



British Education Policy in India: The Legacy Still Continues

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Maktabs, Pathshalas, utilitarian, Education Commission.

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ABSTRACT *Before the British came to India there was a network of indigenous schools in the name of Maktabs and Pathshalas. The Education Policy of the British Raj developed through three marked stages between the battle of Plassey (1757) and the middle of the nineteenth century viz. i) through the transformation of the British from merchants to rulers, ii) Consolidation of the British power in India and iii) the expansion of British power led to the foundation of an educational system in India which contributed greatly to the emergence of modern India.*

Introduction

With the arrival of Warren Hastings (1750) as Governor General of Bengal, the educational channel opened. In this reign, Nathaniel Hatched wrote A Code of Gentoo Laws in 1776 and Bengali Grammar in 1778 and in 1779 Charles Wilkins brought out his Sanskrit Grammar and Francis Gladwin Institutes of the Emperor Akbar in 1783. Two new factors appeared on the scene now and together they exerted the most profound influence in shaping the education policy of the British Raj. Those were the utilitarians and the enlightened Indians.

Discussion

The present Education system was originated in the earlier of nineteenth century. In 1813 British Parliament inserted a clause in the charter of the company. "To the effect that, after defraying all civil and military expenses, a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set a part and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and encouragement of learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the science among the inhabitants of the British territories in India."

In 1835, Lord Macaulay, Law member of Governor General's Council gave his views for rectification of Indian Education System which was known as Macaulay's Minute. The main objective of the Minute was to diffuse European Learning with vernacular education. Consequently schools were established on these lines, teaching European Literature and science. These schools became popular because great interest was shown in English education by teachers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Radha Kanta Dev and others, also because education imparted in these schools became a passport for entrance into Government services.

In 1838 William Adam was the first British Officer to suggest for introducing compulsory primary education. Captain Wingate (1852) suggested that 5% of the Land revenue be utilized to provide compulsory primary education to the agriculturists. In 1854, Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control to Government of India, gave his official report popularly known as Wood's Despatch. On the basis of the Chief recommendations, the British Government was taken the following actions:

1. A Department of Education was created in each state.
2. D.P.I was appointed to head each Department.

During the years 1854 - 1882 it was found that mother-tongue was completely neglected as a medium of instruction. Matriculation Examination began to dominate, not only secondary education, but even the education imparted in primary schools. In 1858, Mr. T.C Hope proposed that local areas should tax themselves for the running of schools for their benefit. To further review the position of education in the country, another Commission known as Hunter Commission (1882-83) went round the Country, surveyed the whole picture and recommended that the Government should take the entire responsibility of primary education. But unfortunately, the British Government did not appreciate their recommendation in those days. Another Chief recommendation of Indian Education Commission (1881-83) was that the responsibility, control and administration of Primary Education should be transferred to local bodies, the District Boards or Councils in rural areas.

National awakening, establishment of Indian National Congress, appearance of leaders like Swami Vivekananda gave a phillip to the movement of compulsory education. There was a rapid growth of Indian Education since Hunter Commission (1882). In 1902, Lord Curzon had appointed an Educational Commission with the following objectives:

- (a) To improve the quality of Indian education and
- (b) To raise the control of the Govt.

As regards expansion of primary education Curzon held two views. The need for expansion was greater than any time in the past, and (b) the principal cause of the slow progress of primary education was the inadequacy of grants from Govt. He, therefore, sanctioned both large non-recurring grants for primary education. He also enabled the Provincial Governments. To raise the rate of Govt.-in-aids to local expenditure Govt. admitted its responsibility in the expansion of primary education in the resolution on Education Policy. The most important duties of the State will be i) training of primary teachers for quality upgradation and ii) revision of curriculum in terms of quality.

Gokhale's Resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council on Primary Education (March 19, 1910) that a beginning should be made in the direction of making elementary education free and compulsory throughout the country is to be considered the next important document in the development of primary education, though unfortunately for India his bill was turned down after a fierce debate that

raged for ten days in the council. The report of the Harog Committee (1929) provided another important document. It found cause to lament the sheer waste and ineffectiveness throughout the whole educational system. In the primary system, which from our point of view should be designed to produce literacy and the capacity to exercise an intelligent vote, the waste is appalling..... for only a small proportion of those who are at the primary stage reach class iv, in which the attainment of literacy may be expected. The year 1937 saw the submission of two important documents- the Abbot-Wood Report in June and the Zakir Husain Committee Report in December. The Abbot-Wood Report emphasized that the education of children in the primary school should be based more upon the natural interests and activities of young children and less upon book-learning, that the mother tongue should as far as possible be the medium of instruction and that the pre-service education course of Teachers and primary schools.

The scheme of ' Basic Education ' enunciated by Mahatma Gandhi remains undoubtedly the most epoch-making event in the history of primary education in modern India. When the Congress Ministries assumed office in 1937 in seven provinces they had to face the problem of introducing universal free and compulsory primary education, in the shortest time possible, without adequate resources for it. A solution to the problem came into sight as Mahatma Gandhi put forth his proposal of self-supporting free primary education of seven years through the help of useful and productive craft. A storm of controversies over several aspects of the revolutionary proposals ushered in the First Conference of National Education at Wardha on 22nd and 23rd October 1937 to consider the new system of education. The Conference resolved that: free and compulsory education be provided for seven years; the medium of instruction be the mother tongue ; the process of education should centre round some form of manual productive work. The conference expected that this system of education would be gradually able to cover the remuneration of teachers. A Committee was then appointed under the president ship of Dr. Zakir Husain to prepare a detailed syllabus on the lines of the resolution. The Zakir Husain Committee submitted a detailed report (Dec., 1937) which has

since became a fundamental document on basic education.

In the history of education thought, Sargent Report (1944) occupies a very prominent place, since it gives very bold recommendations towards primary education during British regime. The report recommended for the first time a system of universal compulsory and free education for all boys and girls between ages of 6 and 14. Even in free India, we have been craving for it and have not been able to succeed so far.

Conclusion

The Kher Committee (1948) recommended the introduction of universal compulsory basic education for the children between the ages of 6-11 within a period of ten years (i.e by 1958) and the children between the ages of 6-14 within 16 years (i.e by 1964). Article 45 of the Indian Constitution directed that free and compulsory education for all children until the age of 14 years should be provided by 1960. For the first three Five Year Plan , the substantial development in respect of involvement of children of group 6-11 and the number of primary schools. In forth Plan (1969-74), the major programmes for an early fulfillment of the constitutional directive on universal elementary education included was:

1. To provide primary schools within easy walking distance from all villages.
2. To increase the enrolment of girls and of children of Scheduled Casts and Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections of the community.
3. To reduce wastage and stagnation.
4. To initiate pilot projects for the organization of part-time schools for those children who cannot attend on a whole time basis.

In classes' I-V, the target of enrolment was to increase from 539 lakhs or 75.1% of the age group to 686 lakhs or 85.3% of the age group. Even after 67 years of independence, the country has not formulated its own educational policy rather to carry the British legacy in a modified manner.

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