



FORGING THE NATION: EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL INDIA

Dr.Susmita Mohapatra

Associate Professor & HOD/DEAN, School of Arts and Humanities, YBN University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Abstract

The paper discusses how educational reform has changed the national identity in India since the colonial period up to the post-independent period. Educational policy was an important tool in the colonial rule in Britain as well as nation-building in the post-colonial period. The British educational reforms of the colonial period (1858-1947) produced a Westernized elite and, at the same time, resulted in the development of nationalistic national awareness that undermined imperial rule. The advent of English education, university, and standardized Education changed the intellectual and social landscape of Indian society radically. The educational reforms of 1947-present attempted to balance colonialism and indigenous ideals, nationalize, and resolve socioeconomic disparities. The paper presents the development of the educational process with the help of the analysis of policy documents, enrollment rates, and literacy data, from the work of Macaulay, Minute on Education (1835), to the modern educational systems. The paper states that Education was a two-sided sword; it served the interests of the colonizers, at the same time, it developed the nationalist consciousness that eventually destroyed the colonial rule. The post-colonial reforms reveal continuous conflicts between modernization, preservation of the culture, and fair access. This educational path makes it understandable why more generalized concerns can be raised on the role of identity formation, state power, and social change within developing countries.

Keywords: Reform in Education, Colonial India, Post-Colonial Education, National Identity, Nation-Building, Literacy, Indian Nationalism, Educational Policy, Decolonization and Cultural Transformation.

Introduction

No one has found Education as an essential process of creating the state and establishing identity as much as in the case of India's acquisition and conversion into an independent country of free land after colonial rule. The history of change in Education and national identity in India is a complicated story that has taken almost 200 years of development, during which Education served as one of the tools of colonial repression and national awakening (Kumar, 1991). It is the nature of this duality that gives the Indian case exceptional pedagogic value in the context of the formation of collective consciousness and political mobilization by the educational system.

School education interventions by the British colonial rule, which started to gain seriousness in the early nineteenth century, brought about a sea change in the intellectual landscape of Indian society. These were not apolitical technical measures but calculated political actions that were aimed at producing what Thomas Babington Macaulay once called a class of persons that was Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, opinions, morals, and in intellect (Macaulay, 1835, p. 116). Ironically, though, it is this same system of English education that gave the Indians ideological weapons, liberalism, nationalism, and democratic values that were used to stir anti-colonial feelings (Nurullah & Naik, 1951).

The educational system that post-independent India received was full of colonial interests: urban-centered, English-speaking, elitist, and lacking any touch with the indigenous knowledge systems (Kamat, 1985). The new country was struggling with the extraordinary task of reconstructing Education to support democratic principles, social justice, and inequalities, and to create a unified national identity out of the incredible linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity. Reform in Education then took center stage in the post-colonial state-building.

The three questions discussed in this paper are interrelated, and they are: How do colonial educational policies create Indian society and unwillingly develop nationalist consciousness? Second, how did the governments of post-colonial countries



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decolonize Education and ensure national integration at the same time? Third, what are the continuities and discontinuities of the shift between colonial and post-colonial systems of Education? This study answers these questions by analyzing the policy and quantitative data to elucidate its contribution to other larger studies on the role of Education as a nation-builder.

The analysis is single chronologically and discusses pre-colonial Education, colonial reforms 1835-1947, and post-independence developments, including 1947 to date. This chronological model shows the way in which educational priorities changed in accordance with the shift in the political situation, though some structural inequalities remained in each period.

Pre-Colonial Education: Aboriginal Systems

India had different educational traditions in the form of a pluralistic society before being colonized by the British. Three leading institutions ran the conventional system of Education: the pathshala (Hindu elementary school), the maktabas (Islamic school), and the gurukala (residential school) (Altekar, 1944). Such native systems focused on religious and moral Education and valuable knowledge that applied to the social status of the students.

The pathshala system, which was common in villages, was an instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic using the vernacular languages, and the content of the curriculum was based on religious texts and village traditions (Dharampal, 1983). Maktabas taught the Islamic religion and included Arabic, Persian, the Quran, and the Islamic law. Coming up, Sanskrit tols and Persian madrasas provided higher Education to a few students in fields like philosophy, literature, medicine, astronomy, and law (Basu, 1982).

The influential and controversial study of Dharampal (1983) relied on the British surveys of the 1820s and 1830s and proposed surprisingly high literacy levels in pre-colonial India, with in some areas one school out of every 400. Nonetheless, historians still disagree with these assertions. It is definite that the pre-colonial Education was decentralized, community-financed, and open to all castes at elementary levels, but tertiary Education was limited to the upper castes (Scharfe, 2002).

British officials had first ignored these indigenous systems as primitive and unsuitable in the system of a modern government, though a few scholars, such as William Adam, had reported in detail on the vitality (Adam, 1868). The methodical destruction and relegation of native Education constituted a significant part of the colonial educational policy.

Colonial Educational Reforms (1835-1947)

Early Debates and Macaulay's Minute (1835)

The educational policy of the East India Company congealed as a result of sharply contested arguments between the Orientalists and Anglicists, with the first one promoting the use of conventional learning in Sanskrit and Persian and the latter promoting the use of Western learning in English. The Minute on Education (1835) by Macaulay gave a clear preference to policies in favor of the Anglicist side. It made English the language of instruction and Western knowledge the cornerstone of the curriculum (Macaulay, 1835).

This policy was influenced by several incentives: to establish a group of intermediaries to govern the colonies, to open the Indians to the higher grade of Western civilization, and to cut the administrative expenses using the so-called filtration theory: to educate an elite that would spread knowledge down (Viswanathan, 1989). The acquiescence shown by Governor-General William Bentinck in the suggestions of Macaulay marked the beginning of an educational revolution that had very long-lasting effects.

Wood's Despatch (1854) and Institutional Expansion

In 1854, Charles Wood gave the first major educational policy framework with his Educational Despatch, which suggested the hierarchical system of the education system with primary schools, mass education in vernacular languages, and higher



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Education in English (Nurullah and Naik, 1951). The Despatch saw the creation of universities in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras (1857) along the same lines as London University, more examination-oriented.

It was an era of explosive growth of Western kind of institutions. Table 1 shows how the number of educational institutions and student enrollment increased during the colonial rule:

Table 1: Growth of Educational Institutions in British India (1857-1947)

Year	Universities	Colleges	Secondary Schools	Primary Schools	Total Students (millions)
1857	3	27	271	28,336	0.50
1887	4	191	3,916	123,086	2.89
1917	8	186	11,321	158,000	6.61
1947	20	591	24,664	208,252	11.50

Source: Compiled based on Nurullah and Naik (1951); Government of India Education Statistics (1951/2015).

The actual literacy rates were abhorrent despite the fantastic institutional development. Literacy rates were already about 12% on the 1947 census with very high gender inequality (male:18; female:6) (Census of India, 1951).

Educational Policy and Social Stratification

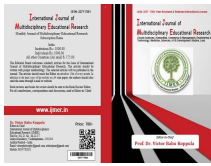
The policy on colonial Education strengthened and even established social hierarchies. The admission to English education was an indication of social status and an entry point into the colonial administration, and it thus served as a further isolation of the urbanized who remained Western educated and the rural majority (Kumar, 1991). It also increased the level of regional inequalities, whereby Bengal, Madras, and Bombay presidencies were allocated skewed resources over the northern and central parts.

There were minimal reforms that did not do away with gender inequality. In the year 1947, female Literacy was as low as 6 per cent, but missions and reform movements in the cities had brought about the Education of girls (Forbes, 1998). In the same way, the communities of lower caste were discriminated against in terms of accessing Education, with many traditional schools turning away most of them (Galanter, 1984).

Education and Awakening of Nationalism

Ironically, one of the most important effects of English education could have been the development of nationalist consciousness. Indian intellectual circles were empowered with ideological instruments to analyze colonialism through exposure to the Western philosophy of politics, especially the ideas of liberty, democracy, and nationalism (Chatterjee, 1993). The first nationalists, such as Ram Mohan Roy, Dadabhai Naoroji, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, were the products of the English education who converted its principles against the British rule.

In 1885, when the Indian National Congress was established, mostly by professionals who were educated in English, they initially sought moderate changes to the Constitution. Nevertheless, the schooling system had generated more radical critics. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Bipin Chandra Pal made louder nationalist claims, but later revolutionaries, such as Bhagat Singh, were well educated enough to consider socialism and anarchism (Sarkar, 1983).



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The criticism of Mohandas Gandhi extended and doubted the premises of Western Education. Gandhi in Hind Swaraj 1909 denounced English education as alienating Indians to their culture but demanded Education based on local crafts, languages, and values (Gandhi, 1997). This criticism had a tremendous impact on post-independence philosophy of Education.

The nationalist movement gave birth to other types of educational institutions: Gurukuls with its nationalistic focus on Indian traditions and the Jamia Millia Islamia with its nationalistic Education, and Santiniketan by Rabindranath Tagore, which was oriented to nationalistic Education with a combination of Eastern and Western Education (Kumar, 1991). These tests showed nationalistic attempts to envision Education outside colonial setups.

The Basic Education (1937) and the Wardha Scheme

The philosophy expressed by Gandhi in Education was put into practice through the Wardha Scheme of Basic Education (1937), made with Zakir Husain. This plan suggested seven years of free and compulsory Education, in the language of the people, focusing on practical manual work and financial independence by selling products the students made (Sykes, 1988). Although it was only adopted on a small scale under the ministries of the Congress, the principles of Basic Education had a significant impact on the post-independence policy.

Table 2: Literacy Rates in Colonial India by Region (1941)

Region	Male Literacy (%)	Female Literacy (%)	Total Literacy (%)
Bengal	24.5	7.9	16.1
Madras	23.0	8.6	15.6
Bombay	29.5	10.8	20.5
United Provinces	13.5	2.4	8.0
Punjab	15.9	3.0	9.7
Bihar	11.0	2.1	6.6
Central Provinces	16.5	3.9	10.4
All-India Average	19.2	5.5	12.2

Source: Census of India (1941)

Table 2 shows that there is a huge regional difference, where the southern and western regions recorded better literacy rates than the northern and eastern regions, trends that continued even after independence.

Post-Colonial Educational Reforms (1947-Present)

Foundational Principles and Constitutional Commitments

Education became one of the main priorities in the Constitution of independent India (1950). Article 45 instructed the state to offer free and compulsory Education to every child up to the age of fourteen years over a period of ten years- a high ambition, which would take many more decades to reach (Aggarwal, 2006). Article 46 focused on the Education of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other weaker groups. The framers of the Constitution imagined Education as a tool that would be used to integrate the nation, transform society, and develop the economy. In the State List (then in the 1976



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Concurrent List), however, Education became a complicated policy to implement as the state governments still enjoyed much autonomy (Tilak, 1997).

University Education Commission (1948-49) and Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)

The role of higher Education in independent India was studied by the University Education Commission, headed by S. Radhakrishnan. It had advised universities to develop democratic values, national consciousness, and educational excellence as it increased access (Government of India, 1949). It promoted a moderate balance between professional training, special and liberal arts, discussing the significance of the humanities as constituents of democratic citizenship.

Restructuring of the secondary Education was suggested by the Secondary Education Commission (Mudaliar Commission, 1952-53) to offer a diversified secondary education with vocational streams, but this was not implemented as the resources could cover only a small number of schools. Parents preferred academic streams that would result in university admission (Government of India, 1953).

National Policy on Education (1968) and Kothari Commission (1964-66)

The most comprehensive review of Indian Education after independence was done by the Indian Education Commission, headed by D.S. Kothari. This, in turn, formed the basis of a report (1966) by them titled National Policy on Education (1968), which outlined several key tenets (Government of India, 1966):

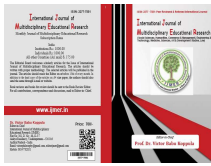
1. Common School system: Promoting local schools offering similar quality education irrespective of the caste, creed, and income levels.
2. Evening the Playing Field in Education: The focus on the access of disadvantaged groups.
3. 10+2+3 System: Educational ladder standardization.
4. Three-Language Formula: To promote national integration by ensuring that linguistic diversity is not infringed, three regional languages, such as Hindi, English, and the regional language, should be taught.
5. Science Education: With the focus on science and math to develop technology.

The Commission suggested that the level of educational spending should be raised to 6 per cent of GDP, which has not been achieved in decades (Tilak, 2006).

Operation Blackboard and District Primary Education Program (1980s-1990s)

The government realized that there were still significant inefficiencies in primary Education and in 1987, the Operation Blackboard was initiated to bring minimum facilities to all primary schools, at least two all-weather rooms, two teachers, teaching-learning material (Govinda and Varghese, 1993). In the process of enhancing infrastructure, the way it was done differed significantly among states.

DPEP (1994), which was with the assistance of International donors was aspired to universalize primary Education in select districts with decentralized planning, participation of the community, and emphasis on girls' Education and people experiencing poverty. DPEP had an increased enrollment and retention rate in the participating districts.



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Table 3: Literacy Rates in Post-Independence India (1951-2011)

Census Year	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Gender Gap (%)
1951	27.2	8.9	18.3	18.3
1961	40.4	15.4	28.3	25.0
1971	45.9	22.0	34.5	23.9
1981	56.4	29.8	43.6	26.6
1991	64.1	39.3	52.2	24.8
2001	75.3	53.7	64.8	21.6
2011	82.1	65.5	74.0	16.6

Source: Census of India (various years)

Table 3 shows an outstanding improvement in Literacy, and it rose to 18.3% (1951), then to 74.0% (2011). Nevertheless, the lack of elimination of the gender gap, despite the reduction, indicates the existence of problems.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Right to Education Act (2000s)

In 2001, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA, 2001), translated as Education for All Movement, was the most radical attempt of India at universal elementary Education. With a substantial investment in infrastructure, bringing teachers, and focusing on the needs of the marginalized population, SSA was to have all children 6-14 years in school by 2010 (Govinda, 2011).

Article 21A became justiciable due to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act, 2009), which became a watershed event. The Act ensured the free and compulsory Education of every child between the ages of 6-14, defined minimum norms of schools, enforced group reservations of the disadvantaged groups in the private schools, as well as made it illegal to keep the children detained till the completion of their elementary Education (Government of India, 2009).

Table 4: Gross Enrollment Ratios in Post-Independence India (%)

Period	Primary (I-V)	Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	Secondary (IX-X)	Higher Secondary (XI-XII)
1950-51	42.6	12.7	5.8	2.5
1970-71	94.9	37.1	21.5	11.8
1990-91	100.0	64.9	37.6	19.4
2010-11	115.4	86.0	69.2	45.8
2018-19	104.8	90.9	79.6	53.8

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India, Educational Statistics (various years)



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Note: GER above 100 per cent reflects the enrollment of children of over age and under ages.

Dramatic enrollment growth is depicted in Table 4, and the primary enrollment has come to an almost universal standard. Nonetheless, interlevel dropout rates show that there is still a problem with retention.

Concerns of Higher Education Expansion and Quality

Exponential expansion of post-independence higher Education, previously consisting of 20 universities and 591 colleges (1947), was observed, and today there are 1,043 universities and 42,343 colleges (University Grants Commission, 2020). This democratization created avenues of access and brought into question the issue of quality watering down, poor faculty-to-student ratios, old curricula, and poor research achievement.

It was suggested by the National Knowledge Commission (2006-09) and the Yashpal Committee (2009) that fundamental changes, which included institutional autonomy, increased funding towards research, better governance, and regulatory restructuring, should be made (Government of India, 2009). This has been a slow process with more recent efforts, such as the Institutes of Eminence and National Education Policy (2020), trying to transform the system more structurally.

National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is the first significant overhaul of a policy in 34 years since 1986. Some of the important provisions are (Government of India, 2020):

Structural Reorganization: The 10 plus two structure changed into a five plus three plus three plus four structure according to the cognitive development stages.

Early Child Care: Ages 3-6 Universal.

Mother Tongue Education: Promoting teaching in the first language through grade 5, or preferably 8.

Multidisciplinary Education: Defying strict separations across streams, with the provision of a flexible curriculum.

Reforming Assessment: Replacing memorization with competency assessment.

Teacher Training: There is are four-year integrated B.Ed. Programs and lifelong learning.

Technology Integration: Online learning, digital infrastructure, particularly after COVID-19.

The implementation of NEP 2020 is in its initial stages, and its results have not been evaluated. Critics wonder how adequate the resources are, whether it was possible to make such ambitious plans, and what it means to federalism since Education has a constitutional status (Kumar, 2021).

The National Identity and Formation of Education

The Policy of National Integration and Language

The most controversial issue in Education after independence was language. The Constitution accepted 14 languages (since 22) and Hindi was used as the official language, which created serious resistance in non-Hindi states, especially in Tamil Nadu (Ramaswamy, 1997).

The three-language formula tried to find the golden mean: students were to learn the local language, Hindi, and English. However, the application was very different. Most Hindi-speaking states also offered Hindi, Sanskrit, and English, whereas non-Hindi states offered regional language, English, and even Hindi, and this did result in an imbalance in the communicative competence and economic opportunities (Annamalai, 2001).

English was still privileged even though nationalist rhetoric focused on vernacular languages. English-mediated Education was availed to higher Education, professional, and world opportunities, which strengthened the divisions of classes



(Ramanathan, 2005). This stratification of language is still defining identity and access, whereby English is viewed as an ability to ascend the social ladder, and not as a means of oppression by those in power.

Secularism, Religious Identities and Content of Education

Secularism in the Constitution of India had to be negotiated with care in school material. Initially, the post-independence curricula focused on scientific temper, rationality, and composite national culture based on the various religious backgrounds (Thapar, 1966). Nevertheless, history textbooks were battlefields of rival accounts of Indian history, especially the relations between Hindus and Muslims and the era of colonialism (Nambissan and Rao, 2013).

The efforts to safeguard Indian history and civilization and safronize curricula under National Democratic Alliance governments intensified the controversies in the 1990s (Lall, 2005). These changes have then been revised a number of times by other governments and have caused instability in the curricula. These controversies indicate the role of Education in shaping collective memory and religious pluralism when it comes to nation-building.

Educational Inequality, Caste, Class

Although there are constitutional pledges towards equality, caste and class play a keen role in determining the access and achievement of Education. The Scheduled Castes (15%), the Scheduled Tribes (7.5%), and Other Backward Classes (27%), as part of the affirmative action policies, tried to roll back historical discrimination (Weisskopf, 2004).

Table 5: Literacy Rates by Social Group (2011)

Social Category	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Gap from National Average
National Average	82.1	65.5	74.0	—
Scheduled Castes	75.2	56.5	66.1	-7.9
Scheduled Tribes	68.5	49.4	59.0	-15.0
General Category	86.8	70.9	79.2	+5.2

Source: Census of India (2011)

Table 5 also demonstrates some long-term inequalities, with SC/ST population groups way lower than in literacy levels around the country. Such holes are a manifestation of historical marginalization, poverty, and discrimination (Thorat and Neuman, 2012).

The economic liberalization (after 1991) increased the inequalities between classes as the privatization process grew. Most of the families are not in a position to pay the fees incurred by elite private schools, establishing parallel worlds of Education with different resources and pedagogy and outcomes that differ dramatically (Srivastava, 2007). The quota mechanism of the RTE Act (25% of disadvantaged children in the private schools) tried to fill this gap, but it is highly challenged by many difficulties in implementation (Mehendale et al., 2015).

Gender and Educational Access

Another important aspect of inequality in Education is gender. Even though female Literacy has increased drastically in relation to 8.9 per cent (1951) and 65.5 per cent (2011), there still exist significant gaps, especially in the rural communities, and marginalized groups (Chanana, 2001).



Girls were restricted in their access to Education by cultural norms favoring boys, issues of safety, early marriage, home/family issues, and lack of sanitation facilities in schools (Ramachandran, 2003). Specific actions like scholarships to girls, girls-only schools, female educators, and toilets helped boost the number of girls enrolling and staying in school, but the number of girls in secondary schools leaving school is alarming (UNICEF, 2011).

Table 6: Gender Parity Index in Enrollment (2018-19)

Education Level	GPI (Girls per 100 Boys)
Primary	1.06
Upper Primary	1.02
Secondary	0.95
Higher Secondary	0.91
Higher Education	1.00

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India (2019)

Note: GPI 1.00 means parity; below 0.97 means gender disparity at the disadvantage of girls.

Table 6 reveals almost the same idea of parity in the primary levels, but the declining female representation in the higher levels indicates the possible dropout between stages. However, interestingly, there is parity in higher Education; this could be a reflection of the selection effect, that is, girls who overcome the barriers via secondary Education proceed to universities.

Continuities and Ruptures: Colonialism and Post-Colonial Education

Colonial educational systems are bound to have colonial legacies, which present contradictions between colonial legacies and decolonization ambitions. There are several continuities to be observed:

Structural Continuities: University affiliation patterns, centralized examination systems, and the discipline-based departments, all these structural forms of Education are mostly the same as colonial times (Kumar, 2005). Colonial-era system of governance remains significantly **embedded in universities, which have little autonomy and are bureaucratically inflexible.**

Linguistic Stratification: English has continued to have a preferred status, where Education through English is considered to be the best despite the call by nationalists to learn their native languages (Mohanty, 2010). This continues the class divisions that are dependent upon colonial language policies.

Elite Bias: In spite of the expansion, quality education remains concentrated in elite colleges (IITs, IIMs, central universities), which are only available to socioeconomically advantaged populations, repeating the colonial-era elitism (Kapur and Mehta, 2017).

Curriculum and Pedagogy: With colonial Education being characterized by Rote learning, examination centrism, and teacher-student relationships that are characterized by hierarchical relations, these aspects continue to be experienced even after the pedagogical reforms (Sriprakash, 2010).

At the same time, significant breaks characterize the breaks with colonial patterns:



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Universal Access: The ideals of universal Education are a stark contrast to the colonial ignorance in regard to mass education, which is manifested in the dramatic enrollment growth (Drèze and Sen, 2013).

Affirmative Action: Quota of weaker groups will be a significant discontinuity of colonialism, which strengthened social stratification (Deshpande, 2013).

Indigenous Knowledge: The recent policies recognize the indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and cultural diversity, and leave colonial rejection of the Indian traditions (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999).

Democratic Governance: Decentralization initiatives, community involvement, democratic school management committees, and college education of the same sort are the contrasts of the colonial era authoritarian administration (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2011).

These continuities and discontinuities depict the complications of post-colonial transformation. The total decolonization is not easy because educational standards in the world, economic needs, and deep-rooted interests are limiting the radical restructuring (Rizvi et al., 2006).

Difficulties and Current Problems.

Present-day Indian education has several related issues:

Quality Crisis: The learning outcomes are not good despite the quantitative expansion. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) offers important statistics that demonstrate that a significant number of grade 5 students are not able to read grade 2 text, which proves the lack of quality in the system (ASER Center, 2019).

Teacher Preparation and Motivation: Teacher education quality, inappropriate training, poor working conditions, and low motivation have a strong influence on the quality of teaching (Ramachandran et al., 2018). There is still teacher absenteeism, especially in rural areas.

Lack of infrastructural amenities: Lots of schools have inadequate amenities in the form of classrooms, toilets, drinking water, electricity, libraries, among others, which undermine the learning facilities (Afridi, 2011).

Digital Divide: The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the existence of harsh digital inequalities as millions of children have no access to the internet or devices to learn online, contributing to the existing disparities (Dutta and Smita, 2020).

Privatization and Commercialization: The fast development of the private sector casts doubts on the commodification of Education, affordability, regulation, and fair accessibility (Juneja, 2010).

Employment Mismatch: There are still poor education-employment associations, high graduate unemployment and underemployment rates, which raises the question of curriculum relevance and vocational training sufficiency (Tilak, 2020).

Regional Inequalities: There is still tremendous variation among the states, with the southern states attaining close to universal literacy levels and some of the northern states lagging far behind (Drèze and Sen, 2013).

This is because these challenges will only be addressed through long-term political commitment, proper resourcing, implementation capabilities, and inclusion of policy processes that involve various stakeholders.

Conclusion

Education plays a fundamental role in defining the national identity, social structure, and political consciousness, and this is evident in the course of educational reform in colonial and post-colonial India. Although colonisation educational policies were structured in order to fulfill imperialistic aims, they nonetheless ended up generating intellectual bases of nationalist



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mobilization, proving the unpredictable nature of Education as a means of social construction. Liberal democratic values created and nurtured by the colonial institutions were directed against their colonial masters by the Western-educated elite, an example of what Partha Chatterjee (1993) calls the derivative discourse of anti-colonial nationalism.

Reformations in post-independence Education attempt to create a national identity out of extreme diversity and to advance social justice and economic growth. The growth of Literacy, which was 18.3 (1951) to 74.0 (2011), is a remarkable feat, bringing hundreds of millions of people who had been left out of the education system into the light of Education. The post-colonial policy is different from the colonial elitism and discrimination due to the constitutional commitments to universal Education, marginalized groups' affirmative action, and linguistic pluralism.

Nevertheless, there are still some critical issues. The lack of quality, the ongoing inequality based on the founding lines of classes, caste, gender, and region, the traces of the colonial past in the organization of the state, and the contradiction between global integration and the cultural maintenance make the nation-building process complicated. The increasing divide between upper institutions and mass education risks forming a divided national identity as opposed to a united citizenship.

The education-national identity is a dynamic and debatable relationship. The policies about language create continuous conflicts between nationalism and regionalism. The content of the curriculum, especially history education, is a battleground of conflicting national identity visions. The rise of the English language and private Education undermines the previous ideas of the common schools that formed the egalitarian national consciousness.

The effectiveness of educational reform as the instrument of nation-building cannot be finally evaluated by the enrollment figures or literacy levels, but it should be determined whether Education produces critical citizenship, lessens social inequalities, facilitates economic and political involvement, and instills common democratic interests without disregarding diversity. Indian Education will show a mixed picture by these measures, with much improvement and still much to be desired.

COVID-19 has produced dislocations never seen previously and has enhanced the pace of some changes, especially those related to digital integration. The National Education Policy 2020 has a grandiose reform vision, yet it will be seen through its implementation. Experience holds that it takes more than policy declaration to achieve transformative change in the sphere of Education, including the ability to commit resources to the project, the capacity to implement, the political will, and even the general social agreement.

The study of the educational course of India sheds some light on the development of the post-colonial world, the process of state formation, and even social change. Education is one of such pivotal spheres where the fundamental questions concerning identity, equality, modernity, and democracy are debated. This is because, as India proceeds to walk a fine line between the traditional and the modern forms of development, Education will still be the main force that defines what it means to be a part of the nation.

The education reform study in India reveals that the process of nation-building via Education is not linear and complete. It is a constant compromise of divergent interests, constant adjustment to new circumstances, and a constant struggle to bring into reality constitutional ideals. The duality of Education as the source of inequality and, possibly, its equalization is the guarantee that the reform in the educational sector of Indian society will remain the battleground of the ongoing project of national identity and democratic citizenship.

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