

primary

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services to the community as part-time teachers.

10. The teachers of non-formal part-time school are not professional. For this reason they have to be specially trained. As the teachers themselves are not acquainted with the non-formal techniques and methods of teaching, they have to be specially oriented to conduct part-time non-formal classes. A special kind of training programme has to be formulated for this purpose. Their training should be imparted on ongoing basis e.g. for 2/3 days after every 2/3 months.

11. The schools on an average will run for 275 days in each calendar year. There will be no vacation or holidays. But in rural areas the school will remain closed in harvesting season and during inclement weather.

12. The school will function for 2-2½ hours each day. The timing will be chosen according to the convenience of pupils at a suitable place.

13. Although the curricula of the part-time schools will be broadly similar to that of formal primary schools, there will be substantial difference in content.

14. The emphasis of the part-time primary schools will be to break illiteracy barrier. Much emphasis should be given on developing reading skill, numeracy and writing skill. The curricula will be need-based and life-oriented. We expect that a pupil after three years of schooling will acquire the skill of reading simple materials, instructions and informative matters, will learn to write letters legibly, should be able to keep simple daily accounts and gain knowledge about simple measurements, will have minimum knowledge of health, sanitation and nutrition. They will be able to practise civility in peer group, family and community.

15. The schools will be supervised by the staff of the

organisation/agency or any authority which promotes the establishment of such schools.

16. Though there will be no formal examination in the part-time schools, an evaluation tool has to be devised to assess the progress of the children.

17. A tutorial type bridge course will be provided for a pupil who desires to switch to formal schools for further education.

18. Cost of running the schools should be less than the formal schools. It is expected that the parents of the disadvantaged families will be able to afford the cost of sending their children to school as the cost of schooling will be kept to the minimum.

It is essential to point out the fact here that the enrolment ratio of female children is rather poor in Bangladesh. Special emphasis should be given for increasing female participation in primary schools. The non-formal primary schools can be of great help in this respect. A three-year course for non-formal part-time schools should be carefully planned and designed. By adopting the non-formal methods we never intend to sacrifice quality by abridging time. This is the reason why we are insisting on the small number of pupils in a learner group and also in teachers training and supervision.

Large number of children can be brought within the fold of primary education if the state, NGOs and other agencies take up programme of non-formal part-time education. This will be a real break for the disadvantaged pupils. Eradication of illiteracy will never be possible in the near future if we do not go for the alternative channel which is low cost and practical in nature.

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An alternative system for Primary education

In Bangladesh at present there is a vast number of primary schools which are supposed to provide primary education to the children of 5-9 years age group. Let us assume that the present number of primary schools is adequate to provide education to majority of this age group e.g. 5-9 years, but what is the actual picture?

Only 48 per cent of the age group of 5-9 years is in school and the other that is 52 per cent is out of schools. Moreover, the drop-out rate is very high. Eighty per cent of the children leave school before they reach class V and 57 per cent finish their school life in class I. There are several reasons for this dismal picture. Extreme poverty, low educational status of the parents, malnutrition of the children have created an atmosphere which is not congenial to the education of children.

Primary schools in Bangladesh are full-time schools manned by full-time teachers. The children have to spend five or six hours in school every day. On the average there are 175 school days in each calendar year.

The existing primary schools in Bangladesh cater only to the needs of comparatively well-to-do urban and rural children. Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries where a large number of families live under subsistence level. The disadvantaged families are unable to send their children to school. To them schooling is a luxury. To send a child to school the poor parents need to spend an amount of money which they cannot afford. Most of the children of the poorest community are never enrolled in schools and even if some of them are enrolled they drop out after first or second year. They learn very little at school and even if they learn at all, they lapse into illiteracy soon afterwards.

The out-of-school children

are either engaged in income generating activities or are engaged in household work supporting the family in its struggle for survival in most cases, according to a study report by the Foundation for Research on Educational Planning and Development (FREPD). Any programme for their education, formal or non-formal, should take into consideration. These hard facts of their life and living conditions.

It is quite obvious that mere expansion of formal primary schools will not be able to bring the rural or urban poor to schools.

To bring the disadvantaged children under the fold of primary education an alternative system should be introduced which will go side by side with the formal system. The alternative system must suit the needs of the poor and disadvantaged section of the community.

A way out of this situation is to provide part-time non-formal primary education at convenient hours so that the poor children are provided with educational opportunities. This will not hamper their work which keeps them out of school. The children will be able to learn as well as work.

The parttime primary education will be provided through part-time non formal primary schools. These part-time non-formal schools will act as stop-gap measure for the present and function side by side with formal schools.

The children who must work to survive will have easy access to education through these part-time schools. Such schools should be established in every locality to enrol the children who cannot receive full-time education due to economic constraints.

The other children should of course be encouraged to attend formal schools on full-time basis.

Needless to say, the non-formal primary schools require properly planned large

scale arrangements.

The prominent features of a non-formal part-time primary schools are:

1. The part-time primary schools are more or less like community schools which are designed to provide educational opportunities to the children of the disadvantaged section of the community who are never enrolled in schools for economic and other socio-cultural constraints.

2. Community support is essential to run these schools. Community should provide rent-free accommodation for the schools. The existing primary schools, the "mad-rassas" or any room in someone's house can be used to accommodate the children.

3. A village level local committee has to be formed with local persons as members. Their involvement and initiative are necessary to conduct the part-time schools successfully.

4. A preliminary survey should be conducted in each village to identify the non-enrolled and drop-outs in age group 7-11. The number of non-formal schools to be opened will depend on the number of non-enrolled children of the village.

5. A three-year programme should be taken up for part-time schools. The part-time school programme may be divided into two phases. a. Literacy Development phase. b. Literacy Extension phase.

6. Not more than 20-25 children will be enrolled in one learner group. There may be more than one group in a village.

7. The age of the children should be from 7-11 years. It is assumed that the children of this age group will be able to learn quickly.

8. Teachers having at least 7/8 years of formal schooling will be recruited from the village for the non-formal part-time schools.

9. The teachers will be given an honorarium for their