

## History of Education

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### THE STATE OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH

There are only seven successful doctoral theses in history of education during a period of five years—between 1988 and 1992. There is no doubt that the crop of research in history of education is outstandingly small during the present survey period as compared to the earlier ones. The First Survey (1969-73) reported 42 studies, the second (1974-78) 48, the third (1979-83) 45, and the fourth (1984-87) 34. It cannot be said that there is a trend of decline of interest in research in history of education. In earlier survey reports the author has seen several cases of overlapping theses which have been reported, say in the First Survey, and have been mentioned again in the Second and sometimes in the Third and the Fourth Surveys also. The reasons may be one or more and are anybody's guess.

Let us now have a look at the seven doctoral researches done in seven different universities in seven different states. All the seven researches have been undertaken in the Departments of Education in the respective universities and, unlike the earlier survey reports, there is no case of a research in history of education having been done in other, non-education departments, including history. Of the seven theses, three concentrate on a chronological development of education in Punjab, Manipur and Darjeeling during a period which may be called contemporary history

(Kaur, C. 1990; Henia, A. 1988; and Dewan, D.B. 1988); one on the contributions of missionaries to education in Orissa (Behera, M. 1988); one attempt at an analysis of the relationship between primary and secondary education and politics in Bombay during 1901-60 (Fonseca, J. 1988) and another (Birdi, H.S. 1990) concentrates on the implementation of national educational policies between 1813 and 1986. The last two theses seem to be a departure from the usual practice among researchers in history of education to choose a subject which can be straightforwardly analysed chronologically. It is also noticeable that all the seven theses belong to the Modern period of Indian history.

Among the theses mentioned above the author would like to grade Fonseca, J.'s (1988) "An Analysis of the Relationship between the Political System and Education with Particular Reference to Primary and Secondary Education in Bombay (1901-60)" highly. The study seeks to investigate the impact of the political system on education during the centralised system of administration (1901-21), dyarchy (1921-37), provincial autonomy (1937-47) and independent India (1947-60). The well-accepted hypothesis that the political system has an impact on the educational system could have, however, been better tested during a much shorter period either in colonial India or in independent India, and in the absence of an explanation of "Methods and Procedure" the author presumes that the



kind of source materials utilised by the authors of the rest of the studies have also been used here.

Similarly, though Birdi, H.S.'s (1990) study, "The Implementation of National Educational Policies in India" constitutes a departure from the general trend, the title seems to be a misnomer. Can we describe the Charter Act of 1813, the Education Despatch (Birdi calls it "Wood's Education Despatch" which is incorrect) of 1854, and the Government of India's Education Resolution of 1904 and 1913 as National Educational Policies as Birdi has done? If so, in what sense are they National? It is true that the Hunter Commission (1882-83) first talked about "a national education" and the Hartog Committee (1927-29) also described education as a "nation building force" but one wonders whether such educational measures initiated by a colonial government could be described as "national" in the sense in which we understand the term today. And some of his findings also are not correct. It is not correct, as Birdi has found, that for two decades after 1813 the East India Company could not spend the Rs.1 lakh sanctioned by the Charter Act of 1813 because of the Anglo-Oriental Controversy. As a matter of fact, the Anglo-Oriental Controversy started only after the formation of the General Committee of Public Instruction in 1823 on the mode of expenditure of the amount of money sanctioned by the Charter Act of 1813 when it was made available to the Committee. And which the latter spent in fostering and encouraging Oriental institutions and learning despite opposition from the Anglicists. Can we put the cart before the horse?

Except Birdi, the other six researchers have concentrated on the educational problems of their respective states. In the earlier survey reports also it has been seen that quite a large number of studies undertaken are on the educational problems of the candidates' own states. In the first two surveys there are fifty-

one out of ninety, in the third, twenty-nine out of forty-five and in the fourth, twenty out of thirty-four, studies which have highlighted regional educational problems in historical perspective (Survey reports). The ascending graph of interest in state level studies is but natural. A researcher born and brought up in a certain socio-economic and political set-up is most likely to pick up a subject of research from within it so that the tools of research can be handled efficiently and smoothly without any technical hindrances, such as, for example, the knowledge of a language other than the researcher's mother-tongue. The author has also seen from his experience as a supervisor at a national university where researchers come from different parts of India that they have a preference for investigation of educational problems concerning their own states or regions. However, the author often doubts the motivation of these researchers—in most cases a researcher who comes to a university to smoothly earn a doctorate degree to increase his market value has only half-baked ideas of research and is often required to be served with a carved slice from some large historical joint which the supervisor has already roasted and kept ready for the purpose to help the concerned student!

Be that as it may, such regional investigations have their own value and uses—they often throw up new material, new data which often enlivens the reconstruction of educational history at the national level. However, such regional investigations also need a new technique, a new skill to handle the fresh materials at the local level. As a matter of fact, investigation in local history is a new phenomenon in historical research and is one of the few important changes along with education that have recently taken place in our understanding of history and education. One wonders whether a researcher who undertakes to investigate at a regional level is aware of these changes. And it will not be inappropriate here to clarify our ideas on the subject before highlighting the status of research in history of



education in the West as well as in India.

### NEW APPROACHES TO HISTORY OF EDUCATION

The changes that have been referred to in the preceding section—the author would like to call them comprehensive changes—have taken place since the fairly recent emergence of the countries in the Third World, and some of the areas of history which are most affected by these changes are local history, comparative history, political history, social history, and intellectual and cultural history.

In local history, adequate attention is now paid not only to a study of institutions or of personalities but of structures and processes also and to the discovery of continuities and discontinuities across the centuries without dividing the past into convenient periods. As the study of local history broadens out, it ceases to involve an exercise in illustrating what is already known about national history from local examples and becomes a means of reconstructing national history afresh from local materials. As a sequel to the rediscovery of the variety of experience embedded in local, regional and national subcultures, a new approach to comparative history has emerged pivoting on the discovery of what was common between and what was distinctive to different societies. What is becoming more useful in local history is a quantitative approach. As Schumpeter puts it, "We need statistics not only for explaining things but in order to know precisely what there is to be explained." The analysis of bodies of data which were often collected for the strictly limited purposes of the historian, can in itself stimulate the asking of new questions.

In political history, attention is now moving from particular pieces of legislation, though these are still studied within a different frame, to cumulative administrative processes, to the making of critical decisions, to the changing scale and role of organisation—it involves less concentration on the "landmarks" and more on the interplay of people and problems. Similarly,

in social history, the attempt is now made to make use of concepts derived from sociology, anthropology and psychology to study "history from below". The new social history directs attention to people whose names never figured in the older history books, the people who were deprived or neglected in their own time and whose participation in government was minimal or non-existent, whose attitudes towards "authority" could be differential or resentful, passive or hostile. And finally, we have the new intellectual and cultural history. The history of ideas is now beginning to come into its own, not merely the history of ideas of the "great thinkers" but the history of chains of ideas and their mode of communication through different "media", the shifting relationship between "minority" and "mass" communication, the significance of "language" and the forms of control. The new history of ideas has been associated with a re-examination of such crucial changes as the invention and development of printing and the subsequent history of literacy and the more recent "communication revolution" (Briggs, A. 1971).

These new approaches to history reveal current preoccupations and are made possible by the availability of new materials and techniques, although the techniques, including oral interview, are, of course, instrumental and depend for their success on the quality of the questions asked. Most important of all is the new balance between specialisation and generalisation—the old barriers between the different sub-branches of history are breaking down and new efforts at synthesis are being made, making possible the emergence of "Total History" as advocated by Lucien Febvre of the *Ecole des Annales* (Leon, A. 1985).

In studying history of education each of these new approaches is to be studied carefully. For history of education is no longer regarded as a matter of "Acts and Facts" as the conception of education has broadened considerably in recent years—education is no longer just a matter of formal schooling but of all the many influences



which go to shape a person's character and intellect. History of education is, therefore, concerned not merely with institutions but with the social forces which have affected the quality of life, and with the ideas which have been put forward by theorists and practitioners of education in the past. Education is thus an adjunct to the historical process besides being one of the chief factors conditioning human beings' outlook and aspirations. History of education is, therefore, a part of the wider study of the history of society—social history broadly interpreted with the politics, the economics and the religion put in.

### THE INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

In the West, in Europe and the USA, as well as in Australia and Japan, the research in history of education has been built up around these approaches which have characterised the emergence of the "new history" in the last three decades. In each of the countries mentioned above there is a History of Education Society which annually meets in conferences and regularly brings out a journal (in most cases a quarterly) carrying the researches done by scholars in history of education. In 1978, at Oxford there was a preparatory meeting to form an International Association of History of Education and to hold annual conferences in different parts of the world. The meeting culminated in successfully inaugurating the International Standing Conference for the History of Education in Leuven in September 1979, and since that year the association has regularly held its annual conferences which have been developed into the only existing international "fair" for the history of education, "a market" where researchers from all over the world can get into contact with each other and exchange ideas and research projects as well as research results (*International Newsletter for the History of Education*, 1993). These annual conferences bring out, subsequently in most cases, a select list of papers presented at these conferences. A very remarkable outcome as a by-product of these conferences is a recent

publication, *Why Should We Teach History of Education?*, edited by Kadriya Salimova and Johanningmeyer, E.V. (1993) which emphasises the importance of the discipline as "one of the teaching subjects which can educate future teachers in the feeling of friendship, mutual understanding and deep respect for all nationalities in the world". The International Standing Conference for the History of Education brings out a newsletter twice during the year as its official organ, and it has been tremendously successful in establishing a network of some three thousand two hundred interested people in the discipline.

All education departments in the universities of these countries offer courses on history of education and most of the universities which do not have an education department have faculty positions in their Departments of History where adequate serious attention is focused on teaching and research involving history of education. In South Africa a whole department, manned by twenty-eight faculty members, exists on history of education. When complimented by the author on his having such "a large and autonomous department" in one single discipline, that is, history of education, the chairperson wrote to the author: "Thank you for your very kind remarks concerning our emphasis on History of Education at Unisa. It isn't, and never has been, easy to maintain this position! We are constantly under fire" (Letter to the author, 1993).

Besides university Departments of Education, there are Institutes where very valuable research in history of education is often done. In Toronto, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) has a Department of History which has since its inception in the 1960s undertaken useful research on educational problems which have global ramifications. Similarly, the History Department, which is now a part of the larger department including other social science disciplines like the humanities and philosophy at the University of London Institute of Education, has been making outstanding contributions to history of education



and allied disciplines. And in Paris we have *Service d'Histoire de l'Education* under *Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique* which brings out regularly thrice during the year, in January, May and September, a bibliographical account of the work on history of education done in different parts of the world.

And what kind of research in history of education in all these university departments and institutes is emphasised now-a-days? In all these places, particularly in the United Kingdom, the USA and throughout Europe generally the attempts of the scholars are to find out how education discovers and provides the conditions which encourage the fuller development of abilities and skills in every sphere of human activity—artistic, scientific, social and spiritual—and, seen in this light, education may be strikingly described as the mode of development of human beings in society. If schools, colleges, universities and teaching and learning institutions of all kinds are to flourish and so realise their purpose of empowerment, one is required to understand what circumstances hinder or encourage such a situation. This involves historical analysis—an attempt to penetrate into the relations between education and society, between educational and social change.

The direction for this kind of research that now dominates historical studies over the past decades in the United Kingdom, the USA and throughout Europe generally has been provided by Sir Fred Clarke, a former Director of the University of London Institute of Education. In 1940, in a seminal little book, Clarke, F. (1940) argued for a new approach in history of education by interpreting thought and practice in the past in the light of conflicting social interests and their political expression. It is from this conflict of interests, as Clarke consistently emphasised, that educational change has emerged—in a form tempered by the political settlement arrived at as well as compromise of thought and practice (Clarke, F. 1940).

In an article in 1966, Brian Simon, described

as “a giant, both as a historian of education and as a maker of educational history” (*Paedagogica Historica* 1993) came forward to endorse Clarke's thesis by arguing that students, teachers and all those concerned with the educational enterprise would find the historical approach highly relevant to their work in schools and colleges of all types. By setting educational developments in their historical perspective, such study and knowledge “opens the teachers' eyes to the real nature of their work.” It is the most difficult thing in the world “to view objectively a system in which one is immediately involved.” Historical study can be a powerful means to this end as it “enables the student to understand that educational ‘principles’ contain historical components, some of which may no longer be relevant—or, in the light of advancing knowledge, viable—and which are, therefore, open to reconsideration.” The same applies to institutions which have often changed in the past and will certainly be changed in the future. As Simon, B. (1966) further observes: “There is, perhaps no more liberating influence than the knowledge that things have not always been as they are and need not remain so.” Not content with this theoretical exposition, Simon, who had since 1960 undertaken to analyse the educational development in England in the historical perspective, completed his four-volume study of English education, covering the period from 1780 with the publication of *Education and the Social Order, 1940-90* in 1991.

### THE NATIONAL SCENARIO

And what is the status of research in history of education in India? Research in history of education in India had been almost unknown before 1945 when Nurullah, S. and Naik, J.P. published their joint venture, *History of Education in India during the British Period*. By that time, however, Indian scholars working on different aspects and periods of Indian history had been able to make a substantial contribution to their subject. In the period, Ancient India, Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhri,



H.C., Bhandarkar, R.G., Mookerji, R.K., Alteker, A.S., Tripathi, R.S., Nilkanta Sastri, Srinivasa Iyengar, P.T.; in the period, Medieval India, Ishwari Prasad, Sardesai, G.S., Sarkar, J.N., Saletore, B.A., Tara Chand, Qanungo, K.R., Beni Prasad; in the period, Modern India, Pannikar, K.M., Dutta, R.C., Sinha, N.K., Banerjee, A.C., Dutta, K.K.—were names of a few outstanding scholars who had already distinguished themselves by their words on Indian history. In 1946, Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhuri, H.C. and Dutta, K.K. sat together and brought out *An Advanced History of India* which has till now stood the test of time and has remained since 1946 one of the best available works which meets the demands of the history students at the graduate and postgraduate levels.

The Indian scholars who made outstanding contributions to Indian history—ancient, medieval and modern—before 1945 based their researches not only on available printed courses including memoirs, diaries, letters and pamphlets but also on unpublished records and, manuscripts and archaeological evidence. This, however, cannot be said about Nurullah, S. and Naik, J.P.'s work who compiled a history of educational development in British India from available printed selections of records and reports and other printed works on education that they could lay their hands on. In such a work it is absolutely futile to look for the kind of approach and treatment that characterised the works of Indian scholars on Indian history. It was difficult for both Nurullah, S. and Naik, J.P. to make an objective assessment of the educational developments in colonial India as both were part of the colonial educational system and viewed the history of educational development from within it. Nurullah, S. who held an M.Ed. degree from Leeds University was a distinguished member of the Bombay Education Service. And Naik, J.P. served the Bombay Education Department before becoming an Adviser in the Ministry of Education in 1959. Thirdly, it was further difficult for Naik, J.P. who actively participated in the Freedom Movement

to write about the educational development in colonial India dispassionately and without any bias. The book was written at a time when the Freedom Movement was about to reach its climax and as such it reflected the spirit of the age—an overdose of nationalistic sentiments. Finally, the title of Nurullah and Naik's book, *History of Education in India during the British Period* should be read as *History of Education in British India* as there has been hardly any substantial information about education in the Indian States outside British India.

Five years before the publication of Nurullah and Naik's work, McCully, B.T. (1940) an American scholar, brought out a book entitled, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*. Despite the fact that McCully's work was an excellent piece of historical writing which anticipated the future history of education that has emerged in the West since the late 1960s, it was Nurullah, S. and Naik, J.P.'s (1974) book which gave us the first authentic and nearly full account of educational development in colonial India and an insight into the nature of the official documents utilised to obtain this information. Immediately after its publication, Nurullah and Naik's book became instantly well-known as a pioneering work on the subject, and within three decades after 1945, it underwent six editions, the last being in 1974 when Naik, J.P. added a chapter to update the educational history to 1973. Unfortunately for us, Nurullah, S. and Naik, J.P.'s (1974) book instead of encouraging further research in the subject became right from its publication in 1945 a handy stereotyped model for historians of education in India to follow. And, consequently, there has been no apparent advancement of knowledge on the subject to what Nurullah, S. and Naik, J.P. had told us in 1945!

One obvious factor contributing to the failure of these authors, who wrote subsequently on the history of education in India, to give us more information on the subject was their inability to consult sources other than those used by Nurullah, S. and Naik, J.P. The government's



account of educational development in colonial India comes handy in Sharp, H. and Richey, J.A.'s selections from *Educational Records of the Government of India* in two parts, covering the period from 1781 to 1859. From 1859 onwards, we have annual *Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India*, and from 1886 onwards, we have the *Quinquennial Reviews of Education* dealing with the progress of education every five years—a practice which arose out of the discussion on the *Report of the Indian Education Commission* in 1882-83. While voluminous reports and recommendations of the various commissions and committees are meticulously studied, the *Private Papers* of the officials of the East India Company till 1857 and of the British Crown after that year in highlighting the real issues and motives behind changes in education are absolutely overlooked (*Private Papers*). So also are the contemporary memoirs, letters and diaries, travellers' accounts, pamphlets as well as the contemporary newspapers and the *Proceedings of the Indian National Congress* since 1885, which throw a flood of light on the Indian reaction to changes in education under the British Raj.

Among the sources thus neglected the most important are the *Private Papers*. A careful perusal of the *Wood Papers* at the Indian Office Library, London, and *Dalhousie Papers* at the Scottish Record Office at Edinburgh tells us that it is not correct to describe the Education Despatch of 1854 as "Wood's Despatch" which is the prevalent practice among all the educationists in the country (Ghosh, S.C. 1975). Similarly, a careful examination of the *Curzon Papers* and *Hamilton Papers* at the India Office Library, London, tells us that Curzon's reform of Indian education pivoted upon his attempt to control higher education, which, in his own words, "turns out only a discontented horde of office-seekers, whom we have educated for places which are not in existence for them to fill" (Ghosh, S.C. 1988).

There are, however, studies since the First Survey Report (1969-73) which have attempted to utilise most of the available sources, including

*Private Papers*, but these are works by Indian scholars which have been done mostly abroad or in India under supervisors who have been trained abroad. Only a few among such scholars have been able to keep burning the flame of their doctoral interests in history of education in their subsequent works, such as Aparna Basu, Syed Yusuf Shah, Dipak Kumar and Mathew, A. In most cases research in history of education over the past years since 1945, as during the current survey period, does not reveal any startling discovery or truth that is not known at the national level.

Earlier trend report writers (Shukla, S., 1974; 1979 and Basu, A., 1987; 1991) have noticed an inclination among researchers to work on educational problems at the state level. As already clarified, this inclination or tendency is inevitable given the situation in which a researcher finds himself/herself at the time of his/her registration for a doctoral degree—a Bengali scholar without an adequate knowledge of Malayalam as well as without adequate acquaintance with the conditions in Kerala will think twice before venturing on a research at the Calcutta University under a Bengali supervisor on an educational problem in Kerala. However, the author welcomes this trend among our researchers to work on educational problems at the state or local level, as in the case of the thesis by Dewan, D.B. (1988), in the present survey, where the discovery and use of new materials add to our existing knowledge on the subject at the national level.

### NEW AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

The history of education in India is a virgin field. Very little is known about education in Ancient and Medieval India and what is now known about it in Modern India is limited mainly to education as it developed in British India. At the time of Independence in 1947, there were more than 500 states, ruled by the Indian Princes, with a total area of about 700,000 square miles which commemorated the vanished glory of defunct kingdoms and empires, and enjoyed a



certain amount of autonomy in internal affairs under the aegis of the British Crown. If a part of the Western system of education built up by the British Raj went to Pakistan, a substantial part of education developed in the Indian States which opted for merger with India, did fill in the gap and became from 1947 onward an integral part of Indian education. Unfortunately, apart from the Chiefs' Colleges we know almost nothing about education in the Indian States (before 1947) which depended upon the whims and caprices of the Indian Princes, many of whom were educated abroad, and no uniformity either in standard or in instruction (the medium varied from state to state according to its regional dialect) could be expected. An investigation into the regional disparities in education, which are now engaging the attention of our educational planners, should start with an analysis of education as it had existed in the Indian States which are part of India since 1947.

Secondly, we know very little about gender education presumably because there may not be much material to write about, but a recent study at a regional level of the Madras Presidency done by Rajalakshmi, R. (1993) has shown how education of women could bring about changes in the society engineered by the educated women themselves. Similar regional studies on the model provided by Rajalakshmi should be undertaken to fill in the gap in our knowledge.

Thirdly, and this flows from what has just been said above, whenever a study of a sector-wise development of education or institution is to be undertaken, such a study should be related to changes in the society. Any interpretation of educational change must take account of the fact that different social classes and groups, including minorities, develop and articulate policies, and indeed a general outlook reflecting their own needs and aspirations. Societies all over the world are riven by contradictions and divisions between opposing social forces. Such divisions, and the conflicts to which they give rise, are necessarily reflected in the world of education—sometimes directly.

The result is that education becomes and is best seen as, the site of a struggle between what are often opposing, or at least, antagonistic, social forces. Such conflicts can become acute, as the historical record shows very clearly, and characterise the very beginning of the history of education in Modern India. The Anglo-Oriental Controversy was not merely a controversy between the Anglicists and the Orientalists over the nature of education to be imparted to the Indians but a controversy where the segments of the contemporary Indian society were involved as opponents of each other (Ghosh, S.C. 1983).

Most of the original contributions to history of education till date have come from disciplines other than education. And this is very natural, for history as an important discipline in education has never been visualised by those who are responsible for preparing courses in education in Indian universities. The recent *Report of the Curriculum Development Centre in Education* (UGC 1989) lists 73 universities which offer courses in education. The core papers offered by these universities vary from two to five, and they are usually philosophical, sociological and psychological foundations of education, research methodology and statistics. History of Education or Historical Foundations of Education is never offered as a core paper and in most universities it is not even offered as an optional or elective paper. There is no doubt, as Landes, D.S. et al. (1971) have pointed out that "history has always been a borrower from other disciplines...but history has always been a lender and all the social sciences would be immeasurably poorer without knowledge of the historical record". Our universities thus prepare teachers who have little or no idea of "the historical record" of education in our country. One sometimes wonders whether these teachers could be compared with those physicians who know all about the various aspects of human diseases and their remedies without any knowledge of the human body!



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