

Thoughts on mass education

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Education is the condition precedent to national progress. So, education, as called the backbone of a nation, is not move without a backbone so no nation can make advancement without real education. For this reason, high priority for education is desirable in any plan for national development. Today, the population of Bangladesh has reached the mark of 9 crore. If 20 per cent of this population is regarded as illiterate, then the remaining about 7 crore and 20 lakh people of Bangladesh are deprived of the light of education, say literacy. In fact, the 20 per cent of the population is not also educated in real sense. Therefore, the number of uneducated people is much more than 7 crore and 20 lakh. If education is the key to national prosperity, then any effort for national march towards development keeping this huge population uneducated would tantamount to putting the cart before the horse.

Our education system, in the main, should be to master the arts and crafts for leading a happy and prosperous life. Our education should be universal and people-and-product oriented. Our education should be to enable us scientifically and technologically and utilise the natural resources of Bangladesh for raising the standard of living of the people. So this education would be essentially scientific and functional in nature. Education in art, literature, philosophy etc., would be selective. Because 'education for education's sake' would be a luxurious waste for us.

For mass education there is need for mass movement. If mass education centres could be established all over Bangladesh and their management ensured through mass mobilisation it would perhaps be possible not only to offer teaching in reading and writing but also impart education in arts and crafts, and sciences to the illiterate people. Both literacy and education is necessary to master the art of leading a standard and prosperous life. Literacy is the greatest medium for learning scientific arts and crafts for development. It is easier to disseminate knowledge throughout the country once we have a literate populace. So literacy is the first step.

One of our greatest national requirements today is to realise the prime objective of universal education, i.e., to reach the lamp of education in each and every house. To be fully successful in universal education, mass education has to be integrated with the national education system on the one hand and to institutionalise it through voluntary endeavour on the other. If mass education is not institutionalised it can turn into an empty euphoria. And, if it is not integrated with the national education system it would neither be realised at minimum cost nor it would achieve fulness and finality.

Public places like office of co-operative societies, clubs, schools, union parishad offices, medical centres, community centres etc., are numerous all over Bangladesh. Mass education centres can be organised easily at some of these public places. For this, cost involved in housing and furnishing would not be much. These centres could also function as the nuclei of co-operatives which could also be so designed as to spearhead the development and productive activities of the villages. In fact, there has to be fusion of mass education with co-operative and co-operatives would be the most essential associate of mass-education. If mass education and co-operatives can gain momentum from the same centre and move forward together they would support and nourish each other. As co-operatives did not succeed in Bangladesh in isolation, so it seems that mass education would meet with failure if planned separately. And developmental and productive activities should be their motive power for survival. None of them would survive if productive effort is not made their driving force. As mass education without co-operatives is difficult to conceive so also co-operatives without mass education would not bear any fruit.

The structure of the mass education centre would be in accordance with the need of the receiver of education. Those who are illiterate would survive if productive effort is not made their driving force. As mass education without co-operatives is difficult to conceive so also co-operatives without mass education would not bear any fruit.

That class is easy. The illiterate would be the children, the young and the old. All people young and old, men or women who are illiterate would be in this class. When they do this class successfully, they would be promoted to the next higher class. Those who drop out from school, madrasa, college would constitute another class. The syllabus for them would include scientific education on co-operative, family planning, agriculture, cottage and rural industry, preservation of surplus products and their marketing i.e., all subjects encompassing all possible developmental and productive activities in rural Bangladesh. All media of education e.g., audio-visual method, learning by doing, lecturing etc., would be used to impart education on these subjects.

It is relevant here to dilate on the composition of topics for mass education. Composing topics for the illiterate class is easy. The illiterate would be the children, the young and the old. All people young and old, men or women who are illiterate would be in this class. When they do this class successfully, they would be promoted to the next higher class. Those who drop out from school, madrasa, college would constitute another class. The syllabus for them would include scientific education on co-operative, family planning, agriculture, cottage and rural industry, preservation of surplus products and their marketing i.e., all subjects encompassing all possible developmental and productive activities in rural Bangladesh. All media of education e.g., audio-visual method, learning by doing, lecturing etc., would be used to impart education on these subjects.

Next we may discuss about the teacher-trainer of the centre. The three types of people living in the village, the students of schools, madrasas, colleges and universities (during the time of vacation) and the students of the higher classes of the centre can be the teachers of the initial class of the centre. Scientists and experts of whom we spoke earlier can be the teachers and trainers of the higher class. Most of these scientists and experts are public men. Therefore, they may be employed for the purpose. Public servants of higher category

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