

## History of Education in British India during first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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To the late nineteenth century north Indian context there had been a sizable number of people who had become significant in the transitional phase in which society had been experiencing the pressures of a modern system and ideas. In the age that witnessed the introduction of modern education, institutions, press and administrative measures that brought structural changes in the role of an educated class became crucial.

Government in British India created a new public system of education and allocated some amount of public funds to every level of education from universities and colleges to primary schools. Although private demand for an English medium education led to a dramatic increase in secondary schools and colleges, the growth of mass primary schooling lagged behind as noted by the differential enrollment patterns and the low level of literacy. Colonial officials frequently cited low demand as the chief obstacle to increasing literacy but they introduced policies that only worsened pre-existing conditions. School fees were levied over the entire period and public subsidies were introduced to minimize state costs and encourage private efforts to develop schools. Consequently, these policies created an important role for local factors to influence the provision of public schooling.

It was reported that there was substantial heterogeneity in the demand for education between different castes and religions during study period, perhaps due to differential rates of return and opportunity costs. Therefore, the population shares of Brahmins, lower castes, Muslims, and aboriginal tribes are important independent variables. The high level of Brahman literacy suggest that this group heavily valued the new public system of education. Moreover, they were

more likely to prefer secondary and middle schools with attached primary classes, which allowed students to go from primary to advanced grades at the same school because primary classes at, these Schools offered a superior instruction as compared to regular primary schools.<sup>1</sup>

It is unclear about the share of disadvantaged groups like the lower castes and aboriginal tribes. During Study period they had very low literacy, missionaries were particularly active in promoting schools for them and official policies also encouraged public support for schools in areas heavily populated by lower castes and aboriginal tribes. Provincial government schools would be positively correlated with their population share. If missionaries relied on grant-in-aids, then lower castes and aboriginal tribes could also be positively associated with aided schools. Given Muslims preferred indigenous private religious schools, but their population share to be positively associated with private schools and negatively associated with public schools. However, provincial governments also established schools to encourage Muslim enrollment and so their population share could be positively correlated with provincial government schools.<sup>2</sup>

Heterogeneous preferences across different Hindu castes and religions could negatively affect the provision of public schools, particularly at the primary level, where decentralized local boards allocated funds toward schools and other local services. Higher castes and classes were disproportionately represented on local boards and perhaps they were more effective in influencing local policy in more diverse districts. Given Brahmins and higher castes were distinct in many salient respects from the rest of the population, one might expect them to undervalue societal benefits of mass schooling suggesting a potential under-provision of primary schools during those days.<sup>3</sup>

Besides social structures, occupational composition and market economy are also likely to affect public schools during those days. Districts with larger populations engaged in professional employment are probably more likely to promote and develop schools at all levels, while areas with larger agricultural populations might place a lower premium on education, particularly secondary schooling.<sup>4</sup>

Finally it became evident that during first decade of 20th century, higher income probably increases public and private revenues available to construct and operate schools.

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**Table.- Population Enrolled in Schools (in % of Total Population)**

A.	Total Public School	1901 - 02	1906 - 07	1911 - 12
1.	National	1.6%	2.0%	2.4%
2.	Madras	1.9%	2.3%	2.8%
3.	Bombay	2.2%	2.5%	3.1%
4.	Bengal	2.0%	2.3%	2.8%
5.	United Provinces	0.8%	1.1%	1.3%
6.	Punjab	0.9%	1.2%	1.6%
7.	Central Provinces & Berar	1.3%	1.8%	2.0%
<b>B.</b>	<b>Public Primary</b>			
1.	National	1.3%	1.6%	2.0%
2.	Madras	1.6%	1.9%	2.5%
3.	Bombay	2.0%	2.3%	2.8%
4.	Bengal	1.7%	2.0%	2.2%
5.	United Provinces	0.6%	0.9%	1.1%
6.	Punjab	0.6%	0.8%	1.0%
7.	Central Provinces & Berar	1.1%	1.4%	1.6%
<b>C.</b>	<b>Public Secondary</b>			
1.	National	0.259%	0.296%	0.362%
2.	Madras	0.271%	0.323%	0.266%
3.	Bombay	0.190%	0.228%	0.275%
4.	Bengal	0.327%	0.298%	0.374%
5.	United Provinces	0.148%	0.182%	0.206%
6.	Punjab	0.322%	0.332%	0.498%
7.	Central Provinces & Berar	0.216%	0.347%	0.354%
<b>D.</b>	<b>Public Colleges</b>			
1.	National	0.010%	0.010%	0.014%
2.	Madras	0.012%	0.015%	0.014%
3.	Bombay	0.012%	0.016%	0.018%
4.	Bengal	0.014%	0.014%	0.022%
5.	United Provinces	0.005%	0.008%	0.012%
6.	Punjab	0.009%	0.011%	0.018%
7.	Central Provinces & Berar	0.002%	0.002%	0.005%

#### Sources: Quinquennial Reviews of Education, 1911-12.

The data presented in above mentioned table indicates that, there was a marked increase in enrollment while the Crown controlled education policy, the average number of pupils attending school as late as 1912 was only one out of every five children of school-age with substantial provincial heterogeneity in enrollment rates.

This Tables present data on the number of public institutions the percentage of the population enrolled therein by level of instruction primary, secondary and collegiate. Collegiate and secondary education expanded tremendously from 1901 to 1912 the percentage of the population enrolled in secondary schools and colleges also increased. With particularly striking increases in Bengal, Bombay, Punjab, and the Central Provinces. In comparison, the growth of primary schools and enrollment lagged behind the number of primary schools increased as compared to colleges and secondary schools. Moreover, the number of primary schools and enrollment actually up in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when larger public revenues were specifically made available for primary education. While the share of the population enrolled in primary schools increased the share enrolled in colleges also increased.

The growth in schools and enrollments are especially interesting in comparison to patterns in other countries. For example, in 1911-12, India had a larger share of the population enrolled in secondary schools as compared to either France or Japan and was only marginally below England and Wales. The percentage of the population enrolled in secondary schools was 0.36 for India, 0.35 for Japan, 0.32 for France, and 0.62 for England. However, the Indian population enrolled in primary schools was 2.00 lower than Brazil (2.61), Russia (3.77), Sri Lanka (8.94), Japan (13.07), and France (13.9)<sup>5</sup> Moreover, these differences are not entirely driven by different enrollments in private secondary schools as compared to primary schools. In 1900 public primary school enrollment per 1000 children of ages 5 to 14 was 625 for France, 720 for the United Kingdom, 507 for Japan and 47 students for British India. In comparison, public secondary school enrollment was 11 in France, 7 in the United Kingdom, 13 in Japan and 9 in British India.<sup>6</sup> This differential performance in secondary versus primary schooling is striking given the extremely poor overall literacy record of British India during study period (1901 - 01 to 1911-12).

Mass primary schooling was never achieved under colonial education policy and literacy rates remained less than 10% in 1911. The census data presents estimates of 1911 provincial literacy rates by gender for different castes and religions. As is evident, average literacy was extremely low and female literacy was almost nonexistent on average less than 1 in 100 women was recorded as literate, with the exception of Jains and Christians. Moreover, literacy rates varied tremendously

between different caste and religious groups.<sup>7</sup> Literacy among Hindus mirrored the social hierarchy of the caste system despite provincial heterogeneity in levels. It was reported that Male Brahman literacy ranged from 22% in United Provinces to 64% in Bengal Proper, while lower caste males had below average literacy that varied from 0.5% in United Provinces to 6% in Bengal Proper. The small number of literate lower caste males were frequently educated in missionary schools that were assisted by government grant-in-aids. The limited success of official and non-official efforts to increase lower caste literacy was attributed to low demand, poverty, and caste norms that made it difficult for lower caste boys to attend public schools. Literacy among aboriginal tribes was reported as even lower than among the lower castes with fewer than 1% of the tribes recorded as literate in any province. The tribes were found in large numbers in Assam, parts of Bengal, and the jungles of central India. Missionaries worked for their educational advancement, but their extreme poverty and geographic remoteness limited the success of missionary endeavors. Education among Muslims, the dominant religious minority (approximately 22% of the population in 1911) also lagged behind Hindus.<sup>8</sup>

This was especially true at the secondary and collegiate levels where Muslims has been slower to adopt the English system as compared to their Hindu brethren. British policy directed significant attention toward increasing Muslim enrollment in public schools and the efforts were largely successful in bringing Muslim primary enrollment on par with Hindu enrollment.

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