

A Brief Study on the British Education Policy

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Abstract

Since the annexation of Rakhine and Taninthayi in 1426, the British government established a colonial polity in Littoral Provinces of Rakhine and Taninthayi. In doing so, they noticed the problems and cost of administration through the appointment of British officials and administrators of other ranks. Therefore they decided to train the natives to become clerks and petty officials who were vulnerable to the British imperialism. After the annexation of Lower Myanmar in 1852, the Department of Public Instruction was founded to initiate the colonial education. This paper examines the policy of British colonial education and its effect on the Myanmar Society.

Keywords : Vulnerable, colonial education

Introduction

This paper examines the educational policy and practice of colonial government. Some scholars studied history of education in Myanmar with various aspects. This paper aims to fulfill the gap of history of education by conducting research on educational policy of British.

After the annexation of littoral provinces of Rakhine and Taninthayi in 1826, the British Government appointed Maingy as the commissioner to implement civil and political administration. He appointed British officials to establish general administration, judicial and revenue administration (Furnivall: 1956, 30). From 1826 to 1850's the government could not consider social welfare including education for the natives. Even in England, the educational activities in 18 century had fallen in the hands of Christian clergies and individual lay scholars. In England, during early 1830s, only in every eleven children was able to learn at school (Tha Kyaw: 2015, 12). So the British government could not initiate educational activities in Rakhine and Taninthayi. However the Christian Missionaries were allowed to establish missionary schools.

The British government inevitably had to take full responsibility for the education of Myanmar people in 1860s. East India Company's Board of Directors thought a strategy for the education. Meanwhile the British government in India would like to create the educated people who were enabling to think like the British. They would become teacher, translators, writers, etc. These educated Indians also being the go-betweens to distribute the ideas of government to non-educated Indians (Tha Kyaw: 2015, 16). The problem was the strategy should be based on a firm policy. The government officials came to believe that if knowledge and then traditions prevailed among the natives; of Asia and if they cultivated them, they could have a tremendous hold over their subordinates (Vyas: 1954, 40). The then Chief Commissioner, Sir Charles Bernard supported this idea and made a remark thus,

"We will be able to carry out tasks in more time than we expected by the spread of our language, knowledge, traditions and religion in our own territory Asia. In addition to this, the subordinates of this region can come into contact with our kingdom" (Vyas: 1954, 40).

At that time most of the British officials had discussed the educational policy for the colonial countries to be adopted by the British government. Various proposals were put forward Lord Macaulay's was considered the most adequate to the educational aims of the British authorities. It could be said that the educational policies adopted by the government officials were formulated on the basis of Lord Macaulay's was considered the most adequate to the educational aims of the British authorities. It could be said that the educational policies adopted by the government officials were formulated on the basis of Lord Macaulay's proposal which, was put

forward in 1835. The proposal contained following points.

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1. To have an expenditure of money on education as low as possible
2. To let the subject people know the usefulness of English language and admire and respect the English and the British Empire,
3. To produce the intelligentsia from ethnic minorities in order that they could be appointed as clerks and minor officers for the bureaucratic system of administration.

The East India Company's Board of directors had realized that the British government could save money if the local intelligentsia were employed more than the English (Vyas: 1954, 41-48). The British firms that invested and traded in the colonial countries also would like to use the intelligentsia of ethnic minorities who were impressed with the British government and loyal to them and whose wages were low. For that reason the British government followed Lord Macaulay's proposal for both the firms and administration and prescribed the English language as a medium of instruction (Khin Zaw Win: 1968: 114).

When the British government began education in India, the natives who already had numerous different languages accepted English as the medium of instruction. In Myanmar the authorities had to face problem. That was whether English would be taught to all Myanmar natives or only to the ethnic minorities to know the importance of English. If they adopted the policy that all the natives would be taught English, the British government would have to establish a great number of schools. Since 1842, the Christian Missionaries opened St. Patrick School in Mawlamyine and in 1847 St. Joseph Girl School was also established. The English. Algebra, Book Keeping, Geography, Math, History, Drawing, Music and Myanmar were major subjects. Sewing and Knitting were additional subjects for girl school. (Tha Kyaw: 2015, 25). Although it will cost the British government too much money, the government at first inclined to, establish English schools. The natives will not think highly of English and the usefulness of it. The British would riot like it to happen. They wanted English to remain as a language used only by the authorities and the upper echelon of ethnic minorities (Laurie, 1885, 175). When trace., the education policy of British in Myanmar had stemmed from the educational policies set up in England and India. In 1854 Sir Charles Wood Submitted "a proposal named "Wood Despatch" which encouraged to give priority lo the indigenous literature and public education. He also discouraged the teaching of Christianity in lay schools (Thet Tun: 1970, 658).

On the contrary, the British Authorities thought if only the native upper class and minor officials were taught English they would have a feeling of loyalty to the English and the British Empire. If this policy prevailed among all colonies, the British Empire which was composed of many colonies will remain in existence longer than they expected. (Vyas: 1954, 49). Before the establishment of the Department of Public Instruction, (Department of Education), the British government adopted the education policy for Myanmar. The important aspects of education policy were;

1. to give freedom to the Christian Missionaries in British territories,
2. to teach English and Science subjects to the minorities,
3. to encourage the learning of indigenous literature and to take; care of the spread of primary education,
4. to practice payment by result,
5. to teach secular curriculum in government schools,
6. to establish regional education committees, and

7. to encourage voluntary teaching through the establishment of private schools (Tha Kyaw : 2015,40)

In 1864, Sir, Arthur Phayre, Chief Commissioner of Lower Myanmar was assigned by the Secretary of Indian Government to submit a project of education to be implemented in Lower Myanmar. Phayre's project inclined to establish Anglo-Vernacular Schools through the collaboration with the Buddhist monks. He also encouraged the government to explain the monks on government text books and curriculum (Kaung: 1963, 86). After the acceptance of Phayre's project, government appointed Mr. Hough as the Director of Public Instruction (Furnivall: 1956, 125). In 1866, the British government established the Department of Public Instruction. The government took Lord Macaulay's advice by using English as a media of the instruction. But English was to be taught within limits to make the natives heed the British government in high regard and highly valued English. According to this policy, the British government had an acute desire to launch a massive programme of education for the natives. But they would not like to implement by themselves. They sought the solution to build educational establishment, with the help of monastic schools and Lay-schools. However, it was apparent that Missionary schools in Myanmar took a leading role in education.

The British government first made an effort to use monasteries because education was found at the annexation to be in the hands of the Buddhist monks. In doing so they had three objectives.

1. To have an expenditure of money on education as low as possible. The authorities thought that the expenses would be high if new educational and other new services must be organized.
2. To identify the monastic schools as main educational establishment. It was to those monastic schools that Myanmar owed her comparatively high standard of literacy, made the basis of the present system of education. The British government thought the education system could be easily achieved if the monastic schools were willing to accept the government curriculum.
3. To realize that the government had a desire for the benefit of public by implementing the present educational scheme with the aid of monastic schools. (Phayre: 1866, 8-10) So the British government started to implement it throughout fifty-three years from 1867 until 1920. They tried to make the monastic schools to accept the government curriculum. It was based on the above mentioned principal elements. But the monastic schools accepted the government curriculum less than the expectation of the British authorities. Only 46 monastic schools had adopted the government's plan (Furnivall: 1956, 125)

In implementing its educational policy, the British government inevitably had to open some government schools. In major ports which were the business centers cities and towns where there were offices for European officers. According to the 1867 report on education the British government opened a school in each of these towns - Yangon in the Bago division, Mawlamyine in the Taninthayi (division and Sittwe and Yambye which were thickly-populated ports in the Rakhine Division. (RPIBB: 1969, 3). In his report A.P. Phayre, the then commissioner, said that two kinds of the government middle schools should be created. The first kind of schools should be opened in Patheingyi and Pyaw and the second in Taungtha, Hinthata Myanaung and Dawe. He noticed that English should be the medium of the teaching but Myanmar (language) should not be neglected. His reason was that by doing that, the natives will come to rely on the British government. Although he suggested this the authorities would like to implement the educational system by using the present educational establishment such as monasteries, because had to be opened in one order not to be criticized by the people. Government Schools were opened in

Mawlamyine in 1835.

After 1852, there were three kinds of schools; namely the monastic school, the lay-school and the Missionary school. According to the 1867 census it was found that the monastic schools numbered 3438 with an average daily attendance of -3733 students and there were 340 lay-schools and 4069 students attended daily (Thet Tun: 1970, 668). There were 31 registered monastic schools in Lower Myanmar in 1867-68 and there were not any registered lay-schools. But the number of the registered lay-schools had steadily risen to 723 in 1898-99. The lay-schools were the schools that introduced the teaching method and the curriculum prescribed by the education department of public instruction (Thet Tun: 1940. 659).

From that time then on the department of public instruction planned to implement the grants- in-aid system. The schools which were found suitable for aid under the grants in aid rules were registered. Accordingly the monastic schools and the lay-schools were transformed into vernacular schools and the mission schools into Anglo-vernacular schools gradually (Kaung: 1963, 73-74).

In March 1874, the first Government High School was established in Yangon. It provided classes from primary to matriculation level. The students who passed middle final examination were allowed to enroll to High School. In 1877 two students and in 1878 another seven students matriculated. In January 1879 an affiliate college of Calcutta University was opened at the High School for matriculated students. The College opened first Arts classed under supervision of the Calcutta University (Thet Tun: 1970, 667). Fifteen years later, another College was established by the American Baptist Mission (FQRPIB: 1897, 6-7). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the government efforts on the education steadily improved. In 1903-04. there were altogether 19, 716 government and government aided schools with 187, 095 students (RAB: 1904, 39). In 1904-05, another 5760 new schools were opened. This figure shows that each three towns or the three village had average one schools (RAB: 1905, 66). During 1911, a number of various types of schools increase up to 27, 532 with 584, 298 students (RPIB: 1918. 39, 71). The increasing number of schools and students shows that Myanmar under colonial rule was ready for next educational step, i.e., the university education which was initiated by the Government in 1920.

Conclusion

The British government initiated education system after the annexation of lower Myanmar in 1852. The main objective of colonial education was to produce the educated class for colonial education. Five decades after the establishment of the Department of Public Instruction, the various types of schools; namely government schools, government -aided schools, mission schools sprang up across the country. Owing to the introduction of colonial education, the middle class which had never been existed in the customary Myanmar emerged in the colonial society.¹ Some elites who had learned educational institution of the West well acquainted with the liberal ideas and nationalism. They became mouth piece in opposing against the British government when the latter introduced the university education.

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