

Feature

Education

'Every Human Being's Learning Style is as Individual as a Signature'

by Raffat Binte Rashid

Everyone is potentially gifted in some way, this was Helen Keller's message to the world. Picking up from the last phrase, we could continue saying that 'and in their individual style'.

Most of our teachers here in Bangladesh and also around the globe operate as if each student is identical. Being good in reading and writing or solving mathematical problems easily does not make a student intelligent, because every student has their own special way of accepting and reproducing facts.

The stereotyped image of an intelligent child has been changed over the years. Professor of Education Howard Gardner of Harvard has made pioneer breakthroughs in shattering the fixed 'I.Q. myth'. For more than ten years Gardner has used prolific research to prove that each person has at least seven different intelligences. Linguistic intelligence is the ability to speak or write well. Logical-mathematical intelligence is the ability to reason, calculate and handle logical thinking. Visual-spatial intelligence is the ability to paint, create sculpture, Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to use one's hands or body such as sports achievers and great actors. Musical intelligence is the ability to compose songs, sing and play instruments. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to access one's inner feelings.

To make the teachers here in Bangladesh aware of these

new approaches and innovative ways of teaching and learning, UNICEF with the support of Directorate Primary Education (DPE) arranged workshops for teachers, trainers and policy makers. Elizabeth Rothenberger, a teacher trainer and also a retired teacher of San Francisco Unified School, where she worked for 30 years, conducted these workshops.

'We are in favour of the government's plans of development in its primary and basic education programmes. To help enrollment and retention of students in both formal and non formal schools and to improve quality of schooling UNICEF wanted to share latest innovations in this field with government here,' says an UNICEF official.

Three important and significant workshops were held for the purpose. Teachers and trainers from non formal, formal, primary, government and NGO schools took part, as well as planners or policy makers who are the key players in the education sector. 'I shared things that are important to teachers in USA. Teachers here are very good and professional and I want to make my colleagues here aware of the teaching revolution going on around the world,' says Rothenberger.

The lessons for the teachers, trainers and policy makers focussed on three conceptual concepts. First the brain-mind research; Gardner's multiple or seven intelligence are present in everyone and each have

their own different patterns of displaying them. Differentiating traits of each intelligence and how you strengthen them was the focal point of the teachers and the trainers workshop. Before entering a school a child already uses five of his

intelligence while two are not so much in practice. If a child does not respond to the teachers duty to dig out the dominant intelligence in the child, 'Fatima is stupid, comments a teacher but she is stupid because you didn't know her way or give her a chance to prove herself her way,' she explains. Extra curricular activities are very essential for learning, these should be taken as rewards and be taught as part of the regular routine. 'Do what they like and make them stay,' points out Rothenberger. Learning is the key to development and you never stop learning... and how to learn was the key point of these seminars and workshops, she adds. Teachers and trainers from all over Bangladesh, formal and NGO schools took part in these workshops.

Second concept was the modality or conditions of learning. 'If you look at an electronic scan of your brain, you'll see how different parts of it process different types of information. In general terms the left-hand side of your brain plays a major part in processing language, logic, mathematics and sequence—the so called academic parts of learning. The right-hand side of the brain deals with rhythm, rhyme, music, pictures and day-dreaming—the so called creative activities,' Rothenberger continues explaining learning modalities. 'In each child or individual either the right or the left part of the brain can be dominant

and this should be determined by the teachers and parents,' she says. Most of the schooling around the world emphasises on the left, which does not help the right dominant child very much. 'Looking at the way children learn, taking information about whether the child is a visual learner or an auditory learner or kinesthetic (body involvement) learner, helps the teacher understand the child better. Rothenberger points out. A teacher should focus on everybody's keen observation will differentiate between each student's learning procedure.

Generally 40 percent of the children are visual learners, those who read or write down lectures, 30 percent are auditory and rest are kinesthetic. A classroom should be more student centered, they should be prepared to think creatively in their own way. Traditional ways of teaching do not foster new ideas and information should be explored. 'All these principles discussed in the seminars also helped the participants understand their own children better,' says Rothenberger.

Third was thinking about thinking, how do I learn more, teachers are very important, students believe them blindly. No one is right or wrong, each person's learning style is as individual as his signature. It depends upon the teacher to distinguish and find out the way in a child,' says Rothenberger. Creativity is all that is needed to find out in a child

Your magic brain:

- Has a trillion brain-cells, including:
 - 100 billion active nerve-cells.
 - 900 billion other cells that 'glue,' nourish and insulate the active cells.
- an grow up to 20,000 'branches' on every one of those 100 billion nerve-cells.
- Has three distinct brains in one:
 - An instinctive brain.
 - An emotional brain.
 - And your amazing cortex.
- Has two sides that work in harmony:
 - Your left 'academic' brain.
 - Your right 'creative' brain.
- Runs a 'telephone exchange' that shuffles millions of messages a second between the left and right sides.
- Has seven different 'intelligence centers.'
- Operates on at least four separate wavelengths.
- Controls a transmission system that flashes chemical-electrical messages instantly to every part of your body.
- And it holds the key to your own personal learning revolution.

The State of the Education System

Most Bangladeshis today live from basic agriculture. But life in the next century will be much more demanding: tomorrow's citizens in both rural and urban areas will work much more in industry and services — often learning and relearning new skills and techniques throughout their working lives.

Bangladesh's education system is not yet producing this adaptable, creative workforce. Teaching has largely been by rote. Staffing is inadequate. Materials are scarce. And classrooms are crowded and dilapidated. Little has been done to stimulate and appetite for learning or to equip children for the challenges ahead.

The poor state of the education system has alienated many parents and children, who regard schools as unattractive or irrelevant to their daily lives. Though a higher proportion of children are now being enrolled in primary education, attendance is no more than 50 per cent and completion only 40 per cent.

This rejection of schooling is not entirely due to weaknesses in the education system. For many children the basic problem is poverty — their families are trapped in a vicious intergenerational cycle of deprivation and ignorance.

ated children grow into illiterate adults and thus the cycle is repeated.

But parents may also have more immediate concerns. They may be worried, for example, about the security of young girls on their way to school. And they may also be concerned about the cost of schooling, not just expenditure on clothes, or paper or pencils, but also the opportunity cost of losing their child's working contribution. A Dhaka child can earn 40 to 50 taka per day just by scavenging for waste paper.

Breaking out of this cycle will demand a determined national effort. The Government's stated commitment to education is clear. Bangladesh signed the World Declaration on Education for All in 1990. The Government has created a National Plan of Action and set ambitious targets for primary education: by the year 2000, it aims to raise the gross enrolment ratio to 95 per cent and the completion rate to 70 per cent. It has also created a new Primary and Mass Education Division in 1992 under the direct charge of the Prime Minister. In 1993, it made primary education compulsory



The smile of innocence. — Courtesy — Shishu Diganta

The General Education Programme are still some \$1.3 billion short of this figure.

The most dramatic improvements could, however, be taken without spending much more money — by making Bangladesh's existing schools more relevant and attractive. They also need to be more accessible to working children, fitting in with the other demands on their time particularly during peak agricultural seasons.

This would require a different vision of education. Better training of both government officials and teachers can stimulate this kind of change. But there are also many positive examples which can serve as models — within both the Government and NGO sectors (see box); the challenge now is to have these kinds of ideas and energy permeate the system as a whole.

First, there is the issue of curriculum. Schools should of course teach basic numeracy and literacy, as well as offer information on health, hygiene, food and sanitation — using books and exercises relevant to the children's daily lives. But schools should also be concerned with what kind of citizen Bangladesh will need. Education should produce

impression on their attitudes to school.

Inevitably, millions of children will still drop out — the pressures of poverty force them to leave school after one or two years. Bangladesh is fortunate, however, in having demonstrated some of the world's most successful responses to this problem. NGOs such as BRAC and around 40 others offer children all over the country a second chance. By working closely with communities, and tailoring curriculum and classes to meet local circumstances, they can both teach the most basic skills and also feed millions of children back into the government education system. They have also proved particularly effective at educating girls — which should be one of the country's highest priorities.

The Government's commitment to the establishment of community schools and satellite schools is a great opportunity to capitalize on this experience. Being closer to children's homes they are more accessible, and being cheaper to construct they can help ease the financial burden of meeting the needs of an increasing population.

Improving education in Bangladesh will involve actions on a broad front — with significant implications for the curriculum, for the teaching methods and hours of schooling — as well as for teacher training. In addition to primary education needs, there are also enormous challenges at the secondary and tertiary levels, as well as the need for functional education for adults. But there is one crucial issue on which everything else hinges — the question of accountability. At present, the management of the country's 50,000 primary schools is highly centralized. And at the school level there is often a lack of mutual trust and cooperation. Parents blame teachers for not teaching; teachers blame parents for not sending their children to school regularly.

Getting the whole of the education system to work in concert will mean shifting much more of the power and responsibility to local communities. All schools do in theory have Management Committees involving local elites, teachers and parents. In

practice, they rarely meet and they take few important decisions. Giving these committees much more control over the resources, staffing, and running of schools could make an enormous difference — encouraging parents to take a greater interest in the schools and help maintain them, and encouraging teachers by making them accountable to the community.

Mobilizing broad community support behind local schools — from parents, teachers, officials, NGOs, religious leaders and many others — could transform the prospects not just of Bangladesh's children but of the country as a whole. The data in this section comes from the Education for All country paper, and the Bangladesh Case study, visual presentation by Unicef.

	Male	Female
• Primary Schools	80	80
— Enrolment ratio	39%	42%
• Adult literacy rate	44%	26%

Murallil Haji Moshin Memorial Primary School

Around 70 per cent of the pupils of this government school near Jessore are the children of poor transport workers. But teaching standards are high and pupils regularly win government scholarships. Attendance is also high. Since the school offers pupils a savings programme, opportunities to make and sell ointments and footpaste, and grow vegetables in the school garden — as well as access to a library — this is not surprising. Even so, an active Parent Teachers Association checks up on any absentee students and if necessary helps poor children by supplying them with books or pencils. In 1990, the school's Management Committee raised 10 thousand taka from the community to build a brick school house. As Amir Hussain, one of the school's founders says: 'This is everybody's

the hand of Providence.'

Together with colleagues from 20 countries, including India, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia and Ghana he has set up a group called 'Initiative for Deaf Education in Developing Countries,' consisting of professionals, teachers, deaf persons, parents and administrators who set out to exchange information and resources.

What about relaxation? Reading, but there is all too little time for that. And music, which he has had to give up, because 'you can't play or listen to music when you live with the deaf. It is as if you are saying to them you are deaf, but I can hear.' And that says you apart.'

Money has always been a problem too, he explains. 'But every year something turns up and we manage to make ends meet twenty-five per cent of the school's income comes from the sale of objects produced by the students. The remainder from donations and

Education

Briefs

Economic Development and Girls' Education in the Sahel

RESEARCH has proven that educating girls is a cost-effective way to accelerate economic growth and improve living standards in the developing world. This was one of the arguments presented by the World Bank to the Seminar on Girls' Education in the Sahel Countries of Africa, held from 9-13 January in Dakar, Senegal. Organised by the World Bank's Economic Development Institute, UNESCO and the Forum for African Women Educa-

tionists. The seminar aimed to convince key decision-makers in the Sahel countries of the essential role that the education of girls plays in nation-building and in economic and social development. Attended by ministry of education, officials from Burkina Faso, Cape Vert, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad, the seminar also aimed to help participants with the conception and development of programmes and national action plans.

Using African Expertise in Africa

THE Donors to African Education (DAE) Task Force met in Angers, France, in October 1993, called for an end to 'donor driven' development and for Africans to assume greater responsibility for the alarming decline of their education and training systems. The meeting, which gathered ministers and other senior government officials from thirty-nine countries in sub-Saharan African and eighty-nine participants from donor and development agencies, agreed that the acute brain drain of African expertise was one of the prime causes of decline. African ministers pointed out that some thirty

years after the wave of independence swept Africa in the 1960s, the situation could no longer be blamed on colonisation. The donor community stressed the need to promote the emergence of national capabilities, the use of African experts and the development of national plans that are wholly 'owned' and supported by the beneficiary country. Various agencies called for a reshaping of primary education in Africa and the creation of a 'new school' that would place emphasis on basic learning and the entry of young people into active life through appropriate vocational training programmes.

Ingredients of Success in Basic Education

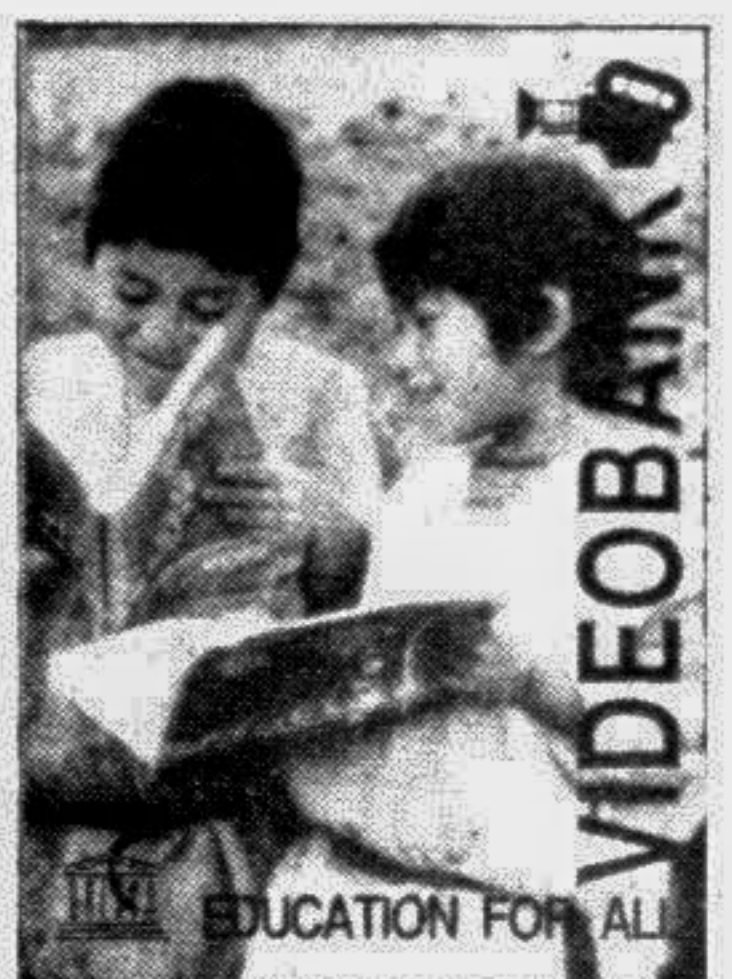
WHAT works in basic education for all? Why and under what circumstances? How has the learning environment been enhanced in and outside classrooms in the developing world? How can these experiences, once proven effective, be best disseminated and promoted? These are among the questions to be discussed at the upcoming Education for All 'Innovations Workshops.' UNESCO's programme to collect, analyse and promote successful basic education projects in the developing world. The three workshops, to be held in Senegal, Bangladesh

and Zimbabwe, in the coming months will bring together ministries of education, international agencies and grassroots project managers.

The first print-out of INNOV, a database listing to-date eighty-one innovations in the field of basic education in the developing world, is now available from UNESCO's Basic Education Division, 7 place de Fontenay, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France, tel: (33-1) 45-68-23-64/21.26; Fax: 33-1-40-65-94-06; INNOV will be regularly updated and re-issued by Education For All Making It Work.

New Video for Reaching the Young Amerindian Child

A video training programme that promotes family and community involvement in children's intellectual development has been successfully field tested in three Amerindian areas of Guyana. Available from UNESCO in both English and Spanish, the video has been used to train primary health workers to promote Facts For Life, based on the United Nations booklet. The programme could prove useful to other Amerindian communities in Latin America, where pre-schooling is unavailable and where economic change has affected family and community life. The video training package, which will be accompanied by a manual and tutor's notes, was developed by Dr Roy McConkey in collaboration with the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Pro-



programme and the Ministries of Education and Health. The video will be available at UNESCO's Education for All Videobank. (See address above for Basic Education Division.)

Bridging the Distance with Distance Education

NINE large developing countries have called for an acceleration of the use of distance education (DE) — a form of instruction via radio, television, telephone and other media that has great potential to reach people who are deprived of learning due to geographic, cultural or physical constraints. The tremendous opportunities for economies of scale offered by distance education were discussed at the Informal Meeting On Distance Education of the Nine High-Population Countries held in Manila, 17-19 February 1994, and organised by UNESCO, with the Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and

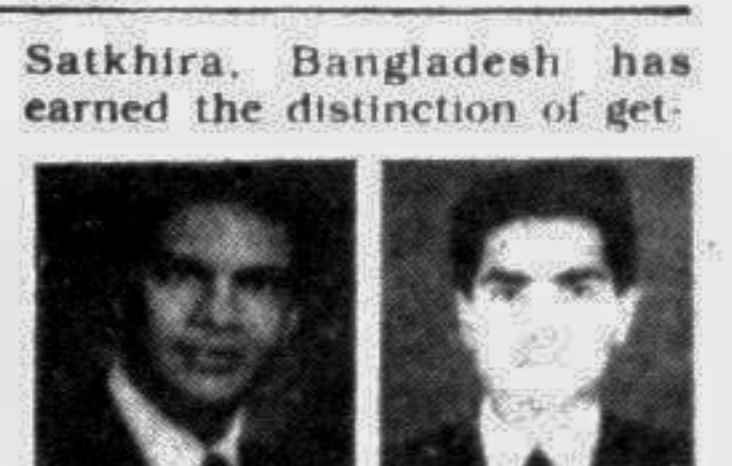
Technology (INNOTECH). Not only can DE reach new-literate and marginalised groups with special learning needs, but it can also enhance teacher training. The nine high-population countries also advocated using pilot programmes in inter-active distance education to re-invigorate the formal system.

INNOTECH, one of the partners in the initiative, held its own meeting in Manila from February 23-25 to address the issues of how learning technologies can contribute to equity and quality for learners in both the developed and developing world. Courtesy — Hidden in Need

Academic feat

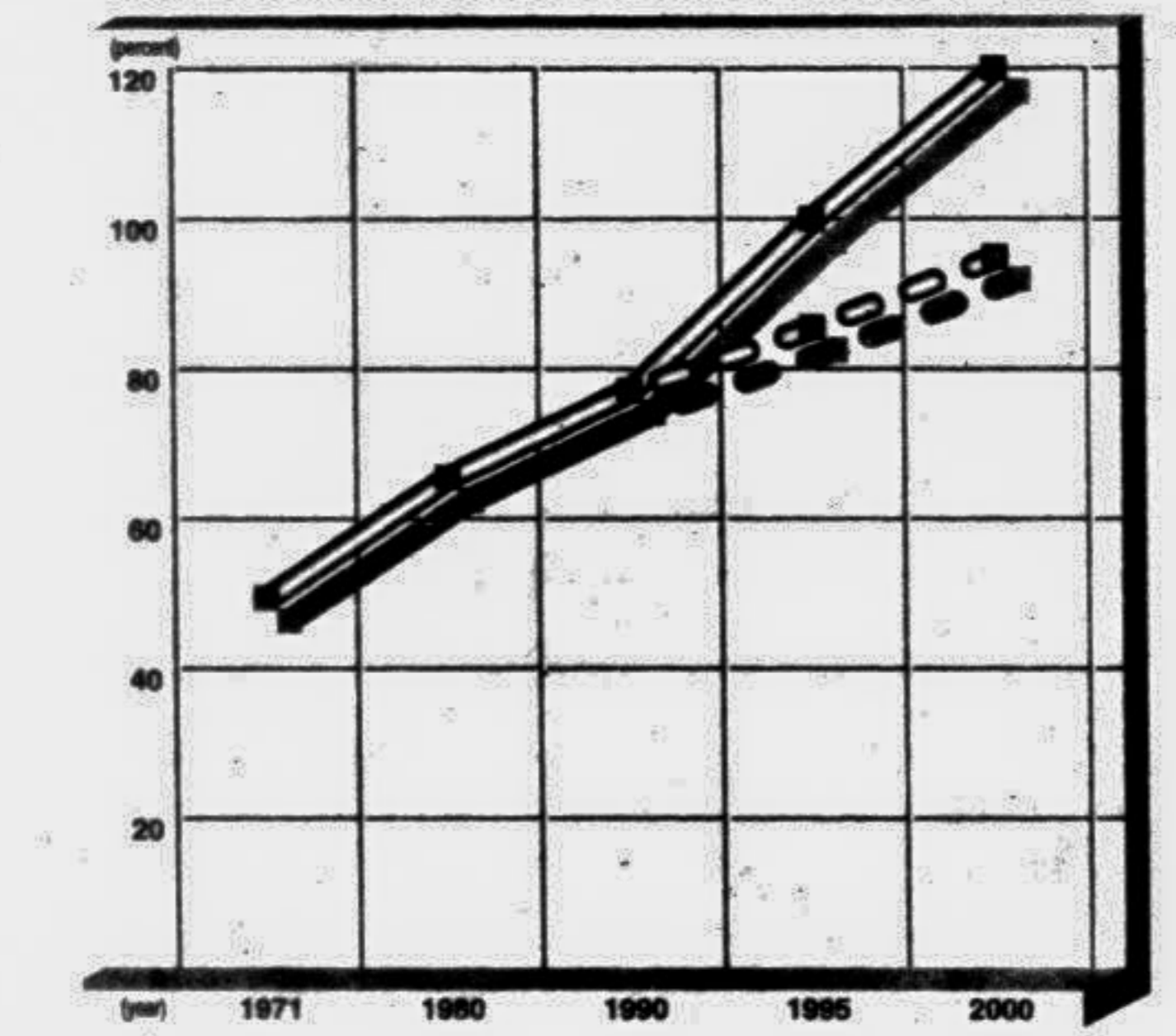
Mohammad Maksudur Rahman has stood first class second in the BSc (honours) examination of 1991 (held in 1993) from the Geography Department of the Dhaka University.

Maksudur is the son of Mohammad Mukhlesur Rahman, senior manager of the People's Insurance Company Limited. Sanjeeb A Haque, the Second Bangladeshi, to be admitted in the Harvard Medical College. Sanjeeb A Haque from



ting selected for admission in the Harvard Medical School of USA. He is the second Bangladeshi to have won the selection. The school which is rated as the best one in this field selects 165 students for admission from among six thousand high calibre applicants from all over the world.

Gross Enrollment Ratio of Primary School Children



Parents who themselves had no education generally fail to appreciate the necessity of regular school attendance and can offer their children little help with their studies. After dropping out of school, unedu-

throughout the country. Achieving the Education for All targets will require substantial investment — \$4.6 billion between 1992 and 2000. Present Donor and Government commitments through

A World of Silence ... and Creativity

THERE is a world of silence, a world where ability is impaired; but the inhabitants of this world are only handicapped if society denies them the right to development and the right to adapt.

Brother Andrew, Director of the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, has understood this. The 44-year-old Dutch priest has devoted the past 17 years to the integration of the deaf into Jordanian society.

'People are realizing more and more that there are no limits to the capacities of deaf people,' says Brother Andrew. 'At the same time, there is greater self-respect among the deaf themselves, who form a community which has its own culture and language, the lan-

guage of signs.' On a hillside at Salt, 30 kilometres from Amman, Brother Andrew is in charge of a school where 140 deaf pupils aged between three and 18 not only learn to express themselves but also learn a trade that will give them a place in the community. The boys learn carpentry, automobile engineering and metalwork; the girls, embroidery, needlework, weaving and ceramics.

Nothing in this tall and gentle man's past suggested that he would find himself where he is today. With a degree in civil engineering, he wanted 'more than just a job in public works — something really worthwhile,' he says.

In 1972, a Dutch friend, Father Andrew, invited him to fly out to Lebanon, where he was running a 'club house' for the deaf at Louail. Fascinated by sign language, Brother Andrew realized that he had found his vocation. After that, things happened quickly. He trained as a teacher of the deaf, attended different courses here and there, and began a doctorate on the education of the deaf, which he has yet to complete. 'That's for my retirement,' he says.

It was also during his visit to Lebanon that he decided to enter the priesthood, choosing the 'Holy Cross' congregation of the Anglican Church and studying theology for that pur-

pose. 'It was then that I realized that I would not be returning to Europe for a long time. I knew that in Europe, whether as a teacher or an engineer, my job would have been to put things right; in the developing world, we are making things. And I prefer making to mending.'

In 1977, he arrived in Jordan to replace his friend, Father Andrew, who had also set up the school for the deaf at Salt. The school also runs teacher-training courses, with candidates applying from the West Bank and Gaza, Syria, Egypt and Yemen, and from as far away as Nigeria and Afghanistan. The school has a workshop producing hearing-

aids as well, but it only just manages to meet the large number of orders it receives, especially from public institutions.

The biggest obstacle Brother Andrew has encountered is 'ignorance, among professionals and parents alike, about what the deaf can do.'

Money has always been a problem too, he explains. 'But every year something turns up and we manage to make ends meet twenty-five per cent of the school's income comes from the sale of objects produced by the students. The remainder from donations and

Courtesy — UNESCO Sources