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## Analysis Of The Evolution And Advancement Of Education In India During The British Period

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the evolution and advancement of education in India during the British colonial period, analyzing its impact on society and its lasting legacy. The British introduced a structured educational system aimed initially at serving colonial administrative needs. However, it evolved into a broader framework that shaped modern education in India. The research delves into key developments such as the establishment of schools, colleges, and universities, and the introduction of English as a medium of instruction. Significant milestones like the Charter Act of 1813, Macaulay's Minute of 1835, and the Wood's Despatch of 1854 are examined to understand their influence on educational policies and priorities. The study also highlights the emergence of Western-oriented curricula, which contrasted sharply with traditional Indian systems of education. While the British system enabled access to modern scientific knowledge and created an educated middle class, it also marginalized indigenous education systems and contributed to social inequalities by prioritizing urban elites. Additionally, the research evaluates the contributions of Indian reformers and nationalist movements in promoting education during this period. This analysis aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how British educational policies both advanced and constrained India's socio-cultural and intellectual progress, laying the groundwork for the post-independence educational landscape.*

**Key words :** the evolution and advancement of education, Educational system, intellectual progress,

**Introduction-** Since the 15th century A.D., India has been a focal point for Europeans due to its abundant economic resources. The Europeans, including the Dutch, French, Spanish, Danes, and English, established trading firms and commenced their commercial activities here. They solidified their status as businessmen before subsequently assuming the role of monarchs. Additionally, they commenced the dissemination of their religion, Christianity, in this territory. The English East India Company established dominance in Bengal in 1765 among European powers. "The East India Company was solely a trading entity and had no interest in the education of the populace. They said, We have forfeited colonies in America by exporting our education there; we should not replicate this in India as well."<sup>1</sup>

However, "the Court of Directors was urged to act to improve education in India by the Indian officials of the East India Company. There were some phony attempts to promote oriental learning by the company's government. Jonathan Duncan opened a Sanskrit college in Benares, Warren Hastings founded the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781, and Lord Wellesley established Fort William College in 1800". The company's administrative requirements necessitated Indians proficient in both the vernacular language and English.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, initial efforts were undertaken to implement and disseminate the British educational system in India. Concurrently, Christian missionaries initiated efforts in India to promote the instruction of Western literature and the Christian faith via the English language. A conflict soon emerged between the Anglophiles, who consistently sought inspiration from the West, and those who aimed to express Indian character.

### **Objectives-**

- To examine the evolution of education in colonial India.
- To conduct a critical analysis of British Government policy regarding the advancement of education in India.

**Methodology-** In this particular piece of writing, we have utilized both "primary and secondary sources of information. Books, journals, and the internet" are the sources from which the data are gathered.

**Discussion-** The initial decades of British administration were marked by debate regarding the education system implemented and promoted in India by the Company. Some adhered to traditional beliefs, while others championed progressive and liberal perspectives. The progressive Indian advocated for the dissemination of English education and Western knowledge. Western education progressively attained prominence in India. The primary advantage of Western education was its economic aspect—Indians sought an educational system that would enable them to secure their livelihoods.<sup>3</sup> Individuals such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Radhakant Dev, and others recognized the necessity for a novel form of education. Raja Rammohan Roy fervently championed the significance of contemporary scientific education. Consequently, the government consented to promote the study of both Western and Eastern science. Financial resources were allocated for the translation of European scientific literature into Oriental languages.



The Charter Act of 1813 marked the initial governmental initiative for the advancement of education in India. The legislation allocated an annual budget of one lakh rupees for the revitalization and promotion of literature, as well as the support of educated individuals in India. The objectives were inadequately delineated in this statute, resulting in the education section being rendered ineffective. However, the issue was whether the allocated funds would be utilized for Eastern studies or Western understanding.<sup>4</sup> A debate was emerging in this matter. To address this issue, the General Committee of Public Instruction was established to formulate the government's educational strategy. The committee comprised ten members. The committee comprised two factions: the Orientalists, led by H.T. Prinsep, who championed eastern literature, and the Anglicists, who supported the implementation of English as the language of instruction. The committee's equal division hindered the ability to reach a conclusion, prompting both parties to bring their grievances to the Governor General. Macaulay, as a member of the executive council, authored his renowned Minute on educational policy on February 2, 1835. He endorsed the perspective of the Anglicist faction. He asserted "that a solitary shelf of a distinguished European library surpassed the entirety of indigenous literature from India and Arabia."<sup>5</sup> Governor General Lord William Bentinck concurred with Macaulay's perspective that government funds should be allocated to the advancement of European literature and science via the English language". The Macaulay system was a structured initiative by the British government aimed at educating the upper and middle classes in India, with the expectation that these educated individuals would disseminate knowledge to the broader population. Consequently, the 'downward filtration theory' was embraced. In 1835, Lord William Bentinck issued a proclamation asserting that government monies allocated for education would be most effectively utilized solely for English education.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the government undertook insincere initiatives to promote vernacular languages, leaving the advancement of literature in these languages to their own speakers. The fundamental purpose behind this provision was purportedly the demands of administrative staff of the British government. In 1844, Lord Hardinge declared that preference would be granted to individuals educated in English schools<sup>7</sup> for public office positions.

**Wood's Despatch On Education, 1854** Since the Charter Act of 1813, many measures have been implemented to disseminate education among the populace. However, other issues and debates have emerged. A new education policy was deemed necessary, and a committee was established to address this issue. "In 1854, Sir Wood, then President of the Board of Control for the Government of India, submitted his formal report, commonly referred to as Wood's Despatch". The primary stipulations of the Despatch were:

1. Focused on the instruction of Western education with English as the medium of communication. He also promoted Eastern education.
2. Proposed the establishment of a vernacular elementary school in the village and emphasized vocational education. It emphasized women's education, teacher training, and education for minorities, among other aspects.
3. Universities modeled after London University were suggested for Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras.
4. A distinct department of public instruction was established in each of the five provinces.
5. A grant-in-aid scheme is to be established.
6. Teachers' training institutions were recommended.
7. Female education and Islamic education were promoted".

The Wood Dispatch can be considered the cornerstone of our current educational system. The dispatch was a thorough treatise that advocated for a structured educational system in India. The Despatch unequivocally acknowledged that the responsibility for education in India rests with the British Government. Nearly all the ideas in the text were executed. The stipulations of the Wood Despatch facilitated the swift westernization of India's educational system.<sup>8</sup> Charles Wood held a belief in the superiority of the English race. The Despatch entirely disregarded the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, and primary education was similarly overlooked.

**The "Hunter Commission"- 1882** "In 1882, the Indian government established an education commission to investigate the principles of Wood's Despatch and to recommend necessary modifications to the school system". Its primary recommendations were:

- It underscored the state's dedicated efforts towards the enhancement and expansion of primary education, with clearly delineated objectives, methodologies, curriculum, and management.
- The principle established for secondary education mandates two divisions: one aimed at preparing students for university entrance examinations and the other focused on vocational and commercial career preparation.
- The commission advocated for the promotion of private enterprise in education through a system of grant aid.



- Indigenous education was promoted. The commission primarily limited its comments to secondary and basic education. It provided visionary recommendations on many facets of education.
- The commission report initiated significant reforms in the education department. In the subsequent two decades of the commission, there was significant growth in secondary and higher education.<sup>9</sup> Between 1882 and 1902, there was significant growth in secondary education, partially because to the zeal of private enterprise. The commission holds a distinctive position in the history of Indian education.

**The “Indian university act, 1904”** - Indian nationalism was on the rise in the early 1900s, and the country's citizens were disenchanted with the British government's educational policies. Educational progress both influenced and was influenced by political changes. The government's view, which claimed that educational institutions had prepared students for the instigation of political revolutions, pointed to serious indiscipline in schools and universities. <sup>10</sup> Viceroy Curzon sought to improve India's educational system in this regard. He called a meeting of India's top government officials in charge of education. The commission's recommended report led to the enactment of the Indian Universities Act in 1904. The main suggestions are “:

1. The universities were required to facilitate the advancement of study and research, as well as to designate university professors and lecturers. Their power was augmented.
2. The majority of university fellows were to be appointed by the government, and the governor's jurisdiction over the institutions was further reinforced. The government was to appoint the vice chancellor.
3. The legislation enhanced university authority over private colleges by establishing more stringent affiliation requirements and regular inspections”.

The nationalist leaders repudiated the deed. The nationalist movement brought the subject of mass education to the forefront. Gopal Krishna Gokhle, the Indian nationalist leader, advocated for the government's endorsement of free and compulsory education. Curzon justified the increase of state supervision in education as a means to improve quality and efficiency; nevertheless, his actual aim was to limit education and foster loyalty to the government among the educated class.<sup>11</sup> His primary goal was political, with education coming in second. Curzon's efforts were perceived by the educated Indian population as an attempt to strengthen imperialism. The approval of funding for the improvement of higher education, which has since become a permanent aspect, was a favorable outcome of Curzon's strategy. The movement for educational reform in India may have begun during his tenure.

**The Sadler university commission-** “In 1917, the Indian government established a commission to investigate and report on the issues facing Calcutta University. Dr. M.E. Sadler was appointed as chairman, so it is referred to as the Sadler University Commission. The subsequent were the principal recommendations”:

- A twelve-year educational curriculum was proposed. Following the evaluation of the intermediate examination, the students were to enroll in a university. The commission proposed the establishment of a board for secondary and intermediate education.
- The period of the degree program following intermediate education should be restricted to three years.
- It underscored the necessity for the expansion of resources for female education and highlighted the importance of teacher training facilities.
- It underscored the establishment of a department of education dedicated to teacher training and the provision of teacher training programs”.

The Sadler Commission said that “enhancing school education was essential for the advancement of university education, contending that the improvement of secondary education was a prerequisite for the enhancement of university education. Seven new universities were established during this period: Mysore, Patna, Banaras, Aligarh, Dacca, Lucknow, and Osmania”.

**Education Under Diarchy, 1921-37** - In 1919, “the British Parliament enacted the Government of India Act”, which bifurcated the province administration into Councillors and Ministers. The British councils assumed control of reserved subjects, while the Indian ministers managed transferred subjects. Education, a devolved issue, became the direct responsibility of the ministers of India. “Ministers were unable to implement significant improvements in education due to the insufficient funding provided by English councillors to Indian Ministers. Consequently, Indians experienced significant disappointment”. Notwithstanding these challenges, education experienced swift development primarily through philanthropic initiatives.

**Hartog Committee** - The swift proliferation of schooling led to a decline in quality and a reduction in standards. Significant discontent existed regarding the educational system. The Hartog committee was established to provide a report on the issue. The committee underscored the national



significance of basic education while denouncing the policy of rapid growth. The group advocated the implementation of diverse curricula at the secondary level, placing greater focus on industrial and commercial subjects to better prepare students for practical occupations. The report highlighted the deficiencies of university education at a lesser standard.

**Wardha scheme of basic education-** The Government of India Act was passed into law by the British Parliament in 1935. Province-related issues were entrusted to prominent ministers. The so-called provincial autonomy system went into effect in 1937. Seven districts saw the Congress Party take control. Attempts to create a national education program for the nation were started by the Congress Party. Mahatma Gandhi established the Wardha plan, also known as basic education, as a framework for education. Basic education was based on the fundamental principle of "learning by engagement." The main goal of basic education was to alleviate problems like poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. The system's details were developed by the Zakir Hussain Committee, which also created thorough curricula for a number of crafts and made suggestions regarding administration, supervision, testing, and teacher preparation. But the start of warfare

**Sergant plan of education :** In 1944, "the Central Advisory Board of Education presented a report on post-war conditions. Sir John Sergant served as an advisor to the Government of India, so it is referred to as the Sergant Plan. It advocated for the building of elementary and secondary schools, as well as the implementation of universal free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 11. The high schools were to be categorized into two types: academic and technical. The Sergant plan can be considered an educational reconstruction initiative for the nation".

**Educational Institution Development In This Era:** The "British Government built an educational institution featuring a Western curriculum conducted in English. Local donors also founded numerous organizations". In 1882, there existed four universities and sixty-seven colleges. By 1922, the number had incrementally risen to 14 universities and 167 colleges. In 1947, there were 21 universities and 496 colleges in operation.

**Concluding remarks:** The evolution and advancement of education in India during the British period were transformative yet complex. The British introduced a structured and modernized system of education that emphasized Western knowledge and the English language. Key policies, such as Macaulay's Minute and Wood's Despatch, played a pivotal role in shaping the educational framework, which aimed to produce a class of educated Indians to serve the colonial administration.

While these reforms facilitated the introduction of modern subjects like science, mathematics, and liberal arts, they also sidelined traditional Indian education systems, including indigenous languages and cultural studies. Furthermore, the British emphasis on education for administrative efficiency created significant disparities, often favoring urban elites and neglecting rural and marginalized communities.

Indian reformers and nationalist leaders, recognizing the duality of this legacy, sought to expand educational opportunities and integrate cultural and moral values into learning. Their efforts laid the foundation for an education system that became a cornerstone of India's freedom struggle and post-independence development.

In conclusion, while British education policies introduced essential tools for modernization, they also reinforced colonial hierarchies and social divisions. The period serves as a critical juncture in understanding India's educational journey, showcasing both the challenges of colonial influence and the resilience of Indian society in adapting and transforming education into a vehicle for national progress.

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