

# WOOD'S DESPATCH OF 1854

In 1854, Charles Wood prepared a despatch on an educational system for India. This document is considered as the "Magna Carta of English Education in India".

## The Wood's Despatch of 1854 had the following contents:

- **Aims and Objectives of Educational Policy:** The Wood's Despatch of 1854 first throws light on the aims and objectives of educational policy of the East India Company in India which are listed below: a) To impart Western knowledge, information about the western culture to the Indians. b) To educate the natives of India so that a class of public servants could be created. c) To promote intellectual development and also raise the moral character of the young generation. d) To develop practical and vocational skills of the Indians people so that more and more articles could be produced and also to create a good market for consumption of those goods.
- **Department of Education:** The Wood's Despatch of 1854, for the first time, recommended the creation of a Department of Public Instruction in each of the five provinces of Bengal, Bombay, Madras, the Punjab and the North Western provinces. The head of the Department would be called the Director and he was to be assisted by a number of inspectors. The D.P.I. had to submit an annual report to the government about the educational progress in his province.
- **Expansion of Mass Education:** - Another major recommendation of the Wood's Despatch of 1854 was the expansion of mass education. It was observed that the common people were deprived of educational opportunities and therefore much emphasis was given on the increase of setting up primary, middle and high schools. The Downward Filtration Theory as proposed earlier was repudiated and in its place importance to primary education was given. Elementary education was considered to be the foundation of the education system.
- **Establishment of Universities:** - The Wood's Despatch of 1854 recommended the establishment of universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The universities were to be modelled after the London University and these were to have a senate comprising of a Chancellor, a Vice-Chancellor, and fellows who were to be nominated by the Government. The Universities would confer degrees to the successful candidates after passing the examinations, (of Science or Arts Streams) conducted by the Senate. The universities were to organise departments not only of English but also of Arabic, Sanskrit and Persian, as well as law and civil engineering.
- **Grant - in-aid system:** - The Wood's Despatch of 1854 recommended the sanction of a grant-in-aid system in the Indian educational system. To educate the large number of people of India was a difficult task and so the grant-in-aid system was adopted by the government. It recommended a system of grant-in-aid to encourage private enterprise. Grants were given to those schools and colleges which satisfied the conditions given

below :-a) The schools must provide secular education. b) The school management should run the school well. c) The school should agree to state inspection from time to time. d) The schools should follow any rule prescribed by the government for the regulation of the grant. e) The school must charge fees from the students. Grants were given to the schools for increasing the salaries teachers, construction of school buildings, granting scholarships to students, improving conditions of literaries, opening of science department etc.

- **Teaching of Language:** - The Wood's Despatch of 1854 gave importance to teaching of English, but at the same time, it also stressed on the teaching of Indian languages. The Despatch realised that any acquaintance of European knowledge could be communicated to the common people and that could be conveyed to them only through learning their own mother tongue. Therefore the Despatch clearly stated that Indian languages as well as English should be used as media of instruction.
- **Education of Women:** - The Wood's Despatch of 1854 stressed on female education. The Wood's Despatch stated, The importance of female education in India cannot be over rated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men . The Despatch also encouraged the private enterprises to promote women education. The schools for girls were to be included among those to which grants-in-aid would be given.
- **Training of Teachers:** - The Wood's Despatch of 1854 recommended the establishment of teacher training schools in each of the provinces. There should be training schools for teachers of engineering, medicine and law. The qualified teachers should be given better pay scales. The Despatch further emphasised on the provision of scholarships to the teachers during their training period.
- **Professional Education:** - The Wood's Despatch of 1854 encouraged professional education. It recommended the establishment of medical, engineering law and other institutes of professional education. The Despatch stated that in order to develop vocational efficiency of people and also to make people realise that the British rule was progressive. Another reason for the encouragement of vocational education was to control the problem of unemployment.
- **Introduction of network of Graded Schools all over India:** - The Wood's Despatch of 1854 recommended the establishment of a network of graded schools all over the country. At one end were the universities and the colleges, then the high schools followed by the middle schools and the bottom of the middle schools and at the bottom of the network were the primary schools, both government and indigenous. Both the Anglo-vernacular and vernacular schools were to be included in the same class. This system was recommended in order to enable an individual to receive higher education after completing the different levels of schools education.

## **Limitations of the Wood's Despatch of 1854:**

The Wood's Despatch of 1854 was held responsible for some glaring defects of the educational system of the country:

1. The British Government was vehemently criticised by the people of India for centralised system of education.
2. Indian languages and Indian culture continued to be backward and neglected.
3. The Despatch suggested the establishment of only examining universities and could not think of a teaching university.