

Commercial education and prospect

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Bangladesh faces a chronic unemployment problem as an acute manifestation of the syndrome of poverty. Superior input of human effort is an important determinant of all developments. In the context of the growing needs of the developing countries, the utilitarian aspect of education has been assuming increasingly greater importance and significance. Business and commercial education in Bangladesh can go a long way in this regard.

Commercial education is commanding greater attention and thought in the present time. About hundred years ago, the concept of 'commercial education' was not very clear. In its early days it consisted of the study of Shorthand, Typewriting, Book-keeping and similar other subjects. It was absolutely utilitarian in its scope and content and for this reason it received little encouragement. The changing character of the business enterprises in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century gave a new orientation to this kind of education. Commercial education is now considered as an important branch of vocational education all over the world.

The complexity of modern business methods and practices demands trained personnel in Secretarial Science, Record keep-

ing, Book keeping, Accounting, Shorthand, Typewriting, Banking, Insurance, Sales Procedures and others. Unlike the developed countries in Bangladesh most of the young workers take up jobs without pre-training in office occupations. Mostly they acquire skills by more experience during the course of their service period. After passing the S.S.C/H.S.C. Examination or even after graduating from a university they take up the job that is at hand. Their professional career is hardly pre-planned.

On the other hand, the shortage of skilled manpower and more particularly of technicians and key personnel at the intermediate level is characteristic of the economies of the Third World countries. Bangladesh is no exception to this, and this shortage constitutes a major obstacle to development. Commercial education has a vital role to play in the development activities, as it is concerned with developing the manpower resources of a country. Like other developing countries in Bangladesh, too, the objectives of commercial education programme are (a) to provide job opportunities for job-seeking persons; (b) to develop skills and knowledge essential for employment in business and government offices; (c) to provide knowledge and understanding about business and economics that will enable

individuals to become more effective citizens and consumers thereby; and (d) to help the country to overcome the chronic problem of unemployment to some extent.

A good and comprehensive commercial education programme in a country can contribute to lower, middle and higher level training. The lower level training is for general clerical duties; the middle level training is for supervisory and executive functions. The lower and middle level trainings are provided in the commercial institutes and Management Development Centre (MDC) in Bangladesh; while at the higher level managerial and administrative training takes place in the university schools of business administration such as the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka and in the corporate management development programme.

Commercial education can facilitate developments by improving individual's ability to

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communicate both orally and in writing and by helping people to understand various types of communications. In fact, recording and communicating is an integral part of commercial education in both skill and non-skill areas. People who become better communicators are better equipped for effective leadership and citizenship.

Abdun Noor (1970) observes that office occupations have been of national importance in the United States of America since 1900 and the business and office occupational group has been the fastest growing area of employment and the second largest occupational group in that country. Byrnside (1970) expresses also the same view that business needs secretaries and stenographers, in fact, the demand now is greater than it has ever been. Surveys reveal that approximately 2,00,000 new employees for secretarial jobs are needed each year in the United States of America. The shortage is likely to con-

tinue. Predictions and occupational forecasts by business executives indicate that the nature of works performed by the secretaries will remain much the same throughout the next decade. Same is the case with the other developed countries of the world like U.K.; U.S.S.R; Japan, France and Germany as well. With their industrial advancement the demand for office aides are increasing altogether.

Commercial education is getting momentum now-a-days, not only in the developed countries, but also in the developing countries as well. The importance of commercial education programmes has been recognized now by the societies all over the world. For instance, according to Wang-Udom (1977) the enrolment in business and office education programmes has increased from 10,969 in 1968 to 21,168 in 1973 in Thailand. Commercial education is gaining its importance in Bangladesh too, as it prepares person-

nels for effective office works which according to the Report of the Committee/Task Force on the Commercial Institutes at District, Sub-Division and Thana-level in Bangladesh (1983), constitutes about 16 percent of the total manpower required to run an organization or enterprise in Bangladesh.

The necessity of commercial education is now widespread and universal. Bhatt (1972) states that the expenditure on commercial education constitutes an investment in manpower, yielding human capital. Today everybody will agree that every citizen should have the opportunity to attain occupational competencies compatible with his/her abilities and interests. Commercial education is one of the areas that can satisfy that interest. Having commercial education one may have scope not only for jobs and higher education but also one may engage oneself in trade. Thus, the commercial education may be thought of as a wise

business investment both for the nation and for the individual. Not only thousands of youth but also hundreds of women—mothers and widows require marketable skill like commercial education.

Today commercial education is essential all over the world, especially for a developing country like Bangladesh. As a newly born nation, obviously, reconstruction of national economy and overall development has become immediate goals of Bangladesh. With this end in view, she is now marching towards industrialization to boost up her economy. Since a set of adequate trained and skilled manpower is indispensable at different levels for partial fulfilment to achieve these goals, commercial education courses are being taught in the 16 commercial institutes in Bangladesh at the 10-2 stage. Now the question arises how many pupils can be accommodated in these 16 commercial institutes in the country? According to an admission circular of the Director General of the Secondary and Higher Education Directorate issued in August 1986, Dhaka Commercial Institute can accommodate 240 students, Barisal Commercial Institute can accommodate 160; and Pabna Commercial Institutes 150. Bogra and Rangpur Commercial Institutes can admit 140 students each; while the

admission to the final year of the Commercial Institutes at Chittagong, Comilla, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Feni, Jessore, Khulna and Rajshahi is 80 only. That is, the admission quota of all the 16 commercial institutes in Bangladesh is less than 2,000. Now let us see how many students have passed the SSC Examination from all the 4 Boards in the country in 1986. Students passed from Dhaka Board are 64,946; Rajshahi Board 61,698; Comilla Board 60,668; and the Jessore Board 53,822. The total number of students who passed the SSC Examination in 1986 is 2,41,134. It seems that the existing 16 commercial institutes in Bangladesh do not have capacity to accommodate even one percent SSC graduates a year! To overcome the impasse for the jobseeking boys and girls in the office occupation, the admission quota of the government commercial institutes should be increased. But before that the number of teachers along with all other educational facilities including teaching equipments should also be increased in the commercial institutes.