



1. Pragya Mittal
2. Prof. Chinmay
Kulshrestha

British Education System Before Independent India

1. Research Scholar, 2. Professor, Department of History Sangam University, Bhilwara (Rajasthan), India

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E-mail: aaryavart2013@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study examines the British education system in India before independence, focusing on its objectives, implementation, and socio-cultural impact. Introduced to serve colonial administrative needs, the system marked a significant departure from traditional Indian education, emphasizing Western knowledge, scientific inquiry, and English as the medium of instruction. Key milestones, such as Macaulay's Minute of 1835, the Charter Act of 1813, and Wood's Despatch of 1854, played pivotal roles in shaping the educational framework. While these reforms modernized education and fostered the rise of an educated middle class, they also marginalized indigenous learning systems and perpetuated social and regional inequalities. The study also highlights the dual nature of the British education system-while it provided tools for modernization and intellectual awakening, it remained limited in scope, catering predominantly to urban elites. Indian reformers and nationalists later leveraged these advancements to promote broader educational access and cultural revival, laying the groundwork for a post-independence educational transformation. This analysis offers insights into the British education system's legacy, showcasing its role as both an instrument of colonial control and a catalyst for socio-political change in pre-independent India.*

Key Words: : British education system, urban elites, transformation, perpetuated, social, regional inequalities.

Prabhu P.N., "Education in ancient India was free from any external control like that of the state and government or any party politics. It was the kings duties to see that learned Pundits, pursued their studies and performed their duty of imparting knowledge without interference from any source what so ever."

Singh R.P. (1970) revealed that "One thing is however evident that there were certain Brahmin families where teaching was a hereditary profession.... There is no evidence to hold the view that teacher training existed in the formal sense, known to us."

Education System in Buddhist Period- "In the 5th century B.C., the Buddhist education system, established by Lord Buddha, emerged. It was the most significant educational system during the medieval period. During this period, Brahman educators denied the general populace access to education. The emergence of Buddhism granted individuals the liberty to pursue education and follow their religion independently. This educational system was monastic (Balwariaa, Gupta, 2014)".

Muslim Education System- The "significance of education was to cultivate religious individuals, to awaken the dormant abilities of pupils, to refine their intellectual capacities, and to provide them with the necessary tools for their moral and material advancement. Education was regarded as preparation for an ideal existence. The teacher who assisted his students in attaining this objective had a highly esteemed position in society by everybody. Balwariaa, Gupta(2014)"

PRIOR TO INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE, THE BRITISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM- The inaugural school "for teacher training was established by Danish missionaries", led by Ziegenbalg and his associates, in Tranquebar in 1716. at 1802, William Carey established a conventional training school mostly for elementary grades at Serampur, West Bengal.

"In 1834, Lord Macaulay arrived in India as a Law member of the Government Council on June 13. In the Minutes of Indian Education, he emphasized that 'Literature' refers specifically to English literature, excluding Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian literature. He asserted that the medium of education should be English and advocated for the preparation of a Code in English, aiming to transform Indian culture. A survey was done to assess the current state of education in India, aiming to enhance the educational landscape. This survey was done exclusively in Madras, Bombay, and Bengal. The result indicated that each hamlet possessed a primary school, corporal punishment was prevalent, kids adhered to a timetable, the condition of teachers was poor, and teachers were underqualified and undercompensated, Balwariaa, Gupta, 2014)."

The Woods Despatch (1854) "marked a significant milestone in Indian education by proposing several concepts and methods for its advancement. The Wood's Despatch (1854) advocated for the creation of teacher training institutions in every province".

Wood's Despatch of 1854 on education identifies the necessity for teacher training, as requested. Training institutions



for educators in engineering, medicine, and law should be established. Qualified educators should have improved compensation structures. The Despatch additionally underscored the allocation of scholarships to instructors during their training term. These methods provided a more effective push for the preparation of teacher educators. The Despatch contains several significant and essential recommendations for the future advancement of education in India. It provided a fresh direction and significant depth to education, establishing the cornerstone of the contemporary Educational system in India.

The "Indian Education Commission of 1882" is regarded as the second milestone in Indian education. The inaugural institution for secondary teacher training was founded in 1886 in Madras, named Government Normal School, Madras. It provided excellent recommendations in the realm of education through numerous methods. "The objective of the Indian University Commission (1892) was to restructure and enhance the current system. It encompassed nearly all aspects of schooling. The Commission emphasized the creation of several normal schools for the training of secondary teachers nationwide. It also advocated the establishment of an examination in the principles and practices of teaching, with only successful candidates being eligible for employment as teachers in any secondary school. In 1889, Lord Curzon was appointed Governor-General of India. During this period, nationalism was rapidly gaining momentum".

In 1904, a significant advancement in "teacher training occurred with the enactment of the Government of India Resolution. Certain social reformers advocated for National Education. They believed that only national education could preserve culture, civilization, literature, and language. The subsequent concepts were established to enhance teacher preparation in the nation". Gupta Balwariaa, (2014)

1. Individuals with expertise and experience should be recruited to ensure a competent group of well-trained education professionals.
2. Emphasis should be placed on the equipment of training colleges for secondary educators.
3. A practical school is required to be affiliated with each college to integrate theoretical knowledge with teaching experience.
4. A one-year program culminating in a university degree or diploma should be established for graduates. These courses should encompass both academic foundations and practical applications. For others, a two-year course should be implemented.
5. Training colleges should be interconnected with schools to ensure that teachers do not disregard the methodologies acquired during their college education upon entering the profession."

"Calcutta University Commission (1917) This inquiry is also referred to as the Sadler inquiry. In 1919, the Sadler Commission issued its findings, highlighting the university's importance in the professional training of secondary school teachers and educational researchers. It proposed that the training programs should prepare the student not only for the educational system but also to be an effective administrator".

The Hartog Committee in 1929 "built upon the efforts of the Sadler Commission, providing significant suggestions and proposing conferences and refresher courses for in-service teachers to enhance the standards of school educators. Consequently, refresher courses for educators were initiated, educational departments were founded in certain universities, and research degrees in Education were introduced. Teacher training institutions commenced the enhancement and modernization of their laboratories and libraries. Through these approaches, teachers' training has benefited from numerous enhancements. In accordance with the recommendations of the Sadler Commission, thirteen out of eighteen institutions are establishing education faculties.

"Lady Irwin College was established in New Delhi. Andhra University announced a new degree program. The Bachelor of Education in 1932. Bombay initiated a postgraduate degree in Master of Education (M.Ed) in 1936".

In 1937, Gandhi M.K. organized the "Wardha Educational Conference and introduced a novel educational system known as 'Basic Education'. Gandhiji recognized the necessity of enhancing the practicality and functionality of teacher training. He provided craft-oriented and productive education for children, linked to real-life conditions for comprehensive growth. Consequently, his emphasis in teacher training has now transitioned to a form of education that is pragmatic and aligned with the need of the students and the community. This basic Education stated by Mahatma Gandhi leading to the training of teachers for basic schools. In 1938, a Basic Training College was established in Allahabad, and the Vidyamandir Training School was initiated in Wardha".

The Abbott-Wood Report of 1937 provided significant recommendations, stating, "The normal school should focus on the social aspects of education in addition to the technical methods of teaching." A refresher course for the teacher was also recommended to broaden his experience.

In "1944 came the Sargent In 1906, only 29% teachers of High School, 37% of Middle School teachers, and 25% of Primary School teachers were trained; by 1947, roughly 61.5% of Secondary and Primary teachers were trained. Sargent



Report underscores the necessity of teacher training programs and the organization of refresher courses for both trained and untrained educators at various times. It additionally recommended that the compensation scale for teachers be elevated to ensure the recruitment of competent and effective educators. In 1937, of approximately 100,000 secondary male instructors, 43,000 were untrained. By 1947, the teacher training program in India was extremely extensive. "At the secondary level, of the total 88,000 teachers, only 51% were trained. Approximately 649 training colleges existed. The total number of secondary level training colleges was 42, with an admission capacity of 3,000 teachers. The figures indicate that some growth had occurred by 1947; nonetheless, overall circumstances still required enhancement due to the rapidly rising requirements of the country".

P.L. Rawat (1970) accurately stated that, "overall, we can conclude that the expansion of training facilities during this period was insufficient. In the early twentieth century, an effort was initiated to imbue education with a national ethos. The primary highlights included education under Indian governance, the eradication of inferiority complexes, the incorporation of Western knowledge and science, the recognition of English as a core subject, and addressing the deficiencies in vocational education".

CONCLUDING REMARKS: The British education system in pre-independent India was a paradox of progress and constraint. On the one hand, it introduced structured learning, modern institutions, and the English language, which facilitated India's integration into a globalized world and fostered the rise of a knowledgeable middle class. On the other hand, it was primarily designed to serve colonial interests, often neglecting the needs of the majority and eroding indigenous systems of education. While it sowed the seeds of modernization and scientific inquiry, the system also perpetuated social and economic disparities by prioritizing urban and elite groups over rural and marginalized populations. Moreover, the curriculum emphasized Western ideologies, often at the cost of India's rich cultural and intellectual heritage. Despite these limitations, the legacy of the British education system provided a foundation for critical thinking, political awakening, and reform movements that would later contribute to India's struggle for independence. Indian leaders and thinkers transformed the system's shortcomings into opportunities for self-determination, paving the way for a more inclusive and indigenous education framework in independent India. The British education system before independence remains a complex chapter in India's history, highlighting both the challenges of colonial rule and the enduring spirit of adaptation and progress among its people.

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