

Primary Teachers' Training

Mohammad Tajuddin

IN Bangladesh, it has been observed that of all the different factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and education of teachers are the most significant. Nothing is more important than securing supply of high quality recruits to the teaching profession, providing them with the best possible professional preparation and creating satisfactory conditions of work. In view of the rapid expansion of primary education we visualise and in view of the urgent need to raise the standards to the highest level and to keep them continually improving, these problems have acquired importance and urgency.

As early as 1944, the Sargent plan recommended that the duration of the training course should be two years. This recommendation has been repeatedly made by the different Education Commissions set up by the Government on a number of occasions. The existing one year training course is not sufficient to prepare competent and capable teachers who will immensely benefit by fresher ideas about the modern development in the education of young children.

The duration of present primary training courses in UK, USA, USSR, Sweden, India and Cuba are 2, 4, 3, 2 and 5 years respectively. In pursuance of the present demand, one year course has been extended to two years, technically adding two separate courses namely Certificate Course and Higher Certificate Course, each for one year duration. Certificate Course is a professional training for school teachers as beginners' course but Higher Certificate Course is for Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher as per design of the course that covers educational administration, management and community relation.

Some difficulties arise from continuation of the two-year course. First, the difficulty is the teachers themselves. In the present system most of the new recruitment for primary school has to be from among untrained teachers, as the trained teachers available in the market are very few. The untrained teachers are reluctant to undergo two years' training leaving their wife and children unfed and unclad in the remote areas. Secondly, the failure to admit freshmen to training institute leads to the recruitment of untrained teachers. These difficulties may be overcome by

instituting an adequate number of scholarships and stipends for the training of untrained teachers and creating scope of promotion and increased salary for trained teachers that they come and join eagerly. Pre-service training for freshmen is necessary for proper availability of trained teachers for primary schools.

According to the statistics given in the Curriculum Handbook (1981), of the total number of teachers in 36615 government primary schools was 15,4,000. Of them 106000 were trained and 48000 were untrained. At that time there were 47 PTIs with annual enrolment capacity of 9400, as per 200 seats each PTI. Due to retirement and death of primary school teachers, 4400 new appointments are necessary every year. As per statistics shown in the Handbook of PTI Curriculum there was huge backlog of untrained teachers. In the last ten years (1981-90) in view of acute shortage of accommodation and teaching staff, what happened in the name of teacher training was regretful. Teachers have been sent for training to PTIs with high expectation but training requirements were not fulfilled in such a condition of shortage of staff, over-crowded class and other shortcomings. So training remained incomplete and half-done. The unrecognised schools also cause a particular problem, for when they become recognised, all their staff automatically qualify to become teachers too, regardless of whether they are trained or untrained.

The clearance of the existing backlog of untrained teachers was only a temporary solution of the problem and unless steps are taken simultaneously to expand training facilities to the extent necessary, the backlog will accumulate again.

How will a nation estimate its annual demand for trained teachers during the next 10 to 15 years and plan the expansion of its training facilities? A high level statistical survey suggests that this may be done on two assumptions:

★ The number of teachers required for replacement due to promotion, retirement and death, may be taken at 4% of the existing number, and ★ The number of teachers required for new enrolment should be estimated on the basis of the additional enrolment expected in primary schools during the period and a teacher pupil ratio of 1:45.

It thus appears that our minimum

annual requirements of primary school teachers would be 22000 and that the maximum would be 55000, depending on the target to be reached and the pupil-teacher ratio to be adopted. Assuming a pupil-teacher ratio of 45:1, it appears that our annual requirement of teachers will vary between 26000 and 46000 during the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans (1990-2000 A.D.) In addition to 8000 teachers required for replacement due to promotion, retirement and death, at the rate of 4% of the existing number of teachers.

Institution

An important problem is to decide the optimum size for a teacher training institution. The optimum size implies that an institution should neither be too big nor too small. If such a size can be determined, and all or most of our training institutions planned on that basis it would be possible to have a great deal of economy without sacrificing quality. It may even be possible to reduce costs and to increase efficiency simultaneously. The optimum size of a training institute should be of four classes, two classes of Certificate Course (1st year) and two classes of Higher Certificate Course (2nd year) preferably of 40 to 50 trainees each. Admission is to be restricted, minimum upto 40 trainees but in no circumstances the enrolment should exceed 50. Supervision and Criticism of practice lessons would not be effective with an enrolment of more than 50. A training institute having two courses like Certificate Course and Higher Certificate course with less than four classes is rather costly and with more than 200 trainees becomes rather bulky. The four-class unit institution will be considered as both manageable and economical.

The instructors of PTIs received professional training from the secondary teachers' training colleges which offer no course in primary education and had very little to do with teaching of children of primary school-age. Hence the instructors of PTIs and supervisors of schools do not have the requisite back-ground for training the primary teachers. Therefore, it is important to operate higher training courses like B, Ed, (Primary) for the personnel working at different levels at primary education.

Sometimes it is speculated that PTIs have not yet been able to rise upto the level of quality product to

prepare competent hands for teaching in primary schools according to the modern concept of teaching-learning methods and principles. One of the main reasons for it is inherent in the fact that the teachers who are engaged in training the primary teachers are themselves not specialised and adequately trained for the business for which they are employed.

The method of teacher training is defective and not up to the mark. In a class of nearly a hundred trainees, the instructors usually have to follow lecture method as the only way of teaching. Shortage of classroom, shortage of teaching staff and the old type of syllabus are responsible for it.

Generally a PTI hardly arranges two class-rooms for training purpose but is obliged to expedite clear the backlog, enrolling 200 trainees, even sometimes in each sessions dividing them, into two sections with 100 in each.

It is difficult for an instructor to perform his job in a big class of 100 trainees. Sometimes it was heard that some PTIs were compelled to use loud speaker in the classroom. In a big class a long lecture may be possible in liberal education what it is quite impossible in teacher education. It may be mentioned that liberal education of college and university differs greatly from teacher education in their procedure.

Evaluation—Internal as well as external evaluation—remains the yardstick of success in the training. Evaluation follows from the subject matter of the syllabus that has two broad dimensions of method and content. Method has been called the heart of the teacher-training but in recent years external evaluation remains stagnant on contents, giving less stress on method and that undermines the whole system of evaluation. Weightage should be sixty-forty on methods and contents, respectively, in all kinds of evaluation in the PTIs. Internal evaluation is gaining momentum all over the world. Let both internal as well as external evaluation work according to their own way without any interference or supremacy by one upon another. A subject what is known as Institute Records remains in an insignificant position. It should be divided into two equal halves, one is Physical Education and the other Art and Craft, and the lesser portions should be discarded from the Records or merged with the respective subjects. (To be continued)