

অবিষ্য 2 APR 1994
কলাম

Compulsory Agriculture Education

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INCLUSION of Agriculture has brought a tremendous change in the secondary curriculum of Bangladesh, rather a positive approach has been adopted to derive out unemployment and frustration among the youth. But it is very much surprising that some people have viewed it negatively. Even some of our dailies have written editorial against the introduction of Agriculture as a subject of study in schools. But I do not find any reason why one should be against the inclusion of Agriculture education in the secondary curriculum. Everybody will agree with me that the development of Bangladesh depends much on agro-based industries. And for this we require not only specialists in agriculture, but we need knowledgeable persons at grassroots levels. It is true that no other education can help a man find self-employment. It has been found that all children can not complete primary education. At least 30% to 35% pupils leave school before completing primary education. And about 50% pupils cross the door of secondary examination from among the pupils admitted into the primary level of education. What is their future? Can they serve the nation in the proper way? Why can they not find economical solvency? This is because secondary curriculum had not been constructed so as to suit our socio-economic background. As a result they after become a burden on the family and hence, society. So the

only way to make them an asset for society is to introduce Agriculture education in the secondary curriculum. This will help them stand on their own feet. I think this agro-based secondary curriculum will also reduce the pressure on higher education. Many will find a proper means to arrange self-employment.

We have observed that the Primary-directorate has been successful in income-generating education by introducing Agriculture education for the primary pupils in some of the areas in Bangladesh. As a result primary pupils concerned have been able to increase family income by adopting modern and scientific methods of agriculture. So if primary pupils can be of great help to their family, why can not the secondary level pupils? Actually the objective of Agriculture education in the secondary level is not to prepare specialists, but to train youths in different fields of agriculture in such a way as to allow them to choose one or two from among the different fields to create their own job. It will be clear if one goes through the books meant for the secondary pupils. It will also be found that the contents kept for these pupils are more or less practically done by 90% per cent pupils with their own hand.

The only thing new is that scientific skills and knowledge have been inserted in the curriculum, which will lead the pupils to manage and in-

crease agricultural produces through a scientific approach. These books contain topics like crop production, poultry, bee-keeping, cattle farming, fish cultivation etc. So the curriculum here has no complexity and is not at all a burden for the pupils. Moreover, to teach these subjects, no specialists in agriculture are required. Teachers of Biology having knowledge of Zoology, Botany, Soil Science and related subjects can easily handle the agriculture teaching. The only thing required is the whole-hearted endeavour of the teachers. Above all the skills of these teachers can be up-dated by conducting short trainings by the agriculture specialists posted in their own localities.

It is clear that there is no alternative to teaching Agriculture in order to prepare our youths as income-generating members of society. These youths can choose a subject for living from among those which they practised with their own hand in school. Thus one can start a life of his own, if he can not proceed to the higher education. For this purpose very small investment is required. Even our financial institutions can help these youths in these employment programmes.

It is in matter of interest that college and university graduates are being trained in various vocational courses to enable them to become a productive force. Here one will find that most of courses are agriculture-

oriented. So why should we not begin these courses from the school life, specially from the secondary stage?

We must accept Agriculture education in the secondary level to reduce unemployment and side by side to build our youths as income-generating citizens standing on their own feet. We can also think of other vocational courses like electrical repairing, TV, freeze mechanism and repairing, computer courses etc. But these courses demand costly machinery and technical persons also, which very few schools can provide. Moreover, these fields are not so wide as the fields of agriculture.

Some argue that a lot of schools in the urban areas have got no sufficient land for the agriculture courses. It is true to some extent. In that cases, courses like bee-keeping, fish cultivation, poultry, cattle farming etc. can well be done.

Some of us say that the curriculum for the secondary stage is very lengthy and some contents are not at all fit for this stage. That may be true. But it is also true that curriculum is not a permanent thing, it is dynamic. So let the present curriculum be implemented. In course of time the curriculum can be evaluated and can easily be changed, moderated to fit the needs of the pupils, if necessary.

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