UNIT 3: EDUCATION IN BRITISH INDIA-II (HUNTER COMMISSION)

UNIT STRUCTURE

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3.5.1 Assessment of the Recommendations on Secondary Education

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3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- highlight the background of appointment of the Hunter Commission
- analyse the recommendation on Primary Education
- discuss the recommendation on Secondary Education

3.2 INTRODUCTION

We have already discussed in the previous unit that through the Wood's Despatch the British Government tried to give some importance on Indian education. In this unit, we are going to discuss the contribution of another Commission i.e., Hunter Commission towards primary and secondary education. As we know that the effort made by the British

Government was not sufficient for mass education in India. After Wood's Despatch, the revolt of 1857 shook the foundation of the British Empire. They thought that Indian people cannot remain neglected for a long time. As a result, the administration of the country was taken away from the Company by the British Crown.

During this period, Lord Ripon was appointed as the Governor General in India. He was one of the most popular Viceroys in India. Lord Ripon was actually interested in the welfare of the people of India. He made significant contribution for the development in various field of the country. He was also interested for the development in the field of education.

Wood's Despatch had already passed twenty-eight years of its existence. As we learnt in the previous units, this Despatch laid down that Government should provide education for those 'who are incapable of obtaining education worthy of the name by their own unaided efforts.' It directed the government to concentrate its energies on primary education. It also asked the state to withdraw itself from the field of higher education and attend to the general education of the masses. But the government neglected primary education altogether.

By 1882, it was considered necessary to assess the development of education in the country. It was also necessary to remove the defects of education which had come out post Wood's Despatch period. For this purpose, Lord Ripon appointed the Indian Education Commission on February 3, 1882. Sir William Hunter, a member of his Executive Council was appointed as the Chairman of this Commission. Besides the Chairman, in the first Education Commission, 20 other members were also appointed. In this commission Indians were represented by Anand Mohan Bose, Bhudev Mukherjee, Syed Mahmud and K.T.Telung etc. From the missionaries' side it was represented by Rev. Dr.Miller of Madras. B.L.Rice, the Mysore Director of Public Instruction was appointed its Secretary.

Hunter Education Commission was a landmark commission appointed by Viceroy Lord Ripon with objectives to look into the complaints of the non-implementation of the Wood's Despatch of 1854; the contemporary status of elementary education in the British territories; and

to suggest means by which this can be extended and improved. This commission, headed by Sir William Wilson Hunter, had submitted its report in 1882. The commission was asked 'to enquire particularly into the manner in which effect had been given to the principles of the Despatch of 1854 and to suggest such measures as it might think desirable with a view to the future carrying out of the policy therein laid down'. The commission was also asked to keep the enquiry into the primary education. The commission was further asked to enquire into the position of the government institutions in a national system of education. The commission was also asked to offer suggestions on secondary education. European Education and Universities were excluded from the preview of the commission.

The commission made several sittings for the first two months in Calcutta and then for the next eight months it travelled the entire country. The commission discussed with the Provincial Governments and formed a number of Committees in various Provinces to study the problem of Primary education. The commission obtained more than 300 suggestions from various groups of persons. After ten months of its formation the commission produced a report of about 700 pages in 1883.

The Hunter Commission report is of historical importance. The report had 222 resolutions. The most significant part of the report was that it freed the government from the responsibilities of mass education. It gave the responsibility to the local bodies and suggested a gradual transfer of government institutions to private bodies. Indian were thus required to raise funds for their own education and their efforts were to be assisted by a liberal grants-in-aid system. Although the commission worked very hard for a stretch of ten months, it failed to give any original suggestions for the development of Indian education. We are discussing below the major recommendations of the commission.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who appointed the Indian Education Commission and when?

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Q 2: Who was the chairman of the Indian Education Commission?

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Q 3: How many members were there in the Commission?

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3.3 MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF HUNTER COMMISSION

In the resolution adopted on the appointment of the Commission it was stated that the duty of the Commission was to enquire particularly into the manner in which effect had been given to the principle of the Despatch of 1854. The specific issues for enquiry of the Commission may be outlined below:

- Whether the government should withdraw from direct educational responsibility in favour of the missionary?
- What was the state of primary education and which measure should be taken for its improvement?
- What should be the policy of the government on giving grant-in-aid?
- What should be the policy of the government on private enterprises in education?
- What policy of the government should be adopted on religious education?

3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS ON PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Government directed the commission to pay special attention to primary education. Accordingly, the commission studied the problem of

primary education deeply. During that period Elementary education was imparted through two agencies: (i) indigenous schools and (ii) new type of primary schools. Recommendations of the Wood's Despatch on primary education were also general in nature and not specific. However, the recommendations given by the Hunter Commission on Primary education were specific and clear. The education policy, the financial system, training of teachers, organisation and curriculum etc. were the areas of recommendation on primary education by the commission. The recommendations on primary education are discussed below in details for your clear understanding.

- **Policy for Primary Education:** The Hunter Commission observed that the Primary education should be related with real life situation. The Commission acknowledged the importance of primary education and laid down the clear-cut policy in this regard. The state should give its effort for the promotion of primary education. The aim of primary education should be the instruction of the larger masses. The commission recommended that primary education should be closely related to the practical needs of the masses. The government should encourage primary education by giving appointments. Instructions should be imparted in such subjects as may best fit the people for their work in life. The students should be given primary education through the mother tongue. The commission believed that primary education will be encouraged through these steps. So, these steps should be taken to promote primary education. The backward and tribal people should also be encouraged to receive primary education.
- **Management of the Primary Education:** The management of primary education was left to the local boards introduced in India by Lord Ripon's Local Self Government Act. In England, the Education Acts of 1870 and 1876 had placed responsibility of primary education on the County Councils, so the commission recommended that the control of primary education should be transferred to District and Municipal Boards. Every district and Municipal Boards were asked

to keep a separate fund for education which should be exclusively for the purpose for which it was meant. The commission also asked the provincial governments to contribute to the local funds by a suitable system of grants-in-aid preferably at the rate of half the local assets or one-third of the total expenditure.

- **Finance:** In the opinion of the commission, finance was the greatest obstacle in the way of primary education. The commission thus pressed the claims of primary education on different types of funds but the funds placed at the disposal of the local boards were insignificant in view of the vast population of the country. The grants to the individual schools were to be made strictly on the basis of results.
- **Training of Primary School Teachers:** The commission felt the necessity of training primary school teachers through a network of normal schools. For this reason, the commission emphasised the need to establish normal schools for the training of teachers. In order to make the normal school functional they were assigned to an Inspector. Cost, direction, provision and inspection of normal Schools was the first charge of the provincial funds and normal schools were to be localised so as to provide for the local requirements of all Primary Schools whether government or aided within the jurisdiction of an inspector.
- **Curriculum:** The commission felt the need for broadening school curriculum by introducing subjects like the native method of arithmetic, accounts, elements of natural and physical sciences and their application to agriculture, health and the individual arts. The commission did not support strict rules in curriculum planning and construction. It opposed uniform curriculum throughout the country. The commission suggested that the Provinces should be provided freedom with regard to the use of text-books and the organisation of the curriculum of primary schools.

3.4.1 Assessment of the Recommendations of Primary Education

Hunter Commission had touched all the major aspects of primary education and made its recommendations which had far reaching effect. It may be recalled that the principle of self-government in primary education was introduced in England at that time by the Foster's Act of 1870. It was imperative that the Commission should adopt the similar principle for Indian Education. It had tried to bring about a radical change in administrative policy of education in favour of mass people. The government involvement could not help to achieve the objective. So, the Commission was in favour of self-administration with regard to primary education.

Although this principle of self-government in our primary education had its harmful effect too. Its major mistake was that of handing over responsibility of education to the inexperienced local authority and that of giving them inadequate money to work. However, without giving into details some of the major achievements and failure of the Commission may be highlighted below:

- **Points of Achievement:**
  - The Commission had fully realised the need of mass education in India and had made all its recommendations in favour of it.
  - It was justified to recommend mother-tongue as the medium of instruction in our primary education.
  - The Commission has rightly discouraged the Missionaries which had its favourable effect on the later development of Indian Primary education.
  - The Spirit of Secularism in our primary Education System was encouraged by the Commission by giving grants.
  - Improvement of Curriculum, training of teachers and provision for inspection of the primary schools had helped in qualitative improvement.

- It was quite reasonable for the Commission to suggest the government for taking educational responsibility of the tribal and backward people.

- **Points of Failure:**
  - The Commission could not perceive the possible harmful effect of relieving the government of its responsibility of primary education.
  - Newly formed local boards and municipalities were inexperienced and incompetent to take charge of primary education.
  - Primary education which aimed at promoting mass education in India should have been entrusted to none other than the government itself. It had therefore tried to evade the responsibility of primary education.
  - The Commission had failed to perceive that sanction of 1/ 3rd of the total expenditure to the local authorities was quite inadequate to meet with the educational cost.
  - It was therefore criticised that the Commission had indirectly wanted the government to evade their primary responsibility of primary education to people.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Mention two points of achievements of Hunter Commission on Primary Education.

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3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS ON SECONDARY EDUCATION

As we have already discussed that the commission was appointed to provide suggestion for the improvement of secondary education along with primary education. The commission presented following suggestions

for the improvement of secondary education.

- **Expansion of Secondary Education:** The commission recommended that the government should gradually withdraw from the field of direct management of secondary schools and leave the expansion to private bodies through a system of grant-in-aid. The government may establish secondary schools in exceptional cases. Specially, where they may be required in the interest of people and where the people themselves may not be advanced or wealthy enough to establish such schools for themselves even with a grant-in-aid. The duty of the government was to establish a secondary school in one district and after that the expansion of secondary education in that district should be left to private enterprise. With a view to make private institutions popular they should not be required to charge fees as high as those of neighbouring government institutions.
- **Bifurcation of Courses at Secondary Level:** To remove the defects of secondary education, the commission suggested improvement in curriculum. In Secondary education, as has been mentioned earlier, the Commission recommended gradual withdrawal of the government from direct enterprise. It however, suggested that the government should maintain some secondary schools, at least one model high school in every poor district. The Commission also recommended bifurcation in the curricula to maintain a high standard in secondary education. It suggested an 'A' course which was meant for the entrance examination of the universities and a 'B' course which was meant for commercial and non-literary studies. The commission was more than a century ahead of its time and looked forward to measure which engaged the attention of the educationists at that time for vocationalising secondary education.
- **Medium of Instruction:** The recommendation on medium of instruction given by the commission was not practical. It recommended that in Middle Schools, the use of vernacular was

preferable to English as medium of instruction and suggested that students should have some elementary knowledge as well. The commission was in favour of English. The most harmful effect of the domination of English as a subject of study and as a medium of instruction had ruined the education system after 1882. In almost all provinces, English remained the medium of instruction at the secondary stage.

- **Training of Secondary School Teachers:** Wood's Despatch of 1854 had already laid foundation of Teachers' Training at secondary level. However, till 182 only two training institutions were established. The commission was not satisfied with the system of teachers training in India. The Commission recommended that students of training colleges should be examined in Principles and Practice of Teaching and the training period for graduates should be shorter than for others. The commission recommended that the success in the examination should be a guarantee for permanent employment as a teacher in any secondary school, government or aided.

3.5.1 Assessment of the Recommendations on Secondary Education

The recommendations of the Commission on Secondary Education had great implication on educational development of the secondary stage. Its main objective was to make administrative changes for effective and qualitative improvement of secondary education. Accordingly, it had rightly pointed out that the government should be relieved of its responsibility of this stage of education. The private enterprises could take better initiative of education than the government. Such policy would also involve the local people in education even further. However, in practice the government did not try to materialise this administrative policy.

The commission had reasonably suggested the government to provide grant-in-aid for its improvement, but such recommendation

were also not properly implemented by the government. As a result, the development of the secondary schools remained limited.

The Commission was also to be criticised for recommending two different categories of secondary curriculum from its practical purposes. It had tried to make secondary education more objective oriented but unfortunately this recommendation did not find favourable response from the people. Consequently, curriculum remain as theoretical and academic as before.

A harmful or undesirable effect of the commission may be observed in respect of medium of instruction at the middle school stage. It had encouraged English medium to be accepted in the high school stage. The Commission had categorically declared English as medium of instruction for secondary stage.

The domination of English medium in secondary education had led to the negligence of the study of Indian languages. It had also not made secondary education easily accessible to the Indian children. Many students were deprived of secondary education owing to this medium.

3.6 OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Besides, the recommendations provided by the commission on Primary and Secondary Education, the commission provided various recommendations of different fields of education. As a student of education, you should know all these recommendations given by the commission. The other major recommendations of the commission are discussed below:

- **On Indigenous Education:** The Commission had perceived the need of importance of the indigenous primary education system as means of national education. It had observed that the indigenous schools, if recognised and assisted by the government, may develop as a useful system of education. As such the Commission had given due recognition and status to it as the system of national education to it. Some of the valuable suggestions forwarded for its improvement

may be described below:

- The Government should encourage the indigenous schools which give secular education.
- Discussion should be made with the pandits and the maulavis regarding their development.
- Grants should be given on the basis of results.
- Education should remain open for all children on schools receiving government grants.
- The government should not interfere in curriculum designing of these schools.
- Arrangements should be made for training of teachers in indigenous schools.
- Government scholarships should be given to the poor students studying in these schools.
- The Municipalities and the Local Boards should try to develop these schools in consultation with their managing committees.

- **On Missionary Education:** The missionaries were disappointed by the Commission on their expected supremacy over Indian education. One of the reasons of setting up of the Commission was that of the missionary agitation launched in England. The Commission had not included the missionaries even in the private enterprises in education. It had further maintained the view that India being a vast country, its educational needs were many. Therefore, it was not possible to place the responsibility of higher education to a single body or party.

The above recommendations of the Commission had frustrated the imperialistic design of religious education of the missionaries. These efforts were therefore limited to primary education in the hilly and backward areas of the country. The Indian people were also given to realise that they themselves were to take future responsibility of education. The missionaries could not help them to satisfy their socio-cultural and educational needs, hopes and aspirations.

- **Education of Women:** Hunter Commission gave various suggestions for the improvement of Women's education in India. The commission recommended that more liberal grants should be given to girls' schools and the grant-in-aid rule should be made easier. Money from Local and Municipal Boards and Provincial funds should be spent in an equitable proportion on girl's and boy's school. Men and Women who were interested in female education should be included in the management of schools. Girls should not be charged any fee so that they may be attracted to get education. Meritorious girls should be awarded scholarships so that they may continue their higher education. Girls should be encouraged to get professional training and training schools for female teachers should be started. Female inspectors should be appointed to inspect and guide girls' school. Secondary schools could be opened for girls only when there was a demand for the same.
- **On Muslim Education:** The Commission also felt that the education for Muslims was not adequate. They were very backward in the field of education and there were very few English-speaking Muslims in the country. Hence, the Commission recommended special educational facilities to the Muslims for encouragement of indigenous Muslim schools like the establishment of Muslim High, Middle and Primary schools. Higher education for Muslim people should be encouraged. In all schools a certain proportion of free scholarship was to be reserved for Muslim students. As far as possible, Muslim teachers were to be appointed in Muslim schools. Muslim inspectors were to be appointed for inspection of Muslim primary schools. The standard of teaching of Muslim primary schools was to be raised. In this way the commission wanted to develop education for Muslim people of the country.
- **Education of the Backward Classes:** The Hunter Commission recommended that in Government schools special facilities were be provided for backward classes. The commission further suggested that some government schools were opened for children

of backward classes. The suggestion of the commission regarding development of education of backward classes helped in the progress of the same.

- **Education of Aborigines:** The commission suggested that special provision should be made for education of aborigines. Special types of schools should be opened in their areas keeping in view the geographical and social conditions, traditions and customs of the people.

The Hunter Commission tried to find a new direction to the Indian Education which was in a bad situation. It encouraged private enterprise in the field of education. But some of its recommendations were very harmful. Indian languages were neglected by the Indian people because the Commission supported English as a medium of instruction.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Mention two suggestions forwarded by the Commission regarding indigenous education.

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3.7 IMPACT OF HUNTER COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON INDIAN EDUCATION

The role of the Hunter Commission in the history of Indian education cannot be ignored. It had a historic contribution towards educational development of the country in the 20th century. Some of the remarkable achievements of the report may be outlined below:

- **Discouraging Missionary Education:** The Commission with its recommendations had minimised the influence of the Christian Missionaries on Indian Education. Even though the British administrators were in support of the missionaries, yet the

Commission did not say anything in support of them. This had a favourable effect on Indian Education System in the country in the later years.

- **Encouraged Indigenous System:** The Commission is to be credited for its sympathetic outlook towards the indigenous primary education system of the country. It had made several effective recommendations for its development and modernisation of this system of education.
- **Sincerity to Indian Education:** The Commission had considered various shortcomings of the Indian Education and had offered suggestions for improvement on a realistic standpoint. It had recommended on improvement of women education, Muslim education and education of the Harijans and backward classes. These recommendations indicate true sincerity of its purpose of education.
- **Secular Policy in Education:** The Commission had a very liberal and sympathetic view on Indian Culture, religion and literature. It had maintained an impartial view in matters of religion and language and did not try to injure the Indian sentiment. The Commission should therefore be appreciated for maintenance of the policy of religious neutrality and cultural integrity.
- **Liberal Grant System:** The System of Grant-in-aid was modified by the Commission for its better efficiency. The Commission had followed a liberal policy of giving grants and had tried to remove the distinction between the government and non-government institutions while giving grants. It had also suggested that government should not interfere in the internal matters of the institutions by giving such grants. This had certainly created a healthy atmosphere of education.

Criticism Against the Commission's Recommendations

As criticism of the Commission's Recommendations, it may be said that it had not given due attention to certain vital issues of Indian education which were very urgent and long overdue. Some major drawbacks and shortcomings which had their relative effect on later educational

development of the country may be outlined below:

- **Discouraged Engineering and Technical Education:** The Commission did not make any suggestions on engineering and technical education which were so much needed at that time. As a result of this growth of technical education and industrial development in the country had lagged behind.
- **Consolidation of English Language:** The Commission had consciously avoided the question of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in Indian Education. In its place, English language was recommended as the medium of high school education. Consequently, English language had consolidated its position in the field of Indian Education at the cost of local languages.
- **Inadequate Government Grant to Primary Education:** The Commission had given responsibility of primary education to the local authorities but it did not make strong recommendations in respect of their finance. Government grant of 1/3rd of the total expenditure was in fact quite inadequate for educational development. As a result, it was not possible for them to make appropriate reform and development of primary education due to lack of money.
- **Not Making Primary Education Compulsory:** In spite of its various recommendations on improvement of primary education the commission did not suggest making it free and compulsory in the country. It may be recalled here that Compulsory Primary Education Act was passed in England as early as in 1870. However, the necessity to take such a step in our country was ignored.
- **Distinction Between Rural and Urban People:** Owing to the recommendations of the Commission distinction began to grow between the rural and urban people and their way of life. The rural Indian people began to move to the urban areas in search of government jobs. This had adversely affected the social, economic and cultural life of the Indian society.

The above defects and drawbacks of the Commission had their relative effect on Indian education in the later years of their development.

Many of the present ills and educational problems owe their origins to Hunter Commission.



3.8 LET US SUM UP

- The Hunter Commission was appointed to assess the position of education in India and to provide suggestions for reforms.
- Lord Ripon appointed the First Indian Education Commission on February 3, 1882.
- Mr. William Hunter was the chairmen of the commission and for that reason it is popularly known as 'Hunter Commission'.
- The commission was to make the enquiries on the condition of primary education and methods of its expansion, the position of state institution and their importance, position of missionary institution in the general scheme of Indian education, attitude of government towards private enterprise.
- The Commission first started its work at Calcutta for nearly seven weeks and thereafter toured India for eight months examining witnesses and collecting materials, and finally submitted its voluminous report of more than 600 pages and 222 resolutions in 1883.
- It recommended that Primary Education must be related to the practical life of the common people. It should not be treated simply as a step towards reaching university education.
- The system of grant-in-aid should be followed thoughtfully.
- Secondary education curriculum should be divided into two parts. In the first part literary and science subjects should be included and vocational subjects should be included in the other part.
- As per the recommendation of the Hunter Commission the number of colleges increased to a great extent in the country.
- After 1883, secondary education attained a high level of progress and the speed of progress was reasonably fast through the decade.

3.9 FURTHER READING

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

3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Lord Ripon appointed the Indian Education Commission on February 3, 1882.

Ans to Q No 2: Sir William Hunter, a member of his Executive Council was appointed as the Chairman of this Commission.

Ans to Q No 3: There were 20 members in the Commission.

Ans to Q No 4: Two points of achievements of Hunter Commission on Primary Education are:

- The Commission had fully realised the need of mass education in India and had made all its recommendations in favour of it.
- It was justified to recommend mother-tongue as the medium of instruction in our primary education.

Ans to Q No 5: Two suggestions forwarded by Commission regarding indigenous education are:

- The Government should encourage the indigenous schools which provide secular education.
- Discussion should be made with the pandits and the maulavis regarding their development.

3.11 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

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

Q 1: Write briefly on the background of appointment of Hunter Commission.

Q 2: Mention the major objectives of Hunter Commission.

Q 3: Assess the recommendations of Hunter Commission on primary education.

Q 4: Assess the recommendations of Hunter Commission on secondary education.

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

Q 1: Outline the recommendations of Hunter Commission on Primary Education and their effects on the trends of development of education in India.

Q 2: What were the recommendations of Hunter Commission on Secondary Education? Write briefly what impact it had on Indian Education?

Q 3: What were the recommendations of Indian Education Commission, 1882? How these recommendations fulfil the demands of Indian Education?

Q 4: Discuss the impact of Hunter Commission's recommendations on Indian Education.

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