



Dr. Michael West

December 18th, 1968

Dear Dr. Huq,

It was very kind of you and the staff of the Teacher Training College to invite me to send a message for your 60th. anniversary.

I came to the college in 1913 or 1914 when Mr. Biss was Principal. I came back to it after the war taking over from Mr. Stark, a very able and high-principled man.

Looking back over my time at the college, I can remember several good things which we were able to do, and some others which, alas, were left undone. Our great principle in those days was that school was a place where pupils were helped to learn and the danger of a training college is that it tends to produce too much teaching. The teacher is thinking too much of what he does so as to impress the Supervisor rather than of what the pupils are doing, and the commonest note in the student teachers' record book was T. T. M (talks too much). It follows from this that successful learning in many subjects depends on the availability of good text books which enable pupils to learn. As a result of this, I produced various books in English which were far too successful so that I fell into the trap of getting too much money from them. That is a great problem. The teacher trainer who produces a successful book tends to be accused of working for profit. I have since thought that some sort of a Trust might be made which would safeguard the writer's security while excess funds were devoted to improving the book.

We made a book for teaching the reading of Bengali by building up the letters as I did in the New Method Primer. This, however, was never put into use. There

Was also a course for teaching pupils to read Sanskrit without the burden of too much grammar, and lastly there was a course for Primary schools which would enable one class to be occupied in learning while the teacher taught the other class. In most primary schools at that time, a teacher had to deal with two classes simultaneously. At an Imperial Education Conference in London, I said innocently that all Inspectors of schools ought to spend some time teaching in primary schools and have some experience of dealing with two classes at once. There was a gust of laughter from the whole audience at the idea of Inspectors of schools being made to do this, but we did this in Dacca.

If there is a message which I would like to leave with you, it is that you should keep on experimenting, and that a school is a place in which the pupils learn and the greatest handicap to learning is an excess of teaching.

Yours sincerely,
Michael West.

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