

A BRIEF REVIEW OF
INDIAN EDUCATION IN NATAL.

by

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A BRIEF REVIEW OF INDIAN EDUCATION : 1860-1960

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Missionary Endeavours.

Indian education in Natal upon the arrival of the immigrants was initiated by at least two Church missions in the country, the Church of S.A. and the Wesleyan Mission. The first move was made by Father Sabon when he sought financial assistance from the Colonial Government in 1863 to start a school for Indian children. This was however, refused. The first Indian schools were thus private in character. In 1867 Father Sabon opened a school with 30 pupils. In the same year Rev. Ralph Stott of the Wesleyan Mission established two schools, a day and an evening school. The efforts of these two pioneers received recognition when the Colonial Government decided to make a grant of £25 to each of them. The buildings used were very poor, consisting of wattle and daub huts, save for one school which was built of wood and iron measuring 17' x 9', with 3 desks, a few benches, 2 maps and a blackboard. The school day began at 9 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. Rev. Ralph Stott's day school had 37 boys and 7 girls. Another school was opened in Lower Umkomanzi on the estate of Mr. Robinson with an enrolment of 10 pupils - 7 boys and 3 girls. There was another school at Sea Cow Lake, where one of the earliest mills was situated and this school started with 21 boys and 5 girls. The Church of S.A. opened a day school at Umzinto in which African and Indian children learnt side by side. The curriculum consisted of the 3 R's and Geography. The aim of education of this period was to pave the way for missionary work.

EDUCATION COMMISSION OF 1874.

In 1874, the Government began to take greater interest in Indian education. Lord Musgrave recommended to the Education Commission that the Protector of Indian Immigrants should correspond with the proper authorities to secure teachers to train future teachers on the sugar plantation and that any educational scheme envisaged should operate without prejudice to colour, creed or race. He sought assistance of the Province in the expansion of Indian education. The Leut. Gov. Keate approved of the attendance of Indian children at European schools. This concession, however met with strong opposition from the Europeans.

Following the recommendations, two teachers were appointed. One was Mr. Henry Nundoo, a printer by trade and who had received a fair education in Benares. He took charge of the evening school in Durban at a salary of 10/- a month. He published a primer in English-Hindi for use in his school. The other was Mr. Francis D'Vaz who was brought from India and he taught at the Rev. Ralph's Stott's Day School at a salary of £24 per annum plus the fees he collected from the pupils which was 1/- per month per child. There was another school at Isipingo opened by Mr. Earl and at which African and Indian children were taught.

In 1887, the General Manager of the Natal Government Railways, established a school near the Durban station for 30 pupils. Here too, an Indian, Mr. Joel Peter a railway clerk was the teacher-in-charge.

Establishment of the Indian Immigrant School Board.

In 1878 the Natal Legislative passed Law 20 by which the Indian Immigration School Board was established to administer

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Indian education. It placed in its hands a sum of £1500 for distribution as grants to scholars on the basis of efficiency and attendance. Three Board schools, - Durban, Umgeni and Tongaat - were opened. The Board also imported Mr. George Dunning from Madras to act as Inspector and advise on matters affecting Indian education. His services were found to be unsatisfactory and he was replaced by Mr. Francis Colepeper, the Protector. With the establishment of the Natal Education Department, the Board ceased to exist as Indian education came directly under the Control of the newly created Department. Dr. P. Booth and his other missionaries helped to establish 4 girls' schools, 3 in Durban and one in Pietermaritzburg. The Roman Catholic and the Indian Church mission also took an interest in the promotion of Indian education in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Separation of Races.

By Law 5 of 1894, a policy of a separate system of schools was initiated. Whereas the earlier practice was confined to the children of Indian immigrants, this law sought to exclude children of a socially more advanced class. Only children who had passed their Std. IV could now seek admission at European schools. In 1905, the Superintendent of Education ordered the dismissal of all Indian infants from European schools. Indian parents protested and made it the subject of a test case but were unsuccessful. A separate school was opened in Carlisle Street. Parents expressed their opposition to co-education with the result that the girls from this school were housed separately in a building adjacent to the school, and taught by an experienced English lady teacher.

Higher education.

In 1899, a higher grade school was established in Durban and another in Pietermaritzburg in 1903. In the year that followed teacher training was provided in Durban at the High grade School. The Indian Educational Institute opened a private High School in Durban staffed by Europeans imported from India. It was closed in 1914 due to lack of funds. It was in 1918 that the Natal Education Department initiated secondary classes at the Carlisle Street Indian School.

The Dyson Commission on Education.

In 1927, the Famous Cape Town agreement was reached between South Africa and India. One of the clauses provided for the Union Government to obtain the assistance of an educational expert from India for the purpose of assisting the Provincial Commission of Inquiry into Indian education in Natal. India was asked to send two educational experts through the offices of the Agent General of India Mr. Srinivasa Sastri. This brought into the country Mr. Kailas P. Kichlu and Miss C. Gordon. They observed, among other things, that discrepancies existed in the manner in which the subsidies intended for Indian education were administered;
that the existing facilities in town and country areas were inadequate;
that conditions in the Government and Government Aided Schools were unsatisfactory; and
that the existing grants in aid were inadequate.

Broome Commission of 1937

In 1937, a Commission of Inquiry under the Chairmanship of the then Mr. F.N. Broome (afterwards Justice) recommended the

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creation of a sub-department to control and administer Indian education effectively.

The Wilk's Commission of 1944.

In 1944, the Province decided to reassess its educational system and to this end it appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of Mr. E.C. Wilks. The report, which was tabled in 1946 made, among other, recommendations touching Indian education in the following aspects:-

- a. Compulsory attendance rather than compulsory education up to the 13th birthday or Std. IV.
- b. The division of schools into Junior, Junior High, and High grades.
- c. A system of differentiated courses for those who were not likely to proceed beyond Std VIII.
- d. The retention of the Primary School Certificate (as a public exam) as an entrance qualification to the secondary school. (It was abolished in the case of the European schools).
- e. Supervisors to be appointed to improve the teaching by unqualified personnel.
- f. The establishment of a co-educational Training College.
- g. The provision of library facilities in secondary schools.

Teacher Training College.

Following the recommendation of the Commission, a Co-educational Teacher Training College was built and ready for occupation in 1954. Student teachers from Sastri College and the Durban Girls' High were transferred to this institution.

University Education.

Up to 1936, there was no facility in Natal for university education for Indians. As early as 1934 Sir Kanwar Maharaj Singh, the then Agent General of India, had made a request to the Natal University College to open its doors to the Indian students. The University Council after investigations and deliberations decided to offer separate facilities to Non-Europeans on a part-time basis. The classes were housed in Sastri College. Courses in B.A. were at first provided, 11 students enrolled. By 1960, there were more than 500 Indian students registered for various courses up to the Ph.D level. But due to lack of laboratory facilities, it was not possible to offer the B.Sc. Course, unless of course it was prepared to allow non-Europeans to work side by side with the European students. Students desiring to graduate in this faculty had to proceed to Universities outside the borders of Natal. In 1951 a Medical School for non-Europeans was established by the College with Government assistance. There was at first public opposition to it, but gradually it came to be accepted. By 1958, it had produced its first set of doctors. In 1960, following Parliamentary sanction, a separate university was established for Indian at Salisbury Island. There was again public opposition to this separation. The College started with an initial enrolment of 110 students in 1961. Classes were also started to students extra-murally. For the first time Courses in B.Sc., among others, were being offered and in 1962 the number increased four-fold.

School Meals Service.

In 1944, a Schools Meals' Service scheme was introduced by Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr. A state grant of 3d per child was made and a subsidy of 5/- per child towards equipment. In the first year the scheme involved an expenditure of nearly £70,000 (R140,000). By 1955, over a million pounds was spent. In 1957, the grant was reduced to 2d per child. In 1958, the scheme was confined to children of poor parents.

Problem of Accommodation.

Of the 322 schools in Natal in 1960, 276 of them were partly the result of community effort. This, the community was forced to do in order to solve the accommodation problem which became acute each year. As early as 1940, and in order to solve the problem in an area when the pressure for school places was high, a double shift system was introduced. Thus the Clairwood Junior Boys School became the first Indian platoon school. It served some 700 children. By 1956, the platoon system was accepted as a matter of policy as the number of new schools could not keep pace with the demand. In 1951 some 16,000 children had failed to gain admission. In 1956, the figure was still close to the ten thousand mark. By 1958, there were 76 afternoon schools with a school population of 13,578, and over 21,000 out of school. In 1960, the number of afternoon schools grew to 94 with an enrolment of well over 15,000, representing 15% of the entire school population. Though the system was unsatisfactory, it, however, helped to reduce the illiteracy rate among the Indian children.

In order to solve the problem of accommodation, the Natal Indian Teachers' Society started a fund among its members for building more schools. By 1958, the fund had contributed a sum of £22,000 (R44,000) towards the erection of school buildings. Forty three schools comprising 205 classrooms had benefitted from this gesture of the Indian teachers.

By 1960, the position of Indian education in Natal was as follows:-

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Enrolment</u>
Training Colleges	1	410
Government Schools:		
Secondary Classes only	4	2,580
Primary with Secondary Tops	11	5,643
Primary with Secondary Tops (Temporary)	3	1,779
Primary only : Morning Classes	13	7,033
Primary only : Afternoon Classes	15	6,643
Platoon	-	-
Government Aided Schools:		
Secondary Classes only	2	732
Primary with Secondary Tops	1	723
Primary only : Morning Classes	209	59,114
Primary only : Afternoon Classes	79	18,944
Platoon	-	-
Govt. Aided Religious Schools	2	483
Registered Private Schools	12	1,997
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