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Commissions and Committees on Higher Education in India

Introduction:

During the early days of European settlers, a statement by court of directors indicated that the British lost America due to foolishness of the British to establish schools and colleges there, which they should not repeat in India. The British thought that if Indians want anything in education, Indians should come to Britain. But this view was not accepted by all and some of the administrators felt it was their moral duty to provide education to Indians. The origin of the present system of education which is prevalent in India today can be traced to the beginning of the nineteenth century when a controversy had been raging over the issue whether oriental learning and science should be spread through the medium of Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian or Western sciences and literature be spread through English as the medium of instruction. The Government conducted surveys of the then prevalent systems of education with a view to re-organising education to suit the needs of the times. Consequent on Macaulay's Minute regarding the educational policy of the future, Lord William Bentick's Government issued a communiqué wherein it was stated "that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education alone". The Government Resolution, however, stated that provision should be made for the continuance of schools and colleges where indigenous learning was being imparted. Macaulay rejected the claims of Arabic and Sanskrit as against English, because he considered that English was better than either of them.

All these and many more acceptance and rejection came in the way of providing education to the Indians and along with were came many committees, commissions and reports.

Commissions, Committees and Policies on Education in India

An organized, systemic and planned approach may solve the challenges in education, to certain extent. Articles in the Indian Constitution and many committees, commissions and reports, have recommended suggestions in the direction of improving the quality of education and to meet the demands of the society. Functionaries (teachers and administrators), policy makers, political and social leaders need to understand the emerging issues, and try to bring structural and functional changes in educational institutes. There are high prospects of achieving success and to offer world class education, to encourage more and more students, to take up Higher Education through such efforts.

Whether it was the pre independence phase in India or the post independent era, whether it was the British government or the democratic Indian government, it is observed that in all situations, government has made sincere efforts for promoting, enhancing and making changes in the education system to suit the need of the society. It tried to study the issues, analyse the situation and make recommendations accordingly, for which several policies are framed, many committees and commissions are set up and documented reports are produced and implemented.

For the purpose of convenience, this aspect of study is divided into two domains:

- Recommendations of Various Commissions and Policies on Education before independence
- Recommendations of Various Commissions and Policies on Education after independence
- **Recommendations of Various Commissions, Committees and Policies on Education before independence**

Company's Charter in 1813 was passed that suggested funds to be released to revive and improve literature, Science and native knowledge of India.

Wood's Despatch:

In 1854, first official attempt was made to promote education in India through Wood's Despatch, it was a long document of 100 paragraphs and dealt with the various aspects of great educational importance. It aimed to produce educated Indians to serve Company, to impart western knowledge to them, to promote intellectual development and to develop practical and vocational skills in them. Some of the major recommendations of the Despatch were expansion of mass education, teaching of language, development of universities and importance to women education. It was observed that the common people were deprived of educational opportunities and therefore much emphasis was given on the

increase of setting up primary, middle and high schools. It clearly stated that Indian languages as well as English should be used as media of instruction. It recommended the establishment of universities in the three Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. It recommended that the government should always support education for women. The woods despatch of 1854 was considered to be the "Magna Carta of Education in India". It was the first authoritative declaration on the part of the British Parliament about the educational policy to be followed in India but it could not manage the education system well. Mass education, Women education and vocational education did not become a reality. The grant-in-aid system did not work well as there was paucity of funds and irregularity of the release of funds. The Despatch was more interested in promoting Western knowledge and culture and the education in the universities could not be related to Indian conditions.

Hunter Education Commission 1882

In 1882 the Government of India appointed a Commission, known as the Hunter Commission, "to enquire into the manner in which, effect had been given to the principles of the Despatch of 1854 and to suggest such measures as it may think desirable in order to further carrying out of the policy therein laid down". It recommended to provide vocational and technical education to the youth for commercial, vocational and non-literary pursuits. It also suggested that those interested in higher education can get admissions to courses based on the performance in entrance examination of the University.

The Universities Commission of 1902

A commission was appointment on January 27, 1902, "to enquire into the condition and prospects of the universities established in British India; to consider and report upon any proposals which have been, or may be made for improving their constitution and working, and to recommend such measures as may tend to elevate the standard of university teaching, and to promote the advancement of learning". Apart from administrative recommendations, the commission stated that emphasis should be laid on the living conditions of students and their pattern of work. It stressed on improving and making necessary changes in curricula, teaching functions and examination system within the universities.

Government Resolution on Educational policy in 1913

There was a growing popular demand in the country for mass education. A Government Resolution on education policy was issued in 1913, enunciating three cardinal principles: (i) that the standard of existing institutions should be raised in preference to increasing their number; (ii) that the scheme of primary and secondary education for the average scholar should be steadily diverted to more practical ends; and (iii) that-provision

should be made for higher studies and research in India, so that Indian students might get enough facilities for higher work without having to go abroad.

Though the Resolution was immediately carried into effect, the outbreak of the World War I delayed the developments planned in the Resolution. However, some new universities were established. It seems that there was a shift of attention from administrative criterion to demand of the society and in this attempt the government stressed on mass education.

The Calcutta University Commission of 1917 (Sadler Commission)

Under the Chairmanship of the Michael Sadler the Calcutta University Commission was appointed in 1917. This Commission went into the question of secondary education and held the view that the improvement of secondary education was essential for the improvement of University education. The Commission made the important recommendations related to courses at secondary and university education and to create a link between secondary and university education it proposed to start intermediate colleges which would provide for instruction in Arts, Science, Medicine, Engineering and Teaching.

The Hartog Committee 1929

In 1929, an Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, known as the Hartog Committee after its Chairman Sir Philip Hartog was appointed to review the position of education in the country. In the opinion of this Committee the Matriculation still dominated the whole of the secondary course. In order to obviate this defect, the Committee recommended that a large number of pupils intending to follow certain avocation should stop at the middle school stage and there should be "more diversified curricula in the schools". The Committee also recommended diversion of more boys to industrial and commercial careers at the end of the middle stage, preparatory to special instruction in technical and industrial schools". The Committee also reviewed the problems relating to the training of teachers and the service conditions of the secondary teachers.

The Sapru Committee 1934

The Sapru Committee appointed in 1934 by the U.P. Government to enquire into the causes of unemployment in U.P. came to the conclusion that the system of education commonly prevalent prepared public only for examinations and degrees and not for any avocation in life. The Committee suggested that- (i) diversified courses at the secondary stage should be introduced, one of these leading to the University degree (ii) the intermediate stage be abolished and the secondary stage be extended by one year; (iii) the vocational training and education should begin after the lower secondary stage; and (iv) the Degree course at the University should extend over a period of three years.

The Abbot-Wood Report, 1936-37

In pursuance of the Resolution of 1935 of the Central-Advisory Board of Education (an advisory body set up in 1921), two expert advisers, Messrs. Abbot and Wood were invited in 1936 to advise the Government "on certain problems of educational reorganisation and particularly on problems of vocational education". The Abbot-Wood Report, submitted in 1937, suggested a complete hierarchy of vocational institutions parallel with the hierarchy of institutions imparting general education. As a result of their recommendations "a new type of technical institution called the Polytechnic has come into existence". The provinces also started technical, commercial or agricultural high -schools conducting non-literary courses.

Zakir Hussain Committee Report 1937

In 1937, the Congress Ministry assumed responsibility of administration in seven major provinces of India and concentrated their attention on educational reforms. Under the president ship of Mahatma Gandhi the following resolutions were adopted: 1. That in the opinion of this conference free and compulsory education to be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale; 2. That the medium of instruction be the mother- tongue; 3. process of education throughout this period should centre around some form of manual and productive work, may be related to some handicraft; and 4. To look into the remuneration of teachers. (Wardha Scheme)

The Sargent Report 1944

In 1944, the Central Advisory Board of Education submitted a comprehensive Report on post-War Educational Development, known as the Sargent Report, visualising a system of universal, compulsory and free education for all boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 14, the Senior Basic or the Middle School to be the final stage in the school career of majority of the pupils. The High Schools should be of two main types (a) academic, and (b) technical. The objective of both should be to provide a good all-round education combined with some preparation in the later stages for the careers.

Implications:

British government made several attempts by appointing different commissions to look into the matter of education and its governance, but these efforts seemed to be only in the direction of expansion of educational institutes, providing the pupil western knowledge, deviating them from Indian culture and traditions and producing only 'babus' (clerks) for the British.

Higher Education, quality education, education for the masses, vocational education and women education received little or no focus. There were barely few schools for girl

students and no special facilities, arrangements were made for the hostel, transport or safety of girl students. No jobs other than ‘clerks’, were available on getting education through these British run schools and colleges. Students of higher education had to go to foreign land and obtain degrees.

➤ **Recommendations of Various Commissions, Committees and Policies on Higher Education after independence:**

Education has continued to evolve, diversify and extend its reach and coverage since the dawn of human history. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of the times. There are moments in history when a new direction has to be given to an age-old process, and such a moment in the Indian history was independence from the rule of British in 1947. The era of educational reconstruction inevitably followed in the wake of social and economic reconstruction initiated by the National Government after 1947, education being the chief instrument for reconstruction and transformation of society. The first steps taken in the direction of educational reconstruction were the appointment of a series of commissions to survey, study, review and recommend improvements in the different sectors of education. Equality and justice to all was the main focus. As mentioned in our Preamble 1950 as one of the national objective, “Equal opportunities will be available to all citizens in matters of education and employment.” In our constitution articles 15(3), 39, and 51(a) specifies that No citizen shall be discriminated on the ground of caste, creed, colour or sex.

The Education Commission 1948

To look into the problems of University education, the University Education Commission was appointed by the Government of India in 1948 under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The Commission made important suggestions for improving the standard of university education in the country. Introduction of a three-year degree course for the first university degree, greater use of tutorial system of instruction, formulation of new aims, emphasis on developing knowledge and critical thinking rather than mechanical passing of examinations, establishment of Rural Universities, introduction of moral education and special attention to women education were some of its salient recommendations. It emphasized on increase in productivity, Promoting Social and national Integration, Education and Modernization and Developing Social, moral and Spiritual values.

The Secondary Education Commission (Mudaliar Commission) 1952

This commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanswamy Mudaliar to mainly offer suggestions on Secondary Education and thus no specific comment

is observed on women education. This Commission offered a numbers of suggestions to adjust secondary education with the new goals and needs of free India. The aim was now to train our youth for intermediate leadership and for democratic citizenship. Secondary education was to be a terminal stage for a large majority of the nation's youth, who would take up their places in society after their school education and provide leadership to the general masses. The Commission was equally concerned with qualitative improvement of the schools. To develop individual talent, curricular offerings were extended and diversified. To achieve the new aims of education, changes in methods of teaching were suggested. New trends in examination, guidance and extracurricular work were brought into the school programmes. Multipurpose secondary school was a new concept recommended by the Commission. Inclusion of craft, social studies and general science in the curriculum was aimed at orienting students towards an industrial and science-centered democratic life.

Education Commission (Kothari Commission) 1964-66

In view of the important role of education in the national development and in building up a truly democratic society the Government considered it necessary to survey and examine the entire field of education in order to realise a well balanced, integrated and adequate system of national education capable of making a powerful contribution to all aspects of national life. To achieve these objectives speedily, the Government of India set up an Education Commission in July 1964 under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari. The Commission in particular was to advise the Government on the national pattern of education and on the general policies for the Development of education at all stages ranging from the primary to post-graduate stage and in all its aspects besides examining a host of educational problems in their social and economic context. The Commission was, however, not to examine legal and medical education.

Few of the recommendations:

1. Education should be related to productivity, social, moral and spiritual values be inculcated in youth.
2. Certain steps were suggested towards social and national Integration and to strengthen national consciousness and unity.
3. Every attempt should be made to equalize educational opportunities or at least to reduce some of the most glaring inequalities which existed by stressing upon the following:
 - Provision of free and compulsory education of good quality for all children up to the age of 14 years as envisaged in Art. 45 of the Constitution;

- Promotion of programmes of adult education aiming not only at liquidation of illiteracy, but also at raising the civic and vocational efficiency and general cultural level of the citizens; and
- Special encouragement to the education of girls and the backward classes.
- Emphasized on part time and vocational education, scholarships and financial assistance for girls, setting up separate machinery to look after women's education.

The National Policy on Education of 1968 marked a significant step in the history of education in post-Independence India. It aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen *national* integration. It laid stress on the need for radical reconstruction of the education system, to improve its quality at all stages, and gave much greater attention to science and technology, the cultivation of moral values and a closer relation between education and the life of the people. It laid down a common scheme of studies for boys and girls, science and mathematics were incorporated as compulsory subjects and work experience assigned a place of importance.

The National Policy on Education of 1986 and Program of Action 1992

It laid special emphasis on universalisation of elementary education and on women education apart from other spheres of education.

The basic objectives of the National Policy of Education of 1986 and Programme of Action of 1992 emphasized that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalance, empowering women, and in securing rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities. Government should take a strong determination and commitment to provide education for all, the priority areas being free and compulsory education, covering children with special needs, eradication of illiteracy, education for women's equality and special focus on the education of Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribes and Minorities.

The National Knowledge Commission 2007

The National Knowledge Commission was a high-level advisory body to the Prime Minister of India, with the objective of transforming India into a knowledge society. The National Knowledge Commission deliberations have focused on five key areas of the knowledge paradigm – access to knowledge, knowledge concepts, knowledge creation, knowledge application and development of better knowledge services. Though the focus of this commission was on creating a knowledge society, still it talks about inclusion and states that, no student be denied the opportunity to participate in higher education due to economic

constraint or due to his/her historical under privileged background. The report focused on the need for excellence in the system, expansion of the higher education sector in the country, and providing access to higher education for larger numbers of students. It recommended to establish 1500 universities and 50 National Universities that can provide education of the highest standard and shall train students in a variety of disciplines, including humanities, social sciences, basic sciences, commerce and professional subjects, at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

Implications:

Due to influence of these committees and commissions, numbers of universities have increased; number of students enrolling in higher education has also increased as stated below. According to UGC report (2013), in the year 1950, the country had just 30 university level institutions: this figure has gone up to 564 in 2011, nearly 19 fold increase and till recently (2013), 136 universities were added making a total of 700 universities in 2013. In the year 1950, India had 700 colleges and this figure has gone higher up to 33020 in 2011, nearly 47 folds increase. Similarly the number of teachers in higher educational institutes in 1950 was 2400: due to the increase in educational institutes, this figure increased 34 times and in 2011 it there were 81700 teachers employed in institutes of higher learning. Universities and colleges increased because there was a great demand for the same. It was due to increase in population and increase requirement of educated people in all fields of development that 397000 students were enrolled in 1950 in higher education tolled up to 16976000 in 2011 that is: the growth in enrolment of students in higher education rose by 43 percent.

India's higher education system is now third largest in the world, after China and the US. India provides higher education in almost all the fields but a lot still has to be done to achieve world class education, to provide vocational education, to provide equal opportunities and to reduced the issues and challenges of higher education.

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