

Growth And Contribution Of Educational Institutions Under The Vellore (C.S.I) Diocese

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ABSTRACT

Education plays a crucial role in the development of any country, particularly in developing nations like India. It drives economic growth, poverty alleviation, human capital development, health and well-being, gender equality, social development, innovation and research, political stability, environmental awareness, and cultural preservation. Education empowers individuals to break the cycle of poverty, contribute positively to society, engage in civic activities, and make informed decisions. In India, a significant portion of the population still faces challenges related to poverty, gender inequality, and access to basic services. Education and Christianity have a complex and intertwined history in India. The introduction of Christianity in India dates back to ancient times, possibly as early as the 1st century CE, through interactions with traders and travellers. The development of higher education through Christian missionaries in the North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu, India, has a significant historical background that traces back to the colonial period. Christian missionaries played a crucial role in establishing educational institutions that have had a lasting impact on the region's educational landscape. Hence, an attempt was made to study the Growth and Contribution of Educational Institutions under the Vellore (C.S.I) Diocese.

Keywords: Education and Christianity, Christian Missionaries

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in the development of any country, particularly in developing nations like India. It drives economic growth, poverty alleviation, human capital development, health and well-being, gender equality, social development, innovation and research, political stability, environmental awareness, and cultural preservation. A well-educated population is essential for driving innovation, enhancing productivity, and attracting foreign investment. Education empowers individuals to break the cycle of poverty, contribute positively to society, engage in civic activities, and make informed decisions. In India, a significant portion of the population still faces challenges related to poverty, gender inequality, and access to basic services. By investing in education, developing countries can unlock their potential for growth, innovation, and social progress.

Education and Christianity have a complex and intertwined history in India. The introduction of Christianity in India dates back to ancient times, possibly as early as the 1st century CE, through interactions with traders and travellers. However, a more organized presence of Christianity can be traced to the arrival of European colonial powers, primarily the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, British, and French. The development of education through Christian missionaries in Tamil Nadu, a southern state of India, has had a significant impact on the region's educational landscape. Christian missionaries, particularly from Europe and North America, played a crucial role in establishing schools, colleges, and other educational institutions that have contributed to the social and academic development of the state. The development of higher education through Christian missionaries in the North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu, India, has a significant historical background that traces back to the colonial period. Christian missionaries played a crucial role in establishing educational institutions that have had a lasting impact on the region's educational landscape.

Christian missionaries and educational development

The Christian missionary charitable service was carried over through churches, educational institutions and hospitals which entered into the deep roots of the Indian culture. These services were used as strategies by the missionaries to implant Christianity as well as to develop and uplift the depressed and unprivileged sections of the society. There were three areas in which the Reformed Church in America (R.C.A.) missionaries to which the American Arcot Mission (A.A.M.) belonged were involved in changing the lives of their converts for better – education, medicine and social justice, while these were not the only areas of social change in the Arcot area; they were the ones in which missionaries were active. The objective of the evangelical missionaries was the planting of a church adhering to the tenets of evangelical Protestantism. There was no compromising, no satisfaction in merely extending the humanitarian and educational benefits of the West. All considerations of material well-being were as nothing compared to winning the Indians over to an understanding of the Christian faith. All missionary activities, preparation of literature, the conducting of school, and the practice of healing arts were evangelical in purpose. Based on this logic, the programme of evangelization was adopted with overwhelming concern with a spiritual zeal.

ROAD MAP OF MISSIONARIES' ACTIVITIES

- Missionaries who argued for the importance of preaching as the sole method for winning converts were opposed by those who held that a missionary's activities included operations such as education.
- Missionaries of South India met in a conference at Ootacamund in A.D.1858, stressed that all their educational operations must be conducted with a special view to the salvation of the souls of pupils, not merely their intellectual and moral improvement.
- The missionaries' own criteria in assessing the success or failure were inevitably the final number of converts. The missionaries and the lay people were answerable to the home boards who supported the missions who expected more results in conversions. The development of Christian character and leavening of the society with Christian ideas through educational and medical institutions paved the way for the eventual acceptance of the Christian faith.
- In India the native system of education by the end of the eighteenth-century A.D. was oriental and the method of teaching was unscientific and mechanical. Primary education was aimed at imparting, reading, writing and arithmetic and these schools had no infrastructure except a sandy ground, small blackboards and pupils were taught to write on the sand.
- The indigenous educational institutions were broadly to two types: Elementary schools for both Hindus and Muslims and the Hindu "Patashalas" and the Muslim "Madrasas" the schools for higher learning. The Hindu schools were mostly attended by boys and excluded girls and in the Muslim schools, along with boys, girls also attended at a younger age, but in richer families, the girls were educated at home. The Gurukulam pattern of education was offered by the Brahmins and Sanskrit was taught. One difference between the Hindu schools and the Muslim schools was that the former was designed for one favoured class or community, and the latter was open for all irrespective of their castes.

The modern system of education brought by Christian missionaries

It was the Christian missionaries who brought the modern system of education to India and made it available to all the people irrespective of caste, colour, creed or status. Francis Xavier, the Roman Catholic missionary from Portugal started a few schools in Goa to give education for the new converts and their children in the seventeenth century A.D. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, the first Protestant missionary who landed in India started a school for the natives in A.D. 1707, where children were taught to read and write. Between A.D.1726 and A.D.1741, Schultze another missionary started a school for the Portuguese children as well as a school for the Tamil children at Madras. Later with the help of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) many Christian missions started a few more schools in other places. The two differences between the traditional and modern systems of education were that the traditional schools had been restricted to upper caste children and transmitted mostly traditional knowledge, but in the modern schools, education was provided to all, especially to the "Sudra" and the untouchables. The caste system had exercised considerable influence on the theory and practice of the ancient educational system of India.

East India Company opened schools in India on the ancient methods of education at work i.e. the Brahmins giving instructions to their people in Sanskrit and the Mohamadens in Arabic and Persian to the children of all communities. The Company aimed at discharging the duties fulfilled by the Delhi emperor, the previous ruling power. Its earliest efforts were confined to traditional learning which led to the establishment of educational institutions at Calcutta and Benares in A.D. 1781 and A.D. 1792 respectively. By the end of the eighteenth century, two schools of thought came into consideration as far as education was concerned. One was known as the "Orientalist" and the other as "Evangelicals". Orientalists were for the promotion of oriental languages and education to be imparted to Indians in their own languages. However, the Evangelicals wanted to give a supreme position for the English language and to use English education as a tool for conversion to Christianity. This proposal was not accepted when the Charter of the East India Company came up for renewal in A.D.1793. Later it was accepted and provisions were made in the renewal of the Charter of the Company in A.D. 1813, for missionary and education work in the Colonies such as India.¹¹ The Charter Act of A.D.1833 opened India not only to all trading companies other than East India Company but also to missionaries from all nations to carry out their activities in India.

Three men, Thomas Macauley, a law member of the Council in Calcutta in A.D. 1835, Governor General William Bentinck, and Alexander Duff, a missionary of the Church of Scotland in Calcutta, bear responsibility for the introduction of English education in India, until the arrival of Alexander Duff in Calcutta in A.D.1830, the official view seemed to that the European literature and science was conveyed to the native mind chiefly through native media i.e., the learned of India – for Muslims, Arabic and Persia; and for the Hindus, Sanskrit. Duff resolved that in his educational efforts, he believed that education must not be confined to religious reading. He planned to teach every variety of useful knowledge from the most elementary to the higher branch including history, literature, logic and moral philosophy. The famous St. John's Church, Vellore located inside the Vellore Fort was raised in 1846 by the Government of Madras for the officers and men of the East India Company military station. The church is named after St. John the Evangelist.

History and recent development of CSI Vellore Diocese

The Diocese of Vellore is one among the 24 dioceses of the Church of South India. The motto chosen for the diocese was "In the Cross of Christ I Glory" (based on Galatians chapter 6 verses 14). Its emblem includes a banyan tree - the tree under which the Scudder brothers prayed before they decided to begin their work in the area of Vellore. The diocese was created by bifurcating the western half of the Diocese of Madras and was officially formed on 26th January 1976. Vellore Diocese is predominantly rural and crosses the state boundaries of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. So Vellore Diocese can be also called a bilingual diocese.

Area Councils

- Eastern Area Council - 26 Pastorates
- Central Area Council - 37 Pastorates
- Southern Area Council - 17 Pastorates
- Northern Area Council - 24 Pastorates

Two more Councils were in proposal, (Viz: Central Urban Area Council & Western Area Council)

Bishops of the diocese from 1978 to till date

- Rt. Rev. Sam J. Ponniah (1978–1987)
- Rt. Rev. R. Trinity Baskeran
- Rt. Rev. Mahimai Rufus
- Rt. Rev. Y. William (2008–2012)
- Rt. Rev. Rajavelu (2012 – 30 June 2018)
- Rt. Rev. H. Sharma Nithiyanandam (as of 2019)

Institutions under CSI Vellore Diocese

Church of South India Vellore Diocese has 105 Elementary Schools, 5 High Schools, 5 Higher Secondary Schools, 2 Teachers' Training Institutes, 4 Primary Schools, 1 Arts and science college, 3 Matriculation Higher Secondary Schools, 2 Nursing Schools and 2 Hospitals.

THE AIM OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH WORK

1. To study the Educational and institutional background of Vellore CSI Diocese
2. To analyse the Growth of Educational Institutions under the Vellore CSI Diocese.
3. To find out the Contribution of the Vellore CSI Diocese to Higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the collection of data from secondary sources. The researcher has collected secondary data from annual reports of CSI Vellore Diocese, various books, reports, journals, magazines, newspapers and websites. The following important secondary sources is used to construct this research work.

CONCLUSION

The Vellore CSI (Church of South India) Diocese has been fostering a wide range of positive impacts through its educational development. These impacts include improved literacy rates, enhanced career opportunities, empowerment of women, health awareness, community development, cultural preservation, social cohesion, economic growth, crime reduction, leadership development, environmental awareness, and improved quality of life. Education programs can help raise literacy rates, providing individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to pursue various careers, reducing unemployment rates and poverty levels.

Education also empowers women, providing them with the tools to make informed decisions about their lives, families, and communities. Education also promotes health awareness, promoting better health and hygiene habits. Community development is also facilitated by educated individuals, contributing to the overall well-being and progress of the diocese. Cultural preservation is another significant benefit of education, as it helps preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the diocese. An educated populace tends to be more inclusive and open-minded, promoting social cohesion and reducing discrimination and conflict. Economic growth is also a significant benefit of education, as it produces a skilled workforce that attracts investments and business development. Higher levels of education are often associated with lower crime rates, as educated individuals are more likely to engage in lawful activities. Lastly, education raises environmental awareness, leading to more sustainable practices and a healthier environment for future generations. Overall, education contributes to an improved quality of life for individuals and communities in the Vellore CSI Diocese.

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