

Administrative Vitality For Primary Education Officers

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THE percentage of literacy is very low in our country. About 75% of the people are still illiterate. Illiteracy is the greatest obstacle to all kinds of national development. The eradication of illiteracy is, therefore, a must.

The administrative machinery of the government for preparing and implementing plan and policy for eradicating illiteracy through the introduction of Universal Primary Education has been well designed. The Ministry of Education is mainly responsible for preparing the policy, while the Directorate of Primary Education is mainly responsible for implementing the policy.

The Directorate of Primary Education has officers serving at the head office and at the field offices. The officers of the head office are generally drawn from colleges. They are members of the B.C.S. (General Education). Their role is directing the field officers who are more closely involved for implementing the plans and programmes designed for expanding primary education.

This paper has been confined to the administrative vitality of the field officers. Starting from the lowest, the field officers are Assistant Upazila Education Officers, Upazila Education Officers, District Primary Education Officers and Divisional Deputy Directors for Primary Education.

The functions and responsibilities particularly of the Assistant Upazila Education Officers and Upazila Education Officers are more significant in the sense that they are to directly supervise, guide and lead the primary schools, the basic educational institutions for imparting primary education, towards the development

of primary education.

It is said that most of these officers have not been able to come up to expectation in the discharge of their duties. It has been observed that most of them lack vitality and leadership qualities required for the efficient and effective performance of the gigantic task such as the eradication of illiteracy through the expansion of primary education.

There may be various reasons for the lack of vitality of the primary education officers under study. However, the reasons stated below seem to be the principal ones.

Pay and Status

The pay and status of the Assistant Upazila Education Officers and Upazila Education Officers are still lower than those of other officers serving at the upazila level. The Assistant Upazila Education Officers have no status though they have been designated as officers. They belong to Class III. The Upazila Education Officers are Class II officers. As a result, candidates of better calibre who can show vitality and take the leadership are not attracted to these posts. Some of the existing officers are, no doubt, better but they suffer from inferiority complex and frustration specially when they see that other officers of not more important subjects have high pay and status.

In view of such a situation, the M.L. Committee on organisation set up in 1983 observed (para 16) that the function and responsibility of the Upazila Education Officers and the Assistant Upazila Education Officers as appeared in the Manual, Thana Administration, Vol. I, is much high-

er and is not commensurate with the existing Scale of Pay and Status. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the scale of pay and status of the Upazila Education Officer and the Assistant Upazila Education Officer should be one step higher along with status respectively for ensuring smooth functioning of the decentralized administrative system in the field of primary education at upazila level.

But unfortunately, the recommendation of the committee has not yet been implemented. The sooner the recommendation is implemented the better it is for the development of primary education. It may, however, be conceded that with the higher pay and status, the qualifications for the new entrants should also be higher. These should be equal to the minimum qualifications required to be lecturers at government colleges plus the Diploma/Degree in Education.

The District Primary Education Officers have been given class I status but it is interesting to note that they have not been given the pay equal to that of other class I Officers serving at the district. Their starting pay is Tk. 2,400.00 per month while that of others is Tk. 2,800.00 per month. They also, therefore, suffer from inferiority complex and frustration which are not helpful for developing leadership qualities and vitality. It has been observed that most of them who come to the district after serving for about 20 years at the upazila level seem to be lifeless.

The posts of Deputy Director at the Divisional level have recently been created mainly for giving scope of promotion to the District Primary Education Officers but these cannot

be filled by them as they are not found suitable for the obvious reasons. There posts are generally filled by college teachers. At present, out of four Divisional Deputy Directors, only one is from the District Primary Education Officers and he is also officiating.

At any rate, the pay of the District Primary Education officers should be equal to that of other officers serving at the district level and the posts of the Divisional level should be filled by them on promotion. Then the Divisional Deputy Directors should have the scope of being promoted to the post of Director at the Head Office.

The field officers should not remain at the field throughout their career. After raising the pay, status and qualification and serving for a few years, the Upazila Education officers should be allowed to join the Head Office of the Directorate as the Education Officers as the District Primary Education Officers, the Assistant Directors and the Divisional Deputy Directors as the Deputy Directors for a stipulated period. This exchange of position is necessary for enhancing their experience and thus vitality.

The reorganisation suggested will require that ultimately the primary Education Service should be cadre Service and the College teachers who will join the Head Office or the field officer should give option to this cadre and should not be allowed to go back to colleges creating void detrimental to the smooth and efficient functioning required for the development of primary education.

(To be continued)