

Female Teachers in Pry Schools: the Emerging Trend

Salma Akhter

SOME fifty years ago, position and role of female teachers in elementary education in the U.S.A and Europe was as it is today in Bangladesh. Gradually the situation has changed. Now children's education in those countries is managed mainly by female teachers in different types of schools.

But in Bangladesh most of the primary schools are yet to have a single female teacher each. This is more so in the rural schools. No statistics is available on the percentage of rural schools having female teachers.

Almost all the schools are headed by male teachers. If any school has a female teacher, the female-male ratio is 1:4/5. There is hardly any physical facilities available for them in the schools, not even a toilet!

Female teachers having small children face problems. Some take children to work places and make them sit in the class. In spite of such problems female teachers in the primary schools are

emerging as a strong partner in the teaching community they constitute 19 per cent of the total teaching stock.

Studies have revealed that female teachers usually come from a higher social background than their male counterparts. Their level of education is expected to be somewhat lower than the male teachers. But in one study it was found that 33 per cent had H.S.C., C-in-Ed. and 17 per cent had B.A. or M.A., C-in-Edn. Lack of opportunities in other sectors is forcing women with higher education to become primary school teachers.

As a result gaps in educational qualifications between male and female teachers are increasing. Female teachers however, prefer to work in the urban areas where their husbands work. But many female teachers are working in schools far away from their homes. About 41 per cent of female teachers in the rural areas daily travel between one and three kilometers to school.

Hashi Rani, daily crosses the Rupsha river daily to reach her place of work. She is a lively, lovely woman of mid thirties. She teaches in a govt. primary school in Rupsha upazila in Khulna. She starts from her house in the morning doing all the household work. Her husband works in the town and their two children go to the school. At school she teaches the young children of class I & II where number of students is usually very large.

Sabina Begum a young graduate of 22 years works as a teacher in one of the remote govt. primary schools in Khulna division. She also has to cross the Rupsha river, ride a rickshaw van or walk about one and half kilometres from her residence to go to the school.

Similar is the case with Hasina Khanam, who has to stay in a lodging near her place of work in one upazila in Manikganj. Many such cases can be found in different parts of the country.

Misunderstanding prevails

about the performance of female teachers in the primary schools. Whenever we talk to the male teachers and male education officers, we hear complaints that female teachers come late in the schools remain more absent, and take time off for domestic business! While this undoubtedly happens sometimes to their dual role, it is not widespread as is often claimed. Women in Bangladesh is still very much secluded, their social and organisational activities are restricted. This may to a certain extent guarantee their presence in school and the classroom. Male teachers are frequently found to be busy in political, domestic, organisational activities.

Attitude of female teachers towards teaching is generally positive. They consider this job permanent with high social status. Their job also raises their standard of living and help better education of this children.

In the school female teachers are found more neat and articulate, lively and self-confi-

dent, maintaining better relations with male colleagues (though facing professional rivalry) and good parent-teacher relation — particularly with mothers.

Since women have "natural" disposition to care and nurture the children, they enjoy teaching younger children. Children also express their preferences more for "apa" than for "sirs" who are usually harsh to them! It indicates that given the opportunities, the female teachers can play a very effective role in teaching young children and achieving Universal Primary Education.

The govt. is planning to recruit 10,000 new teachers 60 per cent of whom will be female teachers. If the quota is fulfilled, then 6000 more female teachers will be appointed in the primary schools. And those teachers should be posted in the rural primary schools.

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Students receiving practical lessons in weaving in a school for mentally retarded children in Dhaka city. —Star photo

Tips on Study Abroad : Courses Offered in UK

Academic year : October to June

University entrance.

Foreign students must have qualifications equivalent to the United Kingdom General Certificate of Education with five or six passes including two at Advanced (A) level.

Language.

Good knowledge of English is essential for all regular university courses. Orientation courses including some language training are provided for new students at certain universities. English language classes in particular are offered at several private and public institutions throughout the United Kingdom.

Information services.

British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN, and British Council offices in capitals and other large cities abroad.

United Kingdom diplomatic missions or information offices abroad.

National Union of Students, 461 Holloway Road, London N76LJ (advice for foreign students, study opportunities in the United Kingdom, English-language courses, etc.)

Association of Commonwealth Universities, John Foster House, 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF (information about universities of the Commonwealth and about fellowships and scholarships for travel between them).

Association of Recognized English Language Schools Federation of English Language Course Organizations (AREL/FELCO), 125 High Holborn, London WC1V 6QD (information on teaching in member school, foreign student's welfare).

Publications.

Higher Education in the United Kingdom, biennial. A handbook for students intending to study in the United Kingdom, and their advisers, prepared by the British Council and the Association of

Commonwealth Universities and published by Longman Group Ltd.

It includes useful information about admissions, knowledge of English, money matters, entry requirements and student life in Britain. A directory of subjects available, facilities for study, useful addresses, fees (both tuition and accommodation), examining bodies and admission requirements completes this book of over 300 pages.

How to live in Britain, biennial; a pocket handbook for students from overseas coming to study in Britain for the first time, published by the British Council.

ARELS-FELCO — Association of Recognized English Language Schools/Federation of English Language Courses Organizations, Schools and Course; an annual list of English-language schools, their courses, term dates, fees. Student Information Leaflets giving information for foreign students before and during their stay in the United Kingdom, published in English, Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. All obtainable from ARELS/FELCO, 125 High Holborn, London WC1V 6QD.

Higher Education Exchange foreseen to be combined with Education Exchange and called Education International, with three issues per year.

Young visitors to Britain, a guide for young foreigners wishing to take part in international meetings, sports, outdoor pursuits, language and other courses, farm work camps, etc. (separate Spanish, French, German, Italian), issued annually and published by the Central Bureau for Education, Visits and Exchanges, Seymour Mews House, Seymour Mews, London W1H 9PE.

The following are published by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, John Foster House, 36 Gordon Square, London W1H 0PF: Commonwealth Universities Yearbook.

British Universities guide to Graduate Studies, published for the United Kingdom Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Research opportunities in Commonwealth developing countries: a Register (1984).

Scholarships Guide for Commonwealth Postgraduate Students.

Financial Aid for First Degree Study at Commonwealth Universities.

Awards for Commonwealth University Staff.

Local Authority Full-Time Courses in English for Overseas Students, an information sheet issued annually by the British Council and obtainable free of charge from the Council's offices overseas or from the British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN. Learning English, a booklet listing private schools, London Education Authority courses and university courses (as well as summer courses) issued annually by the British Tourist Authority, 64 St James Street, London SW1A 1NF, and obtainable free of charge from British Council offices overseas, from the British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN, or directly from the British Tourist Authority.

Heritage Tours and Holidays, a booklet which offers holidays combined with studying is also published by the British Tourist Authority. English classes for Students from abroad, list courses (full time, part time) in the Inner London area, giving class fees, and other details. Obtainable from the IELEA Information Centre, County Hall, London SE1 7BP.

Particulars of Summer Schools arranged by British universities and open to overseas students are available from: the Honorary Secretary, Universities Council for Adult Education, Institute of Extension Studies, University of Liverpool, 1 Abercromby Square, P. O. Box 147, Liverpool L69 3BX.

NOT long ago a group of newly literate women from the south coast of Kenya were explaining the advantages of their recently acquired skills in reading, writing and calculation. Now they could sign their names they had more control over money transactions. They could read medical prescriptions and instructions. "Our eyes have been opened," said one of them, expressing the new sense of pride and increased self-reliance they all felt.

The preliminary findings from a questionnaire sent out in September 1988 by World YWCA to its member associations confirm such liberating effects of literacy. The responses show that:

- Women who receive literacy training are more respected in the community and at home.
- They are better equipped to search for jobs and can therefore earn more.
- They realize that they can do some jobs which are traditionally considered to be for men only.
- They are more able to run small businesses and keep records on their own.
- They become more effective leaders of women's groups.
- Their political awareness, participation and organizational skills are enhanced.
- They gain better understanding of their rights.
- They are much more capable of helping their children with their schoolwork.

There are many human, social and economic reasons why literacy education for women and girls should be a priority objective. For many women, achieving literacy could be one of the first steps in a process enabling them to take control over their lives, to participate on a more equal basis in society, and eventually to free themselves from economic exploitation and patriarchal

oppression. The sole fact that mothers' level of education has a positive effect on their children's health and progress in school should be a strong enough argument.

The figures show that the gap in literacy rates between men and women is constantly widening. Moreover, it seems likely that this "gender gap" will become even wider as economic constraints lead to increased demands on women's unskilled work and push literacy lower down the scale of priorities of people and governments.

Illiteracy among women and men in Third World countries is linked to poverty, inequalities and oppression. The education system introduced by colonial powers sometimes tended to accentuate various forms of discrimination, and the consequent inequities in access to school account for most adult illiteracy in Third World countries today. The traditional division of family and social roles between the sexes also prevented most girls from achieving literacy through schooling, and even when girls were enrolled in schools, educational practices often reinforced their subordination. Although the open discrimination practised during colonial days may be less common today, patriarchal ideologies and social systems that disfavour women have persisted.

Yet in many Third World countries, many women do participate in literacy classes, especially among the rural population. One reason for this is that they tend to see literacy as a way of helping them to cope with responsibilities that were previously monopolized by their menfolk who have migrated to the towns in search of work. If they are literate they can also read their husbands' letters and write back without having to call in other people.

Obstacles to learning

Although there are many reasons why women should want to participate in literacy classes, their traditional and new occupations do not leave

them much time for regular attendance and efficient learning. They tend to be overburdened with domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning, fetching water and firewood, as well as farming and earning money. Frequent child-bearing leaves little time and energy for learning how to read and write. Even when mothers do attend classes they often bring their smallest children. Concentration is obviously difficult when babies and toddlers have to be looked after during the lessons.

Only rarely are child-care provisions made for women during class time, although in some countries they have been offered literacy courses in boarding centres, away from competing demands and duties. Nonetheless, other problems have arisen such as poorly qualified tutors, shortages of food, uncomfortable living conditions, and insufficient programme time.

Women are, moreover, directly discouraged by the attitudes of men, often including male teachers, to their capacities in the classroom. Husbands and guardians sometimes even forbid them to attend literacy classes. The men are afraid that women who learn more than they do may expose their ignorance and, above all, challenge their power position within the family.

Even where women and girls do manage to acquire elementary literacy skills, it is often more difficult for them than for men to sustain these skills. The reading material at their disposal is often not designed for their interests and needs, and in any case they often have less access to it and less time for reading. The support and mobilization which take some women and girls through to literacy tend to dwindle when they become literate.

One response to these difficulties is to integrate literacy courses for women into programmes related to health care, family planning, nutrition and income-generation. In practice, however, this approach often leads to a neglect of literacy instruction,

since the women are exposed to be involved in so many other activities at the same time.

Literacy campaigns

The general experience of adult literacy programmes whether organized on a large scale by the state or on a small scale by non-governmental organizations, is that without various forms of mobilization — awakening or creating motivation — the response is weak.

Only national mass literacy campaigns have successfully managed to mobilize and teach hundreds of thousands of illiterate women and men elementary literacy skills. Such campaigns have taken place in countries where literacy was part of a national policy for overcoming poverty and injustice, where both the state and the people concerned expected literacy to be one of many factors which would improve social, political and economic conditions and help develop human and material resources.

In most of these campaigns the teaching methods have been traditional, but the contents have focused on national issues and have included themes stressing equal rights and the need for women's emancipation and equal participation in all spheres of society.

In national mass literacy campaigns, as well as more local campaigns, the degree of women's participation in particular has depended on community attitudes. While a superior and patronizing attitude among literacy organizers and teachers discourages interest, a democratic, open and involved attitude, treating the learners as equal adults, and creating an atmosphere of confidence, has a positive influence on attendance and results. Local women teachers working with separate women's literacy groups are often successful in encouraging learning and participation.

The active involvement of local leaders in favour of literacy activities has often been crucial for the achievement of high levels of participation and

learning. In 1971, for example, when the first drive of the Tanzanian literacy campaign reached the island of Mafia, the local leaders insisted that men and women were to participate. Separate classes for men and women were organized. Mobilizing visits by national leaders were followed up by the appointment of an Area Commissioner who was a committed adult educator himself.

The reason why this support was so important was explained by one woman who was asked what her husband thought about her participation in literacy classes. "Yes, he grumbles a bit, as men do," she said. "Some men are very worried, and they don't let their wives attend classes. But it's too late, I think. When the Area Commissioner held a meeting here both men and women were asked to come. We didn't dare, in the beginning. But the cell leader had brought his wife, and she came back to fetch us. The Area Commissioner had complained that so few women were present and said that he would not start the meeting until everyone had met up. These classes have meant a lot to us."

Illiterate women often want to become literate, but relatively few manage to satisfy this wish. The constraints — time-consuming duties short-comings in the design of the literacy programmes offered, and men's resistance — are often overwhelming. It is important not to overload the learning programmes or to expect women to be involved in too many programme activities at the same time. Mass literacy campaigns, genuine political priority and community support for literacy have been the most successful factors in mobilizing women to participate in end complete literacy programmes. In these campaigns men have been pressured to accept women's participation in literacy and in other social, economic and political activities. It is important to promote awareness of women's rights within literacy programmes designed for them, and, indeed, this contributes to the success of such programmes.



A typical 'school coach' carrying children to school. This kind of 'coaches' — fragile as they are — ply alongside giant trucks and buses on busy city streets. —Photo: Jamaluddin Haider.

PLANNING INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION-III

A.H.M. Mahbul Alam

V. METHODS OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

The multiple effects of investment in education and also the complex manner in which they are interwoven within the total social, economic and cultural situation of a country make it imperative for the planner to examine carefully how he will use the various methods available to him in determining the most appropriate level of investment in education and also the manner of its distribution among the various types of educational.

Manpower Planning: Presumes that the economy's need for educated labour can be predicated, making it possible to plan the growth of the educational system to avoid both manpower shortages, which may slow down economic growth, and manpower surpluses, which waste educational resources and may lead to educated unemployment or "brain drain".

The starting point of manpower planning is therefore a

prediction of manpower needs. There are various ways of obtaining such a prediction. A simple one is to survey employers, asking how much labour of various kinds they expect to employ, say, five years and ten years in the future. This is not a very good method for several reasons: employers often have no way of estimating future employment, different employers will probably use different assumptions in estimating their future demand for labour, so their replies cannot be aggregated consistently; enterprises to be started up in the coming five to ten years are left out of the calculation; and so on. A second possible method, it data for two historical dates are available, is to calculate past trends and then extrapolate them. A more sophisticated method, based on the work of Dutch Nobel Laureate Jan Tinbergen and the American economist Herbert Parnes involves deducing the future employment pattern from a

projection of GNP growth. The Tinbergen-Parnes methodology predicts manpower needs through the following steps. (1) It starts from a target growth rate of GNP during the planning period, which must be at least several years long, since the training of middle and high-level manpower takes time. (2) It then estimates the structural changes in output by sector of origin needed to achieve that overall growth rate. (3) Employment by sector is estimated, using some set of assumptions about labour productivity growth, or about the elasticity of employment growth relative to output growth, which is its inverse. (4) Next, employment by industry is divided into occupational categories using assumptions about the "required" structure in each industry; these are then summed across industries to get the economy's required occupation mix. (5) Occupational requirements are then translated

into educational terms via assumptions about what sorts of education are appropriate for each occupational group.

The five steps lead to an estimate of manpower requirements in some future year. To project manpower supply in the same year, one first adjusts the current stock of manpower for expected losses through retirement, death, emigration, and withdrawal from the labour force. Then one projects increases to manpower supply resulting from outputs of the school system, immigration and entry into the labour force by non-working adults. The projected manpower supply is then compared to projected requirements. If a gap emerges, it is usually assumed that it must be closed through accelerated school enrollments. In some cases, other ways of increasing manpower supply, such as upgrading less skilled workers or bringing in foreign manpower are considered.