



## An overview on Educational Commissions/Policies before Independence in India



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### Introduction

The history of Indian education is as interesting as it is enlightening. Today, when we look at the educational map of India, we find large number of schools, colleges and universities. Different educational policies have been formed and reformed at intervals, so modern Indian education passed through many critical stages until it reached its present shape. The seeds of the present system of education in India can, no doubt be traced back to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But, F. W. Thomas observes: *“Education is no exotic in India. There has been exercised so lasting and powerful an influence”*. In our cultural heritage education played an important role. When the European countries were ignorant of the different fields of knowledge, India had reached its zenith. In different fields of knowledge: Philosophy, Art and Science etc. India had been source of inspiration for the other countries of the world for centuries together.

Education was considered essential for presenting and transmitting culture. Education aimed at producing a well-knit personality- intellectually, emotionally, socially, culturally and spiritually. Modern Indian education is not based on rich heritage. It is based upon commissions/policies formulated by the British rulers in India. The earlier work of the development of modern system of education in India was done by the Christian



missionaries. The aim of these missionaries was to spread Christianity. However, a systematic approach to the development of education in India can be gathered from the following highlights:

## I. Charter Act of 1813

It is an important landmark in the history of Indian education. It had aimed to spend one lakh rupee per year for the purpose of -

- The encouragement of the learned natives of India.
- The rival and improvement of literature and
- The introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the Indian people.

This committee was divided between two groups- the Orientalists and the Occidentalists. The Orientalists wanted that Indian education should be progressed through the medium of Sanskrit, Arabian and Persia. The Occidentalists, on the other hand, were in favour of developing western education through the medium of English. Each group wanted to get the prescribed funds utilized for its respective purpose.

## II. Macaulay's Minute of 1835

In 1834, Lord Macaulay came to India as the Law Member of the Governor General's Executive Council. He was also appointed chairman of the General Committee of Public Instruction. Macaulay lay believed that it was the duty of England to teach Indians what was good for their and not what was not palatable to their taste. He submitted his report on February 2, 1835. In his minute, he strongly supported the cause of English education.

The main features of the Macaulay's Minute:

- Interpreting the word literature. He explained that it meant English literature and not Sanskrit or Arabic or Persian literature.
- To emphasis the study of European literature. And remarked. "A single self of European library was worth the whole native literature if India.
- Macaulay did not favour the use of mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. He gave strong support to English as the medium of instruction.



- In giving western colour to Indian education. *We want a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, on morals and in intellect.”*
- In reality he wanted to spread English culture and civilization in India.

### III. Lord Auckland’s Minute, 1839

Lord Auckland became Governor General of Indian after Lord William Bentinck. He did not make any particular change in Educational policy and medium of instruction adopted previously but he did give some consensus to satisfy the orientalists. The future policy of the government was mentioned in his Minute put up on 24th November, 1839. The main characteristics of the Minute as follows:

- Already existing oriental colleges may continue and they will receive the same rant as they were enjoying previously.
- The orient colleges may start English classes if they so like.
- They may also prepare and publish books of instruction in oriental languages.
- One fourth of the students, studying in these oriental colleges, may also get scholarship.

### IV. Wood’s Dispatch, 1854

In 1854, Charles Wood, Chairman of the Board of Control, suggested many changes in Indian education. His recommendations are embodied in the document known as Wood’s Dispatch. The chief recommendations are as follows:

- *Government’s Responsibility* - it should clearly accept the responsibilities of education in India. “Among many subjects of importance, none can have a stronger claim to own attention than that of education.
- *Aims of Education* - it was stated that education should aim at the intellectual and moral development of Indians and should also prepare them to help British rule in India.
- *Medium of Education* – it recognized the importance of native languages as medium



of education but recommended that medium of instruction should be English as there was shortage of books of Indian languages.

- *Establishment of Education Department* – the dispatch recommended that the Public Instruction Department should be established in every province with Director of Public Instructions as its head. For his assistance Deputy Education Director, Divisional Inspector of Schools, District Inspector of Schools and Deputy Inspector of Schools should be appointed.
- *Establishment of Universities* – universities should be established by Presidency towns of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The chief functions of these universities:
  - ❖ to inspect the affiliated colleges and give them guidance.
  - ❖ to make attempt to raise the standard of education.
  - ❖ to hold examinations and give degrees.
  - ❖ to encourage Indian languages and establish the departments of Arabic, Sanskrit and Persian.
- *Establishment of graded education* – it recommended that education should be divided into five grades:
  - a) Primary schools
  - b) Middle schools
  - c) High schools
  - d) Colleges and
  - e) Universities
- Grant in Aid System
- Training for the Teacher
- Women Education
- Policy of Religious Neutrality
- Expansion of Mass Education

Wood's Dispatch has unique place in the history of Indian education. According to H. R. James "It is the Magna Charta of English education in India".



## V. Hunter Commission 1882-1883

To reform Indian education according to changing needs of the time, an Indian Education Commission was appointed by Lord Ripon on February 3, 1882. William Hunter was Chairman. The important recommendations as follow:

- Expansion of Primary Education
- Encouragement to Indigenous Education
- Expansion of Secondary Education
- Diversified Courses
- College Education
- Expansion of Education for Women
- Teacher's Training

These recommendations of Hunter Commission were very important but unfortunately, the Government did not show and interest in their implementation.

## VI. Indian University Commission 1902

Lord Curzon appointed Indian University Commission in 1902 to report on the working of University Education in India and suggest necessary reforms are dictated bellow:

- No new universities should be established and existing universities of Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Allahabad and Punjab should be re-organized.
- For the re-organization of existing universities the Senates and the Syndicate should be re-organized.
- The system of examinations should be reformed.
- While granting affiliation to the colleges the concerned rules and regulations should be strictly followed.
- The commission recommended that university libraries and laboratories should be improved for giving facilities to the students.
- It recommended that three years degree course and suggested that intermediate course should be abolished.



## VII. Indian Universities Act-1904

This act was passed on 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1904 to implement the recommendations of Indian University Commission. The following provisions of the Act are worth mentioning:

- This Act reduce size of the Senate
- The functions of the universities were enlarged.
- The syndicate statutory recognition and proper representation was proved to university teachers/lecturers/professors.
- Strict rules were formulated for giving affiliation to colleges and the universities were made to follow those rules strictly.

## VIII. Gokhale's Resolution, 19011

On March 16, 1911 Gokhale presented a Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council, which aimed at making *Compulsory Primary Education*. But Bill was rejected by majority of the council. As a result, the Government itself had to reconsider the policy of education.

## IX. Sadler Commission, 1917

The Govt. of India appointed Calcutta University Commission on September 14, 1917 with Sir Michael Sadler as its chairman. The main purpose of this commission was to enquire into the affairs of Calcutta University but it was also study the working of other universities for the purpose of comparison. The Commission submitted its report in 1919. Those recommendations are as follows:

- Recommendations about Calcutta University
- Recommendations about Secondary Education
- Recommendations regarding Higher or University Education
- Recommendations regarding Women Education
- Recommendations regarding Teachers Training
- Recommendations regarding Vocational Education.



## X. Report of Hartog Committee -1929

To study various aspects of education and suggest measures to bring about necessary improvements, a committee was appointed the chairmanship of Sir Philip Hartog. This committee, after reviewing different aspects of education:

- Wastage and Stagnation
- Low Standard of Education
- Lack of Vocational and Industrial Training
- Need of Improvement in Teachers Training
- Need for Improving Service Conditions of the Teachers
- Improvement and Expansion in Women Education

## XI. Abbott and Wood Report – 1937

The Governor of India invited two English experts Mr. A. Abbott and Mr. S. H. Wood to analyze the problems of educational recognition and vocational education. These experts submitted their report in the year of 1937. This report comprises:

- Suggestions regarding Vocational Education
- Suggestions regarding General Education

## XII. Sargent Report – 1944

In 1944 Central Advisory Board of Education asked Sir. John Sargent studied the post-war educational development and submit a comprehensive report on it. The main recommendations made by the report are as bellow:

- There should be provision for universal, compulsory and free education for the children between ages 6 to 14.
- Diversified courses should be provided at Middle stage.
- At high school stage, two types of courses- Academic and Technical
- For technical and vocational education full-time and part-time institutions should



be set up.

- The education of the physically and mentally handicapped children should be encouraged and promoted.
- Adult education should be promoted for the liquidation of literacy.
- Teachers training should be further improved and service conditions of the teachers should be made better.

## **Conclusion:**

The British education system was a system conceived and implemented the real Indian education system. The ideal of education was never pushed forward. The emphasis on English led to the neglect of Indian languages. The literary content of education made it a passport to government service. There was no relation between educational aims and social needs. Universities came to be regarded as degree awarding factories.

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