

COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN INDIA

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The destiny of a nation is moulded and fashioned through its education. And if it is so, then the education of women has a strategic importance as it enhances the status of the society. A literate mother can do wonders in building up a healthy and bright future for our nation. According to Swami Vivekananda, it is only in the homes of educated and pious mothers, greatmen are born.¹ Mahatma Gandhi, said, “Education of a boy is education of one person, but the education of a girl is the education of the entire family.”² The University Education Commission (1948-49) also felt the need of women’s education and stated that there cannot be educated people without educated women”. In general if education has to be limited to men then that stands for the benefit of the one generation. On the other hand if the opportunity is opened to women then it would most surely be passed on the next generation.³

The Government appointed various commissions and committees to study the barriers of education and suggest remedial measures for it. These commissions provided many valuable methods for the progress of education in general and women in particular.

University Education Commission (1948-49)

The first commission appointed in the post independence period was the University Education Commission under the inspired leadership of Sarvapalli Radha Krishnan.⁴ It recommended that the ordinary amenities and decencies of life should be provided for women in colleges and that there should be no curtailment of educational opportunities for women rather great increase. The commission stressed that, “Women should get good education as men get”.⁵

1 Nirmala Jeyaraj, *Women and Society*, Madurai, 2011, p.364.

2 Shanta Agarwal, *The Girl Child and Her Education*, *Social Welfare*, Vol.53, No.6., New Delhi, September 2006, p.27.

3 Nilima Srivastava, *Women and Higher Education Need and Benefit*, *Social Welfare*, Vol.53, No.6, New Delhi, September 2006, p.28.

4 Sarvapaklli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) was an academic philosopher and statesman. He became the Vice President of India in 1952 and President in 1962. He was awarded Bharat Ratna in 1954.

5 Report of the University Education Commission 1948-49, Ministry of Education and Culture, New Delhi, 1950, p.240.

Based on the recommendation of University Education Commission, the University Grants Commission was constituted as the apex body on Higher Education in 1953 by an Act of the Parliament to provide the direction and support for the development of university education.⁶ It serves as a co-ordinating body between the Union and State governments and the institutions of higher learning. It allocates and disburses grants to universities and colleges for maintenance and development.⁷ The recommendations of Dr. Radhakrishnan were reinforced by the Secondary Education Commission appointed in 1952.

Secondary Education Commission 1952-53

On September 23, 1952 the government appointed a commission on Secondary Education headed by Lekshmanaswamy Mudaliar.⁸ It was also known as Mudaliar Commission.⁹ Some of the main recommendations were, to open separate schools for girls wherever there is demand for them, to lay down conditions to co-educational schools, to satisfy the special needs of girls students and women members of teaching staff and to make distinctions between education imparted to boys and girls, and provide special facilities for the study of Home Science¹⁰. It was followed by the establishment of National Committee on Women's Education.

National Committee on Women's Education 1958

The National Committee on Women's Education was appointed by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of Shrimathi Durgabai Deshmukh on 19th May 1958.¹¹ It made some recommendations on Women's education and the important among them are the following :

- The education of women should be regarded as a major and a special issue and efforts should be made to close the existing gap between the education of men and women.
- Steps should be taken to constitute as early as possible a National Council for the education of girls and women.

6 Report of the Tamil Nadu Development Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, p.209.

7 *Incredible India At A Glance, Year Book*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 214

8 A Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar (1887-1974) was an Indian educationist and physician with notable international and academic roles. He was the longest serving Vice- Chancellor of Madras University (27 years) and Principal of Madras Medical College.

9 Secondary Education Commission, 1952, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, New Delhi, 1952, p.31.

10 *Yojana*, Vol.45, November, New Delhi, 2001, p. 46.

11 J.C. Aggarwal, *Landmarks in the History of Modern Indian Education*, New Delhi, 2007, p.119.

- The State Government should establish a State Council for the education of girls and women.
- The University Grants Commission should specify a definite amount separately for the education of girls.
- In the first phase of development, provision for free education should be made for girls upto class VIII.¹²
- There should be a Condensed Course for adult women on a large scale and hostels should be attached to secondary schools particularly in rural areas.
- Incentives are to be provided to motivate and facilitate girls education. There should be identical curriculum for boys and girls at the middle school and secondary stages. Girls should be encouraged to take up courses in Commerce, Engineering, Agriculture, Medicine at the university stage by offering them scholarships and other concessions. The net result of the National Committee on Education was the formation of National Council for Women's Education.¹³

5.2.4 National Council for Women's Education 1959

On the basis of the recommendations of National Committee on Womens Education of 1958, a National Council for Women's Education was set up in 1959 by the Ministry of Education. It consisted of a Chairman, Secretary and 27 members to discharge the following functions.

- To advise the government on issues relating to the education of girls at school level and of adult women.
- To suggest policies, programmes, targets and priorities for the expansion and improvement to the education of girls and women.
- To suggest suitable measures for educating public opinion infavour of the education of girls and women.
- To organize seminars, take up surveys and other research works for the improvement of girls education in the country and to make periodic evaluation of the progress of women's education.¹⁴

State Council for Women's Education 1961

On the basis of the recommendations of National Council for Women's Education and Government of India the State Council for Women's Education in Tamilnadu was constituted in 1961 with the Chief Minister as its Chairman.¹⁵ The Director of Public

12 Birendra Deka, *Higher Education in India Development and Problems*, New Delhi, 2000, p.47.

13 J.K. Pillai & S. Rajeswari, *Readings in Women Education*, Kodaikanal, 2002 p.60.

14 S.N. Mukerjee, *op.cit.*, p.239.

15 G.O.Ms. No. 350, Education Department, 18-3-1964.

Instruction, Director of Women's Welfare, Deputy Secretary of Education Department, Smt. Visalakshmi Narayanaswamy, Smt. M.C. Jadhav, Smt. T.N. Anandanayaki, the then MLA were appointed as the officials and non-officials members of the Committee. The functions of the council was to meet once in three months to reivev the progress of girls education and advise the government on all matters relating to the education of girls.¹⁶ The State Council insisted the Government that the education of women should be treated as a special problem for some years and diversified courses should be introduced for girls to improve their skills. It also recommended that government should appoint women officers as deputy or assistant Directors of Education in Charge of deucational programmes for girls and to provide adequate funds for thr development of girls education at all stages.¹⁷

5.2.6 Hansa Mehta Committee Report 1962

As a result of the traditional view point of a different curriculum for girls supported by the National Committee on Women's Education 1958, most of the institutions provided for a separate curriculum for girls such as Domestic Science, Household Managements, Needle Work and Fine Arts. This has adversdy affected the concept of equalization of educational opportunities for girls and deprived them of career oriented educational courses of Science and Mathematics. This practice was challenged by the Committee on Differentiation of curriculum for boys and girls. Hansa Mehta Committee was appointed to examine the differentiation and submit a report.

Hansa Mehta Committee was appointed by the National Council for Women Education in 1962 under the chairmanship of Smt. Hansa Mehta.¹⁸ It was aimed at examining carefully the differentiation of curriculum for boys and girls at all stages of education. The Committee analysed the issues and made the following recommendations.¹⁹

- At Higher Secondary level, Home Science is a useful subject for girls but it should not be made compulsory.
- Music, Drawing, Painting and Fine Arts are the subjects of interest for girls and therefore proper facilities for their teaching should exist in educational institutions.
- Girls in sufficient number should be encouraged to take Science and Mathematics subjects.
- In the place of Physical Education, Handwork should form a part of girls education.

16 Ibid.

17 J.K.Pillai & K.Rajeshwari, *op.cit.*, p.84.

18 Hansa Mehta (1897-1995) was an active politician. She campaigned against the Simon Commission. She was appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of Maharaja Sayaji Rao University of Baroda. She served as a secretary to the National Council for Women and was President of All India Women's Conference. She was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1958.

19 J.C. Aggarwal, *Progress of Education in India*, New Delhi, 1977, p.394.

- Steps should be taken to appoint women teachers in all educational institutions at the Secondary and university stages.²⁰ As a general dissatisfaction was found in women's education in the Southern states of India, the Bhaktavatsalam Committee was appointed to study and suggest remedial measures.

Bhaktavatsalam Committee Report 1963

The Bhaktavatsalam Committee appointed by the National Council for women in May 1963 functioned with Shri. M. Bhakta Vatsalam,²¹ as its Chairman. It looked in to the cause of the lack of public support for women's education and studied the problems of women's education in six Southern States where the development of women education was not significant. The Committee did an indepth investigation and made the following recommendations.

- It suggested that the Syllabi for women's education should be developed on the lines laid down by Hansa Mehta Committee, and Domestic Science should be made compulsory.
- It recommended that the condensed course designed by the Central Social Welfare Board should be implemented to educate adult women.²²
- State Government should enlighten the public with regard to the education of girls by organizing conferences, seminars and display of audio visual material.
- Central Government should provide economic help liberally for the education of women.
- A functional curriculum should be evolved for educating adult women.
- In the Teachers Training Centres, seats should be reserved for women students, hailing from rural areas.
- Facilities like attractive emoluments, accommodation and conveyance allowomens etc. should be made available to women teachers.²³ However the gap between the sexes continued to be there in the case of education. So Kothari Commission was appointed to avert this situation and to promote women's education by seeking new measures.

Kothari Commission Report 1964-66

The Education Commission was appointed under the leadership of Dr. D. S. Kothari²⁴ in 1964. It brought to light certain truths like that in the modern world the role of

20 V.K. Kohli, *Current Problems of Indian Education*, Jallundar, 1974, p.47.

21 M.Bhaktavatchlam (1897-1987) was an eminent lawyer, politician and freedom fighter of Tamil Nadu. He involved himself in politics and imprisoned during the Salt Satyagraha and Quit India Movement. He served as the Chief Minister Tamil Nadu from 1963 to 1967.

22 J.K. Pillai & S. Rajeshwari, *op.cit.*, p.60.

23 A.P. Sharma, *Contemporary Problems of Education*, New Delhi, 1968, p.21.

24 D.S. Kothari, was an eminent scientist. He was a outstanding teacher, a great educationist and a renowned physicist. He is regarded as the architect of Defence

women goes beyond the bringing up of children. She is now adopting a career of her own and sharing equally with man the responsibility of developing the family and of society in all aspects. In the struggle for freedom Indian women fought side by side with men. This equal partnership would have to continue in the fight against hunger, poverty, ignorance and illhealth.²⁵ Highlighting the same this Commission gave special attention to the following recommendations of the National Committee on Women's Education .

- The education of women should be regarded as a major programme in the educational administration for some years to close the existing gap between the education of men and women as early as possible.
- Special schemes should be prepared for this purpose and the funds required for the same should be provided on priority basis.
- There should be a special machinery at the centre and in the states to monitor the education of girls and women.
- The proportion of women students to men students in higher education is 1:4. This should be increased to about 1:3 to meet the demand for educated women in different fields.
- At the undergraduate level a separate college for women may be established if there is a local demand. At the post graduate level however, there is no justification for separate institutions.
- Women students should have free access to courses in Arts, Humanities, Sciences and Technology. Facilities for advanced training in Business Administration and Management should be provided.
- Research units should be set up in one or two universities to deal specially with women's education.
- The condensed course for adult education should be expanded.
- Increased facilities should be provided for education through correspondence course.
- Wherever necessary special allowances should be give to women teachers working in rural areas.²⁶

The government formulated many programmes on women education based on the recommendations of various Committees. Education thus started to become a common affair. This trend developed in the general education had its impact on Arts and Science studies.

25 J.C. Aggarwal, *op.cit.*, p. 406.

26 D.S. Kothari, *Kothari Commission*, 1964-66, NewDelhi, 1971, p. 241.