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Human Resources And Primary Education

The importance of human resources in a country can hardly be overemphasized. The human element is involved in all spheres of activities including technological development and industrial production. The type and quality of the human element influences the ultimate quality and quantity of production in all sectors. The importance of this element remains prominent despite all that have been done in the use of technology and know-how. No matter whether one is at the managerial desk or is behind the machine as a worker, the use of all other factors of production is facilitated by him. There is, therefore, a widening awareness about the need for developing human resources in all countries. In developed countries people are found working for training and retraining of the human resources for the purpose of utilizing available manpower in a more productive way. In developing countries, like Bangladesh the emphasis is on spreading education as a facilitating effort for development of human resources.

Bangladesh has a population that has preponderance of the young people including children of schooling going age. As statistics have it, more than forty per cent of the people are in the age group of five to fifteen. But, all of them are not enrolled in schools, many of them remain in their homestead in rural areas and assist their parents in farm activities or in domestic chore. Others who attend schools are faced with problems of different dimensions. In the process, the lofty goal of getting an adequately prepared workforce or of attaining the universal primary education remains beyond the reach of the common man. A man without education enters into the role of bread-winner for himself or for the members of his family and, more often than not, fails to earn enough to have a dependable life and living. Instead, the uneducated human element ultimately becomes a burden on the family and society at large.

In the given context and also at the behest of aid givers and other well meaning quarters, the policy makers have announced their determination to attain universal literacy by the turn of the century. They have adopted programme for expansion of primary education and created administrative machinery for overseeing the expansion programme. Substantial amount of money is spent every year for constructing buildings for primary schools, providing all types of facilities needed for class-room instruction, distributing books for children attending schools and also defraying the costs of all other inputs including pay of teachers. Of late, a programme named food for education has

also been introduced for the purpose of expanding education.

These official efforts are now being supplemented by the workings of kindergartens and even non-government agencies, which have started their schools for nonformal and primary education in rural as well as in urban slum areas. Without break-ups of the number of school going children and the number of seats in schools of various categories one cannot, however, evaluate the system as a whole.

Beyond the declared intent, and the programmes under implementation, one would like that the curse of illiteracy be removed and the development of human resources be ensured. In reality, however, one can see that the goal of universal literacy remains beyond the reach and the scope of broadening the base of educated and skilled workers recedes in the background. As reported in a section of the press, some primary schools in different regions of the country have no roofs on them, no walls around class rooms, no seats for teachers and the taught, no equipment like even a blackboard and no sufficient supply of usualbe items, some schools have teachers on the pay roll and others have vacancies that have not been filled in for years. As a result, schooling has become a sick exercise and educating children has become all the more difficult. In the urban centres, the failures of primary schools has also given rise to a booming schooling business; for many a kindergarten charges fees too high for the common people. And the impact of non-formal education in schools run by NGOs has not yet been assessed in terms of the development of human resources.

Corrective measures are called for and all concerned should work in a coordinated manner to use the move for expansion of primary education for effective development of human resources. It may be worthwhile to suggest that a comprehensive survey of primary schools has to be undertaken for finding out the actual situation in this sector. Such a survey can better be done with the help of local government agencies like Union Parishads, and District Councils for rural areas and municipal bodies for urban areas. Otherwise the impact of current distance between schools and the headquarters authorities in the capital cannot be properly assessed. Likewise survey of children in schoolgoing age-group in selected areas should also be made to find out why some children fail to avail of the opportunity offered and universal primary education programme. Above all, the curricula, the text books, the facilities in schools and the quality of teachers and their commitment have to be evaluated. The prevailing interface of officially-run primary schools with kindergartens and schools run by non-government agencies has also to be examined before taking further action for expansion of universal primary education.