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Education system in pre-independence India

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Abstract

This paper is compilation of the state of education system during pre-independence period of India. It elaborates education system as mentioned in different period like Upanishadic, Bhudhist, Medieval, modern as well as the system being followed at ancient University like Taxila and Nalanda. It examines the education in Mughals period. The educational developments under British rule have been investigated as well Lord Macaulay's Minute, Wood's Dispatch on Education, 1854, The Indian Education Commission 1882, The Indian University Act, 1904, The Government of India Resolution of 21 February 1913, The Calcutta University Commission, 1917-19, The Hartog Committee, 1929, Wardha Scheme of Basic Education, Sergeant Report, 1944.

Keywords: Education system, pre-independence, India

1. Introduction

Organized education has a long history for India. The Gurukul system of education system of is one of the oldest on earth, and was dedicated to the highest ideals of all round human development: Mental, physical and spiritual. Traditional Hindu residential schools of learning, typically the teachers house or a monestry were Gurukul. Education was free and often limited to the higher castes, but students from well to do families paid Gurudakshina that was a voluntary contribution after the completion of their studies. At the Gurukuls, the teachers imparted knowledge of Religion, Philosophy, Warfare, Medicine, Scripture, Literature, Statecraft, Astrology and history.

2. Education system in pre independence India:

2.1 The Upanishadic period:

The teacher enjoyed a special status and position in the Vedic period. He was held in high esteem by the society and this was due not only to learning and scholarship, but also to qualities of hand, heart and head. The Guru was a fountain of knowledge, good qualities and an abode of spirituality. The preparation and selection of a teacher was done with much rigour.

Teaching in the Upanishadic period was known for the personal attention paid to the student. As the word Upanishad means, sit close. There was an intimate relationship between the teacher and the disciple or student. The freedom to accept a disciple rested with the teacher, but once he accepted a disciple it became his moral duty to see that the disciple grew. Similarly, a disciple had the freedom to choose his teacher. Knowledge was transmitted orally and explanation was one of the important method of teaching. The methods used by teachers were adopted and emulated by the disciples and handed over from one generation of teachers to another. The transmission of methods through repetition and initiation continued. Good teachers made the matter interesting and meaningful to students by devised their own method as day-to-day examples. There were five steps to realize the meaning of a religious truth practiced in ancient India 1. Listening to the spoken words, 2. Comprehension of meaning, 3. Reasoning leading to generalization, 4.confirmation by a friend or a teacher, 5.application.

2.2 The Buddhist period

An important feature of Buddhism required that every novice on his admission, should place himself under the guidance and supervision and guidance of a preceptor (Upajjhaya) was the monastic system. The disciple would 'choose an upajjhaya with much care and showed him

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the utmost respect. The upajjhaya, on his part, had much responsibility to the novice, the Saddhiviharika.

He was to offer spiritual help and promote learning through religion among the disciples by putting question, by teaching to him, by instruction by exhortation. The teacher was to look after the disciple fully. The teachers employed other methods besides oral recitation such as debate, discussion, exposition, question-answer, use of parables and stories. In monastic school and viharas, Hetu-Vidya or the inductive method was adopted and the intellect of the disciple was trained through it. The introduction of logic as one of the subjects helped in sharpening the intellect and oratory which was emphasized.

2.3. The medieval period:

Islamic traditions in the field of philosophy, theology, religion, philosophy, fine arts, painting, mathematics, architecture, astronomy and medicine. Vijaynagar kings did not promote education directly. Temples, Agrahar and Matha were the centres of education. The Mughals tried to spread education to the general people. Girls and boys both received primary education. 'Maktabas' and 'Mosques' were the centre of education. The department of 'Suharate Aam' during Babar regime which constructed schools and colleges at that time. Humayun had a personal library. Akbar was a great contributor towards education. During his period libraries were full of rare books and established a "Translation Department". During his period Fatehpur Sikri was the centre of Muslim education. Shahjahan built a college and reconstructed some others as well. The most learned among the mughals was "Dara Sikoh" who contributed most in the field of education. Upanishadas, Bhagwadgita, were translated under his regime.

2.4. Modern period:

The European Missionaries first started scholars and later initiated teacher training institutions in India. The Danish Missionaries established a normal school for the training of teachers at Serampur near Calcutta. In the beginning the East India Company felt no responsibility for education in India. Only some English intellectual felt its need and pleaded with the court of Directors. A beginning was made by Warren Hastings who set up a "Madarsa, at Calcutta in 1781. The British did not think of introducing English education in India at that time. Therefore the Calcutta Madarsa arranged for the study of Persian and Arabic. In 1792 the British resident Jonathan Duncan started a Sanskrit college at Banaras. Lord Wellesley established the Fort William College in 1800 for the training of the Civil Servants of the company in the language and customs of India. These were only personal initiatives of individuals. The Company was not interested in them.

A. Lord Macaulay's Minute: Introduction of English as a Medium of Instruction:

Christian missionaries described the attempts to revive an out of date system of education and advocated the teaching of Christian religion and Western Literature through English medium. The scale in favour of English language and Western literature was main economic factor – Indians wanted a system of education which could help them to earn their livelihood. Progressive Indian elements also favoured the spread of Western learning and English education. Raja Ram Mohan Roy protested against Government proposals to strengthen the Madras, Calcutta and Banaras Sanskrit

colleges and establishment of more oriental colleges in Bengal. The Government agreed to encourage the study of oriental language as well as English.

The Charter Act in 1813, the British Parliament provided for an annual expenditure for educating the Indians of rupees one lakh. The money could not be spent upto end of year. The failure of utilizing this money one reason was the controversy between the orientalist and the Anglicists. While the orientalist desired that the money should be spent on the study of Indian language and learning like Persian and Sanskrit and the Anglicists insisted that it should be spent on English language and learning. When William Bentinck came as the Governor General of India, the controversy was settled.

B. Wood's Dispatch on Education, 1854

The 'Wood's Education Dispatch' an important educational document was released on 19 July, 1854 after Sir Charles Wood, then president of the East India company's Board of Control and described as the 'Magna Carta' of the English education in India.

The Dispatch contained the first comprehensive plan for the spread of education in India and systematized the educational hierarchy from the primary through the high school and the college to the university. The medium of instruction was optional both Vernacular and English being accepted. The first was encouraged at the school level, the latter at the university. A system of grants in aid was laid down so as to encourage private initiative and enterprise in the field. It was hoped that eventually state education would become supported, where, necessary, by state grant in aid. The secular character of the plan by the fact was highlighted that financial aid was to be given irrespective of the religious learning's of the institutions or the persons concerned. In fact, it was laid down that education imparted should be secular in government institutions. Instruction in the Bible was to be given to such as volunteered for it and that too after school hours. Stress was laid as well as vocational education on female and also teacher training. Scholarships should be provided to meritorious students of all schools, be they private, government. They were so planned as to connect lower schools with the higher and the latter with colleges. To ensure the implementation of its programme, examining and supervisory bodies were to be set up for purpose of inspection. Each presidency town has a University, based on the pattern of the University of London, to conduct examinations and confer degrees. All teaching was to be done in colleges.

The new education policy underlined the need for involvement by community at large and stressed that no sudden result could be expected, least of all by dependence on the government alone. The dispatch was to form the basis for all future legislation regarding the spread of education in India. Almost all the proposals in wood's dispatch were implemented. The department of public instruction was organized in 1855 and it replaced the earlier committee of public instruction and council of education.

C. The Indian Education Commission 1882

The British had placed emphasis on the college and university education. The secretary of state for India had made provision of grants in aid by the government to colleges and universities alone by the regulation in 1859. So the primary and high school education remained neglected.

The responsibility of education was transferred to provinces

which had limited economic resources in 1870. That handicapped the primary and high school education also. Therefore, Lord Ripon appointed an Education Commission under Mr. W.W. Hunter in 1882 since Wood's dispatch of 1854 to review the progress of education in these fields. The commission submitted its report in 1883. Some of its primary recommendations were as follows:

- a) The primary education should be given priority. The Government should hand over the management of primary education to District and Municipal Boards which were to be provided one-third of its expenditure as grant in aid by the government on it.
- b) Two types of high schools should be established the one, preparing students for vocational education and the other for providing literary education leading up to the entrance examination of the university.
- c) The government should withdraw itself from the school and college education as far as could be possible and every effort should be made to encourage private enterprise in these fields by the system of liberal grants in aid.
- d) Female education should be emphasized which was most inadequate outside the presidency town.

Most of the recommendations of the commission was accepted by the government and education developed with a marked speed after it. But more than the government a number of Indian philanthropic and religious associations participated in its growth. It resulted not only in the development of a Western education but also in oriental studies. Some teaching cum examining universities i.e. Punjab University in 1882 and the Allahabad University in 1887 were also established in the coming years. But the female education primary education still remained neglected.

D. The Indian University Act, 1904

The centralization and bureaucratization not only in Administration but also in education Lord Curzon was in favour and appointed an Education Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Raleigh in 1902. There were only two Indian members in it, Gurudas Banerjee and Syed Hussain Bilgrami. The commission submitted its report the same year. Lord Curzon passed the Indian University Act on the basis of the recommendations of this Commission in 1904. To bring out improvement in higher education an annual grant of five lakh rupees was the only useful provision of this act.

E. The Government of India Resolution of 21 February 1913

To assume the responsibility of providing compulsory primary education in India the Indian national leaders were pressing the government of India and the Government declared its policy by a resolution on 21 February 1913. It did not assume responsibility of compulsory primary education. Instead, it accepted its adherence to a policy for the removal of illiteracy in India and urged the provincial governments to take early measures towards this direction. It emphasized the need to encourage private Voluntary efforts in this direction. It also emphasized on improvement of the high school education and stressed the need of taking the responsibility of teaching by the Universities.

F. The Calcutta University Commission, 1917-19

Under the chairmanship of Dr. M.E. Sadler in 1917 a commission was appointed. It included two Indians, Dr.

Ziauddin Ahmed and Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee. The problem of Calcutta University was the primary concern of it but it reviewed the entire field of education from the school to the university stage. Some of its important recommendations were as follows:

- a) School Course of a 12 year should be introduced. A student should be admitted to University only after passing the intermediate examination and the intermediate schools were to remain free from the control of the Universities. For the purpose of high school and Intermediate education separate boards should be established.
- b) The degree course should be of three years duration.
- c) By teaching universities, the affiliated universities should be replaced, as far as possible.
- d) It stressed the need of extending the facilities for education of science and technology, female education and teacher's training.

By the Government of India most of the recommendations of the commission were accepted. Which helped in the development of university education in India. In India during the period 1916-1921, seven new universities were established namely Aligarh, Lucknow, Banaras, Mysore, Patna, Dacca, Osmania.

G. The Hartog Committee, 1929

Education was transferred to the provinces and the central government discontinued its grant for the purpose of education by the act 1919. The provincial government could do nothing much concerning education, because of private initiative yet the members of schools and colleges continued multiplying. It led to deterioration of educational standards. Therefore a committee was appointed in 1929 headed by Sir Philip Hartog by the Indian statutory commission to report on the progress of education achieved by them. The main findings of this committee were as follows:

- a) Primary education needed more attention though it was not necessary to make it compulsory. Only deserving students should be allowed to go in for high school and intermediate education and the average students after VIII class should be diverted to vocational courses.

H. Wardha Scheme of Basic Education

'Nai Talim' which is also called basic education is not so much a methodology of education as the expression of an idea for a new society and new life. The Premise is that India could build an independent, self-reliant act by Mahatma Gandhi in 1937 in the course of a series of articles in his weekly "Harijan" through this system of education.

English education had created a permanent gulf between the highly educated few and the ignorant masses, that it had made its recipient ineffective, unfit for productive work, that it had harmed them physically were the main thesis of Gandhi Ji. It was also clear that the money spent on primary education was completely wasted, for it was soon forgotten and had no relevance to the villages or towns from which the students were chiefly drawn. The first conference on "National Education" was convened at Wardha on 22-23 October 1937 to consider the new system. It appointed a committee to prepare a detailed syllabus in the spirit of the resolutions under the president ship of Dr Zakir Hussain. It had adopted in less than two months, by December 1937, the committee had submitted its report.

The main findings of this committee were as follows:

- (i) To introduce a basic handicraft in the syllabus

(ii) Devising ways for coming into contact with the life of the community around the school through service and thereby actually building up the school community.

(iii) Introducing of teaching through Hindi from standard II to standard VII

(iv) To remove the teaching of English from earlier years in school and beginning it only from standard VIII onwards.

(v) The first 7 years of schooling to be organized as an individual, integral part of a free and compulsory nationwide educational system.

The scheme of basic education was accepted both by the union as well as state government as the pattern of national education at the elementary stage after independence and was decided to establish, gradually a Universal system of basic education throughout the country.

I. Sergeant Report, 1944

The Central Advisory Board of Education drew up a Scheme. As Sir John Sargeant was the educational advisor of the Government of India at that time in 1944, it is known as the Sargeant plan.

The objective which the Board set itself was to create in India, in a period of not less than forty years; the same standard of educational attainment on had already been admitted in England with this end in view, the Report provides for:

- a) Preprimary education for children between 3 and 6 years of age.
- b) For all children between ages of 6 and 14, universal, compulsory and free primary education.
- c) High school education for 6 years beginning and for selected student after the higher secondary education.
- d) After the higher secondary examination for selected students a university course of 3 years beginning.
- e) The development of a public libraries system in about 20 years and liquidation of adult illiteracy.
- f) Required for the implementation and continuation of the scheme full provision for the proper training of teachers.
- g) Creation of employment bureaus.

3. Conclusion

A teacher was selected and then educated or trained effectively according to the Rigveda. In the Upanishadic period teaching was known for the personal attention paid to the student. A disciple or student had the freedom to choose his teacher. One of the important method of teaching was oral explanation. The methods used by teachers were emulated and adopted by the disciples and handed over from one generation of teachers to another.

The important feature of Buddhism was monastic system and required that every novice the Saddhiviharika on his admission, should place himself under the guidance and supervision of an Upajjhaya. During the medieval times the monitorial system was in vogue too and was the method of preparing the future teachers. The teachers were respected by the society and their students and were held in high esteem.

Modern period was characterized by the Britishers in India. Various committees which looked in to the system of teacher education and training were instituted. Of them Wood's Dispatch, Government of India's Resolution on Education Policy of 1904, Hartog and Saddler Committees made substantive recommendations which hold good for the present times too.

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