CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Independence ushered in India an era of great national reconstruction. A sound political system being their first anxiety, the people succeeded within the first two years and a half of their freedom in giving to themselves a democratic Constitution. The country emerged as a unified, democratic and secular state based on principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. The Constitution offered the people an opportunity to build up a new social order, to consolidate their political liberty by establishing appropriate institutions for their educational, cultural and economic advance. The task of having a functional political framework completed, the people addressed themselves to making real the hopes and aspirations enshrined in the Constitution.

Since political structure is safe only when there is peace and prosperity within the country and security from aggression from without, the Indian leadership has launched upon an elaborate programme of socio-economic development intended to make the people economically well-off, socially happy, intellectually and physically active and morally strong. This vision of an all-round development of the nation has given to education a national importance it never enjoyed before. A few months after the attainment of independence, Prime Minister Nehru said to the educationists, "Great changes have taken place in the country and the educational system must be in keeping
with them. In the plans for building the nation, education has an important place, because this is the basis for all other activities.\(^1\) And soon after the commencement of the Constitution, the President of India reminding the educational institutions of their role in the new social order observed, "We have had many republics in this country, but they were very small as compared to the republic which we have just established. The responsibility of the people has correspondingly grown in size and intensity and it is for our educational institutions to fit the citizens for the great task that awaits them."\(^2\) Education has consequently been called upon to help the nation realise its goals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity by developing among the future citizens of India the habits, attitudes and qualities of character which enable them to bear worthily the responsibilities of democratic citizenship, to improve their practical and vocational efficiency so that they may play their part in building up the economic prosperity of their country and to develop their literary, artistic and cultural interests which are necessary for self-expression and for the development of the human personality.\(^3\)

Thus the aims and objectives of education have been more clearly formulated and pinpointed than ever before.

The knowledge of the objectives that the high school is to achieve at once poses the question as to how best it can achieve them. What type of educational programme or curriculum should it

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undertake to accomplish its new task? What organisational pattern and procedures will be appropriate to implement its educational programme? These are, naturally, the questions that call for consideration after the goals of education have been specified. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to examine the nature of the curriculum of the high school, its scope and design and the possibilities it has to help children become individually and socially effective citizens of democratic India.

For long the high school curriculum has been a subject of criticism and changes have been suggested from time to time to bring it in accord with the emerging needs. As a result there have been made several additions to the programme of studies. There have also been occasional modifications. But these changes, very often random in nature, have failed to give to the school a satisfying curriculum. By and large the curriculum has remained about the same, the efforts for reform since 1947 notwithstanding.

What has not received much attention at the hands of the advocates of change in the purpose, foundation and structure of the high school curriculum is the basic fact that the present situation in the curriculum development is one stage in a continuous historical process. Its adequacy or otherwise, its direction and forces working on it, and its future possibility, can be better understood against the background of its retrospect. The nature of the issues can only be judged as we know how they came about. Attempts to deal with them simply on the basis of what is obvious may lead to no solution.

Inadequate as the present day high school curriculum may be, it has come down to us as the result of a long evolutionary process of development. It is a product of the past. Various
factors have made it what it is today. Its each part has a
history behind it as to how it came about and what needs it
served. It should, therefore, be very appropriate to know the
conditions that required the inclusion of various courses and
studies in the curriculum in the past, if any programme of
reform is to be undertaken.

The present study is thus designed to examine the course
of the development of the curriculum of the high school. This
must reveal how far the high school curriculum in the past has
reflected the values, beliefs, and aspirations of our people,
and to what extent changes in it have been commensurate with
the changes in the economy, in social life, in political
principles and educational practices that have been going on
steadily. And in the changed circumstances of today what
alterations, additions and exclusions are needed to satisfy the
demands of the present day society. Are we to start all afresh;
or, is the present structure capable of accepting the changes
made necessary by our times?

Since an appraisal of the development of the high school
curriculum in all the States of India must cover so vast a part
of educational history and thus become stupendous a task, the
present study is confined to one state, the Punjab. As a further
limitation to the scope of the enquiry, attention has been
focussed on the development of the curriculum of the high stage
of the school which being the terminal stage of general education
for the great majority of our boys and girls, as well as the
basis of all higher education enjoys an important place. During
recent years there has been an upsurge in the high school enrolment.

4. Under the Constitution of India provinces of India have been
named as 'states' of India.
This rapid increase in the number of students attending the high school has created problems of all kinds, especially in the area of curriculum. The demand to make the high school curriculum functional so that it may prepare youth to live well and to earn a living in an industrially growing society has been persistent. Evidently, there is a need for continuous re-examination of the high school curriculum. Furthermore, the period under review is the twentieth century, for it was from the beginning of the present century that unprecedented expansion of the high school education started in India. There was also launched a keen drive for its qualitative improvement in the form of better training of secondary school teachers, promotion of "diversified type of secondary education corresponding with the varying needs of practical life," and greater governmental control over secondary schools. Also, the social and cultural renaissance, political awakening, growth of nationalism and scientific and industrial advancement that marked the beginning of the present century and ultimately became its characteristic features have made this period a very important period of Indian history which has had a compelling impact on education. In the background of such influences the present study of the high school curriculum has been undertaken.

The Term 'Curriculum'

In order to remain within the acceptable bounds, it is desirable to define the frontiers of the term "Curriculum" to some precision. According to the best modern educational thought, curriculum includes not only the academic subjects traditionally

taught in the school but also the totality of experiences that
pupil receives through the manifold activities that go on in the
school, in the class-room, library, laboratory, workshop, play­
grounds and in the numerous informal contacts between teachers
and pupils. In this sense, the whole life of the school comes
within the range of curriculum which can touch life of the student
at all points and help in the evolution of balanced personality. 6

"A curriculum is more concerned with the education that
children should receive from the school, and it indicates the
procedures, methods and activities by which such education is to
be provided. In the first case, the main objective is the mastery
of facts and in the second, the acquisition of habits and
attitudes which will determine the way children behave and the
things they do." 7

This all-inclusive definition of curriculum is a recent
development. Curriculum has been used historically to refer to
selected portions of accumulated knowledge, classified into
separate subjects, or disciplines, and transmitted to students in
convenient administrative units, called 'Courses'. Any other
activities or learning experiences sponsored by the school came
to be described as extra-curricular. 8

Even in an educationally advanced country like the U.S.A.
where a lot of experimentation has been going on with various
designs of school curriculum, the time-honoured, well-established
academic fields representing accepted logical organisations of

7. Robert Dotterns, The Primary School Curriculum. Unesco,
1962. p.82.
8. James W. Thornton and John R. Wright, eds. Secondary School
p.3.
knowledge are still a very powerful influence in the curriculum and consume a large part of the students' time. Very frequently they crowd out the more practical subjects simply because they have greater prestige with parents, teachers and particularly with the colleges. And present-day demands for "toughness", rigorous mental discipline, and the like, are tending to intrench these subjects even more deeply. In spite of more practical emphasis, schools have not, by and large, given much attention to personal living including health education, face-to-face relationship of adolescents, or the participation of the students in the socio-economic life of the community. The old issue as to whether the curriculum should be organised in terms of problems, interests, and needs of students or in terms of preparation for adult life is still a very live one. The present practice certainly indicates that the latter point of view is common.9

While there have been great changes in the content and organization of the separate-subjects curriculum, it is still the dominant pattern of organization for courses in American secondary schools.10 It is probable that pupils in high schools who are preparing for definite life goals, have their most integrating experiences in working extensively in one or more highly organized areas, such as mathematics, science, commercial art, music, history and literature.11

The subject-centred curriculum, because of its certain striking advantages has enjoyed wide-spread acceptance in the

high school. Since in the Punjab during the period under review, subjects have traditionally constituted the heart of the curriculum and since in the future the importance of subjects is not likely to be minimised, the study of the development of the academic curriculum of the high school is the main subject of this thesis. Extra-class activities emphasized from time to time to provide useful learning experiences have also been considered.