Chapter XII

CONTROL OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

The Despatch of 1854 recommended the establishment of a directorate in Education in each province for the following purposes: execution of the educational policy laid down by the Government of India, direction and inspection of the public educational institutions, aiding of schools through grant-in-aid, and management of government's educational institutions. It was the responsibility of the education directorate to discharge the following functions:

(a) to advise the provincial government on all educational matters;

(b) to administer funds allotted to the directorate by provincial and Central governments;

(c) to manage educational institutions under direct authority of the government;

(d) to supervise and inspect all educational institutions, both public and private, which are in receipt of grant-in-aid or recognition;

(e) to compile annual reports on the progress of education covering areas within its jurisdiction; and,

(f) to take all steps as might be necessary to improve and expand education.

After the Despatch of 1854, all provinces organised a directorate to discharge the duties allotted to it. As Assam formed part of Bengal up to 1874, the province could not have a separate directorate and its educational activities were supervised by one Inspector, one deputy inspector, and twelve sub-inspectors. This arrangement continued even after the separation of Assam from Bengal. The Inspector had to discharge all the duties of a Director.
directorate, but the Government of India rejected the suggestion made by the Inspector that the designation of the existing departmental head should be changed to 'Director'. However, acting on proposal of the Chief Commissioner in 1888, the Government of India agreed to the appointment of a Director subject to the condition that excepting for the increased rate of travelling allowance admissible under the rules, no additional expenditure should be permitted as a consequence of the change. Accordingly, a Department of Education was established with the then Inspector of Schools, Wilson, as the first Director. European Directors continued in the Department till the end of dyarchy.

The Director of Public Instruction (D.P.I.) was the executive head of the Department of Education. He was entrusted with the tasks of implementing the educational policies of the Government. It was his charge to expand and improve the educational facilities and also to supervise the maintenance of proper standards of instruction at different stages of education. It was his business, again, to inspect and cause inspection of schools and colleges. During Dyarchy, the functions of the Director increased. Thus, besides his normal functions, the Director was now called upon to prepare answers to questions raised on the floor of the Assembly on matters relating to education, and to attend to a number of ceremonial and functional duties like attending functions as Provincial Commissioner of Boy Scouts, President of the Junior Red Cross, member of the Central Advisory Board of Education, and of other all-India and provincial European and Anglo-Indian Boards. Such diverse responsibilities naturally stood in the way of proper functioning of the office of the Director in matters of regular and proper inspection of schools and colleges.
The supervision of the work of the educational institutions was vested in the Department of Education and this task it carried out with the aid of an inspecting staff. The inspectors acted as the liaison officers between the Department and the educational institutions. It was the task of the inspecting officers to look into all matters pertaining to the management, administration, and maintenance of standards of instruction and discipline in the educational institutions. The inspection work was very comprehensive: it was academic and administrative supervision in all its aspects. Thus, the inspectors were required to examine the capacity of the institutions, number of the teaching staff and their qualifications; they had to see to it whether the teachers were paid regularly; it was also their task to examine the provisions made for teaching aids, seating arrangements, furniture, and to scrutinise the registers and the accounts.

For the convenience of inspection of schools, the whole province was divided into two valleys, the Assam Valley and the Surma Valley, each valley being put under the supervision of an Inspector of Schools. The Inspector was assisted by other subordinate members of the inspecting staff which had increased its strength over the years. In 1882, there were one Inspector, six Deputy Inspectors, and 14 Sub-Inspectors. By 1957, a different set-up had been functioning. With the Director at the apex, there was one Inspector each for the Assam Valley and the Surma Valley. The Assam Valley inspecting staff consisted of an Assistant Inspector, an Assistant Inspectress, 13 Deputy Inspectors, and 25 Sub-Inspectors. The Surma Valley counterpart of the inspecting staff consisted of an Assistant Inspector, 8 Deputy Inspectors, 25 Sub-Inspectors, and 2 Inspecting Pundits for the Naga Hills. It may be
noted that the Inspector for Surma Valley had his jurisdiction in the Naga Hills as well. The other Hills Districts were also under his jurisdiction. Besides this, there functioned under the Director an Assistant to the Director for Muslim Education, and a Deputy Inspector.

We have already discussed the functions of the Director; it is now necessary to make some reference briefly to the functions of the inspecting hierarchy.

**Inspector:** With the increase in the number of schools in the province, the post of a second Inspector of Schools was created in 1906; this Inspector was put in charge of the Surma Valley and the Hills Districts. Therefore, the other Inspector of Schools had to look after the Assam Valley Schools. Each Inspector was specially responsible for the high, middle and the training schools. The Inspectors were required to spend at least 160 days in a year on tour for the purpose of inspecting at least 10% of the middle schools, 50% of the model girls' schools, 20% of the lower primary schools, and 30% of the aided primary schools. Further, the Inspectors were authorised to administer recurring grants-in-aid, sanction grants for works within fixed limits, exercise departmental control over the Local Board budgets, and to administer the Subordinate Educational Service up to a certain grade. Work other than the inspection of schools had also to be discharged by the Inspector. This included attendance at a number of instruction and Scouting camps and Scout Jamborees, prize distributions, Selection and Moderation Boards, and many other functions.

**Assistant Inspector:** An Assistant Inspector was primarily entrusted with the inspection of middle schools of all grades. Subject to this limitation, an Assistant Inspector was required to
devote a part of his time to the inspection of all high schools other than those maintained by the Government. When directed by the Inspector, an Assistant Inspector had to visit Government high schools and first grade training schools. Further, he was required to visit 5% of the primary schools lying within his jurisdiction. An Assistant Inspector was required to be ordinarily on tour for 150 days in a year.\(^7\)

**Inspectress and Assistant Inspectress:** The posts of Inspectress and Assistant Inspectress were created after the separation of Assam from Eastern Bengal. The Inspectress was placed in charge of women's education and she was to advise the Department in all matters relating to the education of females. She was entitled to inspect all schools meant for girls.

The Assistant Inspectress was entitled to inspect all middle and primary schools meant for girls. She could also visit 'zeana' and other classes for women. Except when she was specially directed to do so, she was not entitled to visit high schools for girls. She had to be on tour for 150 days during the year and in the course of the visits, she had to satisfy herself as to the condition of the schools visited and the attainments of the pupils; further, it was her part of the duties during the visits to give necessary instruction to the staff in teaching methods for the prescribed subjects, especially needlework, handiwork, and domestic science.\(^8\)

On grounds of economy, the post of Inspectress was abolished in 1924. Thereafter, the whole burden of supervising control over women's education fell on the shoulders of the Assistant Inspectress. The assistant inspectorate changed hands frequently. In 1915-16, its charge changed hands thrice in six months with two intervals in between when the post remained entirely vacant. In dyarchy, one
Bengali lady was appointed to the post, but her influence was very limited in view of the inherent limitations of the post and also linguistic difficulties. Anyway, she was not expected to inspect 868 schools with 40,939 pupils. 9

General strengthening of female education was urgently necessary for better control of girls' education. But women's education did not receive proper attention in the form of effective supervision. Even the D.P.I. was constrained to remark as follows: 'It is a disgrace to Assam that its government for thirteen years have not considered the education of women of sufficient importance to warrant the appointment of more than one lady to deal with all the work connected with the girls students and pupils of the colleges and schools of the province'.

Deputy Inspector: Each deputy inspector had to inspect the middle and primary schools of the division allotted to him. He was the educational adviser of the District Magistrate, to whom he was subordinate in matters pertaining to primary education, and on the Board, of which he was an ex-officio member. A Deputy Inspector was required to supervise the work of the Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Inspectors placed under his charge. He was primarily responsible for the state of middle and upper primary schools. Further, a Deputy Inspector had to spend a minimum of 210 days on tour in each year.

Sub-Inspector: A Sub-Inspector was primarily concerned with the lower primary and indigenous schools in his allotted circle. Besides the inspection of the lower primary schools, a Sub-Inspector was required to select candidates for lower primary scholarships, to test the promotion of boys in lower primary schools, to take special care of the Board lower primary schools, to encourage primary education in backward localities, and to instruct
Further, a Sub-Inspector was required to tour for at least 230 days in the year and, during that period, he was expected to visit 70 schools. In order to apply the rule of 70 schools per one Sub-Inspector, the Education Department should have appointed a total of 103 Sub-Inspectors. But in practice it managed with 51 Sub-Inspectors. This showed the extreme paucity of the inspecting staff.

**Inspecting Pandits:** 'These pandits were originally intended to act more as peripatetic teachers than as inspecting officers'. The Inspecting Pandits and some missionaries were appointed to inspect the lower primary schools in the interior and in the hilly places. The pandits proved themselves useful in the establishment of new schools in backward areas and in persuading indigenous schools to adopt departmental methods. But their own educational attainments were so low that they could not fulfil the purpose for which they were appointed. As such, the posts of 17 Inspecting Pandits were abolished in 1905. By 1937, there were only two inspecting pandits for the Naga Hills.

**Assistant to the D.P.I. for Muslim Education:** It was a part of Government policy to encourage the separate development of the Muslims so that they could 'win for them the position which their numerical strength entitles them to expect'. The improvement of the Madrassas, the reservation of scholarships and free-student-ships, the extension of the system of middle Madrassas, the extra grants given to those maktabs and Koran schools which teach the full lower primary course, the grants given to selected primary schools to enable them to take up the teaching of Urdu, and the establishment of Muhammadan hostels—these are some of the measures by which Muslim education was promoted.
Inspector for Muhammadan Education had long been functioning to cater to the needs of Muslim education. In the 1920's, an Assistant to the D.P.I. for Muhammadan Education came to be appointed. It was his duty to tour for about 150 days in each year and visit all types of schools, from high schools to the primary schools. Maulvi Ataur Rahman earned particular distinction as Assistant to the Director for Muhammadan Education. Besides serving as Secretary of the Provincial Madrassa Board, he was also the Secretary of the Board for the Middle School Leaving Certificate and Scholarship examinations. The Deputy Inspector for Muhammadan Education had to be on tour for more than 200 days in each year and it was a part of his duty to visit high schools, M.E. and M.V. schools, middle English madrassas, maktabs, and primary schools.

Inspection of District Officers: The Deputy Commissioners, Sub-divisional Officers, Magistrates, and members of the Local Boards also visited schools. These visits were officially acknowledged to be most valuable because of the assistance offered thuswise to the regular inspecting staff.

This, then, was the inspecting hierarchy. The inspection reports were most valuable to the education directorate in the matter of making appropriate reviews of progress made. The opportunity of personal contact offered by the visits to the educational institutions proved to be an important stimulus to the zeal of the teachers. While all this was true, certain deficiencies in the system might be noted.

First, the number of the inspecting staff, especially of the level of deputy inspectors and sub-inspectors, was hardly adequate to meet the demands of inspection of the different schools. Under the result-grant system, the sub-inspectors had to examine the
pupils of the primary schools: With the increase in the number of primary schools, there had been no corresponding increase in the number of sub-inspectors. The result was that many a school had to wait for long for rewards as the few sub-inspectors could not come regularly, and that too, in a situation when the means of transport and communication remained in a poor state of development. In such circumstances, inspection was not as it ought to be. There were two methods of inspection: inspection 

**in situ**, and inspection at centres. In **inspection in situ**, inspecting officers went to the schools, but their hurried visits for a few hours failed to serve any effective purpose in the case of ill-equipped schools. In the case of **inspection at centres**, students of an area or those of a particular school’s neighbourhood came to the assigned place where the inspector began his work. This work turned out to be perfunctory for the simple reason that many schools had to be examined within a very short time neglecting, thereby, a proper scrutiny of the needs and problems of the schools. There had been an almost chronic shortage of the inspecting staff. A staff of 21 deputy inspectors and 51 sub-inspectors for the whole province was hardly sufficient to look after the inspection needs of 520 middle, 6,795 primary, and 869 venture schools.

Secondly, often enough there were complaints of lack of sincerity coupled with laziness and inefficiency on the part of some members of the inspecting staff. These delinquent officers did not visit the allotted number of schools, neither did they tour the areas even for the minimum number of prescribed days. The official reports. In 1915, even the Director complained how in some cases the expenditure on tour was not the money’s worth because of the small number of schools visited; he also referred to the fewer
number of visits by the Inspector for Surma Valley and the Hills Districts. Every year, some of the officers failed to tour for the required number of days with the inevitable curtailment of visits to the schools. Such negligence of duty naturally led the Director to warn that 'a serious lack of zeal and activity among the sub-inspectors generally, amounting in some instances to a scandalous neglect of duty' existed and that 'those officers who failed so conspicuously during the past year will be considered to be on trial with regard to their fitness for the posts which they occupy'.

Thirdly, till 1917, there did not seem to exist any precise plan of inspection including in it the need to proceed with follow up measures. It was remarked that 'a perusal of almost any inspection book will show that stark and corrigible faults have been in existence for ten years in schools which have been inspected in that period some twenty or thirty times'. Inspection became a formal business where officers showed the defects and suggested some means of improvement which, however, would be duly neglected by the school authorities; this process was repeated year after year.

In 1917, an inspection plan was framed by the Director. Under this plan, inspecting officers were required to frame their own schemes of improvement of the institutions to be covered by inspection; such schemes should be itemised, to be corrected and enlarged periodically as might be warranted by the circumstances. A circular was issued to all inspecting officers to maintain a log-book. In this log-book circular, it was stated that a divisional inspector should examine a school primarily with reference to the work mg of the local inspecting staff. The Inspector should record his views on the efforts made by the Deputy Inspectors. Similarly,
the Deputy Inspectors should work with reference to the work of the Sub-Inspectors under them. Every log-book should contain: (a) the subject selected for concentration; (b) the aim in view; (c) the defects, special and general, prevailing in the teaching of the subject in the concerned school; and, (d) the means adopted for removing these defects and other concomitant evils, and for moving onwards gradually towards the aim in view. Introduction of the log-book was an improvement on the pre-1917 situation, but good schemes were poor substitutes for an adequate number of inspecting officers.

Fourthly, a lack of co-operation marked the relationship of the inspecting staff and the local bodies. As the responsibility of expanding primary education was delegated to the local boards and the municipal boards, these bodies were very jealous of their rights and therefore, any suggestion coming from the inspecting staff came to be regarded in most cases as unwarranted interference in their domain. Thus, defects of the local bodies' schools mentioned in the sub-inspectors' reports were overlooked and suggestions for making improvements in buildings, provision of equipments and increase in the number of teachers were neglected. This state of affairs led to strained relationship between the members of the inspecting staff and the local bodies. In some local boards, the inspecting officers were excluded from the education committees or the school managing committees merely to avoid 'domination' by the inspecting officers. Even the rules laid down by the Education Department for securing grant-in-aid were not strictly followed by the local boards. Further, departmental rules in regard to establishment and closure of primary schools, and appointment, promotion or dismissal of teachers, etc., were violated. The inspecting staff was in most cases ignored. This
was certainly an undesirable state of affairs.

Fifthly, the Government did not show much interest for the inspection of women's education. The post of Inspectress was abolished in 1924 on grounds of economy, but in truth it was misplaced economy.

Sixthly, the inspecting staff was not properly trained in their work. Training was necessary for effective guidance, supervision, stimulation of the educational activities, and offering suggestions for re-organisation in or modification of teaching programmes in the schools. Training was also necessary for matters connected with reforms in the courses of studies and methods of teaching. Proper training for the inspecting staff would have led to better results.

Seventhly, during dyarchy, the Director was overburdened with work. As the head of the educational establishment, he had to devote his time and energy for a number of routine and ceremonial functions, besides keeping himself fully posted with facts relating to the educational needs of the whole province. The D.P.I. needed the expert assistance of a Deputy or Additional D.P.I. But no such appointment was made.

Eighthly, in view of the increased number of schools of all types created the need for proper division of work in the Education Department. This could have been facilitated by the establishment of Primary and Secondary Education Boards as suggested under the scheme for educational reconstruction submitted by the Government of Assam to the Government of India in 1935. But no such Board came up.

Ninthly, during dyarchy, a tug of war, as it were, was witnessed between the Education Secretary and the Director. The comparatively inexperienced Minister in charge of Education had to depend on the Education Secretary, and the latter did not consult the Director.
before submitting proposals to the Minister. The Director felt that he should continue to have the privilege of approaching the Government directly and without going through the Education Secretary. He further felt that the Director should be the Secretary or Joint Secretary of the Education Department. The Hartog Committee was in sympathy with these feelings and the Committee favoured the abolition of the Secretaryship and suggested that one office only should be created, and that the Director should work as the Secretary to bring more harmony and efficiency in the educational activities of the government's Education Department. But these recommendations were not accepted. The relationship of the D.P.I. and the Education Secretary continued to be unsatisfactory.

Lastly, the Director had another cause of complaint and this related to real or imaginary interference on the part of the Minister in matters connected with appointments and promotions of people in the education service. The fear was that certain people would secure promotion on grounds other than merit. In such a situation, distrust and disharmony did arise among members belonging to the same department. This again called for a clear cut definition of the powers of the Director and the Education Secretary.

The foregoing analysis serves to make it clear that the inspecting machinery needed thorough overhaul in order to attune it to the requirements of a changing society.