

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS (FROM MACAULAY TO NEP 2020): EVOLUTION OF EDUCATIONAL NATIONALISM IN INDIA

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Abstract

Our Indian educational system always used to be a subject of colonial influence, nationalism, and contemporary global demands. The very system sought for an approach that neglected individual growth, while promoting nationalistic sentiment. This paper critically examines different committees and commissions of pre- and post-independence era of education with respect to nationalism of India. From colonial intervention of Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Macaulay's Minutes" to National Education Policy 2020, this practice has been continuing. The study investigates how different educational policies, commissions, and committees across different timeframes have contributed to the ideas of nationhood, citizenship, cultural identity, and economic development. At first, Indian colonial educational system focused on administrative needs and the contemporary emphasizes knowledge economy and global competitiveness. The paper adopts a qualitative and analytical research method based on historical education and policy analysis. Particular attention has been given to the ideological transformation, western educational model, and indigenous knowledge system while analysing the changing role of education in constructing national consequences. The research explores that educational nationalism in India is a matter of continuous shifts, which has been evolved by colonialism, anti-colonial, resistance, modernization, globalization, and new liberal reforms. In this study, this has been highlighted the promotion of Indian knowledge traditions, multilingualism, and cultural rootedness. In conclusion, the findings suggest contemporary Indian education is part of a complex synthesis of cultural nationalism and knowledge economy, where the challenge lies in balancing inclusivity, cultural plurality, social justice, and global aspirations in 21st century.

Keywords: Nationalism, Colonial education, NEP 2020, Knowledge economy, Educational policy.

Introduction

Education is always considered a tool of civilizing the human society. Beyond the concept of knowledge transformation, education became a process through which society shape values, construct identity, and prepare an individual to role perfectly and accordingly in the societal aspects. The term 'education' originates from the latin word 'educare' and 'educere,' which means to bring up or to draw out. So, the etymological meaning of education is to nourish the outer imposition of a person or to prepare a person to act in a certain way. Education, therefore, embodies not only instruction but also influences one's perception. Famous philosopher Aristotle perceived education as the ultimate means to achieve *eudaimonia* (human flourishing). In his opinion, education was just a tool to prepare individuals who will cultivate both intellectual virtue and moral character, ultimately being able to serve the society. Later, American philosopher and educator John Dewey came across with his definition of education that it is not just a preparation for a future job, but 'life itself.' Additionally, he meant to promote education a way of empowering citizens to participate actively in communal practices and responsibilities. However, in the Indian tradition (1), Swami Vivekananda defined education as 'the manifestation of perfection already in a man.' In his words, "We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand one's own feet." Instead of

being able to serving the society, Vivekananda considered education a way of developing one's intellect, character formation, and uplift the power of concentration. In contrary, in every historical period, education is meant for national consciousness, social reform, and political transformation, which deeply connected with nationalism and nation building.

An educational system includes organized institutional framework, such as schools, universities, curriculum, pedagogical; methods, administration structures, and examination systems, through which education is delivered within a society. Interestingly, educational systems are never ideologically neutral. Rather, they promote social visions, and political priorities. For example, in colonial period, education was designed to maintain imperial control while in post-colonial time, it became the instrument of modernization. Educational system is regulated by frequently changing commissions and committees, which are constituted by ruling governments. Although commissions and committees are used interchangeably, there is a slight difference. A committee is formed to address a specific issue within a limited framework. However, a commission acts as a broader framework that includes extensive investigation and policy recommendations. Here, a policy is a structured framework of principals and strategies meant to achieve specific goals.

At the core of educational policies, the nation's upliftment was the foremost priority of the governing body. In both pre- and post-independence times, education was meant for social engineering through which states attempted to shape citizens. In colonial framework, different measures have been taken such as Macaulay's Minutes of 1835, Wood's Despatch of 1854, Hunter Commission of 1882, Sadler Commission of 1917, and the Sergent Plan of 1944. Post independence, University Education Commission (1948-49), Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), and Kothari Commission (1964-66), National Policy of Education (1986,1992), School Education Commission (2001) have been introduced to redefine educational objectives as per the needs of an independent nation.(7)

In broader sense, nationalism is defined as a political and cultural ideology that promotes the interest of a particular nation and emphasizes collective identity, shared history, territorial belonging, and loyalty to the nation. According to Benedict Anderson, nations are 'imagined communities' created through shared narratives and cultural practices. In 1882, Ernest Renan in his famous lecture, 'what is a nation?', he described nationhood as a 'daily plebiscite', which refers an everyday commitment by citizen to the community. Later, Partha Chatterjee, perceives nationalism as a distinct, sovereign, and spiritual inner domain to resist complete cultural colonization to foster national consciousness and values. Therefore, the idea of education and the concept of nationalism is correlated.

Education and nationalism both are the parental terms of educational nationalism. In the process, educational systems are being used to cultivate civic responsibility and collective belonging. Educational nationalism refers to the promotion of national languages, indigenous knowledge system, and patriotic values. British power emerged this concept to create a class of English educated intermediaries who would serve colonial administration.(2) Though this system created a section of educated Indians but later they challenged colonial rules and played a significant role in the nation's movement. In post-colonial era, the idea of education shifted to the constriction of democratic citizenship and national unity. After independence, different commissions and committees attempted to balance modernization with social justice. Due to globalization and the emergence of National Education Policy 2020,

educational priorities have been shifted further. It includes the changing landscape by combining cultural rootedness with technological advancements and global competitiveness.(3)

Thus, the paper aims to focus on the educational journey from colonial to contemporary frameworks, which reflects the dynamic relationship between education and nationalism in India. It is essential to understand this historical evolution for examining how education continues to function as a powerful instrument in shaping the social and political imagination of youths.

Objectives

- To investigate how education in different historical periods functioned as a mechanism for shaping ideas of cultural identity, citizenship, and nationhood.
- To reflect the transformation of different educational policies from the Thomas Babington Macaulay to the contemporary version of NEP 2020.
- To critically examine the ideological shift from colonial educational administration to post-independence knowledge-based educational reforms.
- To explore the tension between indigenous knowledge systems and Western model of education.
- To study the relationship between educational nationalism and the contemporary emergence of knowledge economy in India.
- To identify how NEP 2020 balances cultural rootedness with globalization and technological advancements.
- To contribute to interdisciplinary discussions on education nationalism post-coloniality and policy studies within the Indian context.

Brief Review of Related Literature

Within the disciplines of education, history, sociology, and political science, the topic of educational policy, committee, and commissions has remained a significant area of academic research. Existing works talk about the history of educational policy, different aspects of the commissions and committees, comparative studies of several policies, how policy reforms and shapes the structure and purpose of education. But the area of educational nationalism and the changing educational policies of India has not been explored. The present study critically reflects upon this scholarly discussion to enlighten this phenomenon from the colonial period till now.

In the article, '*NEP 2020: A Shift Away from Colonial Educational policies and the Revival of IKS Based Holistic Learning towards Viksit Bharat*,'(6) Dr. Rabi Narayan Kar and Dr. Kusha Tiwari presents a detailed report on the transformative mature of NEP 2020 in reshaping Indian educational framework. This work details the significant movement from British colonial model of education to introduce the holistic spirit of the traditional IKS (Indian Knowledge System). Additionally, the authors point out how colonial education system cornered indigenous learning systems and promoted Western-centric knowledge and hardcore English education system. On the contrary, NEP 2020 is designed to revive India's cultural and intellectual heritage with the help of experiential learning, multilingualism, ethical education and holistic development.

Pijus Das, in his paper titled '*Historical Policy Analysis of Indian Education: A Triangular Study of Macaulay's Minute, Hunter Commission, and NEP 2020*'(5), argues the historical evolution of Indian educational policy in India from the colonial period to the contemporary timeline. The paper tries to establish a comparative study between Macaulay Minute, Hunter Commission, and NEP 2020. By introducing colonial educational intervention and the modern educational reforms, the work explores continuity and transformation in Indian educational thought.

The paper '*History of Education Policy in India*' (4) by Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra and Dr. Purnesh Narayan Singh advocate for a long historical timelines overview of Indian educational policies. Starting from the ancient period and ending up to the national education policy 2020 systematically provides the discussion of pre- and post-independent phases of educational policies. The progression of policy in India considered as a journey, which is evolving till now. Though the paper is largely descriptive and informative rather than analytical. Their contribution explains historical timeframe but does not critically evaluate the effectiveness and questions about it.

In the article, '*Macaulay to NEP 2020: How India's Education System Changed*', Mr. Ashok Kumar presents a relative study between NEP 2020 and the colonial educational policy (1835) of Macaulay. The author crucially compares the objectives, philosophy, language policy, educational vision, and curriculum orientation of Macaulay's system with NEP 2020. His writing focuses that previous one designed to create a class of English educated Indians who could help in their administrative work. Whereas, the latter NEP 2020 explores vocational integration, nation building and holistic development.

In international journal of inclusive education, Sreeram Gopalkrishnan critically examines national education policy 2020 in light of Gurukul tradition and Ancient Indian Knowledge System (AIKS). The article: '*New Education Policy 2020 in India: Future Rewinds to the Past*' strongly presents the ideological shifts of new education policy. The changing sociopolitical perspective of NEP 2020 promotes Indian ancient educational tradition. According to the author, the policy glorifies Gurukul systems and ancient knowledge instead of acknowledging caste-based exclusions and differences embedded within the systems. The study mentions that there has been a concern of inclusivity. Marginalized communities like Dalits and lower castes were a subject of significant injustice.

Therefore, existing research highlights individual educational policies and commissions, their reforms and limitations and how ideological shifts impact educational policies. This discourse evolves educational frameworks within isolated historical phases rather than tracing the broader aspects of it. The present work aims to broadly discuss educational nationalism in the history of the evolution of educational policies in addition to the existing literature.

Discussion

Without examining different commissions and committees of Indian education, it is difficult to know the development of Indian education system. India used to have different kind of education system from the ancient times including Gurukul systems, Buddhist monastic institutions, madrasas, and regional centres of learning. These systems were closely associated with religion, philosophy, ethics, and social customs. In ancient and medieval India, Indian education system had grown and contributed to the intellectual development.

Later, the intervention of British colonialism, introduced education as a tool of nation building and ideological control. The turning point was Macaulay's Minute. Under the chairmanship of Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1835, Macaulay's Minute was introduced to Indian education system. In Macaulay's Minute, Macaulay strongly rejected the Indian systems of education, including Sanskrit and Persian education. Instead, he advocated for English education, Western Science and literature. The major principals of the document included government support for Western education, English as the medium of higher education, and ultimately creation of an English-educated people to serve their administrative system. From here, English language gradually became the centre of colonial education. Interestingly, Macaulay's policy intended to strengthen colonial control but unintentionally it also contributed to the emergence of Indian nationhood. Though at first they started working as clerks, eventually their exploration of liberty, democracy, nationalism, and constitutional rights made the rebellious. The introduction of Macaulay's Minute made a paradoxical situation, where the British-introduced educational policy became catalyst for the growth of political conscious people.(10)

Later, in 1854, under the leadership Charles Wood, Wood's Despatch was introduced to the Indian education system. This became a catalyst in the process of institutionalization of Indian education as a result it is known as 'Magna cutter of English education in India.' The establishment of universities in three presidencies including Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, the expansion of teacher training institutions, the upgradation of vernacular languages while considering English a medium of higher education were the major concerns of Charles Wood. This commission played a significant role in the growth of modern education in India by conducting institutionalized schooling and university education.(16) Similar to Macaulay's Minute, its primary object was to produce educated manpower to rule British governance. But ultimately, modern education enlightened Indians, created awareness regarding political matter and social reform. It is important to note that this uprising conscious educated Indian middle-class people had grown interested in fighting for India's freedom struggle and nation-building process.

Further, the British government formed the Hunter Commission in India under the chairmanship of William Hunter during the administration of lord Ripon. Basically, it was formed to evaluate the process of education after the implementation of Wood's Despatch in Indian education system. The major suggestions of the Hunter Commission were improving primary education, especially in rural areas, encouraging decentralization and local participation. It also emphasized the use of vernacular languages at the primary stage. Considering the colonial framework, Hunter Commission contributed to the growth of Indian nationhood. The increasing number of educational institutes expanded literacy rate and gave birth of larger educated middle-class people in India. Intellectual discussion, social reform and political awareness spread in the schools and colleges. As a result, the growing number of nationalist consciousness, collective identity, public opinion created a section, which deliberately struggled for India's independence.(9)

The Calcutta University Commission, also known as the Sadler Commission, was established in 1917 under the chairmanship of Michael Sadler during the British colonial period. Primarily, this commission was formed to examine the problems of University of Calcutta. Therefore, it influenced the whole structure of higher education in India. This commission majorly focused on the fact that secondary education should extend up to 12 years and after

that students would enter a 3-year university course. To reduce pressure on universities, it recommended the establishment of intermediate colleges between school and university education. It also talked about teacher training, women education, the improvement of university administration, vocational education and the encouragement of academic autonomy and research-oriented higher education. Though the commission did not directly contribute to the development of Indian nationhood by expanding opportunities for higher education, the encouraging intellectual engagement in the university education including political debate, cultural awareness, nationalist activities increased consciousness among the educated Indian youth. As a result, this kind of engagement strengthened collective national identity among Indians and this educated middle-class people actively participated in the movement and public discourses. Essentially, education is the primary foundation of nation building and nationalism. It is because education for which people started to learn how to think rationally and advocate for liberty. (8)

Right before India's independence, in the year 1944 under the rule of John Sargent, who served as the educational advisor to the government of India, came across with his Sargent plan (report of the Central Advisory Board of Education). In the final phase of British colonial rule, this plan aimed to create a long-term framework for the reconstruction and expansion of education. One of the major suggestions of the Sargent plan was the introduction of free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 to 14. It is also recommended about teacher training, technical education, adult literacy programs, and the expansion of secondary education. By recognizing education as essential for social progress and nation development, Sargent plan influenced democratic aspiration among Indian youths. Emphasizing compulsory education, the plan made awareness about the importance of education in building an independent nation. Most importantly, its recommendation later encouraged several educational reforms adopted in post-independence educational era.

After independence, several reforms took place in Indian education system. Indian intellectuals reacted to colonial educational ideology and proposed alternative visions of education. Instead, colonial education gave rise to educational nationalism as an aftereffect of cultural domination. Right after independence, in 1948, under the chairmanship of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the establishment of University Education Commission played a significant role in post-Indian education era.(14) To examine the condition of higher education and to recommend an alternative suitable way to democratic nation, the commission was formed by the government of India. The earliest and most significant educational commission in post-independent India made several recommendations including the development of higher education as a means of promoting democracy, leadership, nation development, reforming examination system, teacher training and university administration. It also pointed the establishment of UGC (University Grants Commission) for maintaining standards in higher education and the exploration of research and scientific thinking. Similar to the earlier commissions and policies, the University Education Commission also developed a sense of national responsibility among students, which helped in preserving India's cultural heritage and democratic values.

Later, in 1952, under the guidance of A. Lakshmanswami Mudaliar, the secondary education commission was established. It is also known as Mudaliar Commission. Initially, it was formed to explore the condition of secondary education in post-independent India and to

recommend reformations regarding social, economic, and democratic needs of the newly independent government.(15) Additionally, it suggested the introduction of multi-purpose schools to provide practical and skills-based learning opportunities to enhance one's capability. Moreover, it advocated for the reformation in examination systems, guidance, and counselling services, co-curricular activities, teacher training to improve the condition of India's independent citizens. Therefore, the Secondary Education Commission significantly played a role to the idea of nation building in independent India. In the preparation of democratic society, national development, and responsible citizens, the Commission exceptionally aligned education with the goals of modernization and national integration. The policy also advocated for the creation of India's balanced educational system in order to reinforce both individual growth and collective progress.

Further, the Kothari Commission, widely known as the Education Commission, was established in 1964 by the government of India under the supervision of Daulat Singh Kothari. In post-independence education system, it became the most influential commission to formulate a national pattern of education, suitable for a democratic and developing nation. Its major proposal was the introduction of a common school system to ensure equal educational opportunities for all sections of society. It also recommended three-language formula, 10+2+3 educational structure, emphasized science and mathematics education, vocational training, the modernization of curriculum, teacher education, and increase of government expenditure on education. The Kothari Commission took a major role in strongly connecting education with the idea of nationhood. As per the commission, education is the most powerful way to ensure social transformation, democracy, national integration, and modernization. In the words of the commission, "*the destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms.*" The commission emphasized equality, secularism, scientific temper, and most importantly social justice. In the process, it created responsible citizens who could contribute to the unity and progress of an independent nation.

After Kothari Commission's release, two decades passed, when a major commission called National Policy of Education was introduced by the government of India in 1986 under the ministership of Rajiv Gandhi. This commission addressed the issue of growing educational needs of a developing and democratic India. Majorly, it focused on equality, modernization, and universal access of education. Later, the policy was modified and reinforced in 1992.(12) From universalization of elementary education, reduction of educational inequalities, including scheduled-castes, scheduled-tribes, and women, adult literacy, vocational education, technological learning to Operation Blackboard, it improved education system, encouraged effective learning to build up national curriculum. By viewing education as a means of promoting national integration, the policy created responsible and skilled citizens capable to contribute in India's unity and development.(17)

However, the recent National Education Policy (NEP) was established in 2020 by the government of India under the chairmanship of Kasturiangan. NEP 2020 replaced National Policy of Education 1986 and fulfilled a major gap of almost four decades. The new policy aimed to combine cultural rootedness with global competitiveness and technological advancements. The primary recommendation of NEP 2020 is 5+3+4+4 curricular instead of the traditional 10+2 system.(11) Additionally, the policy gave importance to foundational literacy & numeracy, vocational education, digital education, research and last but not least flexibility in subject choices. Another recommendation of the policy was mother-tongue

instruction at the foundational stage, encouraging the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into education. The Higher Education Commission of India was another proposal of the policy, which increased the use of technology in teaching and learning. NEP 2020's main focus was on promoting cultural identity, multilingualism, inclusivity, along with holistic development of a person. The aim is to create responsible and globally competitive citizens and preserving India's cultural heritage and democratic values. In 21st century, educational policy like NEP 2020 strongly connected the idea of nationhood by promoting holistic development and cultural identity. By emphasizing both national tradition and technological advancement, the policy seeks to shape education as a means of national transformation.

Conclusion

To conclude, the historical evolution of Indian education is remains deeply connected with the broader cultural, political, and socio-economic transformation of the nation. It started with colonial education initiated through Thomas Babington Macaulay's Minute of 1835 to the National Education Policy 2020. Education in India has always functioned as a means of shaping identity, citizenship, and national aspirations. The present study suggests that colonial educational commissions and policies were primarily structured to reinforce imperial administration, establishing intellectual dominance through English education. Although these policies cornered indigenous knowledge systems and traditional models of learning, they unintentionally added to the emergence of nationalist consciousness and political awareness in India. As modern education emerged into the society, the creation of newly educated class to people later became involved in anti-colonial resistance and nation-building processes. Educational policies and commissions transformed education into an inclusive institution able to promote equality, scientific temper, and social justice.(13) The invention of NEP 2020 balances cultural rootedness with skill development, technological advancement, and global competitiveness. Nevertheless, struggles regarding implementation, digital inequality, and inclusivity was the most significant challenges. Ultimately, the evolution of educational nationalism continues to remain one of the major events that make the nation imagine its brighter future and aspire toward social transformation and collective progress.

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