

Taking literacy to rural masses

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016

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Literacy is a kind of technology not easy to be acquired by a person alone. True it is that by virtue of the modern technology, through computer, talking cards etc. self learning system for literacy may be made available. But how many of the actual clienteles can have the access to such costly technologies. For vast majority of the illiterate population instructor-based training system is the only way of acquiring literacy. For this purpose infrastructure and management system is needed for the operation of the National Literacy Programme. Primers, chalkboards, support materials and services are needed for conducting the literacy classes. People must have to be made aware of the availability of these facilities through publicity and they are to be also mobilised to cooperate in the programme.

The motivation for literacy is needed for different types of people. (a) to motivate the literate people to organise or manage literacy programmes; (b) to motivate the literate persons to work as instructors or teachers in the literacy programme, (c) to motivate the rich people and the key persons in the government or society to provide fund and facilities for the purpose; (d) to motivate the actual clientele — the illiterate mass — for active participation in receiving literacy lessons. This group may be of either sex but in two major age groups—(a) those aged between 10-16 years with basic literacy may be fed in the formal channel of education, and (b) the adults who are more keen to have functional literacy and is not that much serious to be in formal channel of education. There is a basic problem with this age groups. After literacy, if they be left alone, they may forget their learning skill. Hence publicity is needed to inspire the neo-literates to go through follow-up books and material.

Publicity is needed to make the people aware of the need for literacy, as well as to inform the illiterate people about the facilities available at their door step. However, wonderful the national literacy programme may be, unless the clienteles are made aware of its importance, how can we expect to make the project a success? Hence publicity is essential to make the literacy programme a success.

The different types of publicity media materials may be enlisted are: a) print media: (i) newspapers, (ii) pamphlets, (iii) posters; b) Electronic media: (i) cinema, (ii) radio, (iii) TV, (iv) audio/video cassettes and c) other media: (i) folk media, (ii) meeting or conference, (iii) face-to-face contact;

Newspapers and weeklies or

monthlies may play vital role in literacy campaign but its power is limited to the educated mass only. The purpose is to motivate them to carry on the activities connected to the literacy programme. It can also be used as the media for communicating message to the literate mass. It may also be used as powerful tool for continuing education for neo-literates. Because of the literacy barrier it may not have direct effect on illiterate clienteles but its power for information and motivation campaign is enormous.

Small pamphlets carrying short messages and information connected to the literacy programme may be printed and distributed in reasonable quantities for organising the literacy campaign and also to communicate the important messages. Pamphlets with block letters and simple language can also be used for helping the neo-literates continue their literacy.

Posters with short messages and even without any written language but with pictorial information, can easily be used on large scale for information, propaganda and motivational purposes. Posters with only clear pictorial presentation can also carry messages to the illiterate persons too. This is one of the very cheap ways of communication.

Cinema is one of the most popular way of mass entertainment. In Bangladesh there are more than 400 commercial cinema houses scattered all over the country, even in some upazila headquarters. Well thought and well planned short literacy films may be shown in all the cinema houses before starting the commercial film, so that the common cinema goers, vast majority of which are illiterate, can receive the message of literacy. Through the films, since the message is carried through audio-visual method, there is no barrier of literacy. Message through film can be conveyed to both the literates and illiterates. Film made on 16 mm format can be screened for small groups through portable projectors or mobile units.

In a Third World country, radio is one of the most powerful mass media for propaganda purpose. Here, there is also no barrier of literacy. Through the centralised broadcasting, the message can be conveyed to thousands of audience living even in remotest part of the country. Through radio the importance of literacy can easily be conveyed in the form of drama, discussion, short talk, interviews etc. Besides the national broadcasts, regional broadcasts can also be arranged in local dialect to motivate the people on regional basis.

Television is one of the most powerful audio-visual mass media for communication. Here, since the sound and picture go together, it is more powerful than the radio broadcasting. The problem is of prohibitive cost of the receiver sets. But now-a-days community listening sets are available in different unions making the communication a bit easier. Through TV message can also be communicated to the illiterates. Short drama talk, discussion programmes etc. can be broadcast through national network of television. The country is flat and is a compact piece of land, as a result of which, ground relay stations are sufficient for covering the entire country under the network. Here there is no need of satellite broadcasting. This is an added advantage over here.

Audio cassette has not its

limitations but the video cassettes are very powerful tool for publicity in small groups. The recorded message and success stories of one place can easily be transplanted from one area to the other through this system. Because of the capacity for on-the-spot recording and playback system, the video recording has been becoming more popular than even the cinema.

Kabl, Jari, Gambira etc. are very popular folk media in rural areas. The literacy message for publicity and motivational purposes can be very effectively communicated in rural Bangladesh through all these folk media. Even Jatra, Palagan, puppets etc. can also play vital role for motivational purposes. Folk songs can also be broadcast through Radio and TV net work for mass scale publicity. They can also be organised locally for information, education and motivation purposes.

Through meeting and personal contact the literacy message can be communicated in a very effective way. Through the national infrastructure this face-to-face contact is almost impossible. This is an area where NGOs can play vital role, especially the mosque-connected institution can carry on this type of jobs more effectively. On every Friday, the Imam can explain to the rural audience attending the weekly prayer about the importance of literacy. Besides, the representatives of local government and local leaders can also play vital role in face-to-face contact. The local hat, bazar (market place) can be used for the purpose.

The national publicity and propaganda may be conducted at three levels: (a) central, (b) regional and (c) local.

For central publicity national mass media such as Radio, TV, film services etc. can be used. The campaign may gain ground if it is blessed with the direct message from the Head of the State. National symbols and signature tune can be used for every publicity activities in connection with literacy campaign. Short messages may be repeated through TV and Radio. National dailies may be used for the motivational purpose of the managerial staffs connected to the literacy programme. National awards may be declared for successful literacy workers. Short informative films may be released through all the commercial cinema houses. Centrally published posters and pamphlets may be distributed throughout the country.

For regional publicity, local radio station, local newspapers etc. may play vital role. Besides regional folk media team may be organised for using folk song and folk drama for information, educational and motivational purposes, posters, pamphlets, meetings etc. can also play vital role for the regional propaganda.

Local level publicity may be done through meetings and face-to-face contact. For this purpose local authorities including local NGOs, local leaders, religious leaders etc. can play vital role.

Publicity is needed in all broadbased activities, but proper infrastructure and sincere work by individual is the key to all success. Publicity without support service may create frustration. Hence publicity is to be done upto that level the support service can be made available. Country-wide literacy campaign should be taken as national programme for which concerted effort of both the government and the people

is needed