

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN BANGLADESH: A FIRST STEP FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Non-formal Education Programme: Modus Prima for Developing Countries

Introduction:

Developing countries are vested with a lot of problems which are in vicious cycle. Most of the developing country problems are consequences of or related to low literacy rate and poor level of academic instructions. Poor socio-economic condition limits extension of infrastructure construction and these ultimately hinders formal education facilities or expansions. Every year a lot of students pass the ten-grade examination but all of them can not get enrollment into eleventh class education. This is a simple but common picture of the limitation of formal education in Bangladesh because of limited ability to build up physical infrastructure for these peoples. In developing countries literacy rate is poor, health or hygienic issues are ignored, population growth rate is high, and so morbidity or mortality indices are threatening. Social structure and pattern are similar in many of the developing countries. These countries have got multiple factors, which hinders development. These might be-

- Lack of literacy
- Lack of proper health information
- Lack of hygiene practice
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of research on these problems
- Lack of importance given towards the community

In 1960s Non-formal Education Programmes (NFEP) were meant in a different way in Bangladesh. With the advent of technology the significance of NFEP has begun to be newly evaluated. Innovation of modern technology have been able to produce a revolutionary “little bang” in mixture of government regulations, technical capability strategies that constitute the order of the world information technology. Traditional informatics were self-contented, anti-competitive and slowed technological innovations. But usage of powerful hybrids of computer, innovations for communication technology could rather produce a “big bang” in the usage of digital technology and deployment of entertainment facilities to the business or education sector.

Education policy and system with technology could immediately create market demands and options to supply them that defied the old ways of regulating education means and media. Another commercial battle started unfolding with the media revolution under way. In fact it is very difficult to anticipate which of the services or devices would be more important or popular or how much mixed up technology could serve the education system. With researches on technology and with many experiments in different education media and community models, non-formal education delivery has been found to be the best alternative for social development in developing countries.

Scenario of non-formal education in Bangladesh:

Evolution of non-formal education programme in Bangladesh goes back to 1956 when a venture was begun with distribution of about 200 radio sets for schools. In 1962 Audio-Visual Education Centre (AVEC) was formed under the Ministry of Education to highlight Non-Formal Education Programme (NFEP) in the country. Later on School Broadcasting Programme (SBP) was started as a pilot project of the ministry. The start was good but the race was slow because of the uneven political track in the country. After liberation of the country in 1971, NFEP was again given much emphasis. Both Government and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) started various non-formal education programmes at different levels. Government has established a Primary and Mass Education Department (PMED) within the ministry of education and started broad-based primary and mass education projects in different modes. Different NGOs has got different programmes with the similar target groups. In most cases target groups are deprived or dropouts who could not attend or complete formal education because of multiple reasons. So far PMED of the government could train up about 1,50,000 persons in their literacy programme over a period of 03 year. Government venture “Integrated Non-formal Education Programme” (INFEP) under the PMED cell involved 19 district co-ordinators for 5000 centres throughout the country for a period of three year. INFEP has got own curriculum for their rogramme.

This is based on need assessment survey. The curriculum covers main three areas like-

| Mother tongue | Mathematics | Environmental Studies |
|---------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| a) Listening | a) Concept of number | a) Family relationship |
| b) Speaking | b) Reading and writing of numbers upto 100 | b) Ideal family |
| c) Reading | c) Four fundamentals of mathematics | c) Natural and social environment |
| d) Writing | d) Units of measurement | d) Interdependence of living beings |
| | e) Simple transaction of coin and money | e) Health & Hygiene |
| | | f) Social and religious festival. |

Definition of literacy is simplified here as the ability to read simple sentences, write a simple paragraph and count numeric used for ordinary exchanges like sell-buy, telephone usage or number identification. Among the NGOs in Bangladesh, BRAC is doing excellent mass NFEP in various fields like literacy programme, continuing education programme, health education or population control programmes. Throughout the country BRAC has about 25,330 centres for non-formal education and number of neo-literate are about 1.01 million. Also many specific NFEPs are delivered by different NGOs for blind, deaf & dumb, or mentally retarded population.

Non-formal education program has been successful enough to raise the literacy rate of the country with reflection to building of national economy. In public health sector non-formal mode has been proved to be the most successful mode of health education delivery among all sections of people in the community. Non-formal health education has also been tried in North America with variable experiences. Different barriers for distance and open learning method in an advanced country environment have been nicely presented in several papers in last CADE conference at Banff, Canada earlier this year. Wawatay Communications in Northern Ontario, Canada broadcasts secondary level course programmes to isolated aboriginal students. Radio ECCA in Spain

(headquarters in Canary Islands) and radio schools throughout Latin America employ an effective educational format. But problems in developing countries are different. Poor socio-economic condition, less developed physical infrastructure and minimum reach to technology are prime barriers for education extension programmes in Bangladesh. Again mass motivation for non-formal education programmes could not yet been successfully developed at the need scale of the country. For health education drive, Bangladesh Open University planned to deliver Bachelor in Nursing and Certificate in Primary Health Care programmes in distance mode with also Nutrition, Maternity and Health care as the non-formal drive.

B.Sc.-in-Nursing Programme:

Bangladesh is a thickly populated country with inadequate health care facilities. There are about 13800 diploma nurses and only about 1500 graduate nurses for more than 120 million peoples in the country. In Bangladesh there is only one graduate College of Nursing at Dhaka with capacity of about 150 student every year. But because of many reasons only 50-60 nurses can get graduation from the college each year for about 1200 diploma nurses who are coming out from nursing schools. So this only nursing college, with a lot of multifaceted problems, is inadequate to meet the vast need of the professional development of the nursing community and also of the services towards people. Financial limitations restrict further infrastructure development. Considering all these events Government of Bangladesh and Asian Development Bank unitedly decided to make one way out for the issue. Emergence of Bangladesh Open University was thought to be a good solution. Accordingly a country wise need-survey assessment was done incorporating almost all classes of people, both professionals and non-professionals. An acceptable cost-effective demand of the peoples from all walks of life was the initiating point for launching of this programme from Bangladesh Open University.

Programme development has been done like any other programmes of the University. Series of workshops has been done to prepare the draft curriculum and course design for the programme. Programme outline has been performed by combined effort including the national and international consultants from Canada, U.K. and India.

Graduate nursing programme, B.Sc.-in-Nursing (BScN), has been designed for diploma nurses who completed three years post-diploma training in hospital. Basic syllabus covered in diploma programme has not been repeated in the graduate syllabus. Moreover graduate nursing syllabus of Dhaka University (Bangladesh), Indira Gandhi National Open University (India), Open University of Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka) and Athabasca University (Canada) has been consulted aiming at uniformity in curriculum and equalization of standard between universities or states. BScN Programme of Bangladesh Open University is of 06 semester duration. Each semester is of 06 month duration. Much emphasis has been given on applied issues like nursing research, administration, teaching methodology, issues, trends and senior focus elective. English has been selected as the medium of education and a good balk of the curriculum has been spared for english learning and teaching. This is to up grade the language skill, which is very much important for Bangladesh where english is the second language. Programme outline, course outline, unit outline and lesson outline is followed according to the consultancy reports for the Programme.

BScN programme from Bangladesh Open University will be delivered in distance mode. Printed text prepared in easy to understand module format would be the main media for the student. Printed text will be supported by Audio-Video aids both at the national broadcasting media (Radio and TV) as well as audio or videocassettes. Supplementary counseling sessions at the weekend (Friday) are always arranged at conventional academic institutions of the same discipline. Letter, telephone, e-mail communications are encouraged by the university.

Non-Formal Health Education Programme from BOU:

Bangladesh Open University has been established by combined financial agreement between the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). ADB recommended and approved 19 non-formal programmes. Of them Health, Nutrition, Population control, Maternity and Childcare are important items. As per present schedule at the national TV, each slot of non-formal programme is of 20 minute time. So far 76 such episodes of programme has been prepared by BOU. Few more episodes are being prepared recently.

Because of the heterogeneous geographical distribution of the population and also because of the poor literacy rate at different levels, a one step fixation of the target group has been found to be very much difficult. BOU is very much sensitive on this issue. We prepare our programmes in such a way that the programmes do not mimic traditional classroom teaching and again contents can satisfy a wide range of population. Actually these are now widely accepted and very much popular to the mass people. Our non-formal health education programmes are prepared in curriculum based series approved by the appropriate authority in the university like Academic

Council, which is the supreme academic body. We deliver programmes to extend health education to the commoners in very simple Bangla versions. Simultaneously we keep information regarding the latest message or technology device on the issue to supplement professionals. Our objectives for non-formal programmes are information or messages, sensitization, motivation & mobilization, resource materials, direct teaching among illiterate students. We try to sensitize people regarding health and hygiene issues with certain message or information aiming motivation or mobilization of the community members for hygiene practices using resource materials provided by direct teaching at the audio-video media without any botheration for literacy level. For delivering the matter we try to choose the appropriate media for that particular topics to illustrate. We also think planning and designing for the programme whether it would be institutional planning, series planning or study session planning. Then a checklist is done for production issues like audience, aim and objective, content & structure, form & format, support material & activities, resource & cost, scheduling, monitoring & evaluation etc. While planning any particular non-formal topics we try to identify any problem in the community, we try to analyze the problem, we determine strategy and we implement strategy to be evaluated later on.

We have no enrollment but we have good feedback through our countrywide network by 12 Regional Resource Centres, 80 Local Centres and about 600 study centres. Moreover we have our own research wing for having the feedback. We are going to establish collaboration with national or international NGOs for our non-formal programmes. We are planning better and more effective feedback systems in the near future.

Usage of the cyber space and networking technology:

Technology sharing through networking saves money, gives equity access for both developing and developed countries, ensures uniformity in quality control and provides better political commitment between races or nations which may ultimately turn to reduce political tension throughout the world. Establishment of regional network clearly defines jurisdictions and responsibilities, makes policy directives and reporting lines clear, gives staff some leeway, understands pressures for face-to-face service, values criticism from students and staff, trains up front-line multinational staff and also trains up regional and central staff in equal measures.

Bangladesh has got limitation for extension of the existing infrastructure. But on the other hand for better development of the country scope of education should be extended and more training facilities have to be planned. For a nation with such stalemate condition usage of cyber space is the issue to think. When normal school cannot afford space to the community, non-formal mode is preferred to disseminate knowledge or education. In non-formal mode cyber space and networking technology is used for supporting pedagogy in modern day. Networking in education contexts is meant for collaborative approach for delivery of academic instructions. Present world has become a global village because of networking technology. Networking is needed institutions because of many reasons like-

- a) Economic efficiency
- b) Technology sharing
- c) Equity access
- d) Quality Control
- e) Political Commitment

Institutional networking might be for simply *information sharing* where individuals, institutions or systems can exchange information regarding their interests. Or it may be *Consortia* characterized by a formal partnership, joint allocation of resources and an independent managing point. Institutions make necessary agreements for academic or administrative issues.

During recent years waves of technology rushed into Bangladeshi society. Hybrids of computers, E-mail, Internet and web world has already taken their place in the society. Being technology dependent, Bangladesh Open University has started its journey to upgrade its technological status and also trying to cope up with other open or distance learning institutions in other parts of the world. We have excellent access to computer, we have started our *local area network (LAN)* among our academics including some of our Regional Resource Centres. Any of our students can get comfortable access to our E-mail service from any of our *Regional Resource Centres (RRCs)*. *Wide area network (WAN)* is being tried with an elaborate network system *Student Information Management System (SIMS)*. This network might be started within months. BOU is also trying to establish the audio-conferencing system very soon. Besides these, BOU is also trying for downlinking the video-conferencing system in collaboration with IGNOU, India. Among other venture of Bangladesh this is tougher than any developed country perspective, but Bangladesh is on the way to doing it.

Conclusion:

Bangladesh upholds education extension programmes rapidly adopting non-formal modes side-a-side conventional formal education systems. Education contributes to economic growth, upward mobility, expanding the use of national language, political socialization, and cultural homogenization and deepening the understanding of national history and heritage. For such valid reasons non-formal mode of education delivery has been being accepted as the most effective alternate mode of education delivery especially in developing countries like Bangladesh. Proper usage of technology and cyber space is again a new way out for our country context. Cost of the multimedia technology is frequently questioned but one thing is not thought of that when enormous benefit is the concern, cost is not the matter to consider. In a world with information super highway, usage of the appropriate technology should be better utilized for education expansion. Non-formal mode of education delivery has been proved successful in Bangladesh during recent years. Illiteracy alleviation programme and mass literacy campaigns are getting excellent positive results in every effort. But we need better co-operation, improved co-ordination and veteran commitment for obtaining a quality civil society and social peace with harmony through non-formal education programmes.

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