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Non-Formal Education: For Drop-Outs And Development

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ABOUT a decade ago, the search for alternatives to formal schooling was intensified; firstly, because of the poor results of the existing school system and secondly, because the high rate of drop-out lead to unfulfilled expectations regarding universal education and its socio-economic aspects and consequences.

The educational system of Bangladesh faces a two-pronged challenge: the apparent irrelevance of education, vis-a-vis, life and the non-utilisation of various resources for making education to suit all phases of national and personal requirements; particularly for integrated development of the whole community requirements; particularly for integrated development of the whole community in the rural areas of our country. Non-formal education is just one of the methods to offer an alternative to prevent proliferation of problems like dry-outs, stagnation, certificate-oriented schooling, and to promote socioeconomic educational development of the community as a whole.

Education is a life-long process. It starts at birth and ends at death. Education is not imparted only through schooling. One learns through experience of life. At one time in the history of our country, there were no schools but people were educated through non-formal ways. In some way they were better educated than their descendents today. The peasant in the village learnt the arts and skills of farming, together with much traditional wisdom about earth and sky and living things.

In the town, the boy was apprenticed to a master craftsman, in whose household he used to live with other apprentices. In the household of the craftsman, he learnt not only trade but the way of business, customs and culture of the community. For the

girls, the home with a loom, kitchen and herb garden or a field, offered a better home-science-education and work-education than it does in these days of canned food, ready-made clothes, and other modern day 'necessities'.

At a certain stage of development in our country, there were Gururcheha, Maktabas, Asrams and Madrasahs. These institutions of learning were not like our present-day schools and universities. These institutions were not meant for imparting literacy only but to impart such education which is related to the life-needs of the community. Children used to get education through work. These institutions of learning were free from the rigidities and constraints of the formal schools of today. In fact, what we mean to-day as "Life long education or continuing education", was already available during the earlier period on our history.

There has been an explosion of knowledge today due to scientific and technological advancement. Traditional ways of life have been replaced by modern scientific methods. Traditional culture has been wedded to scientific and technological culture. Socio-economic and psychological researches have made considerable advancement and the results of these research studies are being utilised for evolving and effective teaching-learning process. There is a growing realization in all quarters that education should be related to the socio-economic development of the people. In spite of all these developments, there are millions of drop-out children in our country who are deprived of education.

For such drop-out children in the

age-group 6-14 years, we have to think of an alternative system of education as they cannot attend the formal schools as explained in the earlier section of this write-up. We have to think of such a system of education which is free from the rigidities and the constraints of the formal school and which helps in the socio-economic and educational development of the drop-out children.

The alternative way for imparting education to the drop-outs seems to be the non-formal education system. Although the non-formal system of education would require a thorough organisation, as is done in the case of formal system, it will have to be flexible. It should not have the rigidities of the formal system; nor should it be like the informal education where learning takes place incidentally.

There are various types of non-formal education programmes today in our country. Adult, Functional Literacy Programme for age-group 15-35; Mass Education Programme for age-groups 4-5, 6-10 and 11-14 years, who cannot afford to join the regular classes in the schools; Satellite Instructional Television Programme for children in primary schools and for adults; Non-Formal Education Programme for drop-outs in the age-group 6-14 years through part-time education for adopting multiple-entry.

This article is confined to the programme of non-formal education for the drop-outs in the age-group 6-14 years, through part-time education for adopting multiple-entry.

As has been mentioned earlier, one of the major purposes of non-formal education programme is to

organise part-time education programme for such children in the age-group 6-14 years, who have either never gone to school or had dropped out, at one stage or the other, before completing education upto class VIII in a formal school. By way of classification of these children in terms of their educational needs, the total number of children to be covered by non-formal and part-time courses could be divided into the following categories.

Children who do not enrol in class I at the age of six years but after two or three years, are willing to join school, and children who enrol in class I at the age of six or so but drop-out after a few months or at any point before completing the first stage of five years. These children will have to be provided with part-time education to enable them to enter class IV roughly at the age of 11.

Children who, on completion of five years of schooling, enter class VI at the age of 11 + or so but drop-out after a few months or at some point before completing the middle school stage of three years. These children will have to be provided with part-time education to enable them to enter in class IX roughly at the age of 14 +.

Children who drop-out after completing Class V but want to resume studies later. These children will have to be provided with part-time education to enable them to enter class IX.

Before starting the programme of non-formal education for the introduction of part-time education and for adopting multiple-entry, it is necessary to formulate the objectives of education for such a programme. They may be:

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