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Educational innovation is the process by which the inherent dynamism of the system can be sustained. Although various types of innovations are taking place in other countries based on the need of the learners, education system in Bangladesh is characterised by a rigid management system and a stereotyped curriculum. However, even under the prevailing system, a laudable attempt was made in 1976 for initiating an improvement programme in the primary curriculum. The following write-up presents the nature and achievement of that programme.

The "Muktangan" or outdoor primary education project was undertaken in 1976 for a period of 3 months in 500 primary schools selected from 15 Thanas. It was a project based mainly on enrichment of the

primary school curriculum by including learning opportunities in the syllabus from the environment of the children thus making their education work-oriented and relevant to their situation. The stated objectives of the project included the following: (a) to make primary education attractive to young children, through learning from environment so that the alarmingly large drop-out rate could be reduced to some extent, and (b) to provide a realistic and practical education to primary school children so that they may grow up as useful and productive members of the community in which they would live as adults. It is assumed that it would be proper to give them the rudiments of village professions so that school learning could be put to practical use.

Enrichment of

In line with the set forth objectives a curriculum was prepared which contained two parts: Part one included the traditional textbook-based learning activities conducted inside the classroom and other part contained the learning activities to be carried out outside the school premises. The outdoor activities to be performed were specified in great details in a teacher's guide prepared for the purpose. The concerned teachers of the 500 schools were given a short but thorough training regarding implementation of the curriculum. Guidance was also

provided through radio programmes specifically designed to help the teachers in solving the problems encountered. Outdoor activities were listed for all the classes from I to V depending on the age, interest and ability of the children. These included the following: (a) village survey, (b) agricultural work, (c) Skill oriented craft work, (d) study of animals, birds and insects, (e) study of plants, trees, shrubs, fruits and vegetables, (f) identification and conservation of local resources, (g) study of local geography, such as rivers, canal irrigation system, rainfall, communication and

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transportation systems, agricultural problems, etc. (h) marketing and distribution system of local products, (i) health, sanitation and food habits, (j) study of the system of local government, such as the union council, the cooperatives, etc. (k) participation in games and sports, music and other recreational activities and (l) participation in development and social welfare activities.

The project was conducted on an experimental basis for about three months from January 26 to April 15, 1976. In spite of the short duration of the project, it had been successful in making an impact in breaking the rigidity

of the routine and stereotype teaching carried out within the four walls of the classrooms. It also dispelled the idea of the parents who generally believe that education takes place only within the school house. This was evident in the parent's behaviour at the initial stage when they protested the idea of children remaining in the fields, on the banks of rivers and in the local market. But as they saw the children work and improve their knowledge through outdoor learning, they were convinced of the utility and purpose and supported the project wholeheartedly.

The evaluation study carried out at the end of the project period showed that the project was able to break the inertia that characterizes the learning activities in the rural primary schools. The study team collected data from three groups: the students, the parents and the teachers all of whom had favourable opinion about the outdoor primary education project. It was found that the participation and attendance in the schools increased considerably during the project period. The teachers' motivation also increased and they got more satisfaction from this type of teaching in spite of the fact that they had to work harder and had to be more creative under the new system. A great majority of the teachers expressed that the programme should be

extended to all the schools in the country.

However, as the project committee ceased to function after the experiment, the government failed to keep the project going or to extend it to other schools. As a result, the interest and enthusiasm created by the project gradually waned and the schools reverted to the traditional method of teaching. Thus, the primary schools were deprived the opportunity of enriching their curriculum and improving the relevance of primary education in the country merely due to lack of earnestness on the part of the authorities to provide the necessary guidance, supervision and inputs to sustain the activities of the project and expand it further.