the Directors by the Deputy Directors on promotion. The post of the Director General must be filled by one from the Directors of the BCS (Primary Education) Cadre.

Thus far about the officers. A few words must be said about the recruitment of teachers. Primary education has been transferred to the Upazila Parishad with the power of selecting and appointing teachers. Having the power of selection and appointment, many of the Upazila Parishads failed to properly select and appoint teachers.

However, the situation has been improved since 1990 and the power of selecting teachers is no longer with the Parishads.

But still there is some anomaly. Teachers are government servants but they are appointed by the Parishads. Either they should be fully Parishads' servants or government servants appointed by the government and placed at the disposal of the Parishads on deputation as other government servants are.

Training: Mere enhancement of pay and status will not do. The foundation training in administration and management must be made compulsory for the Upazila Education Officers. Then for each stage of promotion properly institutionalised and the on-the-job training must also be made compulsory.

In fact, there was no provision for their training in administration and management. All that they have done has been on the basis of common sense and trial and errors. As a result, they often failed to be effective in utilising properly the money and materials with the result of little improvement in the field of primary education.

It was for the first time that only at the later part of the Third Five-Year Plan, the provision and preparation for management training were made in a systematic and scientific way with the assistance of a National Consultant of the UNDP/UNESCO. The training was started at the end of 1987 and by June 1989 about half of

the Primary Education Officers were trained. The training for the remaining officers could not be imparted in spite of the strong recommendation of the Ministry of Education.

However, as suggested earlier, the BCS (Primary Education) cadre services must be established and they must be imparted foundation, mid-level and senior level training with qualified trainers and modern techniques so that they can be really effective in handling the affairs of primary education.

As regards the Assistant Upazila Education Officers and Head Teachers, they have to perform both academic and managerial functions. Academic training is imparted at the National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE). There is still little opportunity for their training in management. The opportunity must be provided with appropriate trainers at the NAPE which, I am sure, has to be developed for undertaking this task for the Assistant Upazila Education Officers and at the Primary Training Institutes for the Head Teachers.

Pay, status and training will, no doubt, go a long way in developing the administrative ability of the primary education officers. But after that they would be provided with proper physical facilities particularly official accommodation and transport facilities.

At the upazila level, almost all Assistant Upazila Education Officers have no office accommodation and a good number of the Upazila Education Officers hold office with poor accommodation with little furniture. At the district and divisional level, most of the Primary Education Officers hold office in hired houses which are in many cases old and dilapidated.

The transport facilities are far from satisfactory. Most of the Upazila Education Officers have no motor cycles for travelling and supervising. Those who have some motor cycles supplied by the UNICEF complain that they have no funds for repairing those vehicles. The District Primary Education Officers often complain that they are in problems with the transport which is also used by the Facilities Department engineers. The transport facility for the Divisional Primary Education Officers is also poor.

Thus far about the physical facilities of the officers. The picture about the physical facilities provided for the primary schools particularly at the rural areas is really deplorable. Information gathered by my personal visit and the study of the newspapers

clearly indicate how the smooth functioning of the primary schools is greatly hampered by the lack of basic physical facilities such as accommodation, furniture, tubewell, toilet and blackboard.

There is some awareness among the public of the need to send their children to primary school and in fact the first entry into schools is satisfactory but the Head Teachers seem to be helpless in retaining and effectively teaching these children for want of the basic physical facilities.

It may be remembered that without providing the basic physical facilities either by the government or by the community or by both, even the concept of compulsory primary education cannot be successfully implemented.

Then the physical facilities for the Head Office of the Directorate of Primary Education are not satisfactory. The existing accommodation is meant for the Directorates of primary, secondary, higher and technical education. It is too congested. The personnel of the three Directorates and the outsiders who have to come here for official business make the building so crowded that it becomes sometimes difficult to move. There should be four buildings—one for primary, one for secondary, one for higher and one for technical education. These may, however, be located within one campus, example, Khamar Bari set up for agriculture.

Further, even the Directorate of Primary Education is not situated in the same building and under a unified command. The Training and Planning Divisions are not sitting in the same building and campus. These are sitting in two different hired buildings. There is one Director General of Primary Education, one Director General for Compulsory Primary Education, one Director for Primary Education of Chittagong Division and one Project Co-ordinator of the pay and status of an Additional Secretary. The management of primary education seems to be a hydra-headed organisation which is difficult to be easily understood by an outsider.

No proper attention was given to these problems in the past. The present government seems to be determined to set things right and it is expected that problems related to primary education could be solved by it. It has, however, to be conceded that all these problems cannot be solved in one year or even within one five-year plan period. But if a strong political will continues to exist these could be solved within a stipulated period.

The main purpose of suggesting the measures for developing the administrative capability of the officers of the Directorate of Primary Education and its field level offices is to expedite the expansion of primary education and the eradication of illiteracy. It may be argued that even after having the privileges stated earlier, some of the primary education officers and teachers may not be so responsible and dutiful as they ought to be.

In fact, there are complaints that some officers and teachers are not dutiful and the complaints are genuine. The officers and teachers must be accountable for the proper discharge of their duties because administrative privileges to be provided for and administrative accountability, are, indeed, co-relative.

The administrative superior should apply the modern techniques to be learnt during the training period more effectively for realising accountability. In addition, Upazila Parishad chairman, Union Parishad chairman, members of the School Managing Committee which must be reorganised from time to time and Parents-Teachers Association may make valuable contributions towards the realisation of accountability provided they can keep the matters free from politics.

It may, however, be conceded that the extent of realisation of accountability of the education officers and teachers will certainly depend upon that of the officers at the national level. The more the Ministry and the Directorate are made accountable to Parliament, the more the field level officers will be accountable. Under the Parliamentary form of Government which is going to be set up, it is expected that the sovereign Parliament will be in a position to do the needful.

Conclusion: In conclusion, I want to emphasise that mere establishment of a separate Ministry for Primary Education with removing the administrative problems and inadequacies of the Directorate and its field level offices will not be so helpful, as the experiences of the past indicate, as to achieve the goal desired by the Prime Minister except the expansion of bureaucracy at the national level. The advisors to the Prime Minister, particularly in respect of establishing a separate Ministry for Primary Education, should, therefore, uphold the measures for strengthening the implementing agencies and offices concerned with policies, plans and programmes of primary education before her without fear and favour so that her sincere intention to expand primary education is crowned with more success.

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