

14 OCT 1990

48

✓

## Towards Developing Primary Education

Kazi Abdul Matin, M. Ed.

**I**T can reasonably be remarked that the overall standard of education in our country will not be overhauled without the needed overhaul done to the primary level, the foundation of education-structure.

- It is heartening that the Government has been taking sincere steps for developing education in the country. Efforts have been on, at all levels of education for desired improvement. Only recently, decision has been taken for introducing compulsory primary education in the country from the start of the year to come. This will be a horizontal development of primary education. But, here I try to suggest some means and measures for its vertical development i.e. the development of standard.

The following paragraphs are intended to enumerate the defects of the existing state of primary education, with, side by side, suggestions for their removal.

The number of existing primary schools is not commensurate with the demand for them. With the increase of population, the number of school age children increases; but, the existing schools cannot accommodate the unmanageable school populace.

For proper accommodation and learning of the children, new schools should be set up where and when needed; otherwise the over-crowding of children will jeopardise education itself.

Most of the rural primary schools run short of furniture and teaching aids. Often, it is found that in the schools of mofassil areas students have to sit on the floor and all the teachers cannot sit on chairs. Letter-charts and chalk-boards even are not sufficient in some schools, not to speak of other modern appliances.

For the improvement of such pitiable circumstances, government has to supply the needed furniture and teaching aids as the conduct of primary education in the responsibility of the government. If needed, it can impose enhanced rate of education cess; but education of the children should not be let to trudge.

In a considerable number of primary schools shortage of teachers has been a vexing problem.

In a primary school there are six classes from class I to class V with two sections—IA and IB in class I and for these six classes at least six teachers are indispensably needed, whereas, most of the schools of mofassil areas

do not have more than three teachers each. Some have less than three. If the schools are not run in two shifts—morning and evening, the three teachers of a school have to teach two classes each at a time. Both two shift-teaching and two-class teaching tell upon the energy and efficiency of the teachers. Can a teacher go on teaching all-day long? Or, can he teach two classes simultaneously? Or, can the pupils of two classes learn anything from a teacher in the same period? the answer will, surely, be 'No'.

In such a deplorable situation, government should not but put six teachers in every school, if primary education, worth the name, has to be run in the country.

The question of pecuniary stringency may arise. This should be overcome by curtailing funds from other national heads of expenditure or by levying higher rate of education cess.

Some teachers of primary schools are, not efficient enough and dedicated to their job. Mostly Matriculates are engaged in the primary schools. Knowledge of many of them is not enough for educating the beginners. Sometime, they cannot grasp the lessons themselves and so they can hardly make the learners understand.

For tiding over such a situation two means can be resorted to. One, graduates and masters of subjects can be attracted to primary education by adopting the rule of paying the teachers according to qualifications; wherever they may serve. Let a graduate or master have the same extent of pay and other facilities either in primary school, or in a high school or in a college. Two, contents of text-books of primary schools require to be taught to the teachers there-of, in the PTI's by the trained and experienced instructors; rather than imparting other trainings of scanty application to teaching situation.

Posting local teachers to the schools hampers learning atmosphere to a degree. Many a local teacher engages in own agricultural, business and other affairs, and resultantly cannot engage full energy in teaching. Again the engagement of some teachers in local politics, makes them undesirable to both the guardians and the students.

Hence, teachers of one district should be posted to the schools of other districts. This may create the problem of residential accommoda-

tion for the teachers. Experience reveals that the teachers are esteemed much by the guardians who offer them food and lodge gladly. Providing for residential accommodations to the teachers, may be made the responsibility of the Managing committees of respective primary schools. Further the government should shoulder the responsibility of providing residential accommodations, at least, to the Head Teachers of primary schools, as the Headmasters of High schools are provided.

In mofassil schools, it is often noticed that some teachers absent themselves from school by turns. If one teacher plans to be absent from the school on a day, he leaves a petition to the Head Teacher concerned. And, any inspector visits that school on the following day the Head Teacher presents the petition of his absenting teacher; if not, the petition of that teacher is torn into pieces. Authorities find it difficult to stop this practice.

A teacher, if he teaches or not, gets the monthly salary. Similarly an inspecting official gets his service-benefits unchecked. Both teachers and inspecting personnel have to be made accountable.

Moreover, the number of inspectors should be increased. If needed, one inspector for every hundred schools should be appointed in every upazila and the overall responsibility for making the teachers regular in attendance, dutiful in teaching and thus making the schools run expectedly should be imposed on him. Thus, four or five inspectors including one for preparing the pay bills of the teachers, have to be maintained in a upazila.

### Text-books

The text-books now in use, as supplied by the Text-book Board, are not worthy enough. They abound with mistakes and unworthy contents. Books on Bengali literature contain errors of printing, spelling and grammar and unattractive stories and poems. Arithmetic books harbour calculating mistakes and the English books are with varied types of defects. Text-book Board should ensure that no such mistakes creep into the books and that books are made attractive.

### Burden Of Curriculum

Now, a list of subjects with long syllabi has been prescribed for the

young learners which they can hardly bear. At the primary level of education teaching of 4R's—religion, reading, writing and arithmetic should be stressed. These also should be of short syllabi, only basic knowledge in these subjects has to be given to the youngsters. More of it will tell upon their level of grasping and thus may, retard their interest in learning. More of information can be obtained by them at the higher levels, and so they should not be compelled to swallow bitter pills at this initial stage of learning.

Conclusion: Of the means and measures suggested herein, some may seem severe and some again may appear expensive enough. In reply, this can be said that if severity is avoided, accomplishment of success in any good work becomes often unattainable.

The cost involved in executing some of the suggestions can be justified, if education of this level is taken to be the root-education making the tree-education stand erect.

Without firm rooting, the thriving and existing of the tree becomes unthinkable. Hence increased expenditure at this level can well be justified and advocated for.

Vertical development of primary education i.e. the development of its standard requires to be emphasised more than the horizontal expansion in term of introducing compulsory state of it in the country. If the length and breath of the country can be brought under compulsory primary education, the horizontal development can be introduced; otherwise, this may result in the discrimination of literacy-diffusion to the discontent of the people of the left-out areas. On the contrary, if attempts are made with the estimated expenses of the compulsory primary education, for the vertical development of it all over the country, the benefit can be evenly distributed. All the more, this will ensure quality, rather than quantity. A quality-literate man will be better than dozens of 'Ka' 'Kha' 'Ga' knowing ones like a gold grain valued more than the hundreds of iron-grains.

We hope this noble plan of the government may not come to a fiasco, due to non-cooperation of the under-fed and under-clad guardians, dearth of teachers, inadequate number of schools and apprehended unmanageability of such a tremendous task.