

The innovative elements in non-formal education of Bangladesh: Perspective of income generating programmes for poverty alleviation

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore the innovative elements of non-formal education of Bangladesh in terms of its contribution towards poverty alleviation through income generating programmes. A survey of the beneficiaries, focus group discussions, and documentary review are used as research methods. This study selects one NGO through examining relevant NGOs in term of non-formal education linked income generating programmes and then finds out the innovative elements of that NGO by in-depth study. It shows that most of the NGOs have programmes for socio-economic development but a very few of them have innovative elements in non-formal education linked income generating programmes for poverty alleviation.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Attacking poverty has become an international concern for placing in the paradigm of 'education and learning for sustainable development' in consideration of the reality that almost half of the world's population live in poverty. The world has deep poverty amidst plenty (World Bank, 2000). Based on the recognition that formal education programme has failed to become adequately responsive to the needs, particularly of the poorer/disadvantaged sections of people, non-formal education programme has evolved in various form as a strategic intervention for poverty alleviation.

In recent years, non-formal education has become an important phenomenon in developing countries like Bangladesh where many international, national and local NGOs are providing non-formal education for increasing income generating programmes for the poor and disadvantaged groups. The general objective of this paper is to identify and examine innovative aspects of non-formal education programme having demonstrated potentials and scope for poverty alleviation through income generation. Specifically, the paper has sought to identify the scope and the role of non-formal education contributing to income generation; to identify innovative approaches of non-formal education linked to income generation; to assess the impact of pilot /experimental income generation programme under non-formal education as a useful contribution to human resource development; and to make recommendation for policy formulation to build up essential links between non-formal education and income generation programmes for poverty alleviation.

Bangladesh is classified as one of the poorest countries of the world. Data published by UNESCO rank Bangladesh in the thirty-first position out of thirty-five countries for which GDP data could be given. The national literacy rate has increased significantly but 34% adult people are still illiterate (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002). The labour force, with the growth of population, will continue to grow for about 50 years more till the population becomes stationery. It is estimated that the labour force will grow from 55 million to 100 million over the next 20 years. The country has 6.6 million child labour force (aged 5-14), but in reality the number may be

higher. Over 4 million of these children work in agriculture in rural areas and in informal sector in urban areas. The poverty line (daily intake of 2122 K. Cal a day) reveals that 36% people live below the poverty line. Thirty seven percent are rated most vulnerable, and forty six vulnerable (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2000). The present trend of the socioeconomic conditions in Bangladesh in terms of literacy rate, population growth, per capita income, and employment situation are improving but inequitable distribution of resources (e. g., income, land) deteriorate the situation. Twenty percent people has only 8.7 percent share of total income while the highest 20% people has 42.8 percent share of total income (The World Bank, 2000) and 84% people acquired small farm 0.05-2.49 acre land (Planning Commission, 1998).

As in many other countries of the world, non-formal education programmes have been organized in Bangladesh, first, by NGOs and subsequently by the Government at a larger scale. Although there are many NGOs, large and small, engaged in non-formal education not all programmes are well conceived. Also, many of these non-formal education programmes are not specifically designed to address the crucial issues of income generation to improve the quality of life of the targeted population, while some directly address the poor or disadvantaged groups. Some NGOs are relatively new in the field and their emergence has been prompted by foreign funding channeled through government projects or directly by the foreign NGOs with Bangladesh Government approval. A good number of NGOs have vast experience as they have been working for many years. Some NGOs follow traditional approaches and some have been trying to evolve new approaches. It is worth exploring those programmes which have innovative interventions linking non-formal education with poverty alleviation. For such programmes it is important to identify their strengths, weaknesses, replication prospects, sustainability and acceptability in the community.

In spite of the outstanding growth towards universal basic and primary education there are still many left outs of the system. They constitute drop-outs of the enrolled students and non-enrolled, mostly among the rural poor. Besides the non-formal education programme operated by NGO-small and big-the government has administered a member of big non-formal education projects nationwide. The thrust of the government project has been toward promoting literacy aimed at the goal 'Education For All'. Some of the government projects have been implemented by NGOs, as partner (contracted) agencies, although supervised and monitored by designated government staff.

Non-formal education operates alongside the formal education system. It is flexible in terms of curriculum, organization and Management, responsive to the needs of special groups of learners and is inclusive of all who wish to learn. Continuing education combines under non-formal education in a limited way literacy with life improvement skills in consideration of practical needs of different population groups. There are many barriers to non-formal education and livelihood skill training, as far as the goal of alleviation of poverty is concerned. The barriers are at the level of the illiterate poor and also in the nature of non-formal education programmes and quality of management. Identification of appropriate model to alleviate poverty of the people is an important area of in-depth investigation and it is a major concern of the Government, NGOs and the development partners. The Government of Bangladesh undertook several projects such as Integrated Non-Formal Education, Non-formal Education Project- 1, Project- 2, Project- 3, Project- 4, Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Pilot Project to address illiteracy (DNFE, 1999) and in a very limited way, the poverty issues. The Government has been planning to undertake Post-Literacy and Continuing Education for Human Development Project with the financial support of World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Norwegian Assistance for Development (NORAD) and Swedish International Development Assistance (SIDA). The most recent thrust of non-formal education project, named post-literacy and continuing education for human development is on skills training and income generation for poverty alleviation.

METHODOLOGY

Selection of innovative project

In consideration of the objectives of the study, a particular agency was to be selected for in-depth investigation and analysis. This required adopting a procedure so that the selection could be proper. First, the study collected and reviewed the NGO directory published by the Association for Development Agency in Bangladesh (ADAB, 2001), which is an apex body and a forum of all NGOs engaged in development, and the Directory of Education Programmes of the NGOs published by the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE, 1995) which is a forum of NGOs engaged in educational activities. The team examined the activities / programmes of the NGOs and in this process more than one hundred agencies – local, regional, and national operating non-formal education and income generation programme were preliminarily selected. At the second stage, the study team sought to identify non-formal education focused on income generation programme and linked to poverty alleviation. The process resulted in identification of 12 agencies with some relevant information for the study purpose. The selected organizations were then approached to provide further information on non-formal education and income generation programme and also relevant documents. An interview schedule-cum-checklist was used at this stage and direct contact was established with these agencies to collect information. The main areas of information sought from these organizations included:

- innovative elements of non-formal education linked to income generation programme, and the importance given to the programme,
- goals and objectives of the programmes
- information on non-formal education and income generation programme components
- impact of non-formal education linked income generation programme on target population

A total of eight organizations provided all information we sought. The study team then thoroughly examined the information received from eight organizations. From these two organizations were selected:

- Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE), and
- Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES)

The two organizations appeared to have comparable elements that the study could take interest in.

Final selection of the innovative project (organization)

The study team carefully examined the above two organizations by using the following indicators: (a) target groups; (b) benefits planned for the target groups; (c) coverage; (d) goals and objectives; (e) how innovative; (f) how closely non-formal education is linked with income generating programme; and (g) how much importance is given to non-formal education- income generation programme linkage. The study team, at this stage, also assessed the level of cooperation that the authority of the above two agencies at both head quarter and field level were ready to offer to the study team. Thus the team finally selected CMES for the case study.

Data of the study and sources of data

The study was based on both secondary and primary data. Secondary data were obtained from available reports and documents of Government organizations, NGOs, international agencies, which supported planning, development and financing of non-formal education for linking with income generation programme. Primary data were collected from different groups of respondents taken from the selected NGO. Different method i.e. interview, observation, focused group discussion and informal discussions, were used to collect information. Use of different sources

helped us to validate data, as data from one source could be checked by data from another source.

The whole process of data collection, therefore, included the following activities:

- collected documents and reports relevant for the study;
- reviewed available relevant documents;
- prepared a list of leading NGOs involved in non-formal education and skill training;
- selected one innovative non-formal education project involving income generation programme through income generating activities;
- designed interview schedules, checklist and observation guidelines; and
- carried out field survey to collect both quantitative and qualitative information relevant for the study;

Interview and focused group discussion

The study team conducted interviews and focused group discussions with the following groups:

- providers at the headquarters (interview)
- providers at the field level (interview)
- students studying at the centres (focused group discussion)
- graduates of the programmes (focused group discussion)
- parents of the students (interview)

Field study

Besides looking into the available documents on the CMES activities, field study was carried out dating March 21 – April 8, 2002.

CENTRE FOR MASS EDUCATION IN SCIENCE (CMES) – A CASE STUDY

Major thrust and target groups

Established in 1978, CMES is solely dedicated to the disadvantaged population groups, and is based on an assumption that exposing the mass people to science and technology would bring about a significant positive change in the level of their living and would contribute to national development. In its programmatic interventions, CMES has sought to arrange an appropriate education for the common mass encouraging them to be used to science and technology in thoughts and practices. In other words, education and practices that help to bring appropriate technology within the grip of disadvantaged people in particular for their empowerment has been the major thrust of CMES.

The target groups in direct focus of CMES are (CMES, 1999):

- children and adolescents who have no access to primary schools;
- children and adolescents who drop-out from the primary schools; and
- adolescent's who have had some primary education but want to acquire livelihood education.

Features of CMES system

- CMES, an enthusiastic organization, implements non-formal education for the disadvantaged boys and girls through very joyful and family environment. It offers basic education as well as employment opportunity to the learners. As a result not only the particular learners but also their families and community get benefits from the programme. Together with education and learning having concentration on science and technology through its Basic School System (BSS), CMES has got other supportive programmes,

which includes skill training, health and environment, credit scheme, cultural activities, social actions, curriculum development and public awareness programme. A mixture of all these make CMES a unique and innovative organization in Bangladesh.

- The innovative approach to human resource development, particularly for disadvantaged adolescent girls and boys is practically very useful. It has got a design of continuing education program offering diverse options through integrated education, skill training and profitable work-practice. The first stage in the process of transforming poor illiterate/out-of-school groups into productive human resource is the Basic School System, as it is called. This system has evolved through experience over a number of years at field level work and has been replicated and is serving now 20,000 students at a time. The focus is on increasing the chances for both wage employment and self-employment of the poor leading to poverty alleviation.
- Basic School System offers an integrated package, which makes education a supportive force to simultaneous income generation. It arranges for a life-oriented education curriculum compatible to mainstream primary and early high school education (up to an approximate 8th grade level), along with training and profitable practice of appropriate technology. The system includes home to home interventions in health and environment. A distinct supportive programme called Adolescent Girls' Program (AGP) empowers the girls to shake off discriminations and stereotypes and to participate in the education and technology-oriented livelihood improvement programmes equally with boys. All the components of this integrated programme serve to reinforce each other. Literacy education draws its subject matters from livelihood practices while the latter derive scientific basis from the education curriculum. The school-day is divided into an inner campus (class room) and outer campus (practices) situations providing a lot of options. The latter takes place at market level, responding to the local demands for products and services that can be marketed by the Basic Education System. The marketing arrangement offers opportunity to the learners for earning income, which facilitates further practices in production and enhancement of skills.
- Basic School System particularly seeks to establish closeness of education to the life-environment on the one hand, and the practice of rural technology on the other, leading to immediate income generation and enhancement of life opportunities. In keeping with the needs of adolescent boys and girls (young adults); CMES has included community-based programmes at different levels of education. The learning system of Basic School System encourages the learners to use the local reading materials and resources. Students' evaluation criteria seek to assess competency level. It conducts three tests in a year like the government school system, but the tests are conducted very carefully followed by assessment of practice skills. After completing their education in Basic School System the students can get them admitted to technical centre and Advanced Basic School and move through different sessions of continuing education.
- CMES wants the parents to participate in the programmes, gets them in the parents' meeting and thereby facilitates community involvement. In 2001, three thousand and nineteen such meetings were held where the target was 3429.
- CMES encourages financial participation of the students. It allows the students to have a feeling of ownership of Basic School System. Each student deposits Tk. 2 per month that is kept in a bank of the Unit. By June 2002 the total amount deposited under this programme was Tk. 958,497, which is a substantial amount.
- Productive trades of CMES include carpentry, welding, computer-compose, repairing of tools and machineries, tailoring and garments, dyeing, block printing, nursery, mushroom cultivation, masonry sericulture, poultry, leather works and sanitary latrine manufacturing. Necessary supports like teachers and teaching/training materials are provided by CMES.

Community and national demands as well as availability of local resources and learners' capacity are considered. Thus CMES involves its learners in different simple technology based production. The products include chalk, candle, soap, tie-dye, ball pen, and metal products. Other activities for income earning includes home-gardening, construction works, appropriate paper technology, book binding, decorative candle making and craft works by using jute fabrics. In 2001, students produced 971,728 pieces of chalk, 194,261 pieces of ball pen, 2944,005 pieces of candle, 32,466 pieces of soap, 135,137 saplings in home gardening and a good number of other products. The students' trainees earn money and contribute to their family income, while they learn.

- CMES also offer different short training courses for target groups and staffs of other organization. This is an effort to diffuse the education and training on science and technology. To ensure quality education and to develop its own staff, CMES provides regular training to its personnel.
- Home to home work as outer campus education is an important component of CMES programmes. As a change agent at the level of community, CMES takes up some activities like promotion of the improved chula (oven), compost fertilizer use, sanitary latrine use, tree plantation, vaccination, tube well repair, etc., which improve the condition of living of the target community population. The students learn practical knowledge through this kind of outer campus education.
- Gender programmes include organization of gender convention, couple programme for awareness raising, peer assisted education, social action, management of credit programme and entrepreneurial training. Under the Adolescent Girls' Programme the adolescent girls get awareness on gender equity, rights, reproductive health, and livelihood skills.

The importance and use of mass education in science is brought to the attention of various materials for a particularly professional community interested in the promotion of non-formal education and income generation programme for poverty alleviation. Different dissemination initiatives in this regard are regular publication of the lessons, special publication, audio visual presentation, organization of seminars and exhibitions.

Unit level organization

Field Units: Each unit of system works through 15-30 Basic Schools, 2-4 Advanced Basic Schools and one Rural Technology Centre.

Five or six Basic schools serve as feeder to one Advanced Basic School (ABS). This is a primary level school with a difference. Seven or eight ABS serve as feeder to Rural Technology Centre (RTC). Rural Technology Centre is a higher and diversified school having emphasis on technical skill training. The general organizational setup is shown in the figure (please see figure).

The General Patterns of Component Functioning

The following are the general patterns of the functional system at CMES:

- Basic and primary education is delivered by following a learner centred approaches such that the students are active agents in not only learning, but also applying the competencies in the livelihood practices.
- Technology skill training, which involves application of general education and science education, is carried on to production of goods and services for the sale at the local market.

- Home to home work on health and environment constitutes a part of school routine – putting education into immediate practice for the enhancement of quality of life.

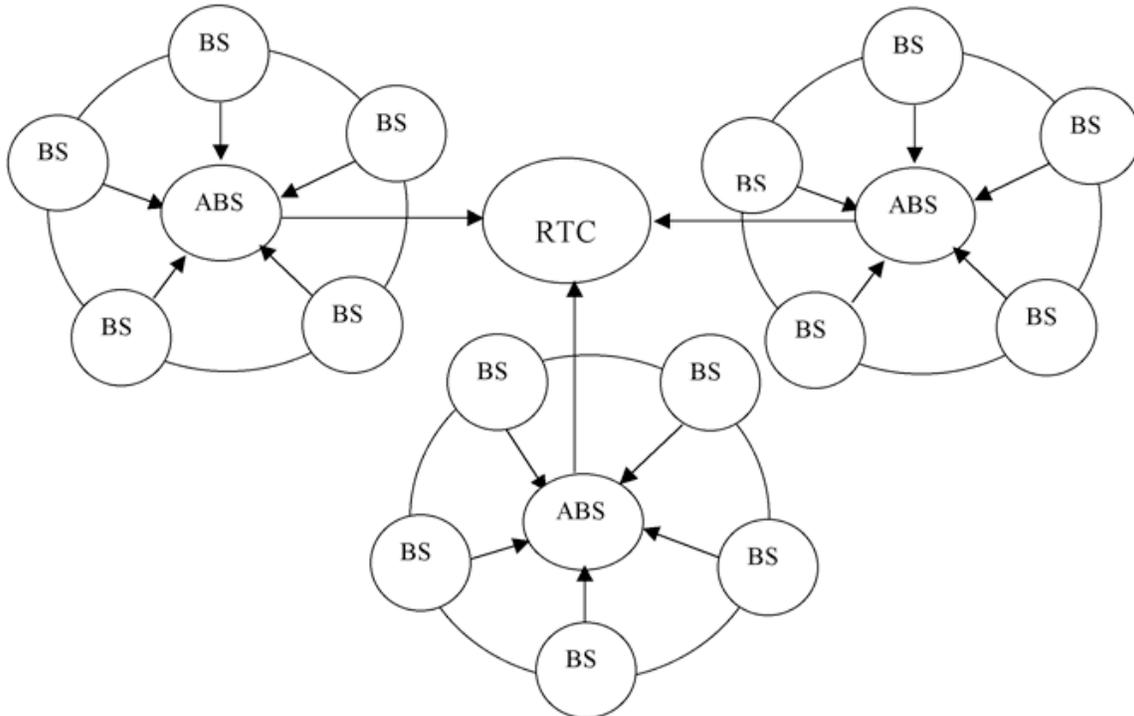


Figure 1: Unit level organizational set up

Implementation approach

The CMES education and training is designed and administered over 5 grades (levels), each taking one year in general. The five levels are: i) Angkur (Germinating), ii) Bikash (Developing), iii) Agrassar I (Advanced I), iv) Agrassar II (Advanced II), and v) Agrassar III (Advanced III). Angkur and Bikash levels are imparted to students in basic school and Advanced Basic School, while Advanced I, Advanced II, and Advanced III are imparted in Advanced Basic School and Rural Technology Centre. The way education and training is organized according to level and type of institution.

The Angkur level education is intended to ensure reading, writing and numeracy skills while imparting basic knowledge of health, and environment. Angkur also offers opportunities to learn at least one technological skill directly relevant to income generation. The Bikash level gives emphasis on the use of literacy and numeracy in real life situation, knowing the environment and acquiring technology skill. Bikash also offers opportunities to learn two or more technological skills directly relevant to income generation. Agrassar (Advanced) I, II, III cover primary level syllabus of the formal education system and advanced technological skills directly relevant to income generation. Rural Technology Centre offers advanced courses as well as combination of flexible courses on technical know-how.

Total number of basic school, advanced basic school and rural technology centre in CMES system

CMES operates its programmes through 20 Field Units in various parts of the country comprising. These units work through eight Rural Technology Centres, fifty nine Advanced School Systems and three hundred and eighteen Basic Schools. The total students in all the schools are 20,000 at a time. All the Rural Technology Centres have, in addition to general education and skill training, Adolescent Girls' Programme. The number of adolescents involved in programs related to income generation activities is more than 10,000. There are 3 field training centres and a central training centre and several special laboratories to support the CMES programmes.

Unique features and innovative elements of CMES

CMES offer non-formal education at three levels in a hierarchy but in an integrated pattern. The levels are: (i) Basic School, (ii) Advanced Basic School, and (iii) Rural Technology Centre. Basic School serves as a feeder to Advanced Basic School and similarly Advanced Basic School to Rural Technology Centre. Basic and Advanced School Curricula are designed to fit to the requirements of trade training at Rural Technology Centre. Combined together, the non-formal education system levels address the needs of the poor target groups. The most note worthy feature of the system is the conceptual coherence and practical integration between education and skill training with the aim of transforming the target groups into productive human resource for eventual elimination of poverty.

Application of non-formal education including skill training is directed at producing services and goods, marketing of the products, add allowing some income for the learners while they participate in education/training. All the components of the system make an integrated package for the young people enabling them to effectively participate in production and market mechanism.

The activities organized at the field level institution, that is, CMES Field Unit are of the following categories:

- Non-formal education combined with livelihood skill training and income generation for the target groups;
- Gender empowerment programme for adolescent girls, as they have special needs and problems, which need specific attention;
- Research and development on appropriate technology and their adaptation to micro-enterprises for the disadvantaged young men and women.

The CMES education system arranges for life oriented education curriculum compatible to mainstream primary and junior secondary (up to 8th grade), along with training and profitable practice of appropriate technology.

The Adolescent Girls' Programme makes the young women conscious of their rights and empowers them to stand up against all superstitions and discrimination and to participate in education and technology based income generating activities.

The organization of activities as 'inner campus activities' (classroom activities) and 'outer campus activities' (practices of skills in work setting) establishes close link between education in classroom and the practical life in the world of work. The outer campus training takes place at market level as if students are producers or employees, get daily wages for the works, or go to the markets to sell the products.

Marketing system of CMES provides scope for the students to become familiar with the challenges and realities at the market situation. This also provides an income to the students and the schools, and encourages the students to further enhance their skills through practice. The Rural Technology Centre serves not only as learning centre, but also as main education resource centre, technology centre and management centre for the field unit.

Programmes of Advanced Basic School and Rural Technology Centre capitalize on the basic education and offer a number of livelihood skills. The livelihood skills are utilized in producing a wide variety of consumable and marketable goods based primarily on locally manageable resources. The system has a provision of very limited micro-credit to the graduates (producers) and the participants of Adolescents Girl Programme of CMES. That the credit programme meets the demand of only a very small percentage of CMES target groups is explained by limited availability of such credit fund.

The innovative elements in CMES education may be presented as the following:

- It brings education closer to home environment, both spatially and attitudinally, through interfacing with the real life of works.
- The same closeness involves the families in education and work, and eliminates the alienations between formalisms of schools and realities of life.
- All the important indicators and competencies of a quality education are given proper weight, and these come in a natural way, the students being active agents. Students create teaching aids through their own practical activities and through the presentation of the same.
- The three components mentioned earlier are organized and managed such that one supports or enriches the other e.g. general curriculum draws its examples and exercises from real life skill practices and home to home interventions, whereas the latter finds the required academic basis from the former. The school is virtually extended from the classroom to the world of work outside.
- Education is not treated here only as a preparation for the next level of academic structure. Rather it is made interesting and useful in itself, a matter of joy and pride, a thing of immediate benefit to themselves and the families. People are more ready to accept some opportunity-costs in such a situation.
- The girls are placed in an active role as much as the boys, within all the components. Gender issues are directly addressed so much so that this has given rise to a follow-up programme for the empowerment of adolescent girls.

In overall terms, CMES education system makes significant contribution to enrolment, retention and quality performance especially in its relevance to improving the quality of living.

OVERALL FINDINGS ON NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: INCOME GENERATION PROGRAMME TOWARD POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Quality of education and training

Discussions with the graduates reveal that the level of skills acquired by them was very good in reading, writing, numeracy and life skills. The levels of skills on trades, however, varied among the graduates. Some were found to have acquired satisfactory level of skill and they were engaged in helping the fellow students. The centre lacks sophisticated machines.

Impact of the non-formal education - skill training

Immediate benefits gained by the graduates are basic education and skill training on a number of simple trades and on one particular advanced trade. In addition, the important qualitative contribution of the programme is reflected in the high degree of consciousness of the graduates about the importance of education, health and nutrition, and keen interest in gainful self-employment or entrepreneurship.

The impact of employment and income is relatively pronounced in case of Rural Technology Centre graduates. Learners graduating from Rural Technology Centre are fewer compared to those who complete 'Ankur' and 'Bikash' in Basic School and Advanced Basic School. Twenty one graduates interviewed in this study have an average earning of Taka 1700 per month, which is a good amount in rural areas of Bangladesh.

Most of the graduates are either employed or self employed. The employed graduates are determined to start self-employment and they are saving money for the purpose. They have been trying and face problems to get loan from CMES and other sources to start their own business.

As the parents of the CMES graduates report, they have been amply benefited. The benefits they mention are:

- graduates are contributing to family income;
- family members are more aware about the importance of education;
- living condition of family has improved;
- members of family now have increased social awareness;
- members are not worried about the future of children who could not avail general education, from the formal schools. They have got alternative opportunity at CMES;
- graduates help younger children in their families to get education; they can do coaching.

Benefit to community

The benefits of CMES for the community include:

- reduction in unemployment
- reduction in crimes
- delay of girls' marriage
- empowerment of girls
- improvement in overall social environment

Income generation and poverty alleviation through credit

The prevailing micro-credit facility in the regular economic system is often not available to landless families and people living below poverty line. The available marketing facility for the products of loan recipients is very poor. In the study area, the only source of credit is CMES. Because of fund constraints, however, the number of beneficiaries of CMES credit is small. The credit amount is also small. Those who could avail the limited facility have started self-employment and they have been able to raise their family income. Case records included in this report as illustrations bear testimony to this.

Areas of skills training as desired

The graduates identified the types or areas of education and skills that would be useful to the target people. The skills appropriate for training in future to help the target group come out of poverty situation are: motor driving; motor mechanics; welding; electric repairing; TV, radio and refrigerator repairing; sewing and embroidery; livestock; pisciculture; vegetable growing; and nursery

Specific lessons learned about non-formal education as an approach to poverty alleviation

The lessons that emerge from the present study could be definitely considered in future planning of non-formal education linked to skill training at a national scale as an approach to poverty alleviation. The approach will have higher chances of being effective provided sufficient attention is given to strengthening of other approaches to modify the structural conditions that work against the poor in their efforts to change the situation.

Lesson 1: Integrated approach to continuing education

Basic literacy with post-literacy with the limited objective to retain literacy is not sufficiently attractive to the poor and, therefore, cannot combat poverty problem of the poorest people. Poverty can be eliminated through gainful wage employment and self-employment. Gainful employment is possible if graduates can rightly identify marketable skills and acquire those skills, which have demand in the local market. Thus the hypothesis that integrated approach is necessary to ensure that continuing education leads to gainful employment.

Lesson 2: Important components and quality aspects within continuing education phase

To identify marketable skills, local barriers, and other problems associated with self-employment, appropriate market research and market analysis by using sufficient and relevant data must be carried out. Locality specific conditions must be placed in this analysis. Available indigenous experiences should also be taken into consideration.

Training should be carried out following well-thought out curricula and syllabus prepared by persons having appropriate conceptual insights, practical knowledge about the skills together with persons having wide-spread knowledge of market mechanisms. The trainers and resource persons should have extensive expertise to work upon the individual poor's motivational level and social and cultural predicaments. They should also be well-oriented about the poverty scenario, the complexity of factors involved in poverty alleviation efforts and the interacting processes between individual and the larger social contextual elements in poverty.

The trained people must have access to raw materials, essential equipment and marketing know-how. During the training the learners must have the opportunities to be involved in practical work and the poor learners should be supported to earn by marketing their products.

After completion of continuing education with an emphasis on vocational training, a probation period of 3 to 4 months would be very useful for the trainees to gain confidence about their capacity and enhance the chances for their acceptance in employment market situation. This would be useful also for building-up motivation and capability to start self-employment.

Access to loans is another important component of the integrated system and a mechanism needs to be evolved so that the individuals interested in self-employment have easy access to loans on soft terms. This is very importance for any continuing education programme education

A special programme to encourage young women and mobilize the local community for marking a congenial atmosphere (in terms of norms and facilities to support) might be integrated within the non-formal education program. The present programme suffered for the fact that these aspects were not built into the non-formal education programme.

Lesson 3: Program relevance as an antidote against lack of interest and low participation

Learners are keen to learn skills as long as they clearly perceive the potential economic benefits, opportunity cost to their advantage, and if they can choose the skills of their choice using their own judgment. Potential learners should have access to information regarding skills, products, markets, capital requirements, rate of returns and future prospects so that they can make the right choice.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROGRAMME EXPERIENCES

The programme experiences have implications for future actions at two levels. The first one is about designing and implementing non-formal education programmes focused on income generation activities targeting the poor in particular, and the second one is getting broad based policy to strengthen non-formal education for transforming the unschooled and early dropout population groups (living in the poverty) into productive human resource conscious and capable to change their economic and social status. The implications are therefore described below under two titles.

A. Non-formal education –income generation programme for poverty alleviation

- (1) Conventional non-formal education programme work with a limited interest in literacy. When extended to cover continuing education, non-formal education programme has to have a particular emphasis on imparting skills which can generate employment and income.
- (2) As the scope of wage employment for non-formal education completers may be limited in a rapidly changing market situation with the continual adoption of new technology, appropriate income generation programme has to be kept in view in a given locality. This has to be done with full understanding of the possibility to use and improve the indigenous technology, and the importance of encouraging self-employment/entrepreneurship of the non-formal education/continuing education graduates.
- (3) With the growth of economy and expansion of wage employment market the pattern of continuing education can be upgraded to ensure skills development appropriate for the target group to have wage employment with a reasonable income level.
- (4) Non-formal education with employment skills training has to be combined with training for other life skills such as healthful and hygienic living, safe living in home and work environments, safeguarding the basic rights as human being within family and community.
- (5) Organization and management of continuing education (non-formal education), programmes have to be in fulfillment of the personal and social (normative) interest of the people, who are potential participants in the programmes.
- (6) The programme characteristics have to be sufficiently motivating and stimulating for the participants that the latter can clearly perceive and experience the prospect of earning and improving their standard of living.
- (7) The programme participants (target group) being the poorest segment of population will find it attractive to have some earning, even if it is in small amount, during the period of their education/training.
- (8) Programmatic initiative for employable skill learning, that is preparation for engagement in income generation activities, is effective when the first part in the preparation consists of an understanding of the role of science in daily life situation, and the other part has the practical experience that the use of technology and learning new skill can give concrete benefits for better living.
- (9) When the issues of women improvement are in focus of non-formal education- income generation programme and pursuit of non-conventional trades is needed for poverty alleviation, the character of the non-formal education programme shall have to be such that women gain the courage and confidence to overpower the cultural prejudice and

negative attitude in the society restricting women's access to new knowledge and participation in new activity.

- (10) Programme managers, monitors, supervisors, teachers/trainers, that is, all categories of personnel involved in implementation have to have sufficient preparation for playing their role effectively while making a link between non-formal education and promotion of income generation programme toward poverty alleviation. An understanding of the dynamics of individual and societal situations in interplay with poverty has to be an important part of this preparation.
- (11) The programmatic non-formal education intervention has to promote participation especially of local government institution and other community based agencies and subsequently gains strength from community participation, in planning, implementation, and monitoring and impact assessment.
- (12) Non-formal education programme for enabling individuals and groups to get out of the poverty situation has to have institutional linkage with other programmes and service agencies, which are relevant to fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the non-formal education graduates.

B. Macro level policy support to establish an environment conducive to non-formal education for poverty alleviation

The following are the important elements of policy consideration:

- (13) The national education policy and plan of action have to give adequate allowance for the development of non-formal education in both government and non-government sectors and also in private sector with emphasis on science and technology to be applicable in bringing about a positive change in life situation. This will be in consistency with the Dakar Framework for 'Education For All' goals.
- (14) Clear and adequate information about non-formal education policy, goals, programme objectives, strategies, key players, targeted groups and new opportunities are to be regularly disseminated through different media and mechanisms and be made accessible to all concerned groups/agencies. This should create an overall positive social climate.
- (15) Successful micro initiatives as experiments or pilot programmes have to be scaled up and replicated with necessary adaptations to varying situations and supports from national government authorities and other development partners are necessary in this regard. National budgetary allocation is an appropriate measure and should be a part of the poverty reduction strategy of the national government.
- (16) All sectors concerned with human development and economic growth are to recognize the importance and the obligation to support non-formal education in the national interest. Two approaches are necessary in this regard. Those who are directly engaged in non-formal education and poverty alleviation projects/programmes can act together in some forum to share and disseminate experience and information. Secondly, the national development planning authority and the specialized agencies, which are to support the national development planning process (e.g. research agencies authorities responsible for collection, compilation and analysis of data in various sectors), can stress the point that the different sectors of development relevant to poverty reduction should draw upon the strengths of non-formal education for preparing human resource to carry forward their sectoral programmes. As such, these development sectors (for example, industries, commerce, transport, public health and so on) are to support the non-formal education programmes. Authorities responsible for implementing micro finance system, in particular, has to assume responsibility to support the non-formal education programme by making funds available to the graduates of non-formal education programme and to

those institutions which can run income generation programme by using the output (graduates) of non-formal education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing analysis of CMES Programme and other observations that come along are drawn upon to make the following recommendations presented in two categories. One is about the post-literacy and continuing education to have special relevance to income generating programme for poverty alleviation, and the other on the role of the national authority (DNFE in the case of Bangladesh) to promote post-literacy and continuing education human resource development including research issues.

Post-literacy and continuing education under non-formal education

- (1) A national policy should guide continuing education programme to contain science and technology orientation, while the educational competence level will be comparable with that of formal education to be integrated with skill training and practices allowing opportunities for production of marketable goods. The programme will contain all necessary ingredients -- curriculum contents, teaching-training approach, materials and equipment etc. which will give employment attractiveness from the very beginning of implementation process.
- (2) Technical-vocational skill training component has to allow supervised practice training within the education training centres. This will require national commitment and a bold move to make necessary resources available as a part of the overall development policy and programmes for poverty alleviation through human resource development and promotion of small enterprises. The major thrusts will on making the large youth population group in poverty informed, conscious and productive manpower of the country.
- (3) Adolescents and youths should be given particular attention as they have special needs and potentials.
- (4) The learners should get practice learning opportunity through work-settings in the market situation; and to make it possible, the training centres should be required to establish linkage with production and business enterprises.
- (5) The learners should be given exposure to and experience in the dynamics of marketing, while they are in the learning centres for skill learning and are engaged in production of useful commodities.
- (6) Skill training component should offer a range of possibilities in terms of trade and skill level.
- (7) Instructors to engage in training are required to have adequate technical competence, ability to teach skills, knowledge about the poverty situation, understanding of the need for linking education and skill learning to income generating programme and poverty alleviation.
- (8) Teachers/Instructors should be locally recruited and specially trained for their job.
- (9) Learners should be given option to select the trades for their skill acquisition. They should be given orientation on the prospect of the trades in the market.
- (10) Trades having no market demand should not be offered.

- (11) Continuing education programme should be monitored and assessed with particular consideration given to the process and outcomes in the light of poverty alleviation objective.
- (12) Continuing education programme management should establish a database for learners and a follow-up system for the graduates moving into the market situation for employment.
- (13) Education and skill learning through non-formal education has to be accredited by the authority as a necessary part of the education system.
- (14) Every learner should be given information on the skills, job market, future prospect, so that he/she can take decision based on analysis and own assessment.
- (15) The curricula and syllabuses should be prepared by experts having practical, as well as sufficient theoretical expertise and familiarity with practical work setting.
- (16) Trainees and graduates should be informed in advance about the capital required to start self-employment in any trade.
- (17) For the graduates to have access to credit facility, concerned organizations should either introduce credit programs or makes arrangements with credit giving agencies.

Role of national authority

- (18) The national authority designated to promote non-formal education /continuing education has to work based on clear guidelines, which can be formulated with the participation of all stakeholder groups. The authority should set standards corresponding to grades/skills and the requirements to be fulfilled for standards at various levels of continuing education keeping in view the poverty alleviation objective.
- (19) NGOs interested and engaged in continuing education should be supported by the national authority to work in fulfillment of definite standard(s), Supervision and monitoring system should seek to ensure compliance with the standard(s).
- (20) The national authority should facilitate linking of NGOs with relevant government bodies for the latter's support to the farmer. Similarly linkage should also be established with business community.
- (21) The national authority should organize sharing of experiences/learning of continuing education programmes and their contributions among the stakeholder groups for feedback and follow-up actions.

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