

Government teachers, private tutors and primary education in Colonial Delhi, 1910-1947

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Abstract-Teacher and certification were two major institutions used subtly by the colonial rule to legitimise their superiority, governance and authority over the colonial masses. Moreover, they were also used very explicitly to marginalise the indigenous education system. Active attempts were made on the part of colonial administrators to train the teachers. These teachers were to act as the agents to translate British culture, knowledge and education as superior and scientific as contrast to the indigenous forms of learning. The colonial education system barged through the young minds through the new instructor i.e., the newly trained teacher. The article consists of two parts. The first part looks into the role of the newly trained teacher and their influence in legitimising colonial pedagogy. Secondly, it talks about the trend of resorting to private tutor to keep pace with the rapidly changing education.

Keywords: Primary education, colonial state, teacher, certificate, private tutor

INTRODUCTION

Despite the introduction of compulsion it was felt that the results were not satisfactory. The high dropouts and the absence of any authority among the children were not fulfilling the motive of the government in introducing free and compulsory education. The results it was found were almost enough to damp the hopes of the most ardent advocates of the system. Henry Craik argues that under the indigenous system of education the pupils used to teach one another but without any proper training or assistance. The pupils' knowledge was not tested through any examination or supervision. This

was a sheer waste of time and resources both on the part of the pupil and the younger generation who were subjected to it. This made the British believe that the indigenous system of education was inefficient and unproductive. The instruction in such schools seldom go beyond the religious formularies.ⁱ

Henry Craik says that the teaching was allotted to men who were scarcely interested in the profession and had no training in it. They very often turned to teaching because all other professions were turned away from them.ⁱⁱ The British government wanted to use the teacher as an agent for colonising the young minds. The authority which he used to enjoy in the pre-colonial era was lost now. The curriculum to be taught was decided by the senior officers or the committee instituted for the purpose. The salary he was paid was quite meagre as his job was considered not relevant or crucial. Earlier or in pre-colonial times the teacher exercised enormous authority over his pupils and was revered by the society. Under the colonial rule his role was reduced to a person propagating information. The process and task of teaching which existed in the pre-colonial era was discredited. It was believed by the British government that under the earlier system of education India was illiterate and unlettered. To tackle the situation or to train the teachers for teaching special schools were formed called the teachers training schools. These schools trained the teachers in carrying out the profession elegantly and efficiently. The schools worked according to the new norms of the colonial state.

The new role assigned to the teacher was to convey information to the students or to train students to be the loyal citizens of the state. For the purpose, the

teacher himself was to be moulded and trained. Hence, was felt the need of teacher training institutions. The teachers were expected to learn or absorb all the means desired by the state for the propagation of order and authority. The measures included the maintenance of order in the classroom, methods of instruction, preparing the lesson plan given by the head of the training institution.ⁱⁱⁱ The state desired that the teacher be able to pass on information rather than instigate students to think new ideas. The teacher was also expected to discipline the students and invoke in them respect for authority and obedience. In order to fulfil these measures the colonial government started to establish numerous training schools in various parts of Delhi. They were thought to teach discipline, punctuality and order among the students. They were sought to produce the obedient citizens.

METHODOLOGY

This paper has undertaken a historical research using qualitative techniques to critically examine the nature of educational developments in colonial Delhi with respect to colonial state and the changing conditions in Indian society. The paper is structured with regard to the available theoretical and archival material. The paper is written within a historical framework and time period. Moreover, it analyses the trends of both the colonial state and colonised citizens in terms of educational proceedings and the attempts made by them to claim their interests. The interest of colonial state in educational matters was fulfilled through the teacher. Although, the deeper motive was to legitimise the authority and superiority of the colonial state, the colonial citizens did not behaved as mere recipients of such changes.

The Role of the teacher

The meagre salary provided to the primary school teacher reflects upon the undesirability of the profession. The profession was devoid of both money and prestige. The teachers worked under the inspection officers who exercised enormous authority over them. . Although the role of the primary teacher was crucial, his income had left the profession toothless. With the small amount paid to the teacher

the state expected something which was quite unrealistic i.e., to arouse absolute obedience among the students.^{iv} It was advised to increase the salary of the teachers to encourage people to opt for the profession.^v The efficiency of the teacher was measured within a short span of time when the inspection officer visits the school. If the children or the students performed well in front of the inspection officers, the teacher was termed as a good teacher and vice versa. The Delhi province under colonial rule had a very insignificant number of teacher training schools. Most of the times the teachers went to the training schools in Punjab, Lahore or in the neighbouring areas of Lucknow. During the year 1935-36 Khan Bahadur Raja Fazil Mohammad Khan was appointed the Superintendent of Municipal Education. In the same year he organised a refresher course for a group of 82 teachers where practical and theoretical work was undertaken for 19 days.^{vi}

Defining the powerless position of the teacher Krishna Kumar says that the training period of the teacher spanned from six months to two years. The powers endowed upon the teachers were so limited that he could not even make a minor change in the curriculum. The inspection of schools by the inspection officer has made the situation even more vulnerable. The inspection was carried out within a few minutes or maximum for an hour. Within this short span the worth of the teacher's hard work was decided. For all the hard work put in by the teacher, a few hours was too less a time to decide its worth. The teacher was entangled and dependent on the inspection officer who would decide his worth. The teachers' hard work and qualification was judged by the officer who very often had the least experiences and knowledge of the hardships of the profession of teaching. Hence, the assessment of his capacity to do his job was placed under the overt control of the bureaucracy through devices like graded certificates and performance and payments of results.^{vii}

The curriculum, timings, examinations, uniform and timings etc. everything was devised by officers other than the teacher and especially the primary

schools teacher. The teacher was entangled in the bureaucracy of the educational process and administration. The authority to decide the curriculum was granted to the education department which was headed by the Inspection officer or the Indian Education Services officer. The authority rested with the schools before 8 February 1900. But after that the authority was shifted to the government of India and the local government. The government decided that the rules required modification. The Government of India lay down that any school which receives grant from the public revenues will have to follow the curriculum decided by the local government. The course of instruction for each class would also be prescribed by the government. It was recommended that a wider choice would be provided in case of aided schools. Care was taken that the books recommended by the local government were affordable. Strict disciplinary action was recommended if any school receiving government grants would deviate from the rules prescribed by the government. Care was taken that even the unaided schools also imply by the rules and guidelines given by the local government. Although if the managers of the aided schools wanted some books to be included in the curriculum not authorized by the local government, the local officials would give every possible facility to have the book referred to the text book committee. In the case of unaided schools also the government was authorised to exempt the school candidates from any public examination, for passing which a certificate was given, or from completion of a government scholarship. The government of India and the local government held full right to prescribe the books to the aided and unaided schools. ^{viii}

The primary school teachers were considered to be of mediocre intelligence, by the colonial government who was good only for propagating information among the children. The same attitude was reflected in the status of the children who were devoid of any analytical skill. Instead they were expected to strictly comply by the authority. Krishna Kumar says that the introduction of new curriculum in schools has created certain ambiguities of the teacher. The teacher

had no role to play in the reconstruction of the new curriculum. He was given six months training for learning the new curriculum which was too short for mastering the new curriculum. The kind of knowledge which he used to impart was not acknowledged now. Instead, he was expected to learn new forms of knowledge desired by the colonial state. In addition to this, the meagre salary made him feel powerless. At the Inspector's Conference held at the end of the quinquennium 1921-22, the low salaries of the teachers were discussed. It was decided that the salary of the vernacular primary school teacher should be increased from Rs. 15 to Rs. 26. The reason being the lower salaries led to the migration of teachers to other districts. The schoolmaster were often made incharge of the post-office and the cattle pound in the village, the postal allowances ranging between Rs. 5 to Rs. 12 a month.^{ix} The mysteries of Geographies or rule of the three R's i.e., reading, writing and arithmetic were resisted by the teachers. This sudden change in the authority to not being able to decide what was worth teaching in schools was disliked by teachers. To tackle this situation the training of teachers was seen as the only possible solution. As per Krishna Kumar, the teacher who earlier had the sole authority of running the schools, deciding the curriculum and proceedings of the school was now put under the surveillance of the inspection officer. This loss of authority had an immense effect on the personality of the teacher. The authority of deciding the worth got transferred from the teacher to the inspection officer. ^x

The untrained teachers who were already employed in the schools were being removed. This caused further panic and disillusionment of the profession. In the year 1921-22 the numbers of trained teachers were 147 and that of untrained teachers were 65 whereas in the year 1926-27 there were 288 trained teachers and 93 untrained teachers. There has been an increase in percentage of trained teachers from 69 to 76 percentage in primary schools in Delhi. This was an achievement on the part of the government to increase the number of trained teachers by either removing the untrained teachers or by giving

them training.^{xi} The insecurity created by the shuffle and reorganisation led to evaporation of remaining interests in the profession of teaching, especially at the primary level. The Inspector of Schools, Multan Division quotes a Deputy Commissioner as having said that the average normal pass teacher commands nobody's respect, neither that of parents nor of boy. The frequent transfers undoubtedly lead to anxieties.^{xii} He has no control over the administration. The policy of frequent transfer does not allow the teacher to settle down in the area or get familiar with the people around him.

Under the colonial structure of education the power to recognise and affiliate the schools vested in the hands of the Superintendent of education on the instruction of the District Inspector in the case of boys school and the Assistant Superintendent of Female Education in the case of girls' school.^{xiii} The Inspector of Schools, Ambala division, remarks about teachers, "When a visit is unexpected (that is the only occasion to see things as they are) the spectacle is often anything but pleasing. The teachers himself does not seem to possess much higher notions of cleanliness, orderliness and tidiness. An inspection of the box or almirah for school equipment, registers, books and the like brings the truth of the above remark home to the most sympathetic of visitors...."^{xiv} This process of recognising the schools arrived with the coming of the colonial government. Once the schools were denied recognition they were also denied aid and the fading away of interest of the pupils which led to its deterioration. This made the profession of teaching vulnerable and highly dependent on the senior officials. For instance, M. Tassar Khan, B.A., (Aligarh) applied for the post of a teacher in Anglo Arabic school in Delhi, but was denied post as he was untrained and uncertified in his profession.^{xv} The traditional knowledge was not given any consideration in the jobs. It was also decided that the salary of a Oriental teacher named M. Muhammad Harun be reduced from Rs. 60 to Rs. 45, the former was considered too large an amount for the job he performs. It was also recommended by the inspecting officer that the headmaster of the school be retired on

gratuity equal to one year pay and a young trained person be recruited in his position. The reason being the trained headmaster would be able to follow the orders in a better way.^{xvi}

Every year 30 stipends to teachers were offered. The number of trained teachers had increased by 132. In the villages men teachers working in boys schools have begun to send their wives to normal schools to be trained as teachers. This has not only helped to raise the family income, but has made it possible to start schools for girls in rural areas. These married women had the protection of their husbands and were at the same time able to get more in touch with the parents of the children which would not be possible for unmarried girls or widows unless they were quiet elderly.^{xvii}

The percentage of trained teachers rose from 74 in 1931-32 to 81 in 1936-37. The rise is partly due to the elimination of unnecessary, uneconomical and inefficient aided primary schools wherein untrained teachers were generally employed and partly, to the fact that the Department prohibited the appointment of untrained teachers laying down that a breach of this rule would result in the removal of the school from the list of recognised institutions.^{xviii} In the year 1935-36, the number of teachers employed in primary schools had come down from 467 to 446. Of these 446 were trained and 77 were certified untrained teachers.^{xix} Out of 420 women teachers employed in schools of all types in Delhi, 373 are trained. Of these 373, 24 are trained graduates and some of them hold British degrees and diplomas.^{xx} Miss Young was the Lady Superintendent of education in the Delhi province during the time period of 1935-36.

The training school was a new phenomenon. It held invalid the other forms and methods of propagation of knowledge. With the coming of the new forms of teaching also came the pain of rejection of old methods of learning and teaching. New teachers arrived with new techniques. The training school trained teachers for a minimum of six months. The cost of training was high which reduced the accessibility of such institutions. The high cost of training and the low

remuneration to the teachers made the aspirants disillusioned from the profession. The training schools were located in Punjab, Lahore and Lucknow which further made it difficult for the aspirants from Delhi to join them. The chances of female teacher joining these institutions were even lesser as the guardians were sceptical of leaving the young females in hostels.

The teachers in the schools were expected to skill in the art of classroom management and not in intellectual pursuit. In the Normal Training school the primary school teacher is taught how to handle a class of boys and to be able to teach certain subjects. He was not provided with the instruction in child psychology.^{xxi} The minimum qualification for the teacher was kept so low that it was undesirable to expect any intellectual pursuit on their behalf. Apart from this the meagre pay of the school teacher made them unsatisfied with their profession. Hence, the profession was unable to harbour the necessary motivation, passion and admiration required in any profession. Training without intellectual context, combined with low salary and status resulted in a perception of teaching as a weak and vulnerable vocation.^{xxii} Teachers were also devoid of the right of autonomous assessment of pupil's progress. The earning, status and powers of the teacher all deteriorated with the coming of colonial rule. The rights endowed upon the primary school teacher were so less that it was a deception to expect any path-breaking result on his part.

The teaching became very much exam oriented. This left no scope for any enquiry both on the part of the student as well as the teacher. The mode of teaching inspired by examinations discouraged any independent enquiry other than the prescribed syllabus. Exam with excessive concern to credentials was an end in itself, rather than with education as a means to acquire skills and competencies and mind-broadening experiences.^{xxiii} Hayden Bellenoit in his book *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920* argues that the education system was largely responsible for shaping the educational enterprise. Any inappropriate comment on the part of

the inspection officer could financially jeopardise the school. Hence, the school teacher was always under pressure to perform as per the norms of the authorities. In a way it was a payment-by-results system.^{xxiv} The teacher was supposed to maintain authority over the pupils. The pupils irrespective of their interest in the curriculum were thought to obey the teacher. The loyalty towards the teacher was the proof of the best student. Total allegiance to authority and unquestioning obedience were the qualities which made the perfect disciple. This discouraged any form of challenge or dissent to the authority.

The situation of teacher could be defined in the inquiry of the Commission, which gave its report. In one it reads "It is impossible to describe the poverty and decay which everything indicated.... The chief textbook seemed to be a kitten, to which all the children were very attentive." In another, the teacher, "a young man, very pale and sickly in appearance," worked as a carpenter during the school hours; "he expressed a strong wish to have an arithmetic book and a grammar for his own improvement."^{xxv}

Nesfield, Percival Wren etc. published certain books for the Indian schools. Their books formed a major portion of the recognised Indian school curriculum. The book by Percival Wren named as *The English Grammar and Composition* and by Nesfield, the *Manual of English Grammar and Composition* were very popular both in India and Britain. These were some of the books used in curriculum.

The unnoticed trend

As the demand for English education was on increase, the colonial schools were unable to keep pace with it. The schools established by the then Government of India were largely using vernacular medium of instruction. To cope up with the situation, many parents whose children went to such schools resorted to private tuitions. The demand for English as a medium of instruction in District Municipal board schools was denied on the basis that the majority of students in such schools came from poorer sections of the society. The introduction of English would prove beneficial in the long run for a selected few who would

continue higher education. But it cannot be useful to the generality of pupils. It would defeat the main objective of education i.e., the spread of literacy among the masses. It was felt by the authorities that the introduction of English would create confusion as the boys will neither learn the 3R's nor learn much English in the third primary class. Majority of the parents were unable to arrange private tuition for their boys which left the boy illiterate even in the vernacular language.^{xxvi} Hence, the government could not use English as a medium of instruction. This trend was not noticed or reported adequately by the officers. The reason could be that these private tutors were not registered and hence did not come under the authority of the state.

Most probably there was an increasing trend of private tuition among the residents of Delhi. The teachers teaching both in Municipal and private aided schools gave tuitions. The reason for this increasing trend could be that the low salary of the primary and elementary school teachers which made it difficult for them to sustain their lifestyles. The District Board has reduced the lowest grade of Rs. 25-1-30 to that of Rs. 20-1-25 and had abolished the topmost grade of Rs. 40-2-50. This had an adverse effect on the recruitment of trained teachers as the cost of living in Delhi was much expensive than that at the countryside.^{xxvii} To substitute their lower income in the struggle for existence the teachers very often resorted to private tuitions extra expenses in the for incurring in the city life The teacher in Delhi and especially the primary school teacher was paid a starvation amount of Rs. 12 per mensem. It was not a living wage commensurate with the length and cost of his training and his responsibilities. The low wages made the teacher's thought far removed from his class and employed in fulfilling the interests of his family.^{xxviii} The lower income forced them to search for new avenues of income. On the other hand the parents who could afford the tuition for their wards resorted to it. The practice of private tuition created disturbances in the education system. It made the educational structure non-uniform. Some students were provided with extra attention depending on the amount of socio-

cultural and economic capital the parents possess. On the contrary, the parents who lacked such capital were devoid of the extra attention. The inspection report by Mr. Leitch Wilson in 1934 depicted the alarmingly increasing trend of private tuitions by the Municipal and private aided school teachers. The report recommended that, no teacher in the employment in Municipal schools should be allowed private tuition without the sanction of competent authority appointed for this purpose by the Municipal Committee. The teacher as a rule should not be granted the permission to accept more than one private pupil at a time. The teacher should also not accept the private tuition of a pupil, who is taught by him in the class. At the same time the aided schools should keep a record of all the private tuitions provided by their teachers and the inspection staffs was advised to inspect at the time of their visit.^{xxix} J. L. Wilson, Inspection Officer of Delhi Municipality in his report on the condition of teachers in Delhi given in 1934 writes,

“Do we really respect and honour our teachers? Do we give them a chance even to respect themselves? It is easy to criticise the vernacular teacher to whom we entrust the education of our children at the stage if their life when habits are most easily formed and the foundation of character are laid. What kind of person is the teacher to whom we entrust our children? He is a man held in such honour and respect that we pay him less than we pay our so-called menial servants, our carpenters, our mechanics- even mu Municipal peon, who is evidently fortunate in his illiteracy, gets more than any of the teachers in Delhi.”^{xxx}

The above mentioned quote defines very well the misery of the primary school teacher and the difficulties he has to undergo in earning a livelihood. The teachers resorting to private tuition became a common phenomenon in colonial Delhi. The reason was very obvious, the low wages or remuneration attributed to the teachers. Sometimes the teachers themselves induced the parents to pay for private tuitions by reporting to them that their boys are likely to fail in the promotion examinations unless they are given extra coaching.^{xxxi} The medium of instruction was

also very important as it created a binary among the educated and especially elite urban educated and the other educated in regional language. The English as a medium of instruction was carried out in schools which had proper trained teacher and which fulfil almost all the requirements of a certified school. This increases the cost of studying in such schools. These schools were accessible by a certain section of Indians who enjoyed both economic and cultural capital and also who were adaptable enough to realize the importance of English in ensuring status quo. These communities on the one hand were enjoying the developments of the British rule. The demand and supply of English as a medium of instruction in schools was limited to upper castes and classes of India. Also when English was not used as a medium of instruction in schools some conscious and well off parents resorted to private tuition for their wards. The demand for English came out of economic and practical reasons. At the same time it was felt that the English education would lead Indian out of the superstitious and ignorant attitude. The English was liked upon as scientific and progressive whereas the vernacular or regional was seen as regressive and unscientific. Rammohan Roy favoured extensive Anglicization, charging that support to Sanskrit and Arabic-Persian education alone would serve only to 'keep [India] in darkness.'^{xxxii}

But while the English or Western education was emphasized on one hand, there was also an attempt to reconstruct the self with it. It marks the entry point of all the reform movements in India. The reform movements could be seen as a result of the fear of the loss of the self and spiritual than the wish to reform the society. The government's decision to use vernacular or regional languages as medium of instruction in Municipal and District Board schools was also seen as an attempt to keep the larger masses inefficient or not eligible for the administrative and other opportunities. On the one hand the then government of India decided to use regional languages in schools and on the other hand it keeps the eligibility of English education for appointment in administrative jobs. In this way the few people who had access to

English education due to their greater economic and social capital were able to hold their dominance over the others who lacked this capital. It can be said that both the Government and the elites of India had a symbiotic relationship where the former helped in maintaining the privileged position of the later and vice versa. The condition of education in colonial India seemed worsening because of what has been called the dynamics of uneven development. That is, there was an ever increasing dichotomization between the haves and the haves not of India. For the then Government of India profit was more important than people.

The idea that education should be seen as a commodity that can and should be bought and sold on in the market was spreading. In this perspective parents have the right to look to their own children's educational needs, rather than the responsibility to contribute to those of the nation's children as a whole. Individual 'choice' holds sway- although choice is often without acknowledgement of the mundane reality that people are unequally placed, socially, economically and politically, to implement the choices they desire.^{xxxiii} The cope up and compete with the new emerging education system a class of tutors and coaches emerged. They became the norm of the time.^{xxxiv}

CONCLUSION

The several strategies adopted by the British for the propagation of their rule were making English compulsory for the administrative jobs; providing supposedly secular education in schools; inspection of schools by inspection officers and superintendents of education; training of teachers and; the certification of schools. The Indians began to see new opportunities and expectations in education and thought that education would enable them to sell themselves better. The administration was revamped and structured in a way which made every officer subordinate and answerable to the ones above them. The graded administrative structure limited the powers of the people but increased their responsibilities. For instance, the teacher was answerable to the headmaster and the inspection officer but his power

were curtailed. Under the new system he could not decide the curriculum, tenure of the class etc.

The learning of English, and sometimes the other subjects in the medium of English, the orientation towards examinations, inspections, the textbooks, disciplining of the self through punctuality, dressing or uniform were the characteristic of the new colonial education system which emerged in the colonial period.^{xxxv} Building the colonial rule involved on the one hand, the construction of legitimacy and on the other, the delegitimation of pre-colonial authority.^{xxxvi}

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