

Feature Education

Open Teaching in Open University

by Monira Hossain

An open university is so called because of its lack of formal entry requirements, and the "openness" of its teaching. The use of distance-teaching methods for university-level education is a practice that has been going for over two hundred years.

Different Models of Open Teaching

One particular pattern of provision — and perhaps the earliest — is correspondence tuition provided by an independent organisation for degrees awarded by a public university. It is still to be found in a number of countries.

A second model is that of a conventional university which provides correspondence study facilities itself to external students as well as examining and accrediting these students.

A third model of university level correspondence teaching is that of collaboration between a number of institutions of higher education in catering for external students.

A fourth model, probably unique to France, is that of a massive centralised state provision for correspondence education at all levels, including university level. Examinations and qualifications attained are identical with those of the formal school/university.

The model which represents the most recent development is that of autonomous institutions established solely and specifically for external students, using a variety of distance-teaching methods to provide specially prepared multi-media courses, and with formal responsibility for evaluation and accreditation. The first of this is Britain's open university.

Examples include the following: Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan (AIQU); Athabasca University, Canada (AU); Everyman's University, Israel (EU); Fernuniversitat, Germany (FU); Free University of Iran (FUI); The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL); Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica (UNED); Universidad Nacional Abierta, Venezuela (UNA); Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain (UNED); Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), India;

Bangladesh Open University Project (BOU).

The General Features

The general features of the autonomous institutional model, as exemplified by the above institutions are:

- the teaching, assessment and accreditation functions are integrated.

- the institution is totally committed to external students (not so with conventional universities having correspondence studies/external degree departments); hence academic staff have no conflicts between attention to internal and external students, and there is a strong motivation to develop and enhance distance-teaching methods free from the constraints and thus develop a tradition of face-to-face teaching.

- the institution is, in principle, far freer to devise new educational programmes for new target groups, and to explore to a maximum the potential of distance-education methods in so doing.

- the institution is also freer to choose teaching methods and media, curricula, course structure, assessment procedures and accreditation policies.

Some of these features, with the additional benefit of greater potential flexibility and lower establishment costs are being catered for in some types of collaborative schemes, as in the third model.

Distance Teaching Systems

The term "distance-learning system" is used here to characterise projects which attempt to develop the full potential of distance methods within a given context, and without relying very much on traditional educational patterns and structures. They serve relatively dispersed student populations and involve a minimal reliance on, or a significant change in the role of face-to-face teaching. In so doing, they liberate the student from the constraints of space, time (and often age) associated with conventional provision, permitting him a degree of flexibility as to the regularity, timing and location of his study activities. Additional to

these "classical features", they include a number of other characteristics which, taken as a whole, imply a radical new approach to educational provision. The features listed below contribute to the overall notion of a generalised distance-learning system.



How open will open education be? Photo: Label

concerning students, key features of such a generalised system are: an enlargement of "opening" of educational opportunity to new target populations previously deprived either

courses, the notable features are:

- a) a flexibility in the curriculum and content of the learning materials through for example, modular structures or credit systems.

- b) the conscious and systematic design of learning materials for independent study, incorporating, for example, clearly formulated learning objectives, self-assessment devices, student activities and the provision of feedback from students to learning system staff and vice-versa.

- c) the planned use of a wide range of media and other resources selected from those available in the context of the system, and suited to the needs of the students; these media may include specially prepared stuff.

Correspondence texts, books, newspaper supplements, posters, radio and TV broadcasts, audio video cassettes films, computer-assisted learning, kits, local tuition and counselling, student self-help groups, lending library facilities and so on. Finally, the following logistic and economic features are characteristics of distance-learning systems:

- great potential flexibility compared to conventional provision in implementation in teaching methods, and in student groups covered, centralised, mass production of standardised learning materials (such as texts, broadcasts, bits and so on) in an almost industrialised manner, implying clear division of labour in the creation and production procedures.

- a systematic search for, and use of existing infrastructure and facilities as part of the system (e.g. libraries, postal and other distribution services, printers, publishers, broad-casting organisation, manufacturers, etc.

- potentially a significant lower recurrent unit cost per student than that obtainable through conventional (classroom or equivalent) teaching arrangements and also potentially a considerably lower capital cost per student.

Any specific distance-learning project will bring together a unique combination of the types of features listed above to serve its particular goals.

Half of World's 1 billion Illiterate Live in India and China

THE debt crisis and subsequent cuts in government spending have fueled a steady decline in the availability and quality of education in almost half the developing world.

A survey of 100 developing countries by UNESCO at the end of the 1980s found that two-thirds had reduced their budget allocation per pupil and that 50 per cent registered a reduction in the percentage of children enrolled for primary school.

At a time when one in four adults in the developing world could not read or write the future looked decidedly bleak.

It was against this background that some 2,000 education leaders from 150 countries journeyed to Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 for a World Conference on Education for All.

After four decades of significant growth in education opportunities and literacy rates it came as a rude awakening for many to know that while future generations would be challenged as never before by new technologies for production, health and other social benefits, they might not have the capacity to recognise, let alone grasp, new opportunities for advancement.

The Jomtien conference provided UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) with the opportunity to remind leaders that an educated population was a nation's most reliable engine for growth.

Its main message was that an education revival was possible but only if nations redefined their social priorities and spending to bring basic education within reach of every child and adult.

The global bill for revitalising primary education was estimated at an additional US\$5 billion a year, but the good news was that little new money would be needed. Most could be found through a reallocation of existing resources.

It was pointed out that developing countries on average spent more on the military than on education and health combined. Some countries employed four times as many soldiers to wage war as they did teachers to educate their

children. Many countries have also biased their education budgets in favour of higher education for a wealthy few at the expense of literacy for the majority. It is estimated that 50 per cent of India's education budget subsidises the best-educated 10 per cent.

India produces more university graduates than it can employ and watches helplessly as many of its prize graduates leave home for jobs abroad. Meanwhile, about half the nation's children fail to complete primary schooling. About 70 children could be given a primary education for the cost of training just one university student.

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Foreign aid for education also needs to be reapportioned. At present, only one per cent of the industrialised world's aid for education is directed towards primary education.

The quality of education is also critical. Education systems can fail in at least two ways. They can fail to reach the child and they can fail to teach those they do reach.

An overcrowded classroom or an overworked teacher can discourage new children from enrolling. The school schedule can also discourage students. A child who has responsibilities at home might not finish her chores in time for classes. Parents might also refuse to send a child to school because they feel that a teacher is untrustworthy or that their children learn nothing of practical benefit for their future adult lives.

Participants at the Jomtien conference set their sights on three main goals to be achieved by the year 2000. They are: basic education for at least 80 per cent of the world's children by the year 2000; a 50 per cent reduction in the 1990 rate of adult literacy; and equality of educational opportunity for girls and boys. The achievement of those

global goals will ultimately hinge on the performance of India and China where 45 per cent of the world's one billion illiterates live. About 25 per cent of China's and 30 per cent of India's primary-school-age children either do not enrol in school or drop out before completing all grades.

According to James P. Grant, Executive Director of the UN Children's Fund, both countries have made significant progress since China's liberation from a semi-feudal and semi-colonial status in 1949 and India's independence from colonial rule in 1947. UNICEF estimates that about 70 per cent of primary-age children in China and 50 per cent of primary-age children in India, completed a full cycle of primary education in 1990.

Over the same period, literacy for the population over age 15 rose from 20 per cent to 78 per cent in China, while in India, literacy for all age groups increased from 16.6 per cent in 1957 to 43.5 per cent by 1990.

The UN Development Programme's Human Development Report makes the point that adequate resources for human development are essentially hostage to political priorities.

Mr Grant said although both countries had pioneered and nurtured many imaginative experiments in education for disadvantaged communities, primary education in both was largely overshadowed by a focus on academic content unrelated to life and determined by requirements for entrance to secondary school.

"How to organise primary education to serve its central purpose of providing skills and knowledge essential to life, rather than compelling children to memorize irrelevant facts in the name of academic preparation for secondary school, is a major challenge for India and China and many other countries," he said.

He noted that education was a "highly political enterprise" and had suffered in both countries from shifts in policies and strategies. Continuity and consistency in both were essential to progress," he said. —Depthnews Asia

Aims of Education

THE first steps towards a new vision of education have been taken by the fifteen members of UNESCO's International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, which on March 4 outlined to the press the conclusions of its first session, held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from March 2 to 4.

Created at the initiative of UNESCO's Director-General, Federico Mayor, to give the Organization guidelines in education for the future, the Commission headed by Jacques Delors, President of the Commission of European Communities, explored the challenges of "education for progress towards the values at the heart of the United Nations system: freedom, human rights, co-development, the struggle against inequality and poverty".

The members of the Commission agreed on a

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"preliminary framework concerning the aims of education". They explored ways of "identifying the constraints, challenges and risks" that societies will face in the coming years, and decided to "propose and educational concept, a place for education in society which enables it to face the hazards of the future."

"Is there a concept of education that can claim to be universal?", Mr Delors asked. "Can it deliver a message of relevance to everyone on our planet, to all educators of the world, in a language free of the overtones of 'monoculture', a language that would take the wisdom of the world into account?"

Reflection on this issue is urgent, insisted Mr Mayor, who added that "anticipation, especially if it is pragmatic, is indispensable if we are to change a reality full of disparities which are an affront to human dignity."

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As for the risks facing the

closing years of the century, the Commission included the break-up of nations, the rise of ethnic conflicts and racism, hunger and malnutrition, and unemployment, "which is taking hold without our having identified all its consequences", said Mr Delors.

On the question of employment, "which is becoming a rare commodity", the Commission asked itself: "What if employment in the classic sense of the term disappears? Then we will have to rethink the organization of life itself and cease to operate on the "studies — work — retirement" sequence.

The subject of youth was mentioned on a number of occasions. For Mr Delors, young people are expecting "new approaches and real changes", while Mr Mayor expressed the fear that if they are not shown signs of renewal, the world will witness great upheavals in a few years time.

Democracy, values, marginalization, life after work, universality and globalism, demography and ecology were key issues during the discussions. In consequence, the Commission will be more concerned with the role of education in responding to the major problems of society than with the teaching of subjects, with education as a social process rather than as a transmission of knowledge.

The Commission will hold another five or six three-day sessions on different continents. On the first day of each session it will invite local educators, parents, companies and unions to discuss educational problems in their region.

"Your success can be the success of UNESCO's role in the United Nations system to construct the defences of peace in the minds of men", said Mr Mayor. "There is", he stressed, "a creator in everyone, though most people are merely struggling for survival... We must react; we do not have the right to remain spectators", particularly in the face of extreme poverty and the irreversible damage being done to the environment.

— (UNESCO Presse)

Primary Education Ensures Socio-economic Development

by Md Nazmul Huda Khan

PRIMARY education, in Bangladesh, has its legacy with Wood's Despatch in the British period in 1854. But, as the imperialist British governments were obsessed with selfish gains and attitude of exploitation, the education system could not grow in the pattern capable of deriving benefit to the people.

The very attitude of the then education system was to create an elitist cum sycophant class giving priority to establish more colleges and universities rather than primary school. Government's resource constraints were shown as the cardinal deterrence on way to establishing primary schools. But this constraints could surely be overcome had there been no constraints of attitude. No-acceptance of the proposal of compulsory primary education raised by the politicians of the British India in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1912 is a brilliant example of the attitudinal crisis in the then government. The proposal was discarded by 38-13 votes. But the sustained efforts of the politicians ultimately could result in passing the Bengal Primary Education Act 1919 and the Bangal (rural) Primary Education Act 1930. In these two bills, the government did not shoulder the responsibility rather the responsibility was thrown on Union Board and District School Board, which proved incapable of fulfilling the objective of universal primary education.

Independence of Bangladesh ushered in a new horizon in the expansion and promotion of primary education. Free and compulsory education has been guaranteed in the article 17 of the constitution. Article 17 reads, "The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of — (a) establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law" and the (b) reads, "removing illiteracy within such a time as may be determined by law". In 1974 under the provision of Acquisition of Primary School Act, 36,105 existing managed, aided and non-aided primary schools had been taken over by the government giving a retrospective effect from July 1973. During the First Five Year Plan (FFYP), 1974-1978, another 500 primary schools were included. One thousand more primary schools had been added during the Third Five

Year Plan (TFYP), 1985-1990. Besides, a few more primary schools were nationalised by the revenue sector. The recent creation of Primary Education Division under the direct control of the Prime Minister of the Republic reflects the firm political resolution of the present democratic government to the programme. The Primary Education Directorate, Compulsory Primary Education Project, Evaluation Cell, National Syllabus and Text Book Board, 53 Primary Teachers' Training Institutes and involvement of 78,448 primary schools in imparting primary education to the children of the country will go a long way to remove illiteracy. The statistics show that there is a primary school or kindergarten school or ittedai madrasa for every two square kilometre of area and otherwise for every 1500 people.

Of course, the number of primary school (78448) includes, government primary schools (37733) registered private primary schools (8830), waiting for registration private primary schools (4688), primary schools in secondary schools (2583), kindergarten (2500), ittedai in higher madrasahs (6086) and independent ittedai (16028). Recently published Statistical Year book of Bangladesh '92 estimated the number of government primary school at 48148 as on 1991 which means the total number of primary educational institution has gone up to 88,855.

According to the information of Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 6-10 years' age-group children stand at one crore 52 lakh 85 thousand presently. By 2000 A D it is expected to rise to one crore 69 lakh 20 thousand. If all children are brought under the compulsory primary education, present per school average student will be 200 and in 2000 A D the average will stand at 220.

The teacher and pupil ratio is another key indicator to be taken into consideration. As per World Bank statistics the teacher-student ratio in Bangladesh was 1:45 in 1965 and in 1987 it became 1:48. Recent statistics of the Education Ministry show that in 1990 teacher-student ratio was 1:63. If we compare this figure with some of the countries of ESCAP region our position will be clear. Taking 1987 as base year teacher student

ratio in Australia is 17, in Republic of Korea, 37, in Malaysia 22, in Vietnam 34, in Afghanistan 34.5, in Iran 39, in Nepal 35, in Pakistan 41, in Sri Lanka 32 and in Myanmar 15.

Drop-out before reaching the fifth year in primary education tier is a serious deterrence to the progress and success of the programmes. As per the recent study of the 1990 the percentage of dropouts in Class-I — 19.3.

Accordingly, the government has decided to implement compulsory primary ed-



Let there be no drop-outs

Class-II — 12.0, Class-III — 15.6, Class-IV — 15.8 and Class-V — 11.0, against 13.50, 9.20, 13.50, 12.70 and 14.25 respectively in 1989.

With whatever existing facilities we have, both infrastructural, logistics and personnel, in the primary level, according to World Bank statistics (1987) educational participation level in Bangladesh was 59 compared to 49 per hundred in 1965. That is in the last 28 years we made a progress of only 10 per cent. Taking 1987 as base year primary level educational participation in Australia was 99 per cent, Japan 100, New Zealand 106, Hong Kong 103, Republic of Korea 101, Singapore 105, China 132, India 98, Indonesia 118, Malaysia 102, Philippines 106, Thailand 95, Vietnam 102, Bhutan 24, Iran 114, Nepal 82, Pakistan 52, Sri

lank 104 and Papua New Guinea 70, per cent. Among all the countries our position is above Pakistan and Bhutan only. So we have a lot to do to bring the entire age group into the steam of universal primary education. Again as per the TFYP document in percentage of the age cohort went upto 78.2 in primary education in 1990.

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enable an average enrollment close to 50 per class or 250 for a full-fledged primary school to be maintained or the new schools to be set up during TFYP period. Satellite schools for pupils of class I and II, affiliates to nearby primary schools will be established.

The TFYP (1985-90) had a development outlay of Tk 989.21 crore for the entire education and religious sector. Of the total outlay the primary education had the largest chunk of allocation of Tk 528.06 crore which is 53.38 per cent. The FFYP (1990-95)

made an allocation of 2401 crore for education and religious sector. Of this allocation, Tk 1162.27 crore, 73.25 crore for spill-over and 1089.27 crore for new projects have been allocated for primary education alone which is 48.41 per cent of the total allocation. The Three Year Rolling Investment Programme (FY 1993-95) took up 17 projects under the Directorate of Primary Education, projecting a total outlay of Tk 1827.12 crore. The Annual Development Programme (1992-93) kept allocation of Tk 796.55 crore but in the Revised ADP (1992-93), the allocation has been sized to Tk 664.0 crore and the projected allocation for 1993-94 is estimated at Tk 879.0 crore which will be 8.34 per cent of the total allocation against 8.18 per cent of the ADP 1992-93. In the current ADP 16 devel-

opment projects involving a projected outlay of Tk 2559 crore comprising of 11 spill-over and 5 new projects have been taken up for implementation. The total outlay includes Tk 1695.69 crore foreign exchange in the primary education sector alone. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) very recently okayed a Tk 300-crore project for uplift of 9000 private primary schools in the country.

Plans and programmes are there to achieve a basic literacy rate of around 60 per cent by 2000 AD. The New Development Perspective (NDP) of the present government gives top priority to accelerated and sustainable economic development of the country with focus on human resource development, participatory planning, women's participation and poverty alleviation. Without freeing the society from the scourge of illiteracy through concerted efforts of policy makers, policy executors, social leaders and above all the clientele, fulfillment of the objectives will remain a far cry.

Under the prevailing circumstances and for the future benefit of the posterity, aggressive motivational works have to be taken up for creating awareness among the people about the imperatives of the primary education with appropriate communication plan and strategy. Adequate steps are needed to ensure enrollment of age cohort children in the primary schools and arrest drop-outs. To attract the distressed children to school, programme for providing nutritious food and dress could be adopted. Such type of programme in Tamil Nadu, India yielded substantially good result and gave political dividend to the ruling party. Besides, there has to be well-thought sustainable syllabus for primary education, effective inspection and monitoring system, system of involving local formal and informal leaders in the process which might help ensure greater accountability. The primary teachers will have to be adequately trained and frequent orientation training courses will help equip them with latest socio-cultural, environmental, and nutritional programmes and information. Teachers should be attractive to pupil in their manners and teaching style so that pupil will feel the urge to come to schools.

(PID Feature)