

Implementing universal primary education

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In order to identify some critical factors social, economic, cultural etc. Which are conducive to or act as a hindrance in the process of planning and implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) programmes in Bangladesh the following picture must be borne in mind.

Literacy is 27 per cent for male and 13 per cent for females in Bangladesh as a whole. But in Rural Area the rates are 25 per cent for male and 10 per cent for females.

Primary Education: (1) 42 per cent of the primary school age children never go to the primary or any other schools. (2) Similarly two third of the girls never go to any schools. (3) Of the 58 per cent who enrol in schools 77 per cent drop out before reaching Class-V majority of which is before Class-III. (4) Primary Schools also physically are unable to meet the minimum requirement of the students who enrol.

With a view to implementing any programme to establish the UPE in Bangladesh the main hindrances are usually to be found in

the conditions generally associated with or rooted in a poverty stricken society. The widespread poverty resulting in near-starvation condition under subsistence level and the 80 per cent of the population have a direct bearing on all development projects not to speak of education alone. But for education sector it is more opposing than any other sector as it works beginning with the general apathy to direct obstacles as a multiple factor. While the multitude of people are engaged in mere survival the question of imparting education to their children has no meaning. The floating population in urban areas and migrating landless people from rural areas and coastal regions is a glaring example.

The illiteracy among parents constitutes another hurdle. Such parents often engaged in manual jobs mostly on daily basis have no urge to get their children education rather they take them along with to help in their job-as a partner in the breadearning.

In rural areas the village gentry or the "Matbors"

with vested interest often discourages education of the people. Ignorance of such poverty stricken parents generates a passive attitude in their minds towards education for their children. The traditional education was urban biased which did not function for social and economical transformation. Therefore they do not know exactly what they want except breadearning.

Added to the general apathy towards education for children among the poor people which constitute 50 per cent of the population the crisis is more chronic in the case of girls who are not often allowed to go outside their immediate family surroundings after certain age. This is a positive hindrance to their education. Even if a girl started learning she has to discontinue for some social reasons such as early marriage illness of her mother or for household works.

Further a good number of children are often deserted along with their mothers by their fathers. The mother struggles for their bread. Giving education to them is a far cry.

The inadequacy in the number of primary schools in rural areas is constituting another hindrance in the process of implementing the UPE (since 90 per cent of the population live in villages. Scattered growth of schools distance of schools from homes in many cases absence of roads etc. are the direct problems associated with this hindrance. This is more acute in remote areas hill tracts and isolated islands of the country. Such as Sundarbans, Bhola, Rangati, Goaland, Bandarban, Khagrachari, Manipur, Monpura St. Martin and others.

The task of implementing the UPE is enormous. Missionary zeal is required to attitude of the primary school teachers as exists here in our country needs to be mentioned to understand the situation. How many of them have taken it as a mission is doubtful. Actually many of them have their own difficulties. They cannot be excluded from the socio-economical circumstances to those they belong.

Once upon a time the liberal

rel education through English medium was discouraged by the religious people mainly of the Muslim section in the Indian Subcontinent for political reasons against the British rules. But Islam extols the role of education. The Prophet of Islam (SM) said "If required go to China in search of knowledge of knowledge is holier than the blood of martyr". The muslim population of Bangladesh comprising 80 per cent of her total population is the proud inheritor of these sayings. If these can be used as 'slogan' remarkable achievement will be gained. The peoples of other religions have also their religious values these can be used for such awakening.

The poor people in the villages invariably send their children to the village mosque or maktab for some elementary knowledge in religion because they know it obligatory for them. If the first step in the process of plan and implementing the UPE can be associated with this a major breakthrough will take place in this respect.