

CHAPTER - VII

TRANSFER OF POWER - EDUCATIONAL PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Political Background

In the post-war political situation in the country, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League were the main contenders for political power. But the contest was not within an agreed political future for the country. While the Congress stood for a unified India with a strong Centre, the Muslim League shifted its stand with a demand for a loose federation of states with a weak Centre to the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims. The political aims being different, the future planning for the country could also not be done with any clear objectivity and a sense of realism. Whatever plans were prepared and the projections for the future made, they suffered from a lack of vision of the political destiny of India.

It is not intended to cast any reflection on the planners for the job they did. Neither it is intended to prove that the problems listed and the solutions suggested were unrealistic. What we want to emphasize is that the planners and administrators had to function in conditions of political uncertainties and this limitation itself was a great handicap for a realistic appraisal of the situation. For instance the post-war educational development plan prepared by the Central Advisory Board of Education did not foresee a divided India on the eve

of independence. Similarly, the magnitude of the problem of integration was never thought to be as serious as it later proved to be. What we want to bring home is the fact that the educational development of that period should be studied and analysed in the context of the changing political situation then existing. Many failures of educational policies are accountable due to an unrealistic assessment of the political realities.

The Political Reality:

A basic political framework had been provided by the Government of India Act of 1935. And in spite of reservations, the leading political organisation of the country had accepted office in a few provinces on the basis of elections held under the provisions of the Act. The fact that the Congress Ministries resigned in 1939 as a protest against India being drawn into the war without their consent does not prove that the constitutional structure provided by the British had been totally rejected. The intervention of war and the 'Quit India Movement' of 1942 did however make a difference in the situation. The old premises of limited constitutional advancement did not hold good in the post-war period. But while the post-war situation favoured independence of India as an immediate goal, the process of transfer of power was through negotiations. The 1942 movement had spent its force and the political leadership did not think it

wise to lead the more militant and violent movements that developed in the post-war period. For example the naval uprising was discouraged and the advice was to withdraw it. The transfer of power through negotiations did not disturb the institutional framework built during the British regime. While discussing about the educational planning in that period we should be clear as to what was the core of that institutional framework as far as education was concerned. The main emphasis of that policy had been to prepare elites at different levels. With each successive stage of the political awakening the social composition of the elites did undergo a change. At the same time the widening of education at primary, secondary and higher level gave extended opportunities to wider sections of the society. But all this did not materially change the basic direction of the educational policy. It continued to retain its elitist characteristics.¹

¹See John W. Meyer, 'Economic and Political Effects on National Educational Enrolment Patterns,' Comparative Education Review, Vol. XV, No. 1 (Montpelier, Vermont: Capital City Press, February 1971), p. 42.

"It is often observed that the British and French had different orientations towards colonial educational development.... The French were supposedly oriented toward primary school development (as playing a 'civilizing' role), while the British emphasized indirect rule through the development and training of local elites in secondary schools and perhaps colleges. We find precisely these differences in comparing the eight ex-British and the nineteen ex-French colonies in our data which are low in per capita gross national product. None of the former, but 39 per cent of the latter are medium or high on the primary/population ratio. But on the secondary/primary ratio, 88 per cent of the British, but only 32 per cent of the French ex-colonies are medium or high. And on the higher/secondary ratio, 50 per cent of the former, but only 37 per cent of the latter are medium or high."

The acceptance of the basic institutional framework precluded any revolutionary changes in the educational system. The changes envisaged were mainly an extension of what had been achieved in the past. There was no doubt a call for introducing basic changes in the educational system but the political realities were either ignored or underrated with the result that the policies either could not be implemented or did not bring about the contemplated and desired changes.

Past Failings of the Educational System

Discussing the failings of the educational system built up during the British rule in India, the sub-committee of the National Planning Committee pointed out the major drawbacks which prevented the evolution of a national system of education in India. The following points have been emphasized in the report.²

- i) The Western education aimed at making out of educated Indians recruits for its administrative apparatus at different levels.

² National Planning Committee Series, General Education and Technical Education & Developmental Research.
(Bombay: Vora & Co., Publishers Ltd., 1948), Pp. 21-22.

The National Planning Committee was appointed in 1938 and began its work early in 1939. But due to the arrest of national leaders in 1940 and subsequent national movement and also due to war, its deliberations could not be continued. With the close of war and the release of leaders, it resumed functioning in 1945. As such the problems discussed in its reports and the recommendations made take into consideration the political developments on the eve of independence and the contemplated plans of development after independence.

- ii) Class rather than mass education became the rule.
- iii) There was an over-emphasis on purely literary education. This was mainly to be imparted through a foreign language.
- iv) No attention could be placed in this system of education to training and development of the inherent faculties of man.
- v) This system could also not provide any training for democracy. Explaining the tasks ahead, the report points out.

The task of the National Planning Authority in this sector of the National Plan would, therefore, be threefold: to redefine the aims; to redesign the method and content; to reshape the entire purpose of organised and systematic national education.³

An Appraisal of the Educational System:

Educational system in India was reviewed from time to time since the government intervened in favour of western system of education in 1835. The first comprehensive review was in the Wood's Despatch of 1854 followed by the Indian Education Commission of 1882. It was again during Curzon's Viceroyalty that a reappraisal was done keeping in view the changing political situation. The Calcutta University Commission, 1919, was yet another attempt to

³ National Planning Committee Series, General Education & Technical Education & Developmental Research, op.cit., p.22.

evolve a pattern of university and secondary education of the country. The major review of the education system after the introduction of dyarchy in the provinces was done by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as Hartog Committee in 1928. The Calcutta University Commission and the Hartog Committee laid special emphasis on the changed political conditions in the country. Political education of the electorate and the training of leaders to man the representative institutions became the watchword of policy changes in education.

Apart from these regular commissions and committees, policy declarations in education were also made through the resolutions of the Government of India as for example in the Government of India Resolution on education/1913. But all these declarations and policy changes were made under one great political limitation. The limitation was the lack of responsible Government in the provinces or the Centre. Even after the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, though education became a transferred subject, the limitations inherent in dyarchy imposed severe restrictions on the functioning of provincial ministries. Whatever freedom of action was allowed under the constitution was further circumscribed by the fact that the main body of national opinion represented by the Indian National Congress was antagonistic to these representative institutions. So any policy changes contemplated lacked

the sanction of the public opinion which was mainly behind the nationalist movement. It was only after the assumption of office by the Congress in a number of provinces in 1937 that the situation underwent a radical change. The change in situation arose because for the first time ministries formed in the provinces were responsible to the elected legislatures and also because a clear image had emerged of India moving towards full independence.

The installation of popular ministries in the provinces brought before them the question of educational planning and the task to look at educational problems with a new vision of India. This new vision of India was based on two fundamental principles. One was that of complete independence for the country and the other of the free government based on democracy. Educational planning was now to be done with these broader political aims in view. A few provincial governments went ahead with reviewing the educational systems and suggesting reforms. We will refer to two important committees on education appointed by the United Provinces and Bihar Governments. The United Provinces Government appointed the Primary and Secondary Education Re-organization Committee in 1938 and the Bihar Government in the same year appointed the Bihar Education Re-organization Committee on Primary Education. Though both these committees were confined to suggest educational reforms

in their respective provinces, the issues raised by them were relevant for the whole of the country.

Previous Reforms in Education:

Pointing out the main drawback of reforms undertaken in the past, the United Provinces Report pointed out.

All the reforms that have been recently suggested in the present system have been mainly prompted either by a desire to mitigate the growing evil of unemployment among the educated middle class or by a desire to effect economies in view of financial shortage. But a bold policy of advance in all directions has never been formulated. Piecemeal reforms have, however, been introduced from time to time but they have failed to achieve any significant results. The objectives of education have yet to be defined and the new lines for future reforms and advance have yet to be clearly marked out.⁴

Referring to the need for redefining the aims and objectives of education in the changed circumstances of the country, the Bihar Report pointed out.

In so far as the conditions have altered and the lines of future growth amongst our people change; in so far as the circumstances of our national life, its purpose and end have been modified, the aims and objectives of education must necessarily change.⁵

⁴Report of the Primary and Secondary Education Re-organization Committee, Government of the United Provinces, (Allahabad; Supt. Printing and Stationery, United Provinces, India 1940), p.9.

⁵Report of the Bihar Education Re-organization Committee on Primary Education, (Patna: Supt. Government Printing, Bihar, 1940), p.19.

The educational reconstruction that was now to be taken up was to be based on not only a change in the forms and methods of education but also of basic aims and objectives. What were these basic aims and objectives which were considered important to give an entirely new emphasis and direction to the educational system of the country? The first and foremost aim that was considered most important was a training for democracy. For true democracy to flourish it was necessary that culture should not be a monopoly of the privileged few but should be disseminated among the people.

It is,...absolutely necessary that we should give the right direction to education and to train up young children to be free and self-governing individuals so that they may try to follow in their lives the high principles of freedom, self-government, peace and co-operation.⁶

This change in emphasis in educational objectives was a departure from the earlier position of training an elite leadership on the one hand and making the general population literate enough to participate intelligently in the elections on the other. This was only possible if the elitist nature of the educational system could be discarded in favour of an educational system more

⁶Report of the Primary and Secondary Education Re-organization Committee, Government of the United Provinces, op.cit., p.11.

broadbased and wider in scope. But for this to happen fundamental political and economic changes were necessary. So long as the general mass of the population was existing on poverty line and so long as basic structural changes in society could not be effected education could not transform itself. The remedies suggested for transforming the educational system may be broadly categorised as, those dealing with primary education and those dealing with higher education, including secondary and collegiate. In the sphere of primary education the important decisions taken could be listed as follows.

- i) Basic education as enun-ciated in the Wardha Scheme was accepted as the national system of education.
- ii) It was agreed that a uniform system of compulsory primary education should be adopted both for urban and rural areas.
- iii) Compulsory primary education should be provided free on a nation-wide scale. It should extend over seven years beginning from the age of seven.
- iv) English should not be taught in basic schools. The medium of instruction should be the regional language.⁷

⁷ Report of the Primary and Secondary Education Reorganization Committee, Government of the United Provinces, op.cit. Pp.127-29.

Also, Report of the Bihar Education Re-organization Committee on Primary Education, op.cit., Pp.120-22.

The demand for free and compulsory primary education was on cards since the beginning of the twentieth century. Systematic attempts to introduce it in a few selected areas also began after the introduction of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. But it was incorporated in the Fundamental Rights of Citizens for the first time in the Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress in 1931. The resolution passed by the Congress on the Fundamental Rights stated in its Preamble, that,

...to enable the masses to appreciate what Swaraj, as conceived by the Congress, will mean to them, declared, that in order to end the exploitation of the masses any constitution agreed to on behalf of the Congress should provide among other things, for free and compulsory primary Education.⁸

Basic Education as a national system of education was also accepted by the Indian National Congress in its annual session in 1938. Thus when Congress ministries were formed in the provinces in 1937 and started taking steps to formulate the educational policy both these principles were incorporated in the national plan for educational reconstruction.

The criticism of secondary education and its reorganisation was made largely on familiar grounds. The criticism that secondary education did not provide varied

⁸ Quoted in, National Planning Committee, General Education and Technical Education & Developmental Research, op.cit., p.18.

courses and was dovetailed primarily to university education had been voiced more than once by a number of committees on education. The remedy proposed that it should be a stage complete in itself and should provide multiple courses of study was again a well known palliative. The more complex problem was that of selection at the secondary stage. The existing economic and political situation in the country favoured only a privileged few to move up to secondary and higher education. If a national system of education was to be evolved in the real sense of the term, the benefit of secondary and higher education should be able to go to the deserving among the underprivileged sections of the society. But they were eliminated from this stage of education not by any educational principle of selection but by a natural process, simply because they could not get anywhere near it. The blame was not of the education system as such. The reasons were to be located elsewhere. The educational inequality arose out of the socio-economic inequality. The educational transformation remained yet another slogan of the politically powerful sections. The worst feature of the situation was that even at the primary stage which was to be the basic national minimum in education for each child, a large number of children dropped out without completing all grades. The objective political

situation was not favourable to allow for any drastic changes in the education system. The universalization of primary education proceeded at a snail's pace and the monopoly of the privileged in higher education continued. No bold decisions on educational reforms could be taken as the popular ministries resigned in 1939 on the issue of war. At best the caretaker ministries tried to maintain the status quo. Another factor which again put the whole education system in dock was the launching of 'Quit India Movement' in 1942. So when the war ended and there was a stock taking of the existing situation, the educational system was once again judged as utterly incapable for the tasks ahead. It was admitted that a national system of education had not been able to evolve and the need for building it up on entirely new foundations was paramount.

...in their considered opinion it is inconceivable that within a reasonable period a really national system could be developed or evolved from what now exists or by the methods hitherto followed. Apart from the extremely slow progress which had been made before the war, the present system does not provide the foundations on which an effective structure could be erected; in fact much of the present rambling edifice will have to be scrapped in order that something better may be substituted.⁹

The National Planning Committee on Education also resumed its work in the post-war years after the release

⁹ Post-war Educational Development in India, Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education, (Simla: Manager, Government of India Press, 1944), p.2.

of national leaders. The Committee took note of the changed political conditions in which a national policy on education had to be evolved and worked out. The latest political developments which aimed at the partition of the country on the basis of religion were a negation of the principle of secularism built during long years of national struggle. At the same time it was a victory of the separatist forces. Another important constitutional issue was that of provincial autonomy. Provincial autonomy had been fought through and a large measure of it had been achieved under the Government of India Act of 1935. The existence of a multitude of languages and the acceptance of regional languages as medium of instruction in their respective regions was yet another dimension of the problem. Over and above all this there was the problem of executing any scheme in extensive areas and on huge numbers. All these factors had to be taken into account while formulating a policy on the national system of education. The problem before the educational planners of the country was to attain a degree of unity in the ideals and objectives and work out a national plan on education in conformity to these ideals and objectives.

Common National Ideals and the Educational Planning:

The development of a national plan for education had to be within an overall plan of national development embracing every branch of the life of the people. What was the projected image of an independent India in economic,

political and social terms? Economically an independent India had to move towards rapid industrialisation with a secure agricultural base. Politically it was committed to a democratic form of government conferring equal rights to its citizens. Socially there was not to be any distinction on the basis of religion, caste or sex. If educational planning was to be done as an integral part of the overall national development, then it had to spell out concrete steps to play its role effectively in the realisation of economic, political and social objectives. These objectives were spelt out in the Congress manifesto issued on the eve of the Central and Provincial elections in December 1945. We will give a few excerpts from the manifesto as it provides the premises on which the educational objectives and programmes of independent India were built. The political future of the country was stated in these words.

The Congress has envisaged a free democratic state with the fundamental rights and liberties of all its citizens guaranteed in the constitution. This constitution in its view, should be a federal one with autonomy for its constituent units, and its legislative organs elected under universal adult franchise. The federation of India must be a willing union of its various parts. In order to give the maximum of freedom to the constituent units there may be a minimum list of common and essential federal subjects which will apply to all units, and a further optional list of common subjects which may be accepted by such units as desire to do so.¹⁰

¹⁰ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, 1935-47, Vol. II (Bombay: Padma Publications Ltd., 1947), Appendix I, p.ii.

The political freedom had, however, to be linked to economic and social opportunities to be provided to the maximum number of citizens. 'The content of political freedom must be both economic and social' as it was mentioned in the manifesto. The programmes envisaged in the manifesto for economic and social advancement were the modernisation of industry and agriculture, provision of social services like health services, education, protection and development of backward and suppressed sections of population. All the development programmes were to be oriented, "...with the primary object of benefiting the masses of our people and raising their economic, cultural and spiritual level, removing unemployment, and adding to the dignity of the individual."¹¹

The manifesto also laid enough emphasis on the education of the masses and gave out certain principles which were in conformity with the projected socio-economic and political structure of the country. They may be stated as follows.

- i) Provision of free and compulsory basic education.
- ii) Protection of the culture, language and script of the minorities and of different linguistic areas.
- iii) Equal rights to all citizens for education in schools maintained out of state or local funds or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public.

¹¹Ibid., p.iii.

- iv) Adequate arrangements for the education of the masses with a view to raising them intellectually, economically, culturally and morally, and to fit them for the new forms of work and services which will open out before them.

Extent of the Problem:

What was the starting point from where the educational reconstruction of India would commence? The future political structure of the country demanded equality of educational opportunity to every citizen of the country. But when the educational reconstruction plans were being made, over 85 per cent of India's population was still illiterate.¹² Though the idea of free and compulsory primary education had long been advocated, compulsion was in force in only 194 urban areas and 3,297 rural areas in 1940-41. Of these 66 urban and 2,908 rural areas were in the Punjab.¹³ Only about 20 per cent of the children in 5-14 age-group were in schools in 1936-37. There was not any appreciable difference in the proportion of school going children in the age-range 5-14 in 1946-47.¹⁴ The increase in the

¹²Post-war Educational Development in India, Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education, op.cit., p.7.

¹³Loc.cit.

¹⁴Percentage calculations have been made on the basis of figures given in Post-war Educational Development in India and Progress of Education in India, 1937-1947.

number of high schools and enrolment in them always surpassed the progress in primary education throughout the span of educational development in British India. The number of high schools and enrolment in them in 1946-47 was 5298 and 21,94,030 respectively.¹⁵ The post-war Educational Development Plan calculated the enrolment needs of high schools on the basis of one child in every five being fit for higher education. The estimated figure of children in the age-range 11-17 who would need accommodation in high schools on the above basis was estimated at 72,50,000 in 1940-41.¹⁶ This figure must have gone up in 1946-47. So, in spite of comparatively rapid growth of secondary education, a lot was still desired to be done even on the quantitative side.

The number of universities stood at 20 in 1946-47 with 2,41,369 enrolment including enrolment in Intermediate classes.¹⁷ The rapid growth can be judged from the fact that the enrolment increased from 1,65,422 in 1941-42 to 2,41,369 in 1946-47.¹⁸ Commenting on the uneven development of education in different stages the

¹⁵Progress of Education in India, 1937-1947, Vol.I, (Delhi: Central Bureau of Education, Ministry of Education, March 1948), p.89.

¹⁶Post-war Educational Development in India, Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education, op.cit., p.20.

¹⁷Progress of Education in India, 1937-47, op.cit., p.111.

¹⁸Loc.cit.

Post-war Educational Development Report observed.

The high proportion of students in Indian Universities as compared with the school-going population indicates that in India the super-structure of the educational system has been allowed to develop before the main building has been erected on broad and sound foundations.¹⁹

But even the proportionately high enrolment in university education left the bulk of the population untouched. And this made India a very backward nation even in university education. The problem before the educational planners was not just of estimating and providing the minimum educational facilities for the vast mass of the population. It was as much a problem of making sure that no one is deprived of higher education because of his economic or social position in society. It was here that drastic changes were necessary in the institutional framework of the educational system which was built upon the edifice of social and economic inequalities.

The educational objectives put before the country by the Post-war Educational Development Plan of Central Advisory Board of Education and by the National Planning Committee on Education could not however, be fulfilled till basic changes in the economic structure were first

¹⁹Post-war Educational Development in India, Report of the Central Advisory Board of Education, op.cit., p.30.

made. The National Planning Committee on Education admitted that the equality of educational opportunity could not be achieved till the whole economic structure was transformed. In its absence the entry to higher education would continue to be in favour of the privileged sections of the society. The diversification of courses at the secondary stage would also not be possible on a rational basis till the government could not exercise effective control on the industrial life of the country.²⁰ Greater confusion prevailed at the primary stage where the avowed aim was to provide seven years schooling to each child. Here basic education was accepted as the national pattern. But serious reservations were expressed even before the scheme was properly put into action. The doubts expressed were on following counts.

- i) The scheme was based on the tacit assumption that the economic structure of rural India will remain static.
- ii) It laid too much stress on vocational training at the very first stage of child's education.
- iii) The 'exchange motive' in the scheme was detrimental to the education of children.

The half-baked convictions about basic education did more harm to the reconstruction of the educational

²⁰National Planning Committee Series, General Education and Technical Education & Developmental Research, op.cit., Pp.143-46.

system than would have been the case if no pretensions had been made to implement it. Acharya Kripalani aptly remarked.

Sabotage is not the monopoly of political opponents. It may come from conformity without conviction, forced by political considerations and opportunism. In several places the scheme of Basic National Education is accepted because the Committees appointed to suggest reform, could not possibly bless the old system, universally condemned, and having no constructive ideas of their own, found Gandhiji's scheme ready at hand and therefore convenient for adoption. All the implications of the scheme are not fully grasped. Moreover the scheme is being worked by Government officials who often lack both faith and initiative.²¹

The vacillation regarding the implementation of basic education scheme is also reflected by the deliberations of Minister's Conference held at Poona on 29th and 30th July, 1946 under the presidentship of Shri B.G.Kher. Here is a sample.

"To produce efficient teachers for Nai Talim would take time. What should be done to improve education in the schools in the meantime?" asked A.Chettiar. Gandhiji provided the following answer.

If you realise that the present system of education cannot bring India independence but only serve to deepen her slavery, you will refuse to encourage it, irrespective of whether any other takes its place or not. You will do whatever you can, within the four corners of the principles of Nai Talim and be satisfied with that.²²

²¹J.B.Kripalani, The Latest Fad(Basic Education), (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1948), p.38.

²²M.K.Gandhi, Basic Education, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1951), Pp.110-11.

The evaluation of basic education is however outside the scope of the present work. But it was clear that basic education scheme was accepted not out of convictions but due to political expediency. It was scuttled down at the implementation stage. Neither the educational planners nor the politicians were prepared for a radical break from the past. They wanted to preserve that institutional structure which was now to pass into their hands from the British. If it had served the foreign rulers in the past it could as well serve them in perpetuating their own hold on the socio-economic fabric of the society. It was no doubt true that the pre-colonial relationships could not continue in post-independent India. New relationships had to be forged and strengthened. But there was no attempt to replace the superstructure by an entirely new one. Perhaps the conditions were not ripe for that. Consequently, we find that when India attained freedom from her colonial rule it inherited neither a clear-cut direction about her education nor it had been bequeathed with a sufficiently advanced machinery to implement policies all her own. There is however no need to place the entire blame at the doorstep of the British rulers for no one could foresee the political chaos that followed in the wake of independence. Surely the confusion lay more in the Indian leaders who could hardly be said to have made up their minds regarding

the India they wanted to make. If under such circumstances education also became a casualty one need not wonder at its performance in the succeeding years.

This Chapter sums up the efforts made in the post-war period in charting out a comprehensive plan of education for the country. The major limitation was that the planning was undertaken under conditions of political uncertainties. Two important documents of this period were Post-war educational development plan prepared by the Central Advisory Board of Education and the educational plan prepared by the National Planning Committee. Both stressed the need for a complete overhaul of the educational system. The National Planning Committee emphasized the need for effecting basic changes in the economic structure as a necessary condition for implementing the educational schemes. Basic education was accepted as the national system of education. But as the transfer of power did not disturb the institutional framework, the existing machinery was hardly fit for giving a radical orientation to the educational policies.
