

Educational Leadership Practices in Bangladesh from British Period till Today: Lessons for the Principals of Schools and Colleges in Bangladesh

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Abstract: *At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of school leadership. Today's school is seen as a learning environment as well as a family unit. Schools not only teach children, but they also raise them. The modern concept regards schools and colleges as a social center where principals and teachers are the leaders who shape the vision and learning processes of the schools. As educational leaders, they absorb the very psyche of the society and translate the needs and aspirations of the society into creating a positive learning culture. A content analysis has been carried out to explore the educational leadership practices in Bangladesh from British period till today. The study showed that leadership practices were present in Bangladeshi context among those teachers and principals who displayed a sense of commitment in regards to culture, society, and above all, politics.*

Keywords: *Leadership, Educational Leadership, Top-down Educational Administration, Teachers and Principals, Schools and Colleges in Bangladesh.*

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I. Introduction

The Indian sub-continent experienced epoch-making differences between pre-colonial and post-colonial India marked by the advent of British colonial rule. These differences are evident in people's consciousness, life-style, religious faith, social and political understanding, and most prominently, in the education. It was a revolutionary change. During the colonial rule, education in India forsook its ancient scale. From then onward, the education system of India took few major turns in relation to its kind, method and nature. Near about three hundred centuries, education in India progressed very rapidly after being institutionalized within this span of time. People who were leading in education were found, in juxtaposition, leading in all other fronts in the society, especially in politics. A kind of educational leadership developed in this field of education. A new dimension added to this field and, in consequence, education in India got a new momentum and modernization took place.

We had a glorious past, especially in the case of educational leadership. Teachers were the leading men and women not only in the field of education, but also in the society. As a consequence, educational leadership emerged with the advent of modern education in the then India. The presence of educationists and educational leaders were respected so much that they were many a time welcomed to lead the society from the forefront.

It is generally accepted that the concept of educational leadership and the concept of modern education in India are two very close and contemporary issues. So, to understand educational leadership in Bangladesh from British Period till today, some renowned personalities who contributed remarkably in this field of education will be discussed.

II. Objectives of the Study

- a. To explore the trends of educational leadership practices in schools and colleges in Bangladesh from British period till today.
- b. To focus the glorious past of the educational leadership so that principals in schools and colleges in Bangladesh get a lesson out of it.

III. Methodology of the Study

The study made use of qualitative approach to explore the trends of educational leadership practices in schools and colleges in Bangladesh. To meet up the objective of this study, a content analysis was carried out on the related issues extracted from the secondary sources, like published books, articles, periodicals, newspapers, etc. And thereby, renowned personalities who contributed significantly in education and marked their leadership role as principals or teachers from British period till today were discussed.

IV. Content Analyses

Principal leadership is a modern concept. It has come to the limelight of academic discussion very recently. In Bangladesh, the concept is very embryonic. Generally, people understand political leadership. Understanding organizational leadership and more specifically principal leadership is absent in our culture. Even the educational administration in Bangladesh stands on the opposite pole of the idea of principal leadership. Still, as the head of the institution, principals hold some sort of leadership which they have inherited from their experiences and from the practices of their senior colleagues. The history of Bangladesh has a long legacy of political history. As politics supersedes everything, it has a great influence on every kind of leadership. The school principals are no exception to that. In this study, a content analysis has been carried out to explore the glorious history of educational leadership in schools and colleges in Bangladesh from British period till today. Some renowned personalities in the field of education covering almost from that period have been discussed to know the kind of leadership practices they had so that today's principals in schools and colleges in Bangladesh gain a ground about their roles as leaders.

4.1 William Carey (1761 - 1834)

The person contributed most in the education in India was William Carey, a British Christian missionary, a social reformer and cultural anthropologist (Smith, 2011).

William Carey's contribution to the history of Bangla language was remarkable. His contribution to Bangla prose is undeniable. In August 1800, he published the first prose book 'MathiyaRochitoMangalSamachar' in Bangla. In 1801, he published first conversational Banglabook. In this year, he joined as a professor of Bengali language at the newly established Fort William College in Calcutta. After taking responsibility for language education, he devoted himself to the development of Indian languages, especially the Bengali language. In order to fulfill the lack of necessary materials for language teaching, he wrote textbooks, grammar and dictionaries.

In 1802, the Mahabharata (one of the two Sanskrit epic poems of ancient India) of Kashiram Das was published in English. Carey's biggest contribution to Bengali literature can be seen as the Bengali translation of Bible. Carey published the first newspaper in India named 'SamacharDarpan'.

Carey and colleagues established Sriram College on August 15, 1818, which still remains the brightest example in the field of education in entire Asia. William Carey by his deeds in the field of education marked a footprint of an educational leadership in schools and colleges in India. As a result, surrounding Carey, a group of people inspired by him became his same boat travelers. And the result was the establishment of Bangla schools in the early nineteenth century. In this sub-continent, the missionaries adopted and imported education policy and method helped form and develop educational leadership in this field (Wellman, 1997).

4.2 David Hare (1775–1842)

After William Carey the man who contributed the most to spread education in this sub-continent was David Hare. His love for people and his human qualities were an important dimension of his character (Mitra, 1949). He felt the necessity of English education in this sub-continent which he could make feel his near and dear ones. Because of his qualities in educational leadership, he could succeed in spreading education in India (Sinha, 2014).

David Hare in 1800 came to India as a watchmaker. Due to his hard work, this talented philanthropist proved himself to be the educational leader in Bengal, India. He founded Hindu School, and Hare School. He also helped in founding Presidency College and many renowned educational institutions in Calcutta, now Kolkata (Shastri, 2016).

The Hindu College was set up in 1817. In the same year, with the prime initiative of Hare, the Calcutta School-Book Society was established which ushered in a new era in education in India. The members of this society wrote, edited and printed useful Bangla and English books for the students.

David Hare had an inexplicable affection to the school going boys. When he would see them, he would forget everything. Along with RamtanuLahiri, a lot of renowned personalities acknowledged very proudly the love and affection they received from David Hare (Shastri, 2016).

4.3 Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774 - 1833)

The name which comes after Reverend David Hare among the contemporary Bengalees was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was the first who axed heavily on the education system and religious belief of the then India (Roy, 1961).

In 1815, he formed Atmiya Sabhain which they interpreted and evaluated Vedanta religious scripture. From this Atmiya Sabah, he explored the possibilities of reforming orthodox Hindu religion and traditional education in India. He was so involved in studying and reforming old Hindu scriptures and social and religious customs and practices that by 1815 to 1820, only with five years he translated Vedanta, Ishopanishad, Kathopanishad, Upanishad, Moonduk Upanishad and wrote his evaluation on Sati Pratha (Roy, 1961).

In 1814, he came to Kolkata and made a reformation to religion. Calcutta's 16 years of struggle and reformation can be called the main work of Ram Mohan. Ram Mohan, the pioneer of the nineteenth century, took up the fight against religious prejudice, religious fanaticism, and so he had to fight with many enemies (Dixit, 2004).

In 1820, Ram Mohan published his other famous book 'The Advice of Jesus Christ-Precepts of Jesus-Guide to Peace and Happiness'. He was engaged in war with Hindu society and goddesses but after the publication of the book he began a new war with the Christian society.

The first and greatest reformation movement in India came through Ram Mohan Roy and it was Satidah system (the burning of the widow) movement. At the time, when the Hindus were in favor of Satidah system, he penned against the fanatic groups with his courage, strength, firmness, wisdom, and scholarship (Crawford, 1987).

He was first among the Bangalee scholars who inspired the Indians to learn English. To teach English in India, he decided to set up an English school (Robertson,2003). Even for this reason, he sent a proposal through one of the important members of Atmiya Sabha, BidyanathMukhopadhyaya to set up an English school to Sir Syde East, the Chief Justice of the then Supreme Court. As a result, the Hindu college was established. Raja Ram Mohan Roy brought revolution both in education and society simultaneously (Shastri, 2016).

4.4 Henry Vivian Louis Derozio (1809-1831)

In the education history of India, the name which appeared brightest was Henry Vivian Louis Derozio. The very name is associated with Hindu College, Young Bengal Academy association and the renaissance history of Bengal. At the age of 19, he was appointed a teacher in Hindu College. When the question of liberal thinking arises, Derozio comes at the forefront. He used to write poems which were published in Indian Gazette. He finished school from David Drummond's Dhurramtallah Academy when he was only fourteen. At this age, he was applauded among the intellectuals for writing a criticism on German philosopher Emanuel Kant.

At the age of eighteen, he was appointed a lecturer in English Literature and History in the Hindu College. For his magnetic personality, he was surrounded by students whenever he entered the campus. He always engaged in debates with his students so that students could think and talk freely and could cultivate a liberal thinking.

Because of all these, the college committee, especially the Hindu members became adamant to expel Derozio from the college and consequently he was sacked from the college. Derozio left the college but the motion he propelled among the students kept continuing. Spirited by Derozio, a strong group of Derozians appeared afterwards to lead the society towards progress. Among them were Rasik Krishna Mallick, Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Ramgopal Ghosh, RadhanathSikdar, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Hara Chandra Ghosh, RamtanuLahiri, Sib Chandra Deb and Peary Chand Mitra (Shastri, 2016).

4.5 Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar(1820-1891)

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a Sanskrit scholar, writer, educator, social reformer and philanthropists.

In 1841, he got the position of chief scholar of Bengali language in Fort William College. In April 1846, he was appointed Assistant Secretary of Sanskrit College. Due to the conservative attitude of the college teachers, he resigned in July 1847 from Sanskrit College. In January 1849, he was appointed head writer and treasurer of the Fort William College. In December 1850, he obtained the post of Professor of Literature in Sanskrit College and was appointed Principal of the college the following month.

His most important contribution to education was writing and publishing textbooks along with the reformation and modernization of Sanskrit College and the establishment of Bangla and Girls' schools. There was no such standard textbook for the students until the introduction of Varnaparichay, a primer of the Bangla language written for the language beginner in 1851.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was the first Bengalee polymath after Raja Ram Mohan Roy who devoted himself to the educational and social reformation in India. It is argued that Raja Ram Mohan Roy could not go ahead of his time fighting the social ignorance which Ishwar Chandra could. In 1841, he joined Fort William

College as head of the Sanskrit Department. From 1841 to 1850 was the time considered as the time of preparation of his life. In early few years of his career, he vacillated from Fort William to Sanskrit College. He was appointed the Principal in Sanskrit College in 1851. This time, he was reposed with the reconstruction and the reformation of the medieval scholastic system prevailing in Sanskrit College and brought about modern insights into the education system. He devoted himself fully to the upliftment of Sanskrit College (Ghosh, 1958).

Ishwar Chandra was a man of character. For his unshakable courage and obstinate quality, he could dare to improve the Bengali society within (Ghosh, 1958). He did not believe in confining education within the geographical boundaries. To him there is no East or West. Irrespective of geographical boundaries, education may travel from East to West or to North or to the South (Halder, 1972).

4.6 Rabindranath Tagore (1861 - 1941)

Rabindranath Tagore was an Indian poet, novelist, short story writer, music creator, novelist, painter, essayist, singer and philosopher. He is the greatest litterateur of Bangla language.

He founded Santi Niketan in 1921. This organization devoted itself to the overall development of rural society. Visvesvarati School was established in Santi Niketan in 1923. Rabindranath, who had traveled many times in his long life, promoted the message of sovereignty and world humanity.

The light paved for education and society by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar reached at its pinnacle in the hands of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore was a unique example who not only directed his nation towards light by his literature but also set up a school and a university and, thereby, took the responsibility by his own to impart education of the people. Santi Niketan was the perfect example where the education curriculum was devised by Rabindranath himself (Bhattacharya, 2005).

The palace Rabindranath built on education was not built in a day. Starting from foundation, he built every bit by his own hand. He experimented on his own creation until he reached perfection. Where he found lack in education system, he tried to fill the gap. And, as a result, Santi Niketan appeared in its finest form.

4.7 Begum Rokeya (1880 - 1932)

Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, popularly known as Begum Rokeya, was a reputed Bengali litterateur and a social reformer of the nineteenth century. She is regarded as the pioneer of awakening Bengali women.

During the birth of Begum Rokeya, the Muslim society was submerged in various superstitions. In Begum Rokeya's family, the opportunity for women's education was not open. They were allowed to learn only the Quranic teachings and Urdu lessons. The learning of Bengali letters was forbidden. Begum Rokeya did not have the fortune to move to the school premises (Joarder, 1980).

After the death of her husband, Sakhawat Hossain, in 1909, Begum Rokeya established a girls' school named Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in Bhagalpur. In 1910, she came to Kolkata after closing the school due to trouble with property. Here, on 15th March 1911, she resumed Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School. Initially, there were only 8 students in the primary school. In four years, it grew to 84 and by 1930, it became a high school.

Through her literature, she highlighted the feelings of life, the reality of society and her own ambition. In her writings, she mentioned that women need to be educated for the welfare of the society and the nation. The essence of her writing was essentially to stimulate women's self-esteem, the compulsion of economic freedom, and the need to end the mental slavery of women. There is also the presence of gender discrimination and ethnic crisis among the communal-based ideology of Rokeya. In addition, in the society of that time, she also summed up the issues of uneven behavior towards Muslim women. She identified how Muslim women were locked up in the name of religion. She emphasized the importance of women as an integral part of society and women as a social and religious consideration (Forbes, 2009).

4.8 Principal Ibrahim Khan (1894-1978)

Principal Ibrahim Khan was an educationist and writer. He was a versatile talent. He is well-known as a writer, dramatist, educationist, politician and social reformer.

In 1926, he was appointed as the principal of the Karatia Saadat College. Later that college became a renowned institution in Bengal with his tireless efforts and skillful management. Once it was known as 'Aligarh of Bengal'.

In 1937, Ibrahim Khan left Congress and joined the Muslim League. In 1946, Ibrahim Khan was elected a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly from the Madhupur-Golappur Center on the Muslim League ticket (Kamal, 1988).

Ibrahim Khan received many titles and awards in recognition for his outstanding contributions. The British government first gave him the title 'Khan Sahib' and later 'Khan Bahadur'. He immediately rejected the title of 'Khan Sahib' and 'Khan Bahadur'. In 1963, the government of Pakistan gave him the title 'Taghma-e-QayedAzam'. In 1971, he refused the title as a protest against the atrocities of the Pakistan army. In 1973, he received the Bangla Academy Award in drama and the EkusheyPadak by the Government of Bangladesh in 1976. In 1977, he formed 'Bhuapur Literary Parliament' and donated all the money of EkusheyPadak and some land to the Parliament. This great person died on 29 March 1978. He had a remarkable contribution in the Muslim Renaissance, education, and social welfare (Alhelal, 1986).

V. Findings and Discussions

The advent of British colonial rule brought forth modern education in this Indian sub-continent. The eighteenth century was the time when Bengali society was introduced with the modern education system. Among the pioneers who took toil to glorify modern education in this society and led the education from the front were William Carey, Henry Vivian Derozio, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and the others. They took the educational leadership on their shoulder as a part of social responsibility. So, leadership was in their character and that was what the latest concept goes with educational leadership. The content analysis of this study led to the following conclusions:

- With the inception of the concept of modern education in Indian society, as the head of the institution, educational leadership practices gained ground. Knowingly or unknowingly, teachers and principals practice some kinds of leaderships which obviously fell into some categories.
- Today's teachers and principals are the descendants of the past. Their leadership is very much existent in schools and colleges in Bangladesh. Other than very fortunate few who could avail the opportunity of getting training and courses in various training institutes, the general understanding regarding educational leadership is confined to democratic and autocratic style of leadership.
- Both formal and informal ways, teachers and principals in schools and colleges in Bangladesh educate themselves about leadership. On one hand, there are school leaders who know and practice the latest leadership theories. On the other hand, many school leaders are found educate them through hand-on practice and shared experience.
- In most of the schools and colleges in Bangladesh, the principal leadership practice is limited to management only and the general concept of good principal as an administrator is attached with autocratic style of leadership.
- The content analysis in this study is a burning example of the existence of educational leadership in schools and colleges in Bangladesh from British period till today. But, in the passage of time, the concept and practice of educational leadership lost its momentum. It has been replaced by educational administration overpowered by the top-down bureaucracy which pushed back school heads and principals to take on management as their prime role.
- Everything related to education in schools and colleges in Bangladesh is being controlled and settled down by Education Ministry and monitored by the education field officers in such a way that there is no room for the principals and head teachers to get a space. In the name of educational administration, bureaucracy has developed over the time in the field of education in schools and colleges in Bangladesh which resulted in principals and teachers to become reactive rather than proactive. The scenario gets worse when training institutions like, National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) and Teachers' Training Colleges (TTC) all over the country advocate and see principals and teachers as managers. So long it persists, educational leadership will not develop.

VI. Recommendations and Conclusions

6.1 Recommendations

The recommendations gleaned from this study are forwarded as follows:

- The educational administration has to be made bottom-up so that principals and teachers get enough space to practice leadership in schools and colleges in Bangladesh.
- There should be ample of scope for today's educational leaders to know the glorious history of educational leadership practices in the past.

- Training has to be made available for the teachers and principals focusing on leadership, not on management.

6.2 Conclusions

Educational leadership is a modern concept. It has come to the limelight of academic discussion very recently. In Bangladesh, the concept is very embryonic. Generally, people understand political leadership. Understanding organizational leadership and more specifically educational leadership is a far cry. Even the educational administration in Bangladesh stands on the opposite pole of the idea of educational leadership.

In this study, an essay has been made to explore the glorious history of educational leadership in schools and colleges in Bangladesh from British period till today. Some renowned personalities in the field of education from the British period have been discussed. It reflected the kind of leadership practices they were upto which will illuminate and guide the present days' educational leaders in schools and colleges in Bangladesh.

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