

Official Documents**A Progress Report on Education**

Progress of Education in India, 1937/47, Decennial Review, Vol. I.

Central Bureau of Education, Government of India.

Education in India, 1947/48,

Education in States of Indian Union. 1948 49.

Education in Universities in India, 1948/19.

THESE publications are indispensable for those who want to check up on the progress of education in this country. Whether they are adequate for an assessment is quite another matter. During the war, all these departmental publications had been suspended due to paper scarcity and the department's preoccupation with the preparation of an integrated post-war educational plan. These volumes, therefore, serve as the major link between the data on the subject before 1937 and now.

Of these, the *Project of Education in India-1937-47* is the most important. It is a decennial review and deals with the entire subject in three parts. The first part is an introductory survey highlighting on all the important events during the decade. The second part deals with the actual progress made in every stage and type of education. The third part summarises the post-war-plans, Cultural Relations, Overseas Scholarship Scheme and Educational Films, Anthropology, Archeology, Archives and Library, and the further education in India of ex-Service personnel.

To appreciate the nature of the progress actually achieved in education, it is well to review the national aspirations in this field as put before the public during this period. Mahatma Gandhi had given considerable thought and attention to the colossal problem of educating the masses, and as early as October 1937 he presided over the National Education Conference and formulated a system of basic Education. This system aimed at:

- (i) Free and compulsory education to be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale;
- (ii) The medium of instruction to be -the mother tongue;
- (iii) The process of education to centre on some form of manual productive work;
- (iv) All the faculties of the child to be developed by being integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child; and
- (v) This system of education should be gradually able to cover

the remuneration of teachers.

Gandhiji's contention was that education to be real should draw the best out of oneself. To him, the existing system of education was defective in that (i) it is based upon foreign culture to the almost entire exclusion of indigenous culture, (ii) ignores the culture of the heart and the hand, and confines itself simply to the head, and (iii) real education is impossible through a foreign medium. He felt it a crime to make education merely literary and to unfit boys and girls for manual work in after-life. Since a large part of our time is devoted to labour for earning our bread, children ought to be taught, from their infancy, the dignity of that labour.

Gandhiji was convinced that education to be universal must be *free*. Because India cannot afford, in the normal course, to have every boy and girl of school going age to be educated in the existing system, he thought that the children must be made to pay in *labour* partly or wholly for all the education they received. Further he stressed character-building in the individual as the *primary* function of education and for that purpose he emphasized the need for the loving touch of the teacher. In effect he looked for a corps of men and women of faith and character who could take up the task and energetically build for the future.

As to the medium of education, Gandhiji had a second thought about a possible alternative. He was firm in the view that foreign medium " has caused brain-fag, put an undue strain upon the nerves of our children, made them crammers and imitators, unfitted them for original work and thought, and disabled them for filtering their learning to the family or the masses. The foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their own land. It is the greatest tragedy of the existing system ". He wanted all instruction to be in the mother tongue of the pupil.

Briefly, then, Gandhiji wanted the introduction of a Basic system of Education which taught the pupil a trade (with all the mechanics and

the three Rs connected with it) free of any monetary obligation, in a medium which was clearly intelligible to him, by a team of teachers who were themselves men and women of faith and character. The cost, of such an education was to be met by the State in return for the goods produced by the pupils in the course of their learning, which could be marketed for sale.

The Post-war Educational Development Plan, prepared by the Central Advisory Board of Education, in 1944 was an able document aimed at solving the problem in every stage of education fairly effectively within a period of 40 years. Some of the fundamental recommendations of the Board were:

- (i) A system of universal compulsory and free education for all boys and girls between the ages of six and fourteen;
- (ii) The promotion of a system of pre-primary education with a view to giving young children social experience between the ages of three and six years;
- (iii) The High School course to (over six years with the normal age of admission to be about eleven; entry to be on a selective basis to provide for at least one child in every live of the appropriate age;
- (iv) High Schools to be of two main types: (a) Academic, and (b) Technical;
- (v) The present Intermediate course to be abolished with a part incorporated into the High School course, and by making the length of a university degree course to three years;
- (vi) The establishment of an efficient system of Technical Education at all stages;
- (vii) A plan for educating the adult illiterates of the order of nine crores of people; and
- (viii) New training schools and colleges to be provided for the supply of additional teachers of the order of 2,000,000 non-graduates for schools of all types and 180,000 graduates for High Schools which the national system will require. The reports under review give us a factual idea of the progress made in every field of education and fairly

reflect the steps taken, and not taken, for the promotion of the above official and unofficial plans during the years covered by them.

Growth vs. Wastage in Primary Education

At the primary stage, there is an over-all increase in enrolment of about 24 per cent. The growth in the last 35 years is from 42 lakhs pupils in 1911-12 to 95 lakhs in 1946-47 for boys and from 9 lakhs to 34 lakhs pupils for girls approximately. The incidence of 'wastage', however, is excessive even though there is an appreciable improvement in this respect. In 1936-37, only 24 per cent of the pupils enrolled reached the class IV, but in 1946-47, 35 per cent of those enrolled reached Class IV. The chief cause for premature discontinuance of schooling seems to be that the children between the ages of 6 to 11 years are useful to their parents in assisting them in their occupations, and obviously punishment on a large-scale is beset with difficulties.

Among the total number of teachers about 65 per cent are trained, which represents an improvement over the position in 1936-37 by about 36,000 teachers. Compulsory education was tried in all the provinces, except Assam, in several areas, but it has not improved school attendance to any appreciable extent.

Basic Education

The scheme, as envisaged by Gandhiji, has been adopted in part in the basic (primary and middle) education plan of the Central Advisory Board and the system was experienced with in several provinces. It is being encouraged in Bihar, Bombay, Madras, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh in some centres. The progress in this direction is not encouraging.

Middle School

There are two types of middle schools: Vernacular Middle and English Middle. In the former, English is optional and it does not lead to the high school stage; English is compulsory in the latter and it leads to the high school stage. Enrolment during the decade increased in the order of 20 per cent in the former and 69 per cent in the latter type of school. Among the teachers, the proportion of the untrained increased from 338 to a thousand in 1936-37 to 410 in 1946-47!

High School

Control over high schools is exercised by Local Governments and

universities former do so by grants-in-aid and the latter by their power of recognition and prescription of courses. In effect, the high school education has tended to become a first step to higher education, instead of being a self-sufficient stage and preparation for the humble walks of life.

During the decennium, there was an increase of 55 per cent in the number of high schools, and an increase of 96.2 per cent in the enrolment of pupils. The proportion of trained teachers also increased from 48 to 51.5 per cent.

It is interesting to observe that the growth in secondary education between 1911-12 to 1946-47 has been of the order of from about 9 lakhs boys to 32 lakhs and 1 lakh girls to 6 lakhs.

Medium of Instruction

At the beginning of the decennium, English was the medium of instruction in Madras, Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Orissa. In Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, the Punjab, and Delhi also English was the medium in some subjects.

During the decennium, Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Madras and Ajmer-Merwara, adopted the mother tongue of the pupil as the medium of instruction. The places where English continues to be the medium are: Delhi, the Punjab, Coorg and Bangalore.

Until 1944, the medium in all universities and institutions of higher learning, with the exception of Osmania University, continued to be English. Since then distinctions were given that the modern Indian languages be recognised gradually and as far as possible alternatively with English as media of instruction for the Intermediate and Degree Courses excepting for English and if necessary for Science subjects. Allahabad, Annamalai, Benaras, Lucknow, Nagpur and Patna Universities have decided to regionalise their media of instruction.

University Education

During the decennium the number of Arts and Science colleges increased from 272 in 1937-38 to 420 in 1946-47, an increase of 54.4 per cent. Enrolment of pupils since 1911-12 increased from 28,000 males to 230,000 and 1,000 females to 22,000 in 1946-47 approximately. Teaching of art subjects takes the first place in the universities. Next comes science and lastly the professional subjects, though technical and professional studies are slowly gain-

ing ground. In several universities, courses have been revised to emphasise technology and science. Delhi University has abolished the 'Intermediate stage,' by making the degree a three years' course and merging the first year of college education in the high school stage.

Adult education

There has been a stupendous progress in adult education in Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Orissa, the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The enrolment in the whole of India increased from 45,696 in 1937-38 to 179,164 pupils in 1946-47.

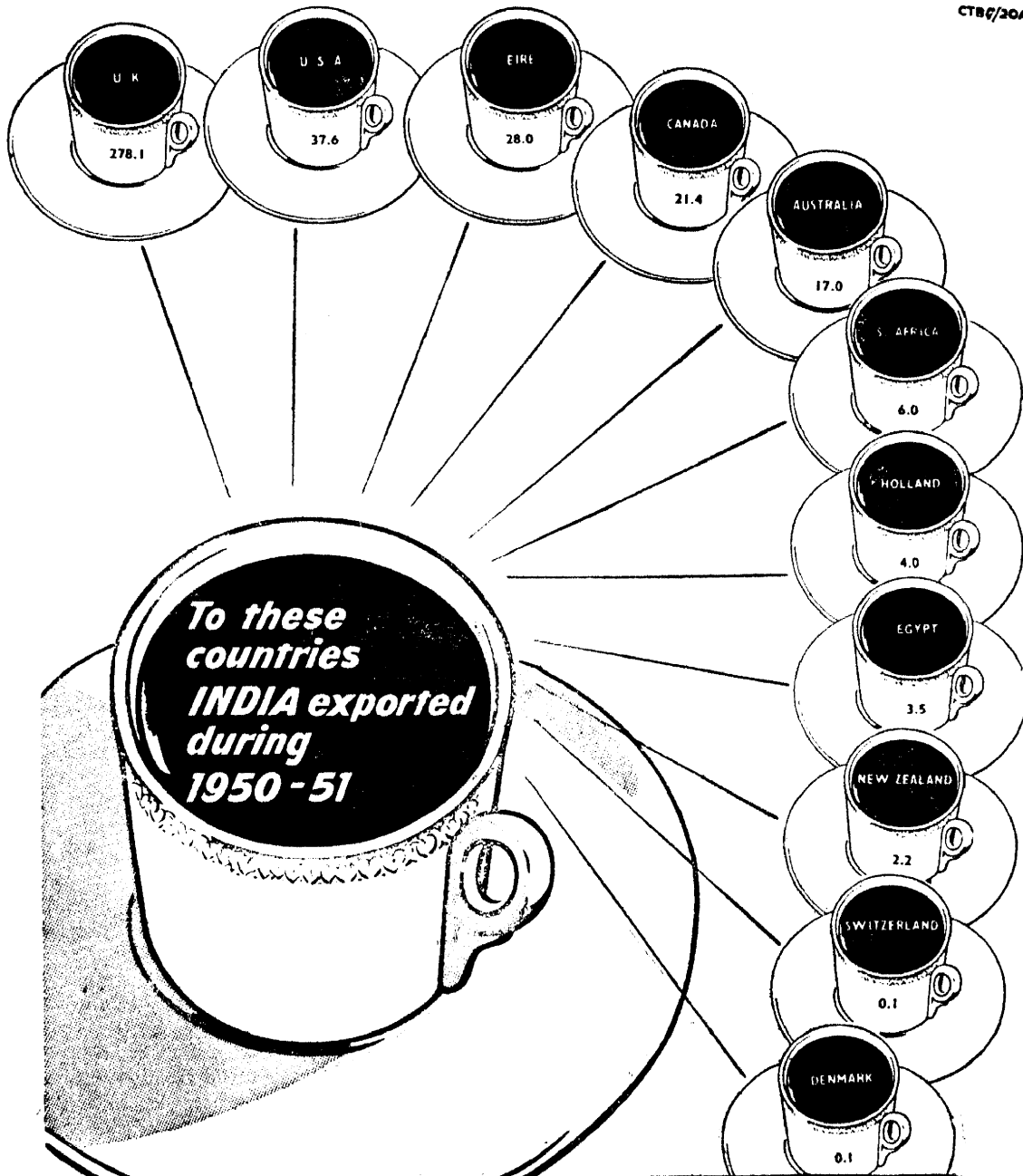
Others

There have been steady progress in other directions as well, such as, the training of teachers, education of the handicapped, aesthetic education, professional and technical education. The chapters on these subjects are informative on the scope and extent of opportunity available and the nature of the work being done at present in each field.

The other volumes are statistical surveys for the years stated and have been carefully prepared to be of excellent reference value. The principal developments have been recorded state by state, and the relative figures include: (1) Area and Population; (2) Number of Institutions; (3) Number of Scholars on Rolls; (4) Expenditure on Education; (5) Number of Teachers; and (6) Examination Results.

While these publications serve as excellent references on the state of educational development in the country during the periods they cover, there is no indication in them of the shape of Unrigs to come in this all-important nation-building activity. Except for the change in the medium of instruction to the mother tongue or a sufficiently developed regional language, no major steps seem to have been taken to broad-base education with a view to moulding people's character and their general well-being. Whereas the emphasis on the need of the English language is slowly diminishing, there is no evidence that the people are being taught to be self-reliant with a practical code of education to be of progressive value in their after-life. The bias in favour of literary education does not seem to have been arrested. It is to be hoped that education will receive adequate attention in the effort to integrate and co-ordinate the general plan of development of the entire nation in all its moral, material and mental planes.

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