

School-Based Education

—Anwar Hossain

THE Government of Bangladesh is pursuing a policy of providing minimum education to all of its citizens. Accordingly, universalization of primary education has been given top most priority in the education sector. Despite all out efforts for universalization of primary education, statistics reveal that 54% of the school-age children are not attending schools and also a large majority of the enrolled students drop out before completion of their primary education.

The Association of School-Based Education (ASBE), a non-government organisation set up in 1978 conducted research studies as to why the majority of the school-age children are not attending the school and also why the large number of enrolled students drop out before completion of primary education.

The research has revealed that the existing system of imparting education in the primary schools was the root cause of illiteracy and dropout.

In the existing system of primary education the teachers give lessons to the students and the students have to prepare their lessons at home with the help of house-tutor, parents or other members of the family. But the research has revealed that 88 per cent guardians cannot afford to maintain house tutors and 77 per cent illiterate guardians cannot help their children to prepare their lessons at home.

For solving this acute problem, the Association for School-Based Education has evolved an idea that the teachers will have to prepare their students at school in such a way that the lesson giving and taking are completed at school.

The present system of education is

home-based, for which the students become dependent on home assistance for preparing their lessons. In the school-based education system, the students are not burdened to carry assigned tasks from their teachers to home for preparing them with little chance of getting assistance from the house tutors or from their mostly illiterate parents/guardians in a rural and poor set-up in Bangladesh. School-based education is a system of education in which the teachers are actively involved in imparting lessons to students so that the students can practise, learn and use the same in the classroom in such a way that they are not required to prepare their lessons at home, or if necessary, can practise lessons with little assistance from others.

On the whole, lesson giving and taking must be completed in the classroom. The school-based education is likely to promote at least the following three aspects towards universalization of education.

a) Increased enrolment in the school through motivation of the parents and guardians relieved from the responsibilities of providing house tutorship for their children;

b) Reduced rate of drop-out of the rural children who hardly manage to get the services of house tutors;

c) Providing ample opportunities for the children to assist their parents/guardians in domestic affairs outside school hours (this is very much needed in most of the Bangladeshi families, specially in the rural set-up).

Introduction of school-based education involves the following measures which are to be implemented by the school teachers and local education authorities.

a) Changing the existing timetable in the school for increasing the duration of class period viz; one hour for each period instead of existing 30/35 minutes. This will result in reduced number of periods per day. In this system, the one-hour time of each period is distributed by the teacher into a series of tasks to be accomplished during the period. In this way, monotony of the students and the teachers will be removed alike.

b) Utilization of each period by arranging presentation of lessons followed by discussion, peer-group learning by the learner under the guidance of the teacher.

c) Recording the performance of the students period-wise, day-wise and taking additional measures to assist backward children, if any.

d) Providing specially prepared and printed performance sheets for the teacher for recording the performance of individual students in the way of awarding appropriate grades.

e) Organisation of intensive training course for the teachers and supervisors at regular intervals to orient, motivate and gear-up the teachers in implementing the school-based learning programme.

The Association for School-Based Education conducted an action research programme under the sponsorship of UNESCO, Paris, in 50 Government primary schools at Mirzapur Upazila, Tangail to observe the implementation of the school-based education system. All concerned like teachers, guardians and students were interviewed through different sets of questions to find out the effectiveness and constraints of the system. The striking findings are

summarised below:—

i) The average rate of success in the school-based system was 93%.

ii) Enrolment increased over 10% in the project schools whereas it reduced in the non-project schools.

iii) Cent per cent of the teachers, students and guardians advocated extensive implementation of school-based education.

iv) Involvement of students in domestic and farm works and inability to complete lessons at home were identified as the prominent causes of drop-out and completion of lesson giving and taking at school was advocated as the principal solution to the problem.

v) Cent per cent teachers of the project schools supported the 60 minutes' duration of class period as introduced under school-based system.

vi) 87% students of the project schools could complete lessons at the school in the new system and the same percentage could help their parents in domestic works.

vii) 80% guardians of the project area expressed that their children at present were no longer required to prepare lessons at home and 87% replied that their wards could participate in farming activities. The above ideas of school-based education system were evolved by Mr. Ibrahim Sobhan, a social worker and Executive Director of ASBE, a non-Govt. Organisation. He has been awarded fellowship as an innovator for 3 years by 'ASHOKA', an American-based non-Govt. Organisation. I think it would be good if the government tried to implement the above system of school-based education in a few selected areas on an experimental basis.