

Universal Dissemination Of Education

Abul Quasem

THE role of education in the building of a developed nation is infinite. In fact, education is the condition precedent of any national progress and is, therefore, called the backbone of a nation. As man cannot move without a backbone so no nation can make advancement without education. Therefore high priority to education is essential in any development plan. Today the population of Bangladesh has reached the mark of 12 crore of which about 9 crore are illiterate. If education is regarded as the key to national prosperity then any effort for national march towards development by keeping this huge population uneducated would be tantamount to putting the cart before the horse.

Against the backdrop of underdevelopment it is desirable to view education in the context of the condition prevailing in Bangladesh. Our education system should be universal; people and production-oriented and should be suited to mastering art and craft in order to lead a happy and prosperous life. Our education system should be such as to scientifically utilise the natural resources of Bangladesh for raising the people from poverty. Education in pure art and literature, philosophy etc. should be selective, because any excess in 'education for education's sake' perhaps would be a luxury for us at the present stage of development.

For the cause of mass education there is a need for mass involvement. If mass education centres could be established all over and their management ensured through mass mobilisation it would perhaps be possible not only to offer teaching in reading and writing but also impart education in arts and crafts, science and technology of production to all illiterate people. It is, as such, imperative to spread the radiance of science and technology throughout the country by way of establishment of mass education centres.

One of our greatest national needs today is to realise universal education, i.e. to reach the light of education in every house, as universal education would be the carrier of all-round

development of this developing nation. To be successful in realising universal education, mass education has to be integrated with national education system on the one hand and institutionalised it through voluntary, mass endeavour on the other. If mass education is not institutionalised it would turn into a transitory feature. And if it is not integrated with national education system it would neither be realised with minimum cost nor it would achieve fullness and fruitfulness.

The public places like office of Co-operative Society and Union Parishad, Club, School, Medical Centre, Community Centre, etc. may house mass education centres. For this, cost involved would not be much. These centres may also function as nerve centres of the Co-operative which would be so designed as to spearhead all the development and productive activities of the rural areas. In fact, there may be fusion of mass education with Co-operative. If mass education and co-operative can gain momentum from the same centre they would support and nourish each other. As Co-operative did not succeed in Bangladesh in isolation, so it seems that mass education would also meet with failure if planned separately. Because mass education and co-operative is complementary to each other and developmental and productive activities should be their motive power. None of them would perhaps survive if productive effort is not made their driving force. As mass education without co-operative is difficult to conceive so co-operative without mass education would probably not bear any fruit. And both of them are expected to stabilise by basing them on productive effort.

The structure of mass education centre would be according to the need of the receiver of education.

Those who are illiterate would form one class. Their syllabus would be: how to read, write and do arithmetic. All people, young and old, men and women, who are illiterate would be in this class. When they do this class successfully they would be promoted to the next higher class. Those who drop out from school, madrasa would constitute yet another class. Their syllabus would include scientific education on family planning, agriculture, cottage and small industry, preservation of food and surplus products, marketing, co-operative i.e. all subjects encompassing all possible developmental and productive activities in rural areas. All media of mass education e.g. audio-visual method, learning-by-doing method etc. would be used to impart education on these subjects.

The composition of topics for the initial class is easy. The basic literature and arithmetics would do the needful. The composition of topics for the next higher class is not also difficult. There is no dearth of experts for composition of topics on the subjects as mentioned above. For example, we are not poor in expert on family planning, agriculture, poultry, live-stock, pisciculture, co-operative etc. stationed in Thana HQs. as Govt officials. Besides, the college and university are producing these experts. The problem is, therefore, to plan the mass education pragmatically and manage it efficiently.

The literate people living in the village, the students of school, madrasa, college and university (during vacation) and the brilliant students of the higher class of the centre can be the teachers of the initial class of the centre. The experts as indicated before can be the teachers and teacher trainers of the higher class. As mass education centres get off to a start the demand on these experts would be great at the beginning. But this

pressure would lighten gradually as some of the meritorious learners of these centres may also assume the responsibility of teacher. Besides, the students of college and university may also be teachers and teacher trainers in these centres as many of them do specialisation in various subjects.

To make higher education pragmatic it should be essentially integrated with mass education. In our country higher education is divorced from reality. It is mostly an artificially lacking in intrinsic value. It has no connection with the chores and core of the nation. If mass and higher education could be related, the latter would be more relevant to our needs. The students of higher education would then get the opportunity to make themselves familiar with the soil and to collect research materials through participation in mass education. The more research on the problems of the country is conducted in the college and university the more we would be educated in the real sense. And this education would be beneficial to us as well as to our country. Present learning, it seems, is mostly as good as the learning of a parrot. Through a methodical participation during vacation the students of college and university can avoid the pangs of unemployment at the end of their education to a great extent as they would then get an opportunity for self-employment in rural sectors.

For scientific mass education there is need for sound planning and administrative management. This is why utmost emphasis needs to be laid on the rise of local leadership to shoulder the responsibility of mass education.

Each centre of mass education would be the centre of gravity of co-operative. Thus these centres would have popular base.

It is refreshing to note that the national leadership has taken in hand the action programme for mass education. If this succeeds, the people of Bangladesh would achieve a healthy life in the near future.