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Abstract: The current study seeks to chalk a historical path of the development of the Indian education system in an attempt to unravel what cultural and/or socio-political factors influenced the decision makers National Policy of Education of 1968, the first ever policy on education in Independent India. The study looks at the ancient traditions of education as it progressed through the centuries all the way the very first unified policy on education.
India is the world’s largest democracy with a population of 1,027,015,247 according to the 2001 Indian census data. The population estimate of India in the year 2008 was 1,147,995,904 and is expected to reach of 1.5 billion by the year 2030. India has a labor force of 5.164 million as estimated in 2007 out of which approximately 1 million workers are in the service and Information Technology (IT) industry. It is interesting to note that while India is being unanimously heralded as a success story for globalization, viewed as a country that has moved into the premier league of world economic growth with a GDP of 9%, a hub of IT and the service industry in the world, it is only a little over a million people off the entire population of 1,147,995,904 who are reaping the benefits of this outstanding growth. This point is further corroborated with the observance that in spite of a 9% GDP, 25% to 30% of the population still lives below the poverty line (Luce, 2007). This is indeed a strange dichotomy and begs to question why India’s booming economic growth does not translate to a decrease in poverty of India’s masses. The answer, perhaps, can lie in the lopsided growth trajectory. Or, perhaps, the fault lies deeper — in the way the India society and the system are structured which allows for categorical disenfranchisement of the less fortunate.

The problem of leaving behind a significant section of the society in the ravages of poverty, while a select few progress rapidly through the westernized concept of economic prosperity, is manifold. Not only does it lead to a ideological sense of despondency amongst citizens towards the government, which can in turn lead to political and civil upheaval (a fair share of both which India has often witnessed) but the inability to access new advanced resources translates to lowered standard of living and affects factors such as quality of life, child and infant mortality rate, health, longevity, etc. (Landes, 1998; Meier & Rauch, 2000). India’s asset is its people. The adage “strength in numbers” stands true for this country and what strengthens this country even more is the presence of individual freedom. However, the continuous presence of abject poverty has been
working efficiently toward weakening this force. It is about time, that every citizen is given the opportunity and the ability to reap the benefits of the economic prosperity that India is witnessing.

Of course, IT cannot be viewed as the golden ticket of the service sector that will be able to draw the masses of India out of the confines of poverty. "Without a more meritocratic and just states, India’s economy will suffer. To thrive, India’s businesses need good infrastructure, a literate and healthy work-force, a sustainable environment, and the promise of law and order" (Luce, 2007, p.335) We have to create an environment where the citizenry is able to usher in a bigger and better economic revolution than the one we have witnessed in the past ten years. And in order to do so, we need to create a citizenry that is educated, well informed in the ways of the world, has the ability to think independently, and to creatively and ingeniously tackle problems. In order to draw the masses out of the shackles of poverty, we need to address the basic right, vis-à-vis, the right to a quality education. This is further corroborated in the field of Economics where the tradition of espousing how monetary gains can be increased through educational gains has been well articulated in the language of Human Capital Theory. Human Capital theory postulates that as the level of education of an individual increases, economic capabilities and potential increases as well, which as a consequence, affects the overall prosperity of the nation (Blaug, 1967, 1973, 1976; Schultz, 1965, 1980, 1971). We know that possibly a simple answer to our predicament is providing quality education to each every child born in India irrespective of race, class, or creed (Psacharopoulos, 1986, 1993; Bishop, 1992, 1998). We also know that hordes of educationist since the dawn of independence have stressed this very fact (Kravdal, 2004; Patel, 1996; Rosenberg & Punctch, 2003; Tilak, 1988; Tilak & Varghese, 1991). However, more that 60 years after India’s independence, a third of the nation is still illiterate (Mehrotra, 2006). Where did the educationists, the economist, and scholars in various fields, who have time and again vehemently stressed the
Determine why government directed education efforts have failed in the past is indeed a gargantuan task. Therefore, for the purposes of simplicity and manageability, I will be using this analysis to chalk a historical path of the development of the Indian education system in an attempt to unravel what cultural and/or socio-political factors influenced the decision makers National Policy of Education of 1968, the first ever policy on education in Independent India.

**History of Education in India**

India has had a long history of organized education. 2000-1500 BC, which has have speculated as roughly being the century during which the Aryan invasion and settlement began, is also accredited to the establishment of the very first system of organized education. "The Gurukul system of education is one of oldest on earth and was dedicated to the highest ideals of all-around human development: physical, mental, and spiritual" (Mehrotra, 2006). The Gurukuls (which literally translates to the house of the Guru or Teacher) were Hindu residential schools of learning established within the boundaries of the Guru's Ashram or monastery where students were taught religion, scriptures, philosophy, literature, warfare, statecraft, medicine, and astrology. Education was free; however, students could make contributions in pecuniary or non-pecuniary forms (known as a Gurudakshina) if they wished to do so only after they completed their education at the gurukul. Students were sent off to the Gurukul at the age of 5 or 6 and were required to stay there until they turned 14. It was only then that they were allowed to return home. There was no standardized curriculum as the Guru decided based on the students' aptitudes what they would be taught and what skills they needed to perfect. In the beginning the gurukul was an egalitarian system where children of rich and poor gained knowledge side-by-side. Neither the state nor the parents were allowed to interfere in what the students were to learn—an extremely decentralized Pratima Dutta
system. It has been speculated that during the same century that the infamous Indian caste system, the effects of which India still suffers, was taking shape. As time progressed, and the caste system grew stronger roots in the society, the Gurukul started to lose its autonomy. Eventually the gurukul was transformed into a residential school only for the society elites. No more were students, rich and poor allowed to learn together. The segregation had begun. (Gosh, 2001; Mehrotra, 2006).

The Gurukul system continued to flourish in India and by the first millennium and a few centuries preceding it Nalanda, Takshila, Ujjain, and Vikramshala Universities were in full bloom (Gosh, 2001). Written accounts dating as far back as 3rd and 4th century BC by international scholars and envoys such as Megasthenese, the Greek envoy and Yi Jing, a Chinese scholar, along with the various manuscripts on politics, medicine, literature, philosophy, and religion (Gosh, 2001; Sen, 2005) produced in these universities stand testimony to the scholarly accomplishments of these Universities. However, as the years progressed, the Gurukul system as well as the glorious universities started to fade and were completely extinguished by 1200 AD during which the Muslim Invasions began. Following the reign of Mughal dynasty, education took on a more localized façade. “Although the ruler and other locally powerful and wealthy people influenced education through patronage, they did not control it” (Annamalai, 2005, p. 20). Families passed on knowledge of scriptures and/or skills on to their wards. The goal of education at the time was not so much economic prosperity, innovation, or competing with world economies, as much as it was to simply carry on family tradition for following generations. Therefore, a son of cobbler was trained to be a cobbler, the son of priest was educated in the scriptures and the arts, and the son of a prince was educated in politics, language, and warfare. Education was strictly along caste lines (Annamalai, 2005).

In India the very first attempt to standardize education at the state level was made in 1813 when the East India Company, a trading company which was rapidly annexing states and gaining
political foothold, took the responsibility of centralizing and standardizing education through a Charter Act of 1813 on a more organized policy level. However, even before the 1813 charter could be enacted, a Charter act of 1698 was released through which the British parliament compelled the East India Company to devote attention to India’s existing educational systems such as the ‘Hindu Pathshalas’, the ‘Muslim Maktabs’ and ‘Madarsahs’. In response to the charter, the very first Christian missionary school, called the St. Mary’s Charity School was established in Madras in 1715. Such schools were established all across the country. Education at these schools were free and had the purpose of converting Indians to Christianity (Bagulia, 2004). Following the charter in 1813, the education system came to be, for the first timed, controlled by the state politically and bureaucratically (Annalalai, 2005; Gosh, 2001; Kazi, 1987; Mookerjee, 1944). The purpose of doing so was extremely clear. “The political objectives of education and the choice of language [of instruction, i.e., English] were made in order to improve the colonial subjects in their temporal usefulness and behavioral morals, and to have a cadre of people to assist the colonial government by working in subordinate positions and by being the buffer between the rulers and the masses” (Annalalai, 2005, p.21). The focus was on imparting education to Indians in English in order to indoctrinate the subjects into the British world view, a much superior world view, as advocated by Lord Macaulay in his minutes to the British government is 1835. Several Indian social reformers of the time, such a Raja Ram Mohan Roy, supported this initiated on the grounds that an education that is more in line with the western world view, i.e., the modern world view would help alleviate some of the inequalities that have plagued the Indian society for thousands of years. Finally in 1854, the debate was settled and Education in India was centralized, imparted in English, and regional languages were not accounted for (Annalalai, 2005; Mehrotra, 2006; Mookerjee, 1944). “While on the one hand it [education in English] led to the introduction of what has since become a major language if international discourse—English—into Indian Education, it also had the far more damaging consequences of segmenting the Indian education system into those who received an
English education and those who did not” (Mehrotra, 2006, p.11). However, the political goals were clear and can be succinctly summed up in J Farish’s minutes issued in the Bombay Presidency, “The Natives must either be kept down by the sense of our power, or they must willingly submit from a conviction that we are more wise, more just, more humane, and more anxious to improve their condition than any other rulers they could possibly have” (Viswanathan, 1989). Education system and the curriculum was designed so to serve this very purpose. Standard curriculum included the study of English literature and language, mathematics and science. It is ironic to note that English literature did not exist as an academic subject in England and was created to be introduced only in the colonies for the education of the Natives (Viswanathan, 1989). The need of the time was such, and the education system that was created catered to that need.

“The missionaries were hit hard by such a policy and they started an organization in London, known as the ‘General Council of Education in India’ (1878) to protest against the government interference in the education” (Bagulia, 2004, p.179). In response to the agitation, the very first Indian Education Commission was appointed in 1882, chaired by Sir William Hunter. The Indian education Commission, also known as the Hunter Commission made several recommendations to primary and secondary education, role of government and missionary enterprises in Indian education, and religious education. The commission, also for the first time, made recommendations regarding the curriculum. The recommendations of the Hunter Commission, which were adopted, laid the foundations of the Indian education system, which is followed till date. The proposed structure stated that Primary education should become a part of the whole system of public education; secondary education should be bifurcated at two levels, one leading to entrance examinations of the universities, and the other “intended to fit youths for commercial or non-literary pursuits” (Bagulia, 2004, p.180). The national council of education was registered on June 1, 1906 and the scheme of studies included Primary Stage, Secondary Stage-
lower, Secondary Stage-upper and the Collegiate Stage. Following the Hunter Commission, the Indian Universities Commission was established in 1902 which made recommendations on the lines of University scope and administration and examinations. The university system in India, just as the primary and secondary education in India, was modeled on the education system in Britain. The debate on including Indian languages a part of the Indian education system started in 1906. The debate was settled, regional languages were included in the curriculum in the form of second or optional languages, and English continued to be the language of instruction and a required subject.

In 1911, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, introduced a bill modelled on the Compulsory Education Acts of England of 1870 and 1876, for free and compulsory education for all in India. The Bill was debated for two days in the Imperial Legislative Council and then rejected. Several other committees and commissions were established in the years that followed to look at and make recommendations regarding various aspects of the Indian education system. However, the most crucial government initiative as far as the Indian Education System is concerned came in the form of the Government of India Act of 1935. The 1935 act was the first step toward India’s political independence where it placed provincial administration under a ministry of a majority of elected members. The Act, also for first time, divided all educational activities into two categories—Central (Federal) and State (Provincial). In the same year the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was revived to make recommendations of the issues related to vocational education. The CABE report was submitted in 1937, but nothing was done due to the outbreak of the Second World War. Also, in the 1937, a conference was called in Wardha under the leadership of Gandhi that passed the following resolutions:

- Free and compulsory education for seven years on a nationwide scale
- Maternal tongue as the medium of instruction
- Education should focus on productive form of manual labor
• System of education should be able to cover teacher remuneration

A committee was appointed which submitted the report, known as the *Wardha Scheme of Education*, to the Indian National Congress in March 1938 and was accepted. Recommendations made by the Wardha Committee focused on manual labor as being an intrinsic part of education and included the following categories such as *The Basic Craft, Mother Tongue, Mathematics, Social Studies, General Science, Drawing, Music, Hindustani*. Another report of crucial importance that came out in 1943-44, known as the Sargent Report, and was part of the CABE, and chaired by Sir Jogendra Singh, stated that after having reviewed the problems of education as a whole “India would reach the educational standard of England of 1939 in a period of not less than 40 years” (Bagulia, 2004, p.196). More thorough and unified attempts to centralize and standardize the Indian education system were made after independence in 1947, details of which we will enumerate in the following sections.

*Education Committees and Commission post 1947*

Following independence in 1947, the first effort made by the government in the field of Indian education was to set up the *University Education Commission* in 1948. Of course, as the title of the commission suggests, its sole purpose was to analyze the university education system and make recommendations regarding collegiate education. The *Committee on Financing Educational Development* was also set up in 1948 to make recommendations regarding financing of education at the different stages of entire education system. In 1951, another committee was appointed to revisit the roles of the state and the federal government in respect to administration of elementary education. The *secondary Education Commission* was appointed in 1952 with sole purpose of reporting the present position of secondary education.

The secondary education commission was followed by the *Sanskrit Commission* in 1957 which stated that Sanskrit should be taught along with the maternal tongue and English at the
secondary stage. Hindi, was to be studied in the college stage. Also in 1957, the *Rural Education Committee* was appointed that highlighted the need to train “farmers’ sons to become more progressive farmers, train a variety of agricultural extension workers and train persons for carrying on research in agriculture” (Bagulia, 2004). The committee also stressed creating “a class of educated youth [that] will be suitable for serving the rural community at the village level” (Bagulia, 2004, p.229). The National Committee on Women’s Education was appointed in 1957, followed by a Seminar on Basic Education held in 1959 in New Delhi formed a series of other committees such as the *Committee on Religious and Moral Education, Committee on Student Discipline*, and *Panel on Higher Secondary School Buildings*. In 1961 the *Committee on Emotional Integration* was appointed to propose educational measures that will help check the disruptive tendencies of citizens which had the potential of threatening the unity of the country. In addition, there was the *Committee on Co-ordinations of Physical Education 1959, Committee on Child Care 1959, Indian Parliamentary and Scientific Committee 1961* to examine the problem of science education in schools, *Committee on Differentiation of Curricula 1961* to address the problems of curricula for girls at all stages of education, *Committee on Girls Education and Public Cooperation 1963, and Panel of Science Education in Secondary School 1964.*

*Kothari Commission Report 1964 and National Policy on Education 1968*

There is no denying that the Government of India wanted to develop the education system as corroborated by the myriad of commissions and committees appointed and reviewed since Independence. However, in spite of all these review efforts, the educational system in 1964 was identical to education system that the British had put in place prior to independence (Mookerjee, 1944). “In post-independence period, a good deal of expansion took place in the field of education, but all this was in the expense of quality”(Bagulia, 2004, p.8). The government realized that commission and committee reports, although plentiful, always examined specific aspects of

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education—one was not able to get a wholistic picture of the education system in its entirety. Therefore, to address this problem the Government of India decided to form the Education Commission which was given the task to examine the entire education system, understand the interdependencies and make policy recommendations for improvement based on their researched knowledge (Bagulia, 2004).

The Education Commission also known as the Kothari Commission was appointed in 1964. The commission convened on October 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 1964 and submitted its report on June 29\textsuperscript{th}, 1966. “The commission was appointed by the Government of India by a resolution dated 14\textsuperscript{th} July, 1964 to advise government on the national pattern of education and on the general principles and policies for the development of at all stages and in all aspects” (Bagulia, 2004). The commission consisted of 17 members with Professor D.S. Kothari appointed as the chairman who was at the time the chair of the Universities Grants Commission. J.P. Naik, who was the Head of Department of educational Planning, Administration, and Finance at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in Pune, as its member secretary. J.F. McDougal, the Assistant Director of School and Higher education at UNESCO in Paris was appointed the Associate-Secretary. The remaining members were:

- A.R. Dawood: Officiating Director, Directorate of Extension Programs for Secondary Education, New Delhi
- H.L Alvin: Director, Institute of Education, University of London, London
- R.A.Gopalaswami: Director, Institute of Applied Manpower Research, New Delhi
- Sadatoshi Ihara: Professor, School of Science and Engineering, Waseda University, Tokyo
- Dr. V.S. Jha: Director, Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit, London
- P.N. Kirpal: Educational Advisor and Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of India, New Delhi

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The commission set up 12 task forces and 7 working groups to address the various aspects of the education system. In order to collect data and make recommendations the commission spent around 100 days travelling across the length and breadth of the country, visiting universities, colleges, schools, and discussing issues with all stakeholder groups. After much deliberation, the report was finally submitted to the Union Education Minister in 1966. The commission in report in its introduction states that “[t]he most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavour, to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals” (Education commission, 1964--Report, p.1). To achieve the above goals, the commission suggested a five-fold program:

1. Relating education to Productivity
2. Strengthening social and national integration through education programs
3. Consolidation of democracy through education

4. Development of social, moral, and spiritual values

5. Modernization of society through awakening curiosity, development of attitudes and values and building up certain essential skills

Discussion

Before we start discussing the Education Commission Report and its eventual adoption into the National policy, we need to understand the political make-up in terms of education of the country at the time the reports were formulated.

Citizens of the nation witnessed the dawn of freedom in 1947 as the Democratic Socialist Republic of India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, who stayed in office from 1947 to 1964 was a thorough bred anglophile. Educated in at Harrows, one of Britian's rarefied private schools, and then in Cambridge before qualifying as a barrister in London, Nehru was an Edwardian gentleman greatly influenced by the Fabian —left-wing upper-class Englishmen of the era who believed that socialism can be “implemented peacefully through a state by a qualified class of platonic technocrats” (Luce, 2007, p.16). Nehru's economic model and the educational model were greatly influenced by this belief. Nehru viewed money-making enterprises scornfully and believed that the country after freedom should strive towards economic self-sufficiency. He skillfully forged a consensus to bear fruit his idealistic visions by having the state lead efforts towards economic self-sufficiency by creating steel plans, aluminum refineries, and dams. All economic pursuits was controlled by the state, whilst the country, which was and still is essentially agrarian, would have done a lot better with program that would help agriculture. The manpower at the time to support elephantine projects such as the ones mentioned above was hard to find as a majority of the country's population was reeling under extreme poverty and impending famine. Nehru envisioned that in order to the pull the lumbering economy of India into the 20th century and

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quickly to the Industrial revolution, India needed to leave its ancient crutches of tradition and beliefs behind and embrace modernity. “[H]e set out to create the infrastructure of scientific and technical education to provide increasing numbers of Indians with the opportunity to train as doctors, engineers, and scientists” (Varma, 2005, p.104). 14% of the nation’s education budget in the first Five Year Plan was allocated to technical education compared to 5% dedicated to secondary education. The second Five Year Plan (1956 to 1961) allocated 18 percent to technical education and the third (1961-1966), 21 percent. As the years progressed, percentage of funds allocated to technically and higher education kept steadily rising to a point where a quarter of the budget was allocated for state run institution and higher and technical education. “The resultant educational edifice in which the foundations were relatively neglected while building the super structure” (Varma, 2005, p.105) explains why today India has the largest reservoir of technologically and scientifically trained and skilled manpower as well as the largest number of out-of-school children (Varma, 2005).

To digress from the Nehruvian model of education, to rectify the system, and draw attention to the need of primary and secondary education, the Education Commission, in its report made 28 recommendations in the area of primary education and 34 recommendations in the areas of secondary and higher secondary education compared to 4 recommendations in the area of technical and scientific education. The recommendations ranged from unified educational structure at both levels, teacher education at the primary and secondary level, to administration, funding, resource allocation, curriculum, improving attendance, and so on. The National Policy on Education of 1968, however, responded with no directive in the realm of primary education and the following policy directive in the realm of secondary education:

a) Education opportunity at the secondary (and higher) level is a major instrument of social change and transformation. Facilities for secondary education should accordingly be extended expeditiously to areas and classes which have been denied these in the past.

b) There is need to increase facilities for technical and vocational education at this stage. Provisions of facilities for secondary and vocational education should conform broadly to requirements of the developing economy and real employment opportunities. Such linkage is necessary to make technical and vocational education at the secondary stage effectively terminal. Facilities for technical and vocational education should be suitably diversified to cover a large number of fields such as agriculture, industry, trade and commerce, medicine and public health, home management, arts and crafts, secretarial training, etc” (Education commission, 1964).

As discussed earlier, India is plagued with the issue of segregation due to the existing caste system and language, especially the usage of English, as seen earlier, has rendered itself quite naturally in exacerbating the already acute condition. Therefore, in response, Education Commission, under the category of Social and National Integration, made recommendations for a language policy:

Language Policy—The recommendation

Develop a language policy for greater national integration. Medium of education in school and higher education should be the same. Regional Language should be adopted as medium of education in higher education. (changes should be made within 10 years). Regional Languages should be made the language of administration in the specific regions.

Produce books and literature (scientific and technical) in regional languages. Responsibility of the University Grant Commission (UGC)

All-India institutes will continue to use English as medium of instruction. Hindi should be eventually adopted; however, while adopting certain safeguards.

English should be taught from the school stage. Learning Languages of international communication should be encouraged. Special attention to be paid to learning Russian.

“English will serve as a link-language in higher education for academic work and intellectual inter-communication. It is, however, equally obvious that English cannot serve as the link-language for the majority of the people. It is only Hindi which can and should take the place...
in due course. As it is the official language of the union and the link-language of the people, all measures should be adopted to spread it in the non-Hindi areas.” (155).

Modern Indian languages should be taught at both schools and colleges (Education commission, 1964)

The National Policy of education responded with the following dictate:


a) Regional languages: The energetic development of Indian languages and literature is a sine-qua-non for educational and cultural development. Unless this is done, the creative energies of the people will not be released, standards of education will not improve, knowledge will not spread to the people and the gulf between the intelligencia and the masses will remain if not widen further. The regional languages are already in use as media of education at the primary and secondary stages. Urgent steps should now be taken to adopt them as media of education at the university stage.

b) Three-Language Formula: At the secondary stage, the State Governments should adopt, and vigorously implement the three language formula which includes the study of modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states, and of Hindi along with regional languages and English in Non-Hindi speaking states. Suitable course in Hindi and/or English should also be available in universities and colleges with a view to improving the proficiency of students in these languages up to the prescribed university standards.

c) Hindi: Every effort should be made to promote the development of Hindi. In developing as the link language, due care should be taken to ensure that it will serve, as provided for in Article 351 of the Constitution, as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India. The establishment, in non-Hindi states, of colleges and other institutions of higher education which use Hindi, as the medium of education should be encouraged.

d) Sanskrit: Considering the special importance of Sanskrit to the growth and development of Indian languages and its unique contribution to the cultural unity of the country, facilities for its teaching at the school and university stages should be offered on a more liberal scale. Development of new methods of teaching the language should be encouraged, and the possibility explored of including the study of Sanskrit in those courses (such as modern Indian languages, ancient Indian history, Indology and Indian philosophy) at the first and second degree stages, where such knowledge is useful.
e) International Languages: Special emphasis needs to be laid on the study English and other international languages. World knowledge is growing at a tremendous pace, especially in science and technology (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1968)

It is clear in the policy directive that Hindi, as the designated *lingua franca* of the country, should become the primary mode of instruction and that the use of Hindi should be encouraged across the nation at all levels of education. What is not clear is why English is included in the three-language recommendation when the supposed eventual goal is of building a unified Hindi speaking nation. In addition, designating Hindi as the national language does not come bereft of political baggage. Of the 28 states and 7 Union Territories, residents in 4 states have been traditionally speaking Hindi. Therefore, mandating that educational institutions, especially universities, use Hindi as their medium of instruction, places a lot of people at a disadvantage, both in terms of skill and comfort level with language as well as inducing a feeling cultural disenfranchisement. However, the question that one can ask is on what justification or understanding was the decision made to designate Hindi as the official language of the nation? Was the general public in this democratic nation consulted on the choice of the official language?

Much of the National Policy and the Commission Report, drew heavily on the Gandhian philosophy of education enumerated in Wardha Scheme or The Zakir Hussain Committee Report of 1937 the goals of which have been mentioned earlier in this report. Issues such as free and compulsory education, which had been adopted as article 45 in the constitution, were re-iterated in the recommendation as well as supported with a policy directive. The language policy as well drew heavily on the Wardha Scheme where Hindi and the maternal tongue were recommended as the language of instruction. In addition, the recommendation regarding the primary and secondary education structure drew entirely from the Hunter Commission Report of 1882. No recommendations were made to revisit the educational system to assess if the system is serving the educational goals of the country. The only suggestion that the commission made was to add an
additional year in secondary education in at the university level on top of what was already established since the Hunter Commission. The education structure under the very first unified National Policy on Education since independence continued to be the legacy of the British government.

What is starkly missing in the recommendation and policy, and illustrated to the very last detail in a myriad of books and essays, is the analysis of the needs of the society at the time the recommendations and the policies were released. At the time of independence, 60% of the population was illiterate; the policy instead of making provision on how best to have educational opportunities available to every citizen no matter how remote or inaccessible a town or village they lived in, the policy makers elected to display abundant rhetoric in matters of national language and creating the common school system. Of course, there is no denying that a common language for nation to function as unified whole is extremely important, but how does any government decide what that language ought to be in nation of 22 languages and an unaccountable number of dialects. Is language really that important an issue when the country at the time was dependent on US food aid to feed its citizens?

On a more sympathetic note, India was faced with tremendous problems at the on-set of independence. Coupled with national pride and the unanimous desire to completely separate itself from its colonial past, Indian politicians, lawmakers, and policy makers were indeed faced with a gargantuan task. Surprisingly, amidst all its mass poverty, litany of uneducated and unemployed youth, social and political unrest in various parts of the country, India remained a democracy and did not crumble in face of issues that could have quite well supported an autocratic regime. One of the primary reasons why Democracy in India never failed is the same reason why India faces a myriad of problems—India’s cultural, religious, and political diversity. The lack of a unified whole is what helps sustains India’s democracy because it is only in a democracy that the thousands of
varied voices can be heard. But, for those voices to be heard, people need to speak. Majority of Indian today have a voice, but the disenfranchised are still silent.

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