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Children give up studies to earn for their families

67 p.c. drop-out in primary schools

By A Staff Correspondent

The number of drop-outs at the primary school level in the country stands at 67 per cent of the total enrolled students. There has been only a marginal improvement in the drop-out situation over the last one decade (1975-85). The drop-out rate registered a decline by about 14 per cent during the decade.

The situation is more dismal for the male students. The drop out rate among the male students is at least two per cent higher than that of their female counterparts.

What is particularly more distressing is the highest rate of drop-out cases among the stu-

dents who are enrolled in class I. The existing state of affairs in the primary education sector came up for a detailed scrutiny at the five-day long national seminar on "enhancing relevance and efficiency of primary schooling" which concluded at NIEA-ER in Dhaka on Wednesday.

The participants most of whom are head teachers assistant teachers of primary schools in the seminar organised by Directorate of Primary Education and Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO termed the drop-out problem among the students at the primary stage as the basic constraint to the attainment of the objective of universal primary education in the country.

The finding in various survey and appraisal reports including "Summative Education Report 1986" by Mr. Magnus Hakansson of World Bank-aided Universal Primary Education Project figured prominently in the deliberations by the experts at the seminar.

Listing the reasons for drop-out the experts opined that poverty lies at its root. Even a student of Class I is forced to give up studies to supplement the earnings of his family or to save the expenses incurred for hiring an additional hand for pursuing his studies.

The indifference of teaching staff inappropriate educational

methods unattractive educational environment faulty education policy and curricula and inhibiting socio-cultural practices were also identified as the other factors causing large-scale drop-out among the students at the primary level.

The educational experts observed that the high drop-out rate at the primary level was responsible for a colossal wastage of resources. The public investments for extension of educational facilities buildings books, equipment furniture and fixtures etc. and also the recurring revenue expenditures for footing the salary bill for the primary teachers educational administrators are not yielding the appropriate social return they pointed out.

The participants strongly pleaded for taking an integrated approach to tackle the problem of drop-outs. The approach they suggested should include measures for improving the economic conditions of the rural poor and introducing an incentives structure for rewarding those parents who would encourage their wards to continue studies. The needs for streamlining educational administration and management ensuring teachers regular attendance recruiting more female teachers and improving the quality and form of primary education were also stressed at the seminar.