

Some Thoughts On Our Primary Education

—M. A. Taher

OUR primary education, a staggering horse in the whole system of our education, badly needs a thorough reorganisation. Education at the Secondary college and university levels has gone through appreciable changes through these decades, but its shape at primary level remains nearly unaffected. This stagnation or deterioration can fairly be attributed to the lack of a school leaving Examination which was abruptly and illogically discontinued during the Pakistani period.

If we delve deep into the root cause of this degeneration we shall find three factors mainly responsible:

- 1) Faulty method of teaching
- 2) Worn out curriculae and
- 3) The traditional system of supervision.

In the by-gone days "spare the rod and spoil the child" was the theory of teaching and belief in its efficacy was so deep, rooted in the common mass that guardians used to come to the teachers with their wards and would say "Here is my ward. His bones are mine and the flesh is yours".

Nationalisation of primary education after liberation could not bring the desired improvement in overall situation. There is though no denying of the fact that by nationalising primary education the then government gave a shape to the long standing demand of the society. It also worked as a befitting incentive to draw the attention of qualified and talented teachers to the profession. But the way in which it was done was not free from defects. A proper survey of the existing primary schools in the country and correct statistics of the number of teachers and roll strength was a prerequisite for any such step. Proper step for increasing the efficiency of supervision was also lacking.

Though training is essential for recruitment of a teacher, not many of the trained teachers are seen adopting improved method of teaching. Instead, they seem to prefer to cling to the traditional method. Many still believe that churning is good for their pupils.

Loose Type of Supervision. The task of supervising and controlling all the primary schools in a thana was vested in the hands of an Education Officer from the British period when primary education meant imparting the students the knowledge of reading and writing English, since the creation of a set of clerks was the primary objective of the education system. Underqualified unemployed youths were recruited as primary teachers with a negligible pay. The so-called supervision by Inspectors was most of the times confined to the annual and monthly returns. His visit to the schools was few and far between. And the salary structure of the teachers was too poor to draw the attention of more qualified hands. This tradition was retained by the Pakistani rulers too. Hence after liberation the Government in order to reorganise the primary education had to take the decision of nationalisation.

The co-factor responsible for deterioration is the flaw in the process of curriculum making and implementation. Though curriculum is a perennial and continual process in other countries, it is painful to note that in our country curriculum is the product of such a mother body that expires after the issue comes into being. The Body is formed and reformed from time to time with the increasing demand from the intelligentsia to infuse new senses of value into our education in keeping with the changing social order. The Body

then lays down some principles and guidelines. The report then goes to an implementation cell formed with officials and political persons. The report in the meantime loses contemporaneity and only a portion of it in modified form is adjudged to be in tune with the already changed socio-economic political atmosphere. As a result our national spirits and ideals are rarely seen to be visualised in the curriculum. Thus our education policy was medieval in the British period, colonial in the Pak period and after liberation it was not quite in conformity with the change. We have observed how the gap between our cravings and having instead of being bridged up gets wider still.

In the light of this context we shall review the measures taken up by the government in this regard. International organisations are constantly trying to bring the less developed countries within their range of assistance. The present government has properly risen to the occasion and have availed of the opportunity. Under the programme 'Universal Primary Education' the World Bank has taken up forty Thanas. In these areas as many primary schools as are needed for the total children of school-going age will be set up. The Bank will provide everything needed for these schools which include teachers in improved ratio, improved teaching appliances and free books. The government is committed to sponsor the programme throughout the country in five phases.

In order to ensure proper implementation of the programme a separate Directorate for Primary Education has been established. A curriculum Development Authority has recently started working. Local Education Authorities (LEA) have

been geared up in seventy-two subdivisions of the country. In Britain these LEA's are vested with full capacity of planning, organising, implementing and maintaining the entire primary education in various parts of the country, according to their local needs. Theirs is grass-roots approach and ours is leadership type. Our LEA's (excepting Dacca & Chittagong) will be given to look upon the supervision of schools, appointment and transfer of teachers, improvement of roll strength, conduct of Primary Final Examination etc. Sub-divisional Officers will be the ex-officio chairmen of these Bodies and Primary Education Officers (PEO) will be the Member, Secretary. Rest of the Body will comprise representatives of the various stages of local bodies.

Keeping in view the above circumstances and developments I would like to put forward some concrete suggestions:—

I) The LEA's should include Heads of the government colleges & government schools and persons with specific contribution to education so that with the official obligation of the administrative officers, voluntary spirit of these technical and experienced persons may be amalgamated to produce better result.

II) Teachers should undertake extensive programme for motivating the guardians, collecting data on various problems and trends of the people and aptitude of the taught.

III) The post of the head teacher in future should be filled in by B.Ed. trained graduates or Master degree holders and the post should carry a salary befitting their qualification and experience. Like other administrative job they may be kept away from home districts and

Family Education

(Continued from page 5)

the tenure in a particular school should be of three to five years.

IV) In order to apprise the guardians of the progress of their wards and other related problems quarterly meetings and annual conferences should be arranged. Thus close co-operation between the teachers and the guardians will be built up and this would help create a congenial atmosphere.

V) Tiffin system and 'earn while you learn' scheme should be introduced to provide incentive to the learners. I think this scheme will catch the fascination of those guardians who seek in their ward a helper of their profession. (The views expressed in the article are those of the author's)