

Educational and administrative implications of UPE

PLENARY SESSION

Introducing his lead paper, Mr Khan stated that the objective of primary education is to impart to children the basic knowledge and attitudes required of an effective member of society. He reasoned that eight years are required to accomplish this. He advocated Universal Compulsory Primary Education rather than Universal Primary Education.

To minimize the difficulties in implementing UPE, Mr Khan suggested that preceding the implementation of UPE a massive campaign be waged in the media emphasizing the values of Primary Education, that social incentives be offered to disadvantaged groups especially girls in the form of free textbooks, school uniforms and school meals, and that the causes of drop-outs be identified and steps taken to remove the causes.

Mr Khan then proceeded to analyze the educational and administrative implications of UPE: Enrolment-projection, the creation of required facilities, the production and distribution of textbooks, the training of teachers and arrangements for proper administration and supervision.

The ensuing discussion focused on the following points: The cause and cure of "drop-outs"; the value of lady teachers; decentralization versus central supervision; the role of the headmaster.

CAUSES OF DROP-OUT

(a) Unfavourable Environment

If the school is attractive, and has playing fields, children will want to attend. If the school is unattractive, compulsory attendance is difficult to enforce. "The school environment must be congenial. Generally, rural schools are unattractive, there are no pictures or teaching equipment.

(b) Lessons Unattractive

With no maps, globes or other teaching apparatus, textbooks which may be irrelevant to the physical environment, and taught by teachers who have no empathy or training for handling such subjects, the interest of the pupils may flag.

(c) Economic Pressures

The main concern of poor villagers is their next meal. During the times of soil preparation, planting, weeding and harvest, every male in the family is required to work in the field. Girls are required to assist their mothers in food preparation and storage. It is difficult to spare the children even two hours daily to attend school. school.

(d) Over-crowding of Classes

Giving individual attention to students is impossible if this exceeds thirty per room, yet in the early grades, they may number double this number. In smaller schools where a teacher must handle more than one grade, he or she constantly is switching attention from one class to another. Children would much rather play outside or even work than pass their time undirected.

(e) Social Constraints

The onset of puberty is a frequent cause of female students' drop-out. The school may be a long distance from the home with no roads during monsoons. In some Muslim homes, fathers are opposed to their daughters attending school with boys. Because the girl has no long-term benefit to the family (because of early marriage) her parents can see no need for investing in her education, so she may never "drop in" to "drop out".

THE VALUE OF LADY TEACHERS

Children go to their mothers with problems rather than to their fathers. The mother tells the children stories and shows them affection. Thus it is reasoned that women teachers have greater empathy for smaller children than do male teachers. In Meher Panchgram, where 50 percent of the teachers are women, there has not been a single girl drop out.

A survey currently is underway in Pakistan to check the effectiveness of female teachers.

It is assumed that no woman teacher will go to a remote area. Accommodation it is said, is not available or suitable for an "outside" woman. Tests are planned to discover if she would go if adequate facilities were made available for her to reside in a remote area with her parents.

Because of constraints upon women's education, female teachers may be unable to match qualifications with male applicants for positions. It is suggested therefore that, temporarily at least, the requirements be relaxed in favour of women teachers.

From tests conducted in India, no casual relations between the effectiveness of female versus male teachers have been determined.

THE ROLE OF THE HEADMASTER

One problem, especially in rural schools is absenteeism both by teachers and headmasters. The headmaster's presence is crucial, since he enforces on-the-spot discipline which is more effective than that provided by supervisors coming in from the outside. The latter are frequently so overloaded, they can give but scant attention to any one school.

DECENTRALIZATION

The effectiveness of decentralization versus central control was argued without reaching final conclusions. There are gradations in opinion as to who should pay the costs (Local Authority or National Authority), set teacher standards, supervise the school buildings, equipment, etc. Practice varies from country to country. Generally it was felt that control can be more effectively related to the situation as it is when carried out by local personnel rather than by officials in the capital city.

GROUP SESSIONS

Mr F Khan prepared the following topics for the groups to discuss:

1. Promotion of local support for, and community involvement in UPE.

- (a) What will be the nature and extent of such support?
- (b) What are the areas and modes of community participation?

2. Procurement, training and supervision of teachers.

In countries where primary enrolment is below 80% level and drop-out is very high, UPE programme will require a large number of additional teachers to cope with the sudden on-rush of pupils. Such an emergency, it is apprehended, may bring in quality deterioration as most of the new teachers will be untrained.

3. Can we think of innovative measures for

- (a) Minimizing the number of teachers required?
- (b) Their training/orientation?
- (c) Effective supervision of their work?

4. Causes of drop-outs and measures for removing them.

Is it desirable and feasible to enforce compulsory attendance of all children of the relevant age-group?

5. The need for revision of the existing primary curriculum.

Is it possible to reduce the existing curriculum contents, especially for classes I & II? Is it desirable to give local bias to curriculum? If so, how?

REPORT OF THE SMALL COUNTRIES GROUP (Chaired by Mr D Leung)

Information on UPE in member countries, including the elements of compulsion, the provision for various categories of handicapped children and whether or not it is free was supplied by group members. It is heartening to learn that all five of the small countries viz. Fiji, Hong Kong, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Western Samoa have introduced UPE and that free-tuition is being practised

in Fiji, Hong Kong, Solomon Islands and Tonga; also that special education has not been ignored. As regards compulsory UPE, only Hong Kong and Tonga have been able to introduce it.

All five of the topics suggested by Mr Khan were discussed but not all at length. Comments and/or recommendations of the group are as follows:

(a) Promotion of Local Support for and Community Involvement in UPE

Local support and community involvement have been the key to UPE success in the small countries. It is felt that such support and involvement should not only come from the enthusiastic few in providing material help in the form of land, building and equipment, but also from the whole community in the provision of moral support by taking an active part in school functions e.g. open days, parent's evenings etc. Once the schools are accepted as part of the community, it is much easier to persuade parents to send their children to school. Promotion of friendship and understanding between the school authority, education officer at the district level and community leaders should go a long way towards bringing about a very high level of UPE, whether it is compulsory or not. Additionally, it is recommended that the operation of literacy classes should provide yet another avenue of UPE.

(b) Procurement, Training and Supervision of Teachers

In a number of countries, qualified teachers get better salaries than their fellow civil servants and this is an added attraction. As far as training is concerned, there have been attempts in some small countries to cut down the length of full-time training from two years to one in order to meet mushrooming pupil enrolments. Introduction of part-time evening training courses or day-release courses of not less than two years duration is worth considering. It is recommended that consideration be given to the possible inclusion of the basic elements of teacher training in the high school as part of its curriculum so that even if graduates should take up teaching appointments immediately after graduation, they will have already been equipped with the basic skills required of a teacher. Another possibility lies in the provision of an orientation training programme prior to the start of term for those who, though untrained are about to join the teaching profession. It is strongly felt that the latter two alternatives are not the best way to solve the problem of procurement unless supplemented by in-service training.

Supervision should be done at the grass-root level, namely by the headteacher. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the headteacher should be a trained teacher. To recognize his status and responsibility, he ought to be paid an allowance. It is expected that the headteacher will set a very good example in attendance and punctuality, in his attitude towards teaching and administration, in his dealing with the community and in his care and concern for children. It is further recommended that a tier structure of supervision should be considered in which the more experienced teachers should help the newer ones.

To tackle the problem of teacher absenteeism, it was felt that some forms of disciplinary measure should be introduced in order to bring about a deterrent effect even though it is admitted that self-consciousness and a dutiful mind should be the eventual solution.

As regards minimizing the number of teachers, it is considered that if positive steps are taken as enumerated above, the problem will be solved.

(c) Causes of Drop-Outs and Measures for Removing them

The group identified six causes and suggested the following action for improving the situation in each case:

(i) Unfavourable family environments

This may have to do with broken marriage or poor living conditions. To tackle this problem, it was thought that teachers and the headteacher should visit the families concerned with a view to finding solutions. It was also suggested that the introduction of a school counselling service should be contemplated. Whether or not it is done through the voluntary agencies or the government is immaterial. Provision of study rooms for those who need them is desirable but these study rooms must be supervised.

(ii) Boredom

Children very often find school work boring. This may be the result of the teacher not doing his job properly or the curriculum not being suitable, or both. Failure to keep up with the class provides yet another possibility. This should be tackled by encouraging teachers to use modern teaching techniques, a more suitable and practical curriculum, and to give closer attention to individual pupils, especially those who are behind.

(iii) Economic pressure

The group recognized the gravity of this problem but could not offer any solution.

(iv) Overcrowding of classes

The introduction of a shift system may provide a solution for overcrowding. In some countries, this is already done but if the same teacher is to teach the various shifts in the same day, it is necessary to cut down the content of the curriculum so that the number of working hours of the teacher are not appreciably different from his counterparts who do not have to take more than one shift. It is recognized that if such a shift system is introduced to tackle the problem of shortage of teachers, the offer of a full curriculum is definitely out of the question hence it should not be accepted as a long-term solution.

(v) Special reasons

In some countries, parents pay particular emphasis to religion and do not wish their daughters taught by male teachers. In cases like this, it is hoped that more female teachers might be employed even though the entry requirements might have to be slightly relaxed. As for religious belief, it is up to the government to co-operate with religious bodies.

(vi) Migration

It is necessary that there is enough provision of places in the new housing estates and in the settlements. A system of reporting should be devised so that the headteacher of the last school attended can report on the pupil in question. Follow-up should be conducted to trace the whereabouts of the pupil concerned with a view to persuading the parents to send the child back to school.

(d) Enforcement of Compulsory Education

The group felt very strongly that priority should be given to:

- (i) Provision of enough places which are easily accessible to children.
- (ii) A free education inclusive of free stationery and text books which must be made readily available.
- (iii) Removal of social and economic pressures.
- (iv) Special education for those who need it.

This done, consideration may then be given towards introducing the element of compulsion if finance is not the problem. The group was firmly convinced that it costs proportionately very much more to get the last 15 per cent into school than it does the first 85 per cent.

(e) Need for Revision of the Curriculum

The group acknowledged that it is important to revise the curriculum every now and then to ensure that it is practical, locally relevant and up-to-date. It was felt very strongly that participation by serving teachers and headteachers was very important in the revision and that very detailed guide-books should be prepared for use by the teachers when a new curriculum is introduced.

REPORT OF THE LARGE COUNTRIES GROUP (Chaired by Mr B L Tan)

The group examined the issues suggested by Mr Khan and what follows is a summary of the discussion.

(a) Promotion of Local Support and Community Involvement

The group defined the expression "local support" as "all resources mobilized by local bodies apart from the budgetary contributions from the government". An attempt was made to identify as many areas as possible where local support and community involvement could be promoted. These were identified as follows:

(i) Land

The donation of land for school building and use is a good example of local support and community involvement.

(ii) Building

It is recognized that although it is the responsibility of government to provide school buildings, it may be necessary in certain areas for the local community to render partial support in this respect. Reference was made to the Papua New Guinea experience where government creates the framework and the community completes the building.

(iii) Teachers

Salaries of teachers are regarded as the responsibility of government although it is conceded that in the initial stages there may be occasions when local support may be necessary. Community support providing adequate teacher accommodation, specially in remote areas, should be encouraged.

(iv) Pupils

Community support for UPE is necessary to ensure success. An information campaign can be mounted to reach the people through places of worship such as mosques, temples and churches. All available channels of mass media should be used. Day care centres can be set up locally to relieve young girls of the responsibility of having to take care of their younger brothers and sisters so that they can attend school. Reference was made to the Nigerian experience when co-operatives were set up to work farms, so that young boys of school-going age could be released for school.

(v) Teaching materials (including textbooks)

It was agreed that local support and community involvement is possible. An argument was put forward that learning and teaching materials prepared locally have specific relevance to the local environment; but a word of caution was sounded: Any materials produced should be in the form of supplementary support and steps should be taken to see that they conform to the aims of UPE as envisaged by the government concerned.

(vi) Supervision and evaluation

The group felt that there is a need for informal supervision by local people. Regular visits by members of Boards of Managers/Governors to identify problems and render assistance can be encouraged. Reference was made to the Nigerian experience of appointing school visitors.

(b) The Problem of Drop-outs

The group identified the following causes of drop-out:

(i) An unfavourable family environment which does not encourage school attendance.

(ii) An unattractive curriculum coupled with uninteresting teaching.

- (iii) Economic pressure; instances of children having to earn rather than learn.
- (iv) Overcrowding in Class 1 (year 1)
- (v) Social inhibitions e.g. negative attitudes towards girls' education.
- (vi) Induced drop-out such as where children have to move to another school in the middle of their primary school course.
- (vii) Teacher behaviour and attitude such as unreasonable corporal punishment and physical violence.
- (viii) Related to (iii) - Parents' view that learning provides no immediate return because it is irrelevant to their immediate economic situations.

The measures suggested for overcoming the drop-out problem included:

- (i) The creation of an awareness among parents and adults of the importance of UPE.
- (ii) The use of multi-pronged interdevelopmental agencies to launch measures to improve the quality of life of rural people. An integrated approach to the UPE problem can be adopted such as that in Meher Union, Bangladesh.
- (iii) The non-formal approach of combining earning with learning.
- (iv) A work orientated curriculum including the production of local crafts.
- (v) With regard to overcrowding in Class 1 (year 1) a definite entry age should be introduced and enforced as early as possible.
- (vi) The need for provision of more women teachers to help overcome the social inhibition towards girls' education.
- (vii) An improved teacher - preparation programme can reduce the need for corporal punishment.

(c) Desirability and Feasibility of Enforcing Compulsory Attendance

Mention was made of the difficulties encountered by some countries regarding the enforcement of compulsory school attendance. It was suggested, therefore, that UPE is desirable wherever it is feasible.

(d) The Need for the Revision of Existing Primary Curricula

The group's opinion was that it may be necessary to review the primary school curriculum. The following matters should be considered when such a review is undertaken:

- (i) The curriculum should be flexible and relevant, and should cater for the ability of the entire pupil population.

(ii) The curriculum should be in harmony with the national aims of UPE as laid down in agenda item 1.

(iii) A non-formal curriculum may be more appropriate for a large section of rural children.