



CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE DESPATCH OF 1854 AND ITS EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE EVEN DO-DAY

Dr. Bibhas Kanti Mandal

Asst. Professor, Yogoda Satsanga, Palpara Mahavidyalaya, [Under UGC12B]. At+PO- Palpara, Dist.-PurbaMedinipur. West Bengal.

Abstract

It is horrible information that the staff of government aided educational institution does not get their salary but Grant-in-aid, that means teacher are subsidized by Government. Just like they are begging persons! This system was established by Wood in 1954. By 1835, a stage had been reached when a comprehensive survey of the whole field of education in India was indispensable. Since the Charter Act of 1813, several educational experiments had been tried, a number of agencies had been at work, in their own ways, spread education among the people, several controversies had been raised and some of them still needed a final decision, various policies for action had been proposed and they involved controversial issues which needed careful, consideration. It was, in short, a time when the best results could be obtained only by holding a through and comprehensive review of the part and by prescribing in the future. This was exactly what the Education Despatch of 1854 did. In the present article the researcher will at first discuss the various circumstances leading to the Despatch of 1854 and then try to establish its educational importance.

Aims and Objects

- *To impart western knowledge, information about the western educational culture to the Indians.*
- *To impart so that how to a class of public servant created.*
- *To highlight that we are bearing the colonial education system even to-day.*

Historical Background

Differential Development in the presidencies In spite of Lord Bentinck's decision the introduction of western education was not an accomplished affair. Many other obstacles had to be removed before a full-fledged system of English education could be established. Although the supreme Council of Calcutta was the administrative apex of the company's affairs, the administration was not yet so centralized as to guarantee uniformity of action in all the presidencies. The different presidencies acted on their own to a great extent and in many affairs.

Authorities at Bombay rejected 'downward filtration' and adopted the policy of spreading western knowledge through the vernaculars. Indigenous schools were, however, rejected and modern elementary schools were planned. An education Board was formed in 1840. In 1852 the policy of effective attention to rural education was adopted and in the following year it was decided to extend aid to teachers of indigenous schools. Normal schools were established at Bombay and Poona. Madras already had a committee of Native Education existent. It was replaced in 1843 by a Board of education. A policy to patronize indigenous schools had been in force. Here too a directive of the central Government required the decontamination of aid to collectorate, grants would be made only for western education. Mr. Thomason, Governor of N. W. Province accepted the Adam Principle by overriding the Filtration Theory. A Department of education was founded a policy of accepting the indigenous school with preference to vernacular medium was adopted officer were appointed in 1844 with the task of organizing the preparation of text books in vernacular language. In spite of this positive feature, N. W. Province was gradually brought under the impact of Bengal policy. The province of Punjab has started to emulate the example of N.W. Province. But here to the demand for English education become very soon irresistible.

In Bengal, the Orientals continued to fight a lost battle with the object to turning a total 'rout' into a simple defeat. They prayed for the maintenance of existing schools and continuance of aid for printing classical works. With the object of pleasing every one with a moderate policy he declared in 1839 that the existing oriental schools and teaching posts therein would be maintained, necessary oriental literature would be published.

The period of Lord Auckland's Governor Generalship, the early beginning of a movement of make the Government recognize the modern India languages as media of instruction. The lead came from the young Bengalese. This group founded newspapers like "The Enquirer" and Jnanan-wesana and established intellectual, societies like the 'Academic Association' and 'Sarvatattwa Dipika Sabha' (1833). The 'Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge' (1838) was their contribution. They favored western education, but they also spoke of education of the 'masses', education of women, knowledge of the sciences and vernacular as medium of instruction.



After the victory in 1835 the Anglicist took the field in right earnest. In a couple of years the number of English schools conducted by them up to 48. On the other hand judicial officers were declared open to educate Indians. In 1837 English replaced Persian as official language. In 1844 Lord Hardinge declared the policy of recruiting Indians for official employment on the basis of educational qualifications. These measures facilitated the quick expansion of English education.

Indian thinkers adopted a new strategy. The political controversies of the twenties and thirties decade now died down and both the traditionalists and extremists adopted moderation Rammohan's Principle of cultural synthesis and constructive reforms again came out victories and was shaped in the second phase of the Renaissance by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore of the Brahma Samaj and Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar of the Hindu Society.

Mid 19th Century was the turning point in the history of education in British India.

1. The Government had in 1835 adopted the policy of English education, but there was yet no firm policy in regard to the objective of such education. There had been three schools of thought from the cultural point of view:
 - i) The successors of Hastings-Duncan School.
 - ii) The successor of Grant-Macaulay School.
 - iii) The successor of Jervis-Rammohan School.

From the political and administrative point of view there were three types of thought-

- i) Produce less costly officers.
 - ii) Win the aristocracy over.
 - iii) Ally with the middle classes.
2. English had been accepted as medium of education. But with reversal of filtration theory there was the need to reconsider the language issue, because the demand for the mother tongue even in post primary education became more and more vocal.
 3. The Directors of the company wanted to secure properly trained servants.
 4. The missionaries dreamt of moral and religious rebirth through education.
 5. In regard to the method of provision, the Downward Filtration Policy had been adopted on the anaglyph English aristocracy. Education of the higher classes had been considered politically more important. Government care was too bestowed upon a limited few who were expected to be interpreters of the west.
 6. The once condemned indigenous schools had again to be brought into the focus.
 7. The limited span of Government responsibility required to be widened.
 8. Muslims had so long boycotted western education. But now the Muslim leadership began to think a new and the Government considered it worthwhile to forgo a link with the Muslim masses through education.
 9. The social reform movement initiated by Rammohan, Bentinck, and Bethune carried forward by Vidyasagar had been breaking through the conservative wall. The question of women's education became a practical proposition.
 10. In 1835, a decision had been made in favour of English education, but the question of agency had remained untracked. The missionaries had begun with a new burst of enthusiasm with emphasis shifted to secondary and collegiate education. The Government had also simultaneously entered into the field through the G.C.P.I. Private India enterprise had started. A clash of interests, therefore, became inevitable.

All these considerations led to a rethinking. The British Parliament again discussed all these things at the time of renewal of the charter in 1853. The future educational policy was incorporated in the Despatch received in India in 1854.

Wood's Despatch

"A select committee of the House of Commons held a very thorough enquiry into the educational development in India. On the basis of this enquiry, the Court of Directors sent down their greatest Educational Despatch on 19th July, 1854. This document of immense historical importance is described as Wood's Educational Despatch because it was written at the instance of Charles Wood who was then the president of the Board of control.

It is a long document of hundred paragraphs and deals with several questions of great educational importance.

Objectives of Educational Policy

The Despatch had the following objectives in view:

1. To confer upon the natives of India those vast and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of western knowledge?
2. Not only produce a high degree of intellectual fitness but to raise the moral character of those who partake of the above advantages;
3. To supply the East India Company with reliable and capable public servants;



4. To secure for England a large and more certain supply to many articles, necessary for her manufactures and extensively consumed by her population, as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labor.

The Despatch then emphatically declare

"The Education that we desire to see extended in India is that which has for its object the diffusion of the improved arts, science, philosophy and literature of Europe, in short of European knowledge." The medium for such improved knowledge would be English although the vernaculars might be accepted on account of their traditional and social value, and also as the media for mass education. Anglo-vernacular schools and vernacular High Schools might be established.

As for method, the Despatch regretted that Filtration Theory and declared that "upper classes can stand on their legs." Hence Government's attention would be turned to the needs of the masses. The policy would be to impart "Useful and practical knowledge suited to every station of life. The Despatch admitted the need for professional education in law, Medicine and Engineering under the University.

"On the question of religion, the Despatch made an explicit declaration in favour of secular instruction. Government schools would be nondenominational as would be the non-official schools enjoying grants-in-aid. This was a clear negation of missionary claim for monopoly and denomination instruction. Simultaneously, it was announced that non-official agencies might impart religious instruction at their own cost and this would be kept off the margin of Government's attention."

"The Despatch explained the new schemes that were to be introduced. The first of these was the creation of a Department of Public Instruction in each of the provinces viz..., Bengal, Madras, Bombay, The North Western province and the Punjab. The Department was to be placed under an important officer to be called the Director of public Instruction. He was to be assisted by an adequate number of Inspecting officers."

"The second scheme related to the establishment of universities in the presidency towns (Calcutta, Madras and Bombay). The London University, which was then a purely examining board, was to be taken as their model. The proposed universities were to be administered by their own senates, consisting of a Chancellor, a Vice-chancellor and fellows to be nomination functions and the award of degrees and diplomas.

As for the administration of this system the Despatch suggested:

- i) Autonomous administration of universities under acts of incorporation and the university's own rules, and regulations.
- ii) For administration at the lower stages it suggested the establishment of a Department of education.

A big role of non-official enterprise was recognized. The non-official schools would be given grants-in-aid under salary, house building etc. The grants would be subject to conditions viz..., good secular education, local initiative and good management, realization of tuition fees, subjection to official inspection etc.

Regarding the training teachers, the Despatch advocated the need for establishing different types of training institutions and of giving stipends to teachers under training.

Finally, it sympathized with the cause of women's and Muslim education, and assured government grants for this education.

Importance of Wood's Despatch

Some historians characterized the Despatch as a Magna-Charta of Indian education. It was the first authoritative declaration on the part of British Parliament about the educational policy to be followed in India. It was admitted that the education of the people is the duty of the state. The Despatch is so comprehensive in its nature that Indian educationalists have not yet succeeded fulfilling the tasks, which it had set. The Despatch also condemned the Filtration Theory and suggested several measures not only for spreading mass education but also preserving and encouraging indigenous education. At the same time, it provided enough opportunities to a capable child to make his way up, right from the primary to the university stage. Through a scheme of grant-in-aid, the Despatch proposed to leave education gradually to the people.

Besides these the recommendation to establish an education department in each province, to provide training of teachers, to use the Indian languages, to teach the larger classes who were ignorant of females, to establish vocational schools- all these were moved in the right direction though the government could not give effect to all these recommendations. Anyway, the Despatch laid the foundation of the modern education in India and therefore, it has rightly been described as "the Magna-charta" of education.

It is no wonder that Dalhousie declared that Despatch contained "a scheme of education for all India, for wider and more comprehensive than the local on the Supreme Government could have ever ventured to suggest." It began a new era of



organized educational administration, defined the aim of Indian education determined government's attitude towards religion, stressed mass education and recognized the need for technical and women's education. As Janes observes, "the Despatch of 1854 is thus the climax in the history of Indian education: what goes before leads up to it, what follows from it."

In positive sense

1. It started a new era by clearly defining objectives of education.
2. It made the government realize the importance of education for the people.
3. It presented a comprehensive scheme of education embracing primary, secondary and higher education.
4. It recommended the creation of separate Department of Public Instruction in five provinces and appointed of a Director to head the department.
5. By the grant-in-aid system many organizations were encouraged to open new schools.
6. This Despatch encourages higher education by recommending the establishment of universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.
7. The Dispatch emphasized on the necessity of vocational education.
8. To improve the quality of teachers it recommended to established teacher training institute, improved their salary also.
9. It recommended scholarships for the poor and deserving students. Etc.

In negative sense

1. The education planning and management schemes only in black and white!
2. The aims of education as described by the Despatch did not aim at education for leadership, for industrial regeneration or for fostering the patriotic spirit of the education. Aims of education vary from age to age. How can expect that the Despatch in the middle of the 19th Century would suggest such aim which would be appreciated today? We should not forget the fact that the Despatch was formed and formulation by an alien ruling class for an enslaved nation.
3. It had a partial attitude towards the Christian missionaries.
4. The Despatch introduced a new education system based on a chain work of schools, college and examinations under the ultimate control of the state. This new type of centralized system with numerous departments, files and officers introduced and robbed Indian educational system of its flexibility.
5. The Despatch did not inquire into the past traditions of the country and did not at all consider that education was religious sacrament in India.
6. The Despatch suggested the establishment of merely examining universities and could not think of a teaching university, although Oxford and Cambridge Universities were existing on English soil for over more than six hundred years. The constitution of the university bodies was also defective.
7. The Despatch succeeded in only producing a clerks and accountants.

Conclusion

The Despatch does not ever refer to the ideas of universal literacy, it does not recognize the obligation of the state to educate every child below a certain age and it does not declare that poverty shall be no bar to the education of deserving students. But we deserving this system even to-day. To-day we are more interested in promoting Western knowledge and culture. Harry! We are happy to 'Grant-in-aid' system in our education. In spite of these it can be said that the authors of the Despatch were not perfect. So how could they visualize the ideas which were non-existent then? But it can easily be said, what goes before leads upon it, what follows from it? We should judge the Despatch from that stand point but we cannot appreciate the boldness, for sight and for sight of its authors.

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