UNIT 2: EDUCATION IN BRITISH INDIA-I

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2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the beginning of the British education system in India
- discuss the Charter Act of 1813
- explain the controversies between Anglicist and Classicist
- discuss the famous Macaulay's Minute
- highlight the major recommendations of Wood's Despatch and its effect on Indian education.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

From the first unit we have already come to know that India has a rich and old cultural and educational history. We had ancient education system in our country which included Vedic education, Buddhist education and Muslim education. We have already discussed about these education systems in details.

The establishment of British rule in India introduced western civilization and culture in India. East India Company after its victory at Plassey

in 1757 A.D. began to think of establishing its empire in India. After acquiring Diwani powers its officers began to show that they were really interested in public welfare and began to pay attention to education. They started giving government grants to educational institutions but did not introduce any changes in the educational system. The Director of the company wanted to win the support of influential people to whom they provided higher education. Company started the Calcutta Madrasah in 1780 with the objective to provide education to the Muslims who belonged to upper class and make them supporters of the company. The Madrasah was given full financial support by the East India Company. Arabic and Persian were the medium of instruction. Law, Philosophy, Logic, Mathematics, Astronomy and Grammar were taught there. The company succeeded in its objective of winning the support of upper-class Muslims. Also, to maintain harmonious relationship with the Hindu community, they established the Banaras Sanskrit College. The medium of instruction of this college was Sanskrit. The subjects taught in the college were Hindu Religious Principles, Jurisprudence and other subjects. Despite these efforts the company did not want to take the full responsibility for education.

Towards the end of the 18th century, some Englishmen had begun to feel that East India Company should accept the responsibility of educating the Indian people. Foremost among these was Charles Grant who wrote a paper in which he wrote the dark story of the moral degradation of India and suggested that the country could be reformed through English education with the help of the state.

With several efforts from both British and Indian side the East India Company was compelled to pay attention towards the Indian Education. When the Company's Charter came up for renewal in 1813, a clause for the appropriation of one lakh of rupees for Indian education was also included.

2.3 CHARTER ACT OF 1813

The Charter Act of 1813 is a turning point in the history of Indian

education. The Charter Act of the East India Company was renewed for a further period of twenty years on 21 July 1813. Until that period the Company's interest or concern was only on business in India.

The Charter Act was a written document which was published in 1813 that included a clause related to education of India. As mentioned above it was the continuous effort of Charles Grant that British government compelled to do something for the development of education in India. Thus, Charles Grant has been regarded as the father of modern education in India.

Two important clauses relating to education were incorporated in the Charter Act of 1813. Firstly, the missionaries received full freedom to conduct educational activities in India. It was after 1813 that more missionaries began to arrive in India and establish schools. The other clause number 43 stated that the Company had to accept the responsibility of education in the country. The clause 43 empowered the Governor-General to offer a sum of not less than one lac of rupees' in each year out of 'the surplus territorial revenues' for the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the science among the inhabitants of the British territories in India.

Through the Charter Act of 1813 the British Parliament admitted the fact that education was their responsibility and it has a rightful claim on public revenues. However, the appropriation of the sum of one lac of rupees for education was not obligatory but was left to the discretion of the Governor-General-in-Council. Although the objects of educational policy were mentioned in the act unfortunately, they were confusing and admit of many interpretations. Moreover, the section gives no directions about the ways of achieving the objectives. As a result of these shortcomings little or nothing was done for a decade after the passing of the Charter Act of 1813.

As already mentioned above, the British parliament directed the East India Company to accept the responsibility to educate the people of India. East India Company never wanted to involve in educational activities in India. It was the British parliament who compelled the company to accept

the responsibilities of education in India. However, for a large country like India one lac of rupees was not sufficient to spread education in India. As a result, the Charter Act of 1813 provided worse education system that could not be compared to our own indigenous education.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who allowed missionaries to spread the Christianity in India?

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Q 2: What does Section 43 of the Charter Act stated?

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2.4 CONTROVERSIES BETWEEN ANGLICIST AND CLASSICIST

In 1923, a General Committee of public instruction was set up for implementing the provisions of the Charter Act of 1813. All the schools maintained by the Government were placed in its charge along with one lakh of rupees set apart by the above act. A controversy between the Anglicist and Classist had developed regarding the policy of education, medium of instruction, method of teaching, agency for organisation.

Regarding these issues, the opinion was divided into three groups. Though there were three groups, the real fight was between the two groups. These were the Anglicist and Classicist groups.

Regarding aim of education, the clause of the Charter Act was interpreted by three different groups in three different ways. The first group influenced by the thinking of Warren Hastings and Minto gave importance on the need of preserving and spreading oriental learning and culture. The second group influenced by Charles Grant emphasised the importance of spreading the religion and culture of the west. The third group advocated the need for preparing Indian people for secretarial post under the East India Company.

With regard to the of medium of instruction, controversies were among three different groups, one group favouring English, another Sanskrit and Arabic and third group favouring Modern Indian Language. As the modern Indian languages were in a state of infancy, the advocacy by Munro and Elphinstone for these languages did not attract much attention. However, the controversy of the Classist who supported Sanskrit as well as Arabic and the Anglicists who advocated English was of violent nature. The oriental group was led by H.T. Princep who was then the secretary to the Government of Bengal in the Education department. The Anglicists had no definite leader. This group generally consisted of the younger servants of the Company and the missionaries.

The difference in methods of education between the two groups become prominent. The first view gave importance to the necessity of educating the upper section of the society. According to this group a ruling class should be prepared from the rich and upper-class Indian people. From this ruling class education would automatically come down to the lower-class people. Actually, adopting this policy, the East India Company did not want to spend much money in Education in India.

As we all know that before 1813, the educational policy of the company was in favour of old Indian traditional education system. The Company wanted to maintain the old educational system. It was because of this policy the company established three Sanskrit colleges at Calcutta, Madras and Banaras. Many English officers were supporters of this policy. Warren Hastings, H.T. Princep, Lord Minto, H.H. Wilson were some of the persons who were supporters of the Orientalists or Classists education system.

The Orientalises (Classists) put forward four main arguments in support of their view. First, Section 43 of the Charter Act of 1813, this group claimed that this section was in their favour i.e. they interpreted the various provisions of the section in their favour. They interpreted the term literature which was mentioned in the section as the literature of the Hindus and Muslims. The term 'learned natives of India' was interpreted as 'the Indians were versed in their traditional learning'. On 'the introduction and promotion

of science' the Classists group said that it means introduction and promotion of science in India through the classical languages. Classists group argued that the classical languages of India were very rich and full of potentialities, and if English was adopted in preference to these languages, it would pose a threat to the Indian heritage and culture. This group also felt that English language was so unrelatable to the Indians that they would never be able to learn this language adequately enough.

The other group known as the Anglicist group consisting of young civilians, argued that English should be used instead of the oriental languages for educating the upper sections of the Indian society. This group strongly believed that the expansion of European knowledge and science should be the main objective of the company. For that reason, the Company should spend all funds for the expansion of European knowledge through the medium of English. This group was against the use of Sanskrit and Arabic as the medium of instruction. They also wanted to close all the traditional educational institutions in India.

A group of orientalists believed that the move to introduce the study of English language and literature and European culture was politically motivated. They thought that Anglicist wanted to create a body of Indian people to help them in the administration of the country. Both the Anglicist and the Classists had something in common as well. Both the group did not want to provide mass education in India. Again, both the groups believed that science education was possible only through English language. They said that science could not be taught through Indian languages.

The Anglicist- Classist controversy lasted for about 32 years. Ultimately, it ended when on February 2, 1935 William Bentinck approved the policy advocated by Macaulay.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: When was the General Committee of public instruction set up and why?

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2.5 MACAULAY'S MINUTE

Lord Macaulay came to India as a Law Member of the Council of Governor General of India in June 1834. Lord William Bentinck the then Governor-General of India appointed him as the chairman of the General Committee of Public Instruction. As the chairman of the General Committee of Public Instruction it was his duty to settle the Anglicist-Classist controversy. Macaulay was interested in spreading English language and English culture in India. Initially, he did not take any part in the controversy. When the Anglicist as well as the Classists group approached Bentinck to settle the controversy, then Bentinck entrusted the responsibility to Macaulay. Lord Macaulay who was the Chairman of the committee and also the Law Member of the Governor General's Executive Council wrote his famous minutes on 2 February, 1835 through which an effort was made to settle the main issues involved in this controversy.

Macaulay began his minute by questioning the Orientalist's interpretation of the educational clause which was mentioned in the Charter Act of 1813. He said that 'the revival and improvement of literature' did not necessarily mean Sanskrit and Arabic literature. Macaulay argued that the word 'literature' mentioned in the Act of 1813 meant English literature. He also interpreted that 'learned native of India' means a person who knew the philosophy of Locke and the poetry of Milton and that the object of promoting a knowledge of science could only be possible through English language. Macaulay in his minute also mentioned that a sum of one lakh rupees was set apart, not only for reviving of literature in India but also for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British India.

With regard to medium of instruction, Macaulay mentioned that the languages spoken in India contain neither literary nor scientific information. These languages were perceived as too inadequate that until they are enriched from some other quarters, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. The choice of the medium of instruction was either Sanskrit and Arabic or English. Macaulay did not have any knowledge of

either Sanskrit or Arabic. As expected, he did not give much importance to Sanskrit and Arabic languages as the medium of instruction. He opined that 'a single self of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'. He strongly argued that English should be the medium of instruction in India. He gave many arguments in favour of English. He argued that English was the language of the ruling class and was also used by highly placed Indian officials. It was the language of trade and commerce throughout the world. The English language not only helped in the unification of India but also improved the relationship between India and other countries. Indian people were ready to receive education in the English language and the students of English schools were also ready to pay requisite fees. From an economic point of view also, English language would give Indian people better opportunity then Sanskrit and Arabic. In this way he argued in favour of English as the appropriate medium of instruction.

Lord Macaulay said that it was the duty of England to teach Indians what is good for their health, and not what is pleasant to their taste. He further pointed out that the Indians themselves preferred English education. Macaulay suggested that the government should not incur any heavy expenditure on the maintenance of Oriental institutions of learning.

At the end of his Minute, he expressed the intention of British government towards Indian people. He said that 'We must, at present, do our best, to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect' for a cultural conquest of India. He then suggested the immediate stopping of the Madrasah and the Sanskrit colleges at Calcutta. He advocated the discontinuation of printing of all Oriental work.

It is evident from various documents that the Orientalists were not given any chance to present their point of view at the council meeting. On 7 March, 1835 the Governor-General had endorsed Macaulay's Minute. William Bentinck approved the Macaulay's Minute with the following words, "I give my entire concurrence to the sentiments expressed in this minute". Bentinck passed the following order for implementation of the minute, "His Lordship in Council is of opinion that the great object of the British

Government ought to be the promotion of the European literature and sciences among the natives of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed in English education alone".

This particular order was a turning point in the history of education in India. This Minute defined the aim and type of education. The objective of education was promotion of English Arts and Sciences. The medium of instruction to be adopted was English. The resolution promised the British government to recruit English educated workers under the Company in India.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: When did Macaulay write his famous minute on educational policy?

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2.5.1 Evaluation of Lord Macaulay's Minute

Macaulay has been greatly appreciated as well as highly criticised for his Minute through which he introduced a new system of education in India. Macaulay is considered as the 'torch bearer in the path of progress'. However, this is not true and rather debatable. Macaulay was criticised for many reasons. Some of the criticisms are given below:

- It is said that Macaulay was responsible for initiating a new educational policy. You know that this new educational policy means European knowledge through the medium of English language. A vast majority of educated Indian were in favour of English education. During that period, those with knowledge of English language were able to get better jobs under the company. For this reason, people were concerned to take up English

education. The Government was also eager to introduce English education in India for their own advantage. What Macaulay did was that he gave his decision in favour of introduction of English education and his decision was accepted by the Government.

- It would be unfair to consider Macaulay as the torch-bearer in the path of progress. He was not the only person to have had awaken the desire for English education in India. The desire was there before he came to India. It had already been stirred and sustained because Indians saw the advantages of English education.
- His absolute disapproval of the classical literature of Sanskrit and Arabic was completely baseless. He himself admits that he had no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. It was totally unfair on his part to make such remarks. Macaulay did not care to know the fact that a number of Indian languages were in a flourishing state under the Mughals and were well-equipped. He was perhaps misguided by local persons that the adoption of Indian language as the medium of instruction was impossible.

Considering the above, we can conclude that Macaulay's intentions in recommending the introduction of English education in India was not in good taste and if the Indians benefited somewhat from English education, it was much against the wishes of designer of the Minutes of 1835.

2.6 WOOD DESPATCH 1854

You have already come to know how British government started education in India. You have already understood that the British government did not have any interest in spreading education in India. The British government also felt that despite funding from the government Indian education did not develop from 1813 to 1853 as expected. As a result, in 1853 during the renewal time of the Charter Act, the British government felt the necessity to make a comprehensive survey of the education prevailing

in the country. The government also ordered to prescribe a systematic policy in the light of the survey for the future educational development of the country. With this aim a Parliamentary Committee was set-up which heard a large number of people and collection of various documents and data, it formulated the policy of education. The document prepared by the Committee was sent to the Government of British India in the form of a despatch by the President of the Board of Control, Sir Charles Wood in 1854. The Despatch of 1854, popularly known as the 'Wood's Despatch', observed the situation and gave a directive for the promotion of mass education in India.

The Education Despatch of 1854 is divided into 100 paragraphs. This document is of immense historical importance. It was the first official declaration by the Government of its educational policy. The Despatch is said to have laid the foundation on which had developed the modern educational system in India.

Three English scholars namely, Marshman, Parry and Wilson worked hard in preparing the Wood's Despatch. We can say that the despatch was the essence of their ideas. These scholars studied the Indian education system and its literature seriously and made its proper evaluation. They observed that Sanskrit and Arabic literatures were very important for education of Indian people.

The Wood's Despatch gave various recommendations for the development of Indian education. Some important recommendations are discussed below:

- **Aim of Education:** The Wood's Despatch of 1813 mentioned that the aim of education should be to impart useful knowledge to the Indian people in such a way as to raise their intellectual, moral and economic status. They should also be given such an education which might develop in them administrative ability in order that the Government might get sufficient workers.
- **Creation of the Education Department:** The Despatch recommended that the Department of Education should be created in all provinces of the country. During that time the country were

divided into five provinces. These were- Bengal, Madras, Bombay, North-West Provinces and the Punjab. The Director of Public Instruction was the head of the department. The Director was assisted by a number of Inspectors for smooth functioning of the department. The Director was to submit an annual report to the Government on the progress of education in his province.

- **Establishment of Universities:** The Despatch made recommendation to establish Universities in India. The Despatch recommended the establishment of Universities in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras for the development of higher education in India. These Universities were to be established on the model of London University. These Universities were to conduct examination for awarding degrees. For the smooth administration of each university a Chancellor, a Vice-Chancellor and Fellows were to be appointed by the Government. A Senate was also to be constituted for framing the rules and the Vice-Chancellor and the Fellows were to be members of the Senate. The functions of the Universities were granting affiliation to colleges, inspecting the affiliated colleges and raising their standards of teaching, examining the students of the colleges and awarding degrees to them and organising departments of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit.
- **Mass Education:** Wood's Despatch recommended that education should be made available to all the people of India. The Despatch drew attention of the Government to the absolute ignorance of mass education. Before Wood's Despatch the East-India Company had planned to provide education only to the upper classes of the country. The officers of the company wanted to spread education through the 'Downward Filtration Theory'. We have already discussed about this theory. The despatch criticised the policy adopted by Macaulay. Macaulay wanted to educate only the upper and rich classes of the country. In opposition of Macaulay's Minute, this Despatch recommended education to all people of the country. It had also recommended the opening of more and more elementary schools

in every district for improving those indigenous schools that were imparting elementary education to the children.

- **Grant-in-aid System:** The grant-in-aid system was adopted by the Government with a view to withdrawing itself from the responsibility of education. The Despatch proposed the sanction of grant-in-aid to the educational institutions for enhancement of salary of the teachers, scholarship for the students, development of library, construction of building etc.

The task of providing education to the general people was so huge that the Government was unable to take the responsibility of education alone. The Despatch therefore emphasised on building up of a system of grant-in-aid. It propounded that grants-in-aid may be given to those schools and colleges which satisfy the following conditions:

- They should have stable management body and should run very well.
- They should provide secular education.
- Educational institutions should be open to state inspection.
- Institutions must follow the rules and regulations enforced by the Government.
- They should not provide free education but should charge fees from students.

The Despatch did not want all expenditures to be incurred by the state. It may be mentioned that the grant-in-aid system benefitted the missionaries more because they were the main private institutions in the field of education.

Medium of Instruction: The Wood's Despatch did not aim at replacing the language of the country with English. So, the Despatch recommended that due to the shortage of books in Indian languages, the medium of instruction should be English. For teaching of English, the Despatch laid down the criterion of demand. It should be taught those people who have proper knowledge, and taste for English and be able to understand European knowledge through this language. But teaching of English language should be combined with the language of the district. Perhaps the Despatch hinted

at the teaching of the mother-tongue or of the regional language. It clearly stated that Indian languages as well as English should be used as media of instruction.

- **Training of Teachers:** The Wood's Despatch recommended that training schools should be established. The Despatch realised that without proper training teachers would not be able to teach well. The school masters who received training in them should be given sufficient salary or employment. The Despatch, therefore, recommended the need to establish different types of training institutions. The Despatch advised that there should atleast be one training college in each province. The training college for training teachers in engineering, medicine, law should be opened. The pay scale of school masters should be so encouraging that people may aspire to join in teaching profession.
- **Education of Women:** The Wood's Despatch emphasised on the necessity of women education in India. The Despatch said that the government should give support to the education of women. The Despatch recognised the important role of private enterprises in promoting women education. The Despatch recommended that the education would be incomplete without 'women education' and appreciated the work of enlightened Indians engaged in this field.
- **Vocational Education:** The Despatch gave importance on providing vocational education. Wood's Despatch pointed towards the need of starting vocational schools and colleges for imparting instructions in different vocations. Vocational education is essential for preparation of life.

The Wood's Despatch of 1854 is a great historical document for India. Many people described it as the 'Magna Carta of Indian Education'. For the first time, it outlined a complete and systematic organisation of education starting from primary education to University education. The Despatch suggested a coordinated system thereby giving a definite shape and form to the educational organisation.

It is true that the Despatch did not give certain rights and privileges on education to the Indian people. However, some of the recommendations like cultivation of Indian languages, use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at the school stage, establishment of universities were some important recommendations of the Despatch for the progress of Indian people. Recommendations to establish an education department in each province, adoption of grant-in-aid system, to provide training to teachers, to give encouragement to indigenous schools, encouragement of women education, establishment of vocational schools were some positive recommendations of the Despatch for the development of Indian education. It is criticised that the Government did not give much attention to implement all the recommendation of Wood's Despatch. It is true that the government did not pay much attention to implement all the recommendation; but the Despatch laid the foundation of the modern education system in India. Therefore, it can be rightly said that the Despatch is 'the Magna Carta of Indian education'.

When we describe the Despatch as the 'Magna Carta of India', we cannot say that the Despatch was free from errors. The Despatch has many loop holes. The aims of education as described by the Despatch were too narrow. The expenses on higher education were not cut down and funds for elementary education could not be systematically provided. Again, the government was very soft towards Missionary Education. The government did not adopt any policy to universalise primary education in the country. The Despatch also failed to emphasise on values like development of character, development of leadership among students. In short, we can say that the good recommendations of the Despatch remained unimplemented. Moreover, we should not forget the fact that the Despatch was formed and formulated by a foreign ruling class for a colony.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Why Wood's Despatch is known as the 'Magna Carta of Indian Education'?

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

- The Charter Act of 1813 was one of the most important acts in the history of modern education in India.
- Section 43 of the Charter Act stated that a sum of not less than one lakh rupees should be set aside annually by the company and this amount should be spent for the improvement of literature and science among the learned Indians.
- The Charter Act of 1813 was the first official document which sanctioned such a big sum of money for the development of Indian education.
- The General Committee of Public Instruction were divided into two groups. One group supported the spread of native Indian education system. This group is known as the Classicist. The other group known as the Anglicists. This group supported the spread of western literature and science. This led to the famous controversy which was known as the Anglicist- Classicist Controversy.
- The issue which gave rise to this controversy were aim, medium of instruction, agency etc.
- Lord Macaulay came to India on 1834. He solved this controversy through his famous Macaulay's Minute.
- The 'Downward Filtration Theory' was given by Macaulay as a suggestion of method of teaching. According to this theory education should filter from the top to the bottom as the drops of water coming down from the Himalayas and pouring into the Indian Ocean. He suggested that some of the English speaking upper class Indians should

be given education, so that they may in turn educate the mass people of the country.

- The British Government constituted a committee with some prominent members of the British Parliament to review the educational policy adopted and progress of education in the country.
- On the basis of the recommendations made by the committee, a Despatch was submitted by the committee to the British Government. Charles Wood was the president of the Board of Control, who had sent the Despatch. Hence, the Despatch came to be known as Wood's Despatch.
- Some of the main recommendations of the Wood's Despatch were- establishment of the Education Department in the five provinces of the country, establishment of three Universities in three major cities of the country, introduction of Grant-in-Aid system, training of teachers, special provision for women education, expansion of mass education, along with English, Indian languages should be accepted as the media of instruction etc.
- The Wood's Despatch declared that education in India was the responsibility of the British Government.
- Wood's Despatch may be regarded as a revolutionary step taken with regard to education in India. It gave a new direction to education in the country. For this reason, some people considered it as the 'Magna Carta of Indian Education'.
- However, some of the recommendations of the Despatch were not properly implemented.
- The Departments of Education were established in the five provinces. However, despite their existence they could not promote the interest of education.
- The universities established were on the model of the London University. So they were more British in nature and spirit.

2.8 FURTHER READING

1. Aggarwal, J.C. (2004). Landmarks in the History of the Modern Indian Education. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
2. Ghosh, Suresh C. (2007). History of Education in India. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
3. Dash, B.N. (2014). History of Education in India. New Delhi: Dominant Publishers and Distributors Pvt. Ltd.

2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PRIOGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Charter Act of 1813 allowed missionaries to spread the Christianity in India.

Ans to Q No 2: Section 43 of the Charter Act stated that a sum of not less than one lakh rupees should be set aside annually by the company and this amount should be spent for the improvement of literature and science among the learned Indians.

Ans to Q No 3: The General Committee of public instruction was set up in 1923 for implementing the provisions of the Charter Act of 1813.

Ans to Q No 4: Macaulay wrote his famous minute on educational policy on February 2, 1835.

Ans to Q No 5: Wood's Despatch may be regarded as a revolutionary step with regard to education in India. It gave a new direction to education in the country. For this reason, some people considered it as the 'Magna Carta of Indian Education'.

2.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Short Questions (Answer each question in around 150 words).

Q 1: What were the reasons of criticism towards Macaulay's minute?

Q 2: Write a short note on Grant-in-aid system.

Long Questions (Answer each question in around 300-500 words)

Q 1: What is Charter Act of 1813? Why this Act is called as the foundation stone of modern education in India?

Q 2: What was the controversy or clash between the Orientalists and Anglicists? How did these controversies come to an end? What was its effect on the subsequent development of education in India?

Q 3: Show how did Wood's Despatch of 1854 lay the foundation of the present system of education in India? Why it is called the Magna Carta of Indian Education?

Q 4: What were the main recommendations of Wood's Despatch (1854)? Discuss how these recommendations were implemented?

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