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CENTRAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

**PROGRESS OF EDUCATION
IN INDIA**

1937-1947

DECENNIAL REVIEW

Vol. I



(For Official use only)

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

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FOREWORD

In issuing to the public of India this survey of what has happened in the field of Education during the ten years preceding 15th August, 1947, I hope I shall not be regarded as evading my responsibility for it, if I take this early opportunity of making clear how much of the material on which it is based is the work of others. For the things which might have been done but have not been done, I must accept sole responsibility, except in so far as I can unload a share of it on the mills of Government which grind so slowly or on events beyond the control of any of us like the War, which covered a large proportion of the period under review. For what has been accomplished—and I feel that the record under the circumstances is not an unimpressive one—the main credit must go to my colleagues. And by colleagues I do not mean only my associates in the Department—or Ministry, as it now is—of Education. The credit together with my gratitude for the help and co-operation which I have received in such generous measure must also extend to all those administrators and teachers, up and down this vast country, who have borne the main burden and heat of the day and in many cases have faithfully served the cause of Education in the face of difficult and discouraging circumstances. Praise is also due to those responsible for establishing and maintaining those private or semi-private institutions which have opened the doors of opportunity to many students in many branches of knowledge, sometimes with but meagre assistance or encouragement from official sources.

It would be an invidious, if not an impossible, task to attempt to mention by name all those who have deserved well of India in the field of Education during the decade under review. Apart, therefore, from the few personal references which I am permitting myself in this Foreword and from occasional flourishes of my own trumpet, which have crept into the Introduction and for which I ask forgiveness, I have done my best to make this an impersonal record, as I suppose a document of this kind should be.

I feel, however, that I must pay a special tribute to the Members of the Central Advisory Board of Education. Those who read this survey will realise how much of what is recorded therein has been directly or indirectly their work. But apart from producing its main Report and the many subsidiary reports upon which that was based, the Board has achieved something else which in my opinion is not less valuable or commendable. It has shown that an all-India body, necessarily large and mixed in its membership, can weld itself into an effective instrument for the service of the nation as a whole. The particular importance of this achievement lies in the fact that Education being largely a Provincial subject and likely to remain so for reasons given in the Introduction, there is a paramount need for a national body which cannot only evolve a national plan and establish national standards but can also indicate how local efforts to give effect to these can be co-ordinated in the interests of efficiency and economy. It is gratifying to record that in spite of its brief existence the All-India Council for Technical Education under the skilful guidance of a former Hon'ble Member for Education shows promise of a similar satisfactory development and I am confident that the Inter-University Board will fulfil a not less admirable function in its own sphere when it is equipped with an adequate secretariat.

During the ten years eight Hon'ble Members or Ministers have been in charge of Education at the Centre, two of whom died shortly after relinquishing office. I must acknowledge with sincere gratitude the kindness, encouragement and forbearance which I have experienced from them.

And then a few very inadequate words of thanks to all my colleagues in the Department. I am conscious that the loyalty and assistance which I have received from them far exceeds anything that I had any right to expect, particularly under the exceptional circumstances in which the Department has grown up. Indeed to all of them and the senior members especially, I feel I owe a parting word of apology and explanation. When I was offered the post of Educational Commissioner ten years ago, I was told that it was the firm intention of Government to tackle the all-too-long-deferred issue of providing India with a comprehensive and up-to-date system of public instruction. The extent to which this intention was frustrated by the outbreak of war will be apparent from the pages of this Review and I need not refer to it here. In spite of that, however, I tried to keep steadily in view what I conceived to be my main function; it was the twofold one of first helping to produce a practicable scheme which could be brought into operation as soon as circumstances permitted and then the machinery for implementing it. How the scheme came into being is described at length in the pages that follow and so is the abnormal growth of the educational administration at the Centre. What increases my gratitude to my colleagues for their loyalty but gives me at the same time an uncomfortable feeling that I have not deserved it, is the fact that owing to the conditions governing recruitment in the war and post-war periods I have not been able—or at any rate had not been up to 15th August, 1947—to secure for them the security of tenure and other terms and conditions of service to which in my opinion public servants are entitled.*

My senior colleagues, or some of them, may also feel that I have handed over to them too large a share of work and responsibility. This, however, was quite deliberate. It was clear to me from the start that if Government adopted any plan of development which was worth the name, it would not be possible under the most favourable circumstances to do more than make a beginning with it in my own time. Consequently, the most useful service I could render would be to train administrators with initiative and a sense of responsibility to carry on when I had gone. This I believe I have succeeded in doing. Apart, however, from India's urgent need for a first-class educational administrative service, my own administrative experience, for what it is worth, suggests that under almost any circumstances the head of a large office is wise to give his senior assistants, within the limits of the policy generally laid down, the widest freedom to run their sections in their own way. His function is not to cumber himself with the jots and tittles of detailed administration but to give advice, encouragement and, when necessary, reproof and to shoulder the blame when things go wrong. For all these reasons I owe a special debt of gratitude to my earliest colleagues, who have grown up with the Department and now occupy key positions in the educational service either at Delhi or elsewhere. They have already done much for Indian education and I am confident

* I am glad to say that just before I went on leave preparatory to retirement the new Government decided that the Ministry of Education should be put on a permanent basis and I am sure that my successors will lose no time in doing an act of belated justice to those who have rendered such loyal service.

that given the opportunity they have service of even greater value still to offer.

Nor are my thanks or my hopes confined to the "Old Guard". I much regret that owing to my absence from India in 1946 just when the most rapid expansion of the office was taking place and to other reasons since then I have not been able to get to know the newer recruits as well as I should like to have done but I have seen enough of most of them and of their work to be satisfied that I leave behind the nucleus of an organisation which, if properly treated and inspired, will stand up with loyalty, devotion and ability to the requirements of the future.

To all engaged in the solution of what I regard as the greatest of all India's long-term problems, whether as teachers or administrators and wherever they may be, I leave my sincerest good wishes.

JOHN SARGENT

March 1948.