

INDIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION, 1882

(HUNTER COMMISSION 1882)

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INTRODUCTION:

The Indian Education Commission of 1882, popularly known as the Hunter Commission, was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir William Hunter to review the progress of education since the Wood's Despatch of 1854. The Commission focused mainly on primary and secondary education and emphasized the responsibility of the state in spreading mass education through local bodies like district and municipal boards. It recommended that primary education should be provided in the vernacular language and expanded to rural areas, while secondary education should be divided into two streams—literary, leading to higher education, and vocational, providing practical training in agriculture, commerce, and industry. The Commission also stressed the importance of women's education and encouraged private institutions and missionaries through a grant-in-aid system. Though its recommendations were only partially implemented, it marked a significant step in shaping the framework of India's educational system during the colonial period.

BACKGROUND

- Appointed under the chairmanship of Sir William Hunter in 1882.
- Formed to review the progress of education after the Wood's Despatch of 1854 and to make recommendations for future development.
- It mainly dealt with primary and secondary education, especially in the provinces.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMISSION

1. To enquire into the working of primary and secondary education in India.
2. To examine the role of provincial governments and local bodies in promoting education.

3. To suggest measures for the spread of mass education in rural areas.
4. To evaluate the progress of grant-in-aid system introduced after 1854.
5. To assess the participation of private institutions and missionaries in education.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Chairman: Sir William Hunter.
- Members included educationists, administrators, Indian representatives, and missionaries.
- Some prominent Indian members: Syed Mahmood (Allahabad High Court Judge) and representatives from Bengal, Bombay, Madras and Punjab.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Primary Education

- Should be regarded as the responsibility of the state but managed by local bodies (municipal boards, district boards).
- Emphasis on vernacular languages as medium of instruction.
- Expansion of rural primary schools to spread mass literacy.
- Free and compulsory education for boys in some areas (where feasible).

2. SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Two divisions:
 - Literary (leading to university education).
 - Vocational/Practical (industrial, commercial, agricultural education).
- Encouragement to private institutions through grant-in-aid.
- Development of teacher training institutions.

3. ROLE OF STATE AND PRIVATE AGENCIES

- The government should not monopolize education but encourage private initiative.
- Missionaries, local societies, and private bodies to be encouraged with financial aid.

4. Women's Education

- Special encouragement for female education, especially in urban and rural areas.

- Suggested that grants should be given to private bodies promoting women's schools.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Local boards (district and municipal) were entrusted with primary education.
- Many provinces started district schools and rural schools.
- Diversification of secondary education (literary and vocational streams) began in some provinces.
- The grant-in-aid system was expanded to support private institutions.
- Women's education gradually received more state attention, though progress was slow.

CRITICISM

1. Recommendations were not binding; implementation depended on provinces.
2. Focus was on quantity rather than quality of education.
3. The spread of education to the masses was slow; literacy levels remained very low.
4. Compulsory education was suggested but not effectively enforced.
5. Higher education was ignored; emphasis was mainly on primary and secondary levels.
6. The division of secondary education into "literary" and "vocational" remained mostly on paper.

CONCLUSION:

From academic point of view the role of Hunter Commission of 1882 is very significant. It was the first systematic attempt to define the role of the state and local bodies in Indian education. Though its implementation was partial and slow, it laid the foundation for the later growth of primary education, vocational training, and women's education in India. On the basis of this later on Curzon's Education Policy of 1904 was declared.