School Education System in India before and after Independence

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Abstract: The educational institutions which provides the primary Education to the maximum number of children is the world largest single enterprise. With the involvement of a bit array of teachers, the biggest number of pupil, a large number of supervisors and administrators, this kind of institution is able to change the social value of human life with the help of education. As such, from the point of view of magnitude, from the stand point of psychological preparedness, from the preponderance of the sociological influences, in view of the economic necessities, and the philosophical background and in view of scientific enlightenment and humanism, the role of primary education is extremely significant and crucial. Education works as a lever in raising financial and social status of the individuals. So, expenditure on education is regarded as useful investment not only by the economists, but also by the educationists. Economic condition of a country depends largely on the educational standards of its people since primary education is the foundation and should be the maximum or basic acquisition for the majority. Education is the root of modernization and human development. Education is a process of learning and it continues throughout the life. It promotes mobilization and encourages people to participate in development activities. Education makes people skilled towards jobs and creates productive efficiency. So to know the practice of Education in India, this chapter has been divided into two parts: Education in India before independence that includes education in all the three historical phases’ namely ancient, medieval and modern India). Likewise, another part basically deals with Education in India after her independence.

Index Terms - Educational institutions, Independence, Modernization, Human development.

I. EDUCATION IN INDIA BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

The cultural and the traditional education were started from the beginning of the human civilization. Although the pattern of learning was different from today’s curriculum yet, no one can deny that the human civilization was elaborated in a parallel manner in the presence of cultural and the traditional education.

(a) Education system in Ancient Period

Every aspect of life including education in ancient India was influenced by religion. However, it is worth to mention that education aimed at many sided development of the personality of the student of course with a religious orientation. The concept, aims and ideals of education were correlated with the ideals of life. Religion played an imperative part in life in ancient India. The whole social structure of those days was religious and the whole system of education surged with religious atmosphere. Teachers were usually priests, so they provided Liberal, Spiritual and Religious education. In ancient India the whole system of education ran on the specific system of institution called ‘GURUKUL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION’. The main sources of teaching in the ancient education were Vedic literature which represent the most important and intrinsic part of life of the Indian people. In Vedic period, as the period is known, teacher or Guru used to give knowledge to their pupil on the basic of Vedic literature which consisted of eight different forms; they are Four Vedas, Six Vedangas, Four Upavedas, Four Brahmanas, One hundred and eight Upanishads, Six systems of Philosophy, Bhagwad Gita, and Three Smritis. The Vedas deal with every branch of knowledge and provide basic material of all arts and science. In fact, they are the first source of wisdom. Ancient educators considered knowledge as the third eye of man which gives him insight into all worldly and nonworldly matters. Teacher occupied a vital position in the Vedic system of education.

The teacher was a parent surrogate, facilitator of learning, exemplar and inspirer, confident, detector friend and philosopher, evaluator, imparter of knowledge and wisdom and above all a guru, religious and spiritual guide. In Vedic period forest was treated as a centre of education, which was far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife4. In ancient time people used to live a simple and a pious life. They used to perform their duties and responsibilities with utmost care and devotion. Everyone had certain moral values and they considered following religion norms as their duty. They used to live in closed contact with saints, which made their life religious.
Under ancient or more particularly Vedic education process, all human beings would make necessary or positive changes in their behaviours. It was with feelings of love and devotion that atmosphere of educational institution was charged with. An important objective of ancient educational system was to preserve and transmit ancient Indian culture. This task was being performed by renowned teachers, who used to engage in their work continuously. Habits of performing various functions independently were developed in student, which used to help them in uplifting their future life. The ancient education system had been able to develop the all-round behaviour of student. Though, the system did not have a written curriculum yet, Gurus would choose those activities that helped to develop different dimensions of student’s personality. To reiterate, the overall system of education in ancient India was based on Vedas. Vedas are considered to be main source of Indian philosophy of life.

Among the four Vedas, the Rig Veda is considered as most fundamental from point of education as it is in this Veda that knowledge aspect is being interpreted and four stages of human life are also dealt in the Rig Veda. In the Gurukul system of education, the Brahmin Gurus or teachers taught children of only three upper casts of Aryan society, namely, Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The education for non-Aryans was kept in dark, although they are in the majority among the Indian populace. The majority of the pupils were boys or male, but there was a provision for the girl’s education also, but the number of schools or Gurukul which were exclusively for girls were very few in those days.

As mentioned earlier the exclusive dominance of Brahmns on education had divided the Vedic society on the basis of caste and work so the rigidity and complexity of the Hindu religion on the matter of education gave birth to two new protestant creeds in ancient India, namely Buddhism and Jainism. The formation of these two creeds in ancient India creates a new dimension on the system of ancient education, which was purely based on Hindu religion. Thus, the major change in Buddhism was the rejection of rituals, ceremonies, and caste discrimination and education was available to every individual of the society who desired to learn. However, this change of thinking process did not affect the learning in a larger scale as it continued to be based on the Veda, Upanishad as well as Buddhist scriptures such as Dhammapada. Monasteries are the main institution where pupil used to learn. The Buddhist religion did not offer any educational opportunities. All the matters related to the education were in the hands of monks. The establishment of Viharas for the higher education in the form of residential University such as Nalanda and Vikramsila, Taxila, Odantapuri and Jagaddala acquired an international reputation in ancient India. Prosenjit, Jivaka, Panini, and Kautilya were some of the significant products of Taxila. The Indika of Megasthenes and Arthasastra of Chanakya sometimes known as Kautilya are the great achievement of education system in ancient India. The study of Vedas, sciences, medicine and surgery, archery and agriculture were the main subject in the curriculum at Takshashila or Taxila. But in 455 AD, this institution was destroyed by the Huns, who invaded India.

(b) Education system in Medieval Period

After the Islamic invasion of India from Persia and Asia Minor, and the establishment of Islamic theocratic monarchies under Mahmud of Ghanzi in A. D. 1001, Muhammad Ghauri in A. D. 1175, the educational institutions of the Hindu and the Buddhist religion were destroyed paving their ways for the development of the Muslim education in India. The Muslim educational institutions are attached to the Mosques.

Educational system was free from all restrictions. Although there was great respect for girls and females during this period, but no satisfactory provisions were made by the Muslim rulers to educate the common girls of their community, provision of education of girls was being restricted to higher families. In spite of education, Purdah system was practiced by Muslim rulers. According to this system, females are not allowed to go in front of outsiders without keeping her face and body under purdah which is still found. The presence of Hindu religion schools, where Sanskrit was the medium of the instruction and the Maqtabas of the Muslim religion, where the medium of instruction was Persian led to the formation of a new language called ‘Urdu’, generally written in Persian characters with words of Arabic and Persian origin, which was later became the lingua franca of the Muslim community in India.

One of the most important developments during the period of Muslim in the field of education was the vocational and technical education. For the first time in thousand years since the fall of the Gupta’s Empire, Islamic rulers built an empire with a central administration.

While in medieval period the Islamic education replaced the existing Vedic system of education and Buddhist education system for the growing need of Islamic administration. During the period of Akbar, education made great progress as compare to Tughlaq dynasty. Akbar was deeply interested in the work of spreading education and learning. The establishment of residential colleges for postgraduate studies in different subject and advanced studies were made in various branches of learning like Mathematics, Geometry, Astronomy, Physics, Philosophy, History, Grammar, Literature etc, leads
the Muslim rule in various part of the India. After the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire and the system of education based on religion came to end, many Maktabs and Madarsas attached to mosques and Pathshalsas attached to the temples were closed down. The death of a mediaeval society caused a twofold social reaction. Loss of value led to social anarchy and growth of socio-personal immorality. As against this, the Pandits and Mullahs prescribed social conservatism with the object of saving the crumbling social structure and social order. A great damage was done on the cultural front.

The indigenous Hindu and Islamic system of education that still existed were but carcasses of what they had once been. The fall of Mughal Empire after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb caused the educational and cultural vacuum of the Indian society and end of the medieval period. The majority of the oppressed people are ready to get hold of a new haven of rescue in this mooring less life.

(c) Education system in Modern Period

The Western Missionaries who had already been in the field now entered in right earnest into the arena to fill the hallow part. Thus the modern system of education in India germinated in the attempt of Christian Missionaries to spread their religion. The first among them were the Roman Catholic Missionaries, who organized educational activities in the territory under the possession of Portuguese. Francis Xavier, a famous missionary arrived in India and started to organize street classes for instruction in Christian religion. The main aim of the missionaries was to convert the native Indian to Christianity that’s why most of the missionary schools were attached to churches or to the missionary offices. The new era witnessed the growth of a new economic pattern like, a commercial monetary economy, the development of new values, and education and new political pattern. The Elementary schools of Parochial type, with Portuguese and Latin media. Orphanages providing vocational preparation together with the 3 Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic), Jesuit College at Goa in 1575, Theological Colleges and Seminars for the training of Indian Clergymen and one university type institution at Salsette are some important educational institution which were established by the Portuguese missionaries. During the Portuguese era a few institutions for higher education were founded, because they concentrated more on elementary education.

In 17th century the Dutch maritime power replaced the Portuguese. Their major attention was directed to Ceylon, and particularly to South East Asia where they ultimately founded the Dutch Colony of East Indies (Indonesia). So the contribution of Dutch power in the field of education on Indian land was insignificant. The French East India Company, established in 1664, entered into a political and commercial venture in right earnest with the dream of a French Empire in India. In their educational enterprise, they imitated the Portuguese by and large. Their efforts were not restricted to Christian population alone. With the recruitment of Portuguese and Indian teachers the French East India Company established the institutions at Mahe, Karikal, Pondicherry, Madras and Chandernagore. They also established the efficient secondary school at Pondicherry to impart liberal education. However, their efforts were restricted mainly to southern India but their contribution in the field of education cannot be overestimated. But the Goddess of Victory favours the English when the French and the English entered into a mortal contest for a foothold on the Indian soil. However, their school continued to exist under the British India Empire with the missionaries sticking to their posts. The victory of English people leads the formation of East India Company on 31st December 1600 in Indian soil. Afterwards they brought whole India under their control and put it under the chain of imperialism. In the beginning of imperialism British made their domination over the Indian natives in all the sphere of life, the education sector was no exception in any manner.

The educational development in India dragged by another commission called Hunter Commission 1882, which is also known as Indian Education Commission and it was first Indian Education Commission under British India. Sir William W.Hunter, a member of the Governor General’s Executive, was its chairman. The commission surveyed throughout the country within eight months. Finally in 1883 the Commission submitted its voluminous report of 600 pages with 222 resolutions. According to the commission’s report the Grant-in-aid system should be liberalized, government should refrain from establishing new educational institutions, primary education should be handed over to local bodies, and secondary and collegiate education to responsible committee. Commission mainly focuses on primary education due to slow progress during the period of 1854-1882. In the subject of primary education commission declared boldly that “while every branch of education can just claim the fostering care of the State, the elementary education of the masses, its provision, extension and improvement deserves the greatest attention in any national system of education. So for the development of primary education commission made altogether 36 important recommendations under six different heads: Policy, Encouragement to indigenous schools, Legislation, and administration, School administration, Training of teachers and Finance. The Indian education commission
also made important recommendations for the growth of female education in India. Finally, recommendations made by the Hunter Commission were accepted by Government.

After implementation of the commission’s recommendation various kind of changes were introduced in the field of education. During the period of Lord Curzon, education deserves the most important position. The Simla Conference in 1901, the Indian Universities Commission 1902 and the Indian Universities Act 1904 are the main reforms created by the Lord Curzon in the field of education. In the field primary education his policy was slightly different. Lord Curzon observed that the need for expansion of primary education was greater than any time in the past and the factor responsible for the slow progress of primary education was the inadequacy of grants from government. So Lord Curzon declared that expansion of primary education was a major responsibility of the state and had a major claim to Provincial and District Board budgets for education. For the betterment of education to the Indian natives he adopted a policy to improve the curriculum, introducing physical education and nature study, linking primary education with village life supporting with two-year teacher-training and the Government aids to primary schools were increased. The combine policy of quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement able to increase the number of primary schools which rose from 93604 in 1901 to 118262 in 1911-12.

Due to the policy formulated by Lord Curzon, a national consciousness get arose throughout the nation. During the period of 1905 to 1917 the important point which was put forwarded by educationists was that they agreed to make use of mother tongue as medium of instruction. However, in general or the majority of institutions impart their education in English language and the number of schools where the medium of instruction is mother tongue was in minority.

The next important steps taken for the development of primary education was the Gokhale’s Bill. Gokhale made heroic efforts to make the government accept the principle of compulsory education in between 1910-1913. Due to implementation of compulsory education policy by different provinces like in Gaekwar of Baroda in 1906 the demand for compulsory education was put forward by Gopal Krishan Gokhale in his Resolution 1910 but withdrew it on an assurance from the government that the whole question would be examined more carefully. But nothing was done on this matter by the British Government which forced Gokhale to reintroduce the bill in Imperial Legislature Council on March 16, 1912. But Bill was rejected by voting system along with two days debates.

The slow growth of the higher education forced the British Government to set up the Calcutta University commission in 1917. The Commission worked for the development of higher education in India, for this, commission made certain recommendation like, setting up a Board of Secondary and intermediate education in each provinces, the level of degree colleges and intermediate classes should be clearly defined. The Commission also recommended on medium of instruction, according to commission mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction at secondary level, and in college level the English should be used.66 Recommendations made by Calcutta University Commission (Sadler Commission Report)67 were realistic and practical which was easily accepted by government of India. After implementation of commission’s recommendation the tone of higher education got changed entirely, official interferences in the working of education institutions got restricted to considerable extent. However, the commission’s recommendation not able to solve the problem of situation of over-crowdedness found in Indian universities. From 1917 till independence several Acts were passed and numerous commissions were set up for the better development and growth of modern education India.

II. EDUCATION IN INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The day of independence, it witnesses and share the happiest movement of the Indian people in Indian history, but real picture in the field of education was totally different. The opening balance on the eve of freedom in every sector of education was extremely scanty and disappointing in all aspect like educational disparities and imbalances were very large between urban and rural, between men and women, between rich and poor. Except a few pre-primary centres run by Christian missionaries and some philanthropists in the metropolitan cities, pre-school education was a non-entity, the universalization of primary education was absence. According to S. K. Kochhar, the total enrolment of in the age group 6-11 was 141 lakhs, which meant hardly 35% in this age group in the primary school. There were 5000 secondary schools with enrolment of 870000 or 4% of the children of the 14-17 age groups. The 19 universities and 400 colleges had an enrolment 250000. The total expenditure on education was Rs 57 crores or 0.5% of the total revenue of the government. The independent India opened new avenues of economic development, social change, and democracy which required skilled and well-informed people and also afforded learning opportunities to those who could participate in the developmental process.

After independence India need immediate reforms in education system which is important instrument for social change and national upliftment. Several committees and commissions were required to review the educational problems and make
recommendation in order to adjust it to the changing needs, aspiration of the people, structure, and strategy of education. Free India needs effective Constitution to provide Justice, Liberty, and Equality and off course to provide free education to the people of India. Finally a new constitution for free India became effective from 26th January 1950. Some of the articles in the constitution deal with education in the republic and touch the following five aspect of Indian education;

- Free and compulsory primary education in the country – Article 45 of the Indian Constitution explain that the State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.
- Religious instruction – Article 28(1), Article 28(2), Article 28(3) and Article 30 of the Indian Constitution safeguard the Secular Education. India is a secular state and every religion has got the right to popularize and spread its religious ideals.
- Equality of Opportunity in Educational Institutions – Article 29 and 30 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the minorities certain cultural and educational rights to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice, whether based on religion or language.
- Education of the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes of Citizens –Article 15, 17 and 46 safeguard the educational interest of the weaker sections of the Indian community, that is, socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
- Language and Educational Safeguard – Article 29(1) explains that any section of the citizens, residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to construe the same.

The above mentions Articles and some others which is provided by Indian Constitution to popularized the education among Indian citizens is able to fill the gap of educational disparities between rural and urban, between male and female, between rich and poor and provide maximum possibilities to get education with minimum expenditure. The immediate action taken by Government of India after independence was the formation of University Education Commission in 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radha Krishnan and submitted its report in 1949.

After establishment and implementation of University Commission’s recommendation, India move toward the development of entire education system. To construct the fresh and more effective system in the field of education, the Education Commission (Kothari Commission) was appointed in 1964-66 to advise the Government on national pattern of education for the development of education at all stages and in all aspects. The mention Commission was lead by Dr. D. S. Kothari as a chairman. According to report submitted by Education commission or Kothari Commission, the state and national level machineries to define, revises and evaluate national standards of education. It also suggested for setting up of National Board of School Education to channelize the school education in proper way. While after careful consideration and nationwide discussion on the Report of the Education Commission, Government realizes the absence of policy particularly in education. So without delay Government of India declare the National Education Policy in 1968.

Thus free India able to accelerate the expansion in education only after adaptation of policy 1968, like school-less villages have got school facilities within the radius of one kilo meter. “The investment in education sector was next only to defence, when plan and non-plan taken together. In 1985, about 520000 primary schools, 130000 middle schools, 59000 secondary schools, 6000 degree college, 135 universities including 17 Agricultural colleges and 117 medical colleges are able to provide education in the country. One of the most important developments achieved by Indian after implementation of 1968 Policy on education was the acceptance of a common structure of education throughout the country and the introduction of the 10+2+3 system by most of the States. After 20 years of implantation of National Education Policy 1968 Government of India made some change on it to response the changing face on different sector. In 1986 the Government of India declared the New Education Policy called National Policy on Education 1986. To the removal of disparities and emphasizes on the steps to equalize the educational opportunity to women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the handicapped and certain minority groups who are either educationally deprived or backward, the following subjects were covered by National Education Policy under 23 Task force;
As various kind of changes took place in different areas in our nation to maintain social disorder in various fields, where education stands on the top level by which our nation has got recognition in the international market. The transition from a traditional to a modern industrial society free India needs fine action to accelerate economic growth through three main sectors Primary, Secondary and Tertiary sector. So for this the Central and the Government required greater attention on Primary education and Primary Health and provide larger resources on it. To fulfil the goals of Universalization of Elementary Education, elevation of poverty, national integration, population control, promotion of Women’s equality and education for women, the National Policy on Education was modified in 1992. The modified version on National Policy on Education Stated that, the whole nation has pledged itself, through the National Literacy Mission, to the eradication of illiteracy, particularly in the 15-35 age group through various means with special emphasis on the total literacy campaign. The implementation of revised National Policy on Education has now passed about more than two decade, but its success is not yet up to satisfaction. The national goals of education have still remains unfulfilled and sincere efforts are to be made by all concerned at all levels for efficiency and effectiveness of education. Beside different Constitutional rights provide by Constitution of India commissions and committees work for the development of education in the land of free India, the four UN agencies UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIP and the World Bank joined to sponsor Project ‘Education for All’ for meeting the basic learning, needs of the world community. One the most notable action plans for improving Primary Education was the UNICEF-assisted Project II, which was known as Primary Education Curriculum Renewal Project and worked out intensively with 3000 primary schools covering all states and Union Territories.

To fulfill the dream of every children the Government of India formulates lots of schemes, policies and Acts to develop the education system, to increase the literacy rate, to improve the quality of education, to make new society with no discrimination based on sex, caste, religion, urban and rural. Government will implement the policy for the betterment of individual with no discrimination as mention above but it’s a responsibility of every individual to use it on a proper way for the social development.
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