

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN FREE INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MADRAS

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In this article, the performance of the Government in the Education department during the first five year plan will be reviewed. The compulsory education could have made the children to enter the portals of educational institution. But the mere motivation given and awareness created by the National Government did not help eradicate illiteracy which had been a scourge of the country under colonial rule for long time. The Government did not apply coercion to enrol children in schools. The social condition of the presidency was cited as one of the causes for the dismal record of the Government in the field of education.

Modified Scheme

The Madras Government implemented the modified scheme of elementary education in July 1953.¹ It was a valuable interim measure. Though the education board felt that basic education was a proper pattern for the country, the board also suggested certain modifications in the recommendations of the Secondary Education Commission setup to modify the secondary education in the country.² The Board said that the Madras Scheme introduced by C. Rajagopalachari was a welcome attempt to bring education within the reach of a large majority of children and to establish closer contact with the life of the community.³

The three fundamental principles according to G.Ramachandran, the honorary advisor to Government on education (Elementary and Basic), were children should be inside the school for only three hours, secondly, there should be two sessions and thirdly and most vital of all was the children should be accustomed to manual work and that the idea should be taken away from their minds that manual labour is something contemptible. The two sessions idea, he said suited to a poor country like India where "we have less than 50% of the children of school going age going to school. And the insistence of manual work would clear the ground for basic education in the future".⁴

Free Education

The Travancore-Cochin Government had worked out a scheme to make education free up to the middle school standard. Pattamthancipillai, the Chief Minister of the State got permission for it from New Delhi.⁵ The system was implemented in two stages rather than immediately. When it was implemented in full

scheme it cost the state an additional sum of than Rs.45 lakhs in a year. The Madras Government evolved such a measure during the first Plan Period. But its implementation was stalled.

The New Education

Gandhiji was the first revolutionary in the sphere of Indian education. He fired the first shot on the British-sponsored urban educational system for the rural child. The insistence on the vocational and self supporting nature of rural education was the essence of the Gandhian scheme. In keeping with the lofty ideals of Gandhian thought, the Wardha Scheme was elaborated.⁶ Accordingly to Gandhi plan, basic education was spread over four stages.

1. Pre-Basic - 2nd to 7th year of age,
2. Basic - 7 to 14
3. Post Basic- 14-18 and
4. The rural universities partially modeled on Benmark's Folk High Schools.

Pre-basic education was to be free, compulsory and universal. Basic and pre-basic schools were also to be like it.⁷ Thus Gandhi laid a foundation stone for compulsory and universal education.

Secondary Education

During the XXVII All India Conference of Secondary Education Teachers, Amarnath Jha said that the teachers were those who imparted education. It was in the interest of the system itself to see that their needs were properly met and while mass production was possible in industry it should not be attempted in education.⁸ The view expressed in the conference clearly indicated the priority given by the state to mass education during the first plan period. The revamping of secondary school curricula which remained bookish and hence considered the bane of the country was replaced by a system of education which was expected to be productive as well as humane. Secondary education received greater attention only because this was the pre-collegiate education.

Free Studentships

A scheme for Indo-German industrial co-operation was approved by the standing finance committee, which met on August 10th in New Delhi. It was headed by C.D.Deshmuk, finance minister. Under this scheme Indian students took training at German universities or in German heavy industries.⁹

The Government of India received 50 free studentship at German universities and in technological institutes and also for the training of a number of Indian engineers and apprentices in workshops of heavy industries in Germany. As an award to Germany, Indian Government provided ten free studentships to Germans to study in Indian Universities during the first year of the plan. The Committee approved an expenditure of about Rs. 2,12,000.¹⁰ The Committee also approved a grant of Rs.15 lakhs during 1951-52 as an award of scholarships to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes.

University Grant Commission

India's first Education minister Azad announced on November 9th 1953 the formation of an interim University Grant Commission with Dr.Bhatnagar, the Secretary to the Ministries of Education and National Resources and Scientific Research, as chairman. The Commission started functioning from November 15th 1953. The Commission consisted of Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, the Vice Chancellor of the Madras University, N.J.Wadia, Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University, K.G.Saiyidain, Joint Educational adviser to the Government of India and K.1),K. Menon, Secretary of Finance Ministry.¹³

It was estimated that of the 170 millions who went to the polls in the general elections 90% were illiterate.¹⁴ Therefore universal education of the basic pattern for all children of school going age, followed by a diversified secondary education in the first stage was envisaged. Consequently, universal franchise and universal education went hand in hand to make the Indian Democracy a success by educating the illiterates.

India's rural education of those days aimed at rural reconstruction. Brayne, the American expert prescribed that self-help was the only way towards happy state.¹⁵ For that the government started several social education centres, adult education centres and so on. The government knew that the eradication of illiteracy was possible only by the mass help. The U.S.S.R. example was sought to be emulated in this context.

As a result of this scheme the adult workers contributed much towards the consolidation and co-ordinating of adult workers under different centres for campaigning and promoting literacy in the country.¹⁶ Night schools, clubs, libraries, dramas, folk songs and dances, radio and films, maps, charts and posters - all these were pressed into service. University extension programmes and anti-illiteracy drives were organised. Mild mannered gentle college students formed into batches and went to villages.¹⁷

Indian Fulbright Scholars in U.S.

Forty two students and professional men from various parts of India including five Tamils went to New York in August 1952 under the cultural exchange programme initiated by the State department. These delegates were awarded fulbright grants to spend a year in higher educational institutions in U.S.A. They took a six week preliminary orientation course in certain universities before going to the U.S.¹⁴

The Madras Government appointed Prof. R.V,Parulekar to examine the modified scheme of elementary education. The committee recommended that two days of every month should be set apart for the whole school to organise a programme of games, cultural and recreational activities. Secondly, training for teachers in scouting and Junior Red Cross work was also suggested.

Regarding teachers pay, the committee considered and recommended that appropriate increment in the pay of teachers without delay was essential for sustaining their enthusiasm and devotion in their work. In spite of above said policies of the Government, the Government failed to achieve the goal of the total literacy. Only Fifty Nine percent of boys and twenty five percent of girls which were in between six and eleven pupil came to schools, the average percentage being 42. This was on the eve of the implementation of the plan. But it was raised to 69 and 33 percent of boys and girls respectively at the end of the plan period.¹⁵ This was no mean achievement in the then prevailing situation.

The goal set in the constitution about free, compulsory and universal education was yet a far cry. The figures given above were for the nation as a whole. The position varied considerably between the states. In many states the average was much lower than the one for all India. Out of hundred pupils who" joined the first class at school scarcely about 50 percent reached the fourth class. The rest dropped out without completing the course.¹⁶

The first plan had failed to educate the girls. A major obstacle in the way of promoting girls education was the dearth of women teachers. During 1953-54, women teachers accounted for about 17 percent of the total number of teachers employed in primary and secondary schools. Compulsory education upto the age of 14 years, which was the directive of the constitution, was not fulfilled.¹⁷

It was pointed out that the principal remedy for intellectual decay lay in improving the quality of teachers and teaching techniques. Opening of separate schools for intellectual decay boys and girls was also thought of as a remedy for poor enrolment of girls. The provision housing facilities for women teachers in villages was also considered essential.¹⁸ In this connection the introduction of shift system in

both basic and non-basic schools was recommended by the central advisory board of education at one of their meetings held in 1956.

Regarding finance for education, Government's resources were supplemented in increasing measure by local community effort. The state authorities encouraged local effort by providing adequate grants-in-aid.¹⁹ In addition to contribution towards the cost of maintenance of schools, it was recommended that each state should consider enacting legislation to enable local authorities including village panchayats to levy a cess for education.²⁰

The education cess was related to appropriate state and the burden of local taxes such as land revenue, property taxes etc., desisted different sections of the community to make their contribution.²¹ As the outlay provided for education fell short of the promise made earlier the task of the government became extremely difficult. The congress while out of power was committed to set apart 10% of the total revenue for education. In power, the congress did not fulfil its commitment in terms of increased allotment for education. Nehru gave priorities for setting up research laboratories and promoting science. The cause of free and compulsory education was abandoned. Notwithstanding the above criticism, the government led by the congress took earnest steps to make- education accessible to every section of the society. This is really laudable given the dauntless task the government had on its shoulders.

End Notes

1. Indian Review, Vol. XXXXXV, 1954, p. 284.
2. Indian Review, Vol. XXXXXV, March 1954, p.140.
3. *Ibid.*
4. The Indian Review , Vol. XXXXXIV, August, 1953, p.380.
5. The Indian Review, Vol. XXXXXV, May, 1954, p.236.
6. The Indian Review Vol. XXXXXIV, April 1953, No.4, p.148.
7. *Ibid.* p.149.
8. The Indian Review Vol. XXXXXIV, No. 2, February 1953, p.92.
9. The Indian Review Vol. XXXXX II, September 1951, p. 460.

10. The Indian Review Vol. XXXXXIV, 1953, p.572.
11. The Indian Review, Vol. XXXXXIV No. 4, April 1953, p.145.
12. *Ibid.*, p.147.
13. The Modern Review, Vol. LXXXXIV, 1954, p.484.
14. The Indian Review, April 1953, p.149.
15. The Second Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, Government of India 1956, p.503.
16. *Ibid.*
17. The Second Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, Government of India 1956, p.505.
18. Madras Legislative Council Debates, Vol. VIII, dated 5.10.1954, p.15.
19. The Second Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, Government of India 1956, p. 504.
20. The Second Five Year Plan, Planning Commission Government of India 1956, p.505.
21. *Ibid.*

