



Colonialism and its Impact on Education

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Abstract - This paper tries to understand the nature of colonialism and its impact on education. By the introduction of the ‘Complete system of Education’, the British confined indigenous education which was marked by diversity. Education system in present day India has been influenced by the British rule. The Indian subjects were informed that colonial education aimed at bringing modernity among the natives. Education is a powerful tool to unlock the golden door of freedom . With the advent of the British, their policies and measures go against the legacies of traditional schools of learning and this have the result for the need of creating a class of subsidiaries..

Objectives - This paper make attempts to make familiar with the rules of British government made in education field in India. We will come to know about colonialism and its relation with education, features of indigenous education , impact of British policy and new Western English education system.

Key words – British Education, , colonialism , indigenous education, Orientalist, Anglicist, education policies.

Introduction - We can see changes in different spheres of life due to establishment of British control. Major changes are seen in Education with the transfer of powers to the British. The major question which is discussed in this paper is why, how and impact of this change?

Colonialism and its relation with education - Colonial education is meant for the better control of the colonial country. It brings changes and cultural transfiguration in a colonial country. Thus, it is essential to understand the development of education under colonial rule. Some authors have argued that colonial rulers made such education system in a colonial country that shows their domination and to fulfill their economics needs. For their survival economic and political control is necessary, so to fulfill their control they used education. New rules and values were indulged in education which changes its identity and thus become under ruled by political power. Meanwhile, new ideas and experiments enriches the wit.

Indigenous education- We get an idea about indigenous education from 18th to 19th century through the British records. Indigenous education describe the knowledge systems developed by community as opposed to the scientific knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is the basis for local level decision making in many rural communities. There are number of elements that characterize indigenous educational process. They are like the living stones the “Inyan”, which animate and support the expressions of indigenous education. The officers and non – officers of the East India company believed that the indigenous system

of education had little worth and obsolete without any practical significance. There were mainly two types of indigenous institutions-

- Higher
- Elementary

Institution for higher learning included-

- a. Schools for the Hindus
- b. Madrasahs for the Muslims

Elementary institutions were of 4 categories –

- a. Pathshalas of The Hindus.
- b. Maktabas of the Muslims .
- c. Persian and Arabic schools.
- d. Modern Indian languages school .

The medium of instructions in these institutions was Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Telugu, Tamil etc. In those days there were limitations due to lack of scientific and secular learning. The pupils of the indigenous school came from different communities but the majority is of upper classes. These schools taught the ABC's of reading, writing and arithmetic. These are the main source of the spread of mass education .

The chief advantage of the indigenous system of education was its flexibility to local environment and the vivacity, popularity they had earned by centuries of existence under a variety of economic conditions.

The disadvantage of indigenous system of education includes lack of training of teachers, its narrow and limited syllabus, different types of punishment adopted etc.

At the beginning of 19th century the indigenous system of education was fast decaying on account of the prevailing anarchy under the British rule .

Education policy- From the middle of the 17th century to the end of 18th century, new social, economic and intellectual forces firmly quickened – forces that in the late 18th century to the early 19th century would weaken and end the old aristocratic dictatorship. The new trade had increased national wealth and these social and economic changes together produced industrialism, urbanization and the beginning of mass labour. All these trends influenced the progress of education. Its significant result was the gradual acceptance of the view that education ought to be the responsibility of the state. Some countries such as France, Germany were inspired to begin the establishment of public educational systems early in the 19th century .

The new social and economic changes also called upon the schools, public/private to broaden their aims and syllabus. Schools were to promote literacy, discipline and good moral character. They also help to prepare children for citizenship for jobs. Although teaching methods remained oriented towards text book.

Since the 1980s education reform has been focused on changing the existing system from one focused on inputs to one focused on outputs. Education reformers desire to make public education into a market, where liability creates high interest from curriculum standards. As a result of this input-output system equality has been conceptualized as an end point and this conceptualization of education reform is based on the market-logic of competitions.

Before accession of territorial power the company had no rule in education, however, attempts were made by missionaries to establish charity schools and to promote learning, but in second half of 18th century things began to change with the British occupation. After the accession of political power in India the British officers wanted to maintain neutrality in the sphere of religion and culture of the indigenous society. In the initial stage the British officers patronized oriental learning which promote the establishment of “Calcutta Madrasa” by Warren Hasting in 1781. “Benares Sanskrit college” by Jonathan Duncan in 1791. The main reason behind these establishment was to develop friendly relations with the elites of the indigenous society and to understand their culture. Orientalists argued that there was a prejudice among Indians against European knowledge and science, so there might be complete rejection of Western knowledge. They were also interested to explore the classical tradition and culture of ancient civilization. Orientalist wanted to teach the local language and culture so that the British officer would be able to do better at their job. Orientalist approach was strongly opposed by the Liberals, the Evangelicals and the Utilitarians and different groups in England. Thomas Babington Macaulay recommended Western learning should be promoted in India through English language and should be the objective of education policy in India. James Mill- a Utilitarian, highly critical of Indian culture, believed that education alone was not sufficient to bring desired transformation in India, but legislative and administrative reforms were also necessary for this change. In general, all these groups believed that Indians were in backward stage and its remedy is only the Western education given through English language.

After that the Filtration theory in education comes which means coming down of education from the top to the bottom i.e. from the higher class people to the lower class. Lord Macaulay developed the policy of Downward filtration. There were many reasons for adopting this policy- some people think that this policy was adopted due to the narrow mindedness and selfish behaviour of the English who intended to educate only a few for running their administration. They wanted to create an elite group which would be given high posts in the administration. According to some persons the main reason for adopting this policy was the inadequate financial resources with the company for educational purposes. Lord Macaulay explained it by observing that ‘ the aim of education in India was to anglicize the Indians through English education and to make black-colored Indian English in their way of living, behaviour, thought, culture, traditions and morality.’ On July 31, 1837, Lord Macaulay again explained that the purpose of the Company was only to educate the elite group which would educate the general public later, thus, fulfilling the goal of educating the masses in general.

During the company’s rule, Missionaries were encouraged to work in the field of education and they opened a number of schools and colleges to educate children of higher classes. By doing this, they want to convert them to their own Christian faith, and these converted person would give sermons about

Christianity among the lowest classes . Somewhere, it boosted renaissance in India through various organization like Brahma Samaj by Raja Ram Mohan Roy ‘ the father of Indian renaissance’.

Roy believed education to be an implement for social reform. In 1817, in collaboration with David Hare, he set up the Hindu College at Calcutta. He supported induction of western learning into Indian education with this belief that it would help Indians to connect themselves with the knowledge of western science, rationalism and literature.

Impact of British education policy- the main aim of the British policy of education in India was to create educated clerks who can work for the British Government. Indians were not allowed to take part in Indian Civil Services . Higher education was a slavish imitation of the Western system. They had never advocated for the education of lower class. The growth of education in British rule was not uniform at all levels. They never give importance to primary education. Primary schools suffered for lack of funds, thus, masses of the country remained illiterate.

The intentions of British education policy in India can be understood by these facts -

1. At the beginning of the 20th century many Indian villages were without primary school and many Indian children grew up without any education .
2. Literacy in 1947- male 24% and female 7%
3. Filtration theory has been adopted in education policy. It created a division between English educated Indians and the rest of Indians. Indigenous literature and thoughts were ignored.

Education had played an important role in the Independence movement. It introduced the concept of a republic which was a Western concept. The freedom movement had been translated into the Indian language which gives the new ideas to Indian freedom fighters. It created awareness about the ideals of equality, liberty, fraternity and democracy .

Western education - Under the Company’s rule indigenous elementary education suffered a decline. There had been the beginning of English education in India under the influence of Christian missionaries. Missionary schools were first established in Madras and then in Bengal and Bombay.

The beginning of English Education was made in the Charter Act of 1813, which provided that a sum of rupees one lac was to be set apart per year for the promotion of learning in India, i.e. to improve literature, encourage learned Indians introduce and promote knowledge of the science among the inhabitants of the British Indian. Governor - General Lord William Bentinck declared in 1835 that the Government would devote the specific amount to promote European literature and science among the natives of India through the English language. Wood’s dispatch known as Education Dispatch of 1854 was a leap forward in the growth of Western education in India Sir Charles Wood in his Dispatch made 12 - point recommendation of both the spoken language and English education in India. He had also recommended for the establishment of universities. Thus , in 1857 universities were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

The newly emerged English educated middle class was influenced by the scientific and rational outlook of the west and began to examine the Indian socio-religious institutions. The spirit of enquiry gave birth to tempting forces of socio- cultural and religious reforms in the first half of the 19th century. They established English schools which led down the foundation of the modern educational system in India.

Thus, the above attempt shows how English education developed gradually. Neglecting indigenous system of education Government promote Western education system in the 19th century. It was a long process of spread of English education in India and before 1857 its spread and depth were limited. The new education broadband the horizon of knowledge. A new spirit of rationalism was developed. By the establishment of printing press and availability of many books remove the traditional barriers and influenced the young generation.

The Anglicist idea of filtering down education to form elites to masses did not work in practice. This system did not provide equal entrance for education to all and this lead to the prolongation of the backwardness of socially backward castes and communities. Whether it was orientalist or Anglicist, the basic object of their education policy was to strengthen colonial rule. The Orientalists wanted to do it through indigenization and the Anglicist through Westernization. On the whole, the colonial administration was keen to promote an education policy which served its own interest.

Thus, the indigenous system of education was replaced by the British with the new system of education. New schools and colleges were established to promote learning. Western education opens the path to new social, political and economic ideas. The finest part of British Education Policy is their model of academic institution, women education and the introduction of English education. The English Education changes was very limited in nature because the beneficiary of this education was mainly for the upper class of society.

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