

Research Article**Educational Reforms and Modernization in Hyderabad State under Nizam VII (1911–1948)****Aruna Etikala**

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Corresponding Author: Aruna Etikala.**Abstract**

This article examines the development of education in Hyderabad State during the reign of His Exalted Highness Mir Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII (1911–1948), focusing on educational reorganization, institutional expansion, intellectual influences, and the social implications of educational modernization. Although the earlier Asaf Jahi rulers had established important educational institutions, the early twentieth century witnessed more systematic efforts to reorganize the Education Department, expand primary and secondary education, improve administrative efficiency, and develop higher and professional education. The article analyses the contributions of Arthur Mayhew, Allama Shibli Nomani, Sir Akbar Hydari, and Sir Ross Masood in shaping the educational policies and intellectual vision of Hyderabad State. Particular attention is given to Arthur Mayhew's recommendations for educational reorganization, the expansion of educational institutions, and Sir Ross Masood's interest in the Japanese model of education as a means of combining scientific advancement with cultural identity. The establishment of Osmania University in 1918 marked a major milestone in this process, particularly through its adoption of Urdu as the medium of instruction for higher education while retaining English as an important language of learning. The article also examines the establishment of Jagirdars' College, highlighting the relationship between educational modernization and the interests of the aristocratic and landed elite. Drawing upon official educational reports, administrative records, institutional histories, and relevant historical studies, the article argues that educational reforms under Nizam VII contributed significantly to the institutional modernization of Hyderabad State, the development of professional education, and the emergence of a distinctive educational model. However, these developments did not ensure equal access to education across class, caste, gender, region, and linguistic communities. The article concludes that education under Nizam VII must be understood both as an instrument of administrative and intellectual modernization and as a mechanism through which existing social hierarchies and inequalities were partly reproduced.

Keywords: Hyderabad State; Mir Osman Ali Khan; Nizam VII; Educational Reforms; Osmania University; Arthur Mayhew; Allama Shibli Nomani; Sir Ross Masood; Urdu as Medium of Instruction; Japanese Model of Education; Jagirdars' College; Educational Modernization; Social Inequality; Colonial and Princely Education.

Introduction:

The accession of His Exalted Highness Mir Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII, to the throne of Hyderabad in 1911 marked an important phase in the institutional development of education in the Hyderabad State. Education had already received attention under earlier Asaf Jahi rulers, particularly through the establishment and development of institutions such as the Dar-ul-Uloom, Nizam College, and various professional schools. However, the early decades of the twentieth century witnessed a

more systematic attempt to reorganize the educational administration, expand elementary and secondary education, improve teacher training, develop higher education, and establish a university appropriate to the political and cultural aspirations of the State.

The scale of the challenge was considerable. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hyderabad's educational development remained behind that of some other major princely states. In 1902–03, the State had approximately 2,667 educational institutions and 94,979 pupils. A substantial proportion of these institutions were private and unrecognized, revealing the fragmented nature of the educational system. The educational reforms initiated during the reign of Nizam VII therefore need to be understood not merely as an expansion in the number of schools, but as an attempt to transform education into a more organized instrument of state administration, social development, and modern knowledge.

Educational Reorganization and the Role of Arthur Mayhew:

One of the significant steps taken by the Hyderabad Government was the appointment of Arthur Mayhew, an officer of the Indian Educational Service, as Educational Adviser in 1910. He served for approximately two years and prepared an important report on the condition and future organization of education in the Hyderabad State. The official historical account of Hyderabad's education identifies his recommendations as covering the expansion of primary and secondary education as well as reforms in the administrative machinery of the Education Department.

Mayhew's report, published as *Report on Education in H.H. the Nizam's Dominions and Proposals for its Reorganisation* in 1912, provided a framework for subsequent educational development. His proposals included the expansion of primary education, improvements in secondary education, better inspection and administration, revision of curricula, recruitment of teachers, and the development of a more coherent educational structure.

An especially important feature of the emerging policy was the recognition of the importance of vernacular or mother-tongue education at the elementary level. The argument was both pedagogical and administrative: children were more likely to acquire basic literacy and conceptual understanding when instruction was provided in a language familiar to them. At the same time, English retained importance as a language of higher learning and access to modern scientific and administrative knowledge.

This tension between vernacular education and English education became one of the central questions in the educational history of Hyderabad. The later development of Osmania University demonstrated the State's attempt to resolve this tension by combining modern Western knowledge with instruction through Urdu.

Allama Shibli Nomani and the Eastern–Western Educational Synthesis:

The educational debate in Hyderabad also involved prominent intellectuals from outside the State. Allama Shibli Nomani (1857–1914) became associated with the Education Department of Hyderabad after leaving Aligarh. His educational thought was particularly significant because he sought to bridge the apparent division between traditional Islamic learning and modern education. His approach did not simply reject Western knowledge; rather, he sought to combine modern intellectual methods with the preservation and revitalization of Islamic and Eastern intellectual traditions.

Shibli's association with Hyderabad is particularly important in understanding the intellectual background of the later educational policy of the State. Sources associated with Shibli's legacy state that he contributed to educational reforms in Hyderabad and that his ideas were connected with the adoption of Urdu as the medium of higher education at Osmania University.

His educational philosophy therefore represented an alternative to a purely Western model. He regarded education as a means of intellectual regeneration and social reform. His approach attempted to reconcile religious and modern education rather than treating them as mutually exclusive. This intellectual environment was important for the development of an educational policy that sought to synthesize Eastern and Western knowledge systems.

Expansion of Primary and Secondary Education:

The reforms of the early twentieth century produced measurable changes in the educational structure of Hyderabad. According to a recent historical study based on official statistical material, the total number of schools increased from 2,311 in 1910–11 to 8,418 in 1920–21. During the same period, public schools increased from 1,051 to 4,365, while private schools increased from 1,259 to 4,053. The number of recognized and public schools per lakh population increased from approximately eight to 35.

These figures demonstrate that the educational transformation under Nizam VII was substantial. The increase was not limited to urban Hyderabad. Expansion of elementary and secondary institutions sought to extend educational opportunities into the districts and smaller administrative centres of the State.

However, the statistical expansion should not be interpreted as evidence that education had become universally accessible. Social, economic, geographical, linguistic, and gender inequalities continued to affect access. The existence of large numbers of private and unrecognized schools also indicates that the State's educational system remained heterogeneous.

Indeed, the policy changed during the 1920s. Rather than continuing unlimited expansion, the Education Department increasingly emphasized efficiency and standardization. Some unsuccessful experimental primary schools were closed, institutions were consolidated, and a number of private unrecognized schools disappeared from the official system. Consequently, the total number of institutions declined to approximately 5,497 by 1925–26.

Thus, the history of educational reform under Nizam VII should be understood as involving two interconnected phases: first, rapid expansion and institutional development; second, administrative consolidation and attempts to improve quality and efficiency.

Establishment of Osmania University:

The most important achievement of educational policy during the reign of Nizam VII was undoubtedly the establishment of Osmania University. The proposal developed within a broader debate about the need for a university that would serve Hyderabad rather than remain dependent upon institutions and examination systems outside the State.

Sir Akbar Hydari played an important role in this process. In early 1917, he submitted a memorandum recommending a university in Hyderabad with Urdu as the medium of instruction. A *Firman* issued on 26 April 1917 approved the establishment of the university, while the university began functioning in 1918.

Osmania University represented a distinctive educational experiment. Urdu was adopted as the medium of instruction, while English was compulsory as a language. The objective was not simply to replace English but to make modern knowledge accessible through an Indian language. The university's stated educational philosophy sought to combine ancient and modern, Oriental and Occidental learning.

The university subsequently developed courses in law, education, science, medicine, engineering and other disciplines. Osmania University's official historical record notes that law and M.A. courses were introduced in 1923, the medical course in 1927, education in 1928, and engineering in 1929.

The significance of this experiment went beyond Hyderabad. The use of Urdu as the medium for higher education represented an important challenge to the prevailing colonial model in which English dominated university education. Contemporary intellectuals such as Rabindranath Tagore and Sir Michael Sadler expressed interest in the experiment.

Sir Ross Masood and Educational Modernization:

Another major figure in Hyderabad's educational history was Sir Ross Masood (1889–1937), grandson of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Masood served as Director of Public Instruction in Hyderabad from 1916 to 1928.

His contribution was important because he attempted to place Hyderabad's educational development within a wider international framework. In 1922 he travelled to Japan to study its educational system. His report, *Japan and Its Educational System*, was published in 1923. Masood

regarded Japan's educational transformation as an important example of how a non-Western society could acquire modern scientific knowledge while retaining its own cultural and political identity.

His educational philosophy therefore went beyond the simple opposition between Eastern and Western education. He advocated the transmission of Western scientific knowledge through widespread vernacular education while simultaneously emphasizing cultural identity, patriotism, and freedom from foreign domination.

This is particularly significant in the context of Hyderabad. The educational system under Nizam VII was attempting to modernize the State without completely reproducing the educational structure of British India. Masood's Japanese model offered an alternative intellectual framework for this project.

Education and the Jagirdar Elite: Establishment of Jagirdars' College:

Educational reform under Nizam VII also reflected the social structure of Hyderabad State. One important example was the establishment of the Jagirdars' College, which was designed specifically for the education of the sons of jagirdars.

The idea originated in the context of the Revenue Department and the Court of Wards. The Hyderabad Public School's archival history records that in 1919 H. Wakefield, associated with the Revenue administration, proposed a residential institution modelled partly on elite British public schools such as Eton, intended to provide the sons of jagirdars with a specialized educational environment.

The institution was established at Begumpet. The Hyderabad High Court's historical account records that in 1923 Mr. Wakefield started Jagirdars' College for the education of the children of jagirdars and that land was provided from sources associated with the State's aristocratic landed interests. The Court also records that the Nizam Government levied a 2 per cent education cess on the net income of jagirdars, which was utilized toward the institution's expenditure.

The Hyderabad Public School archives state that the institution opened its doors in 1923 with five students and six teachers under its first principal, H. W. Shawcross, and that the first group appeared for Senior Cambridge examinations in 1929. By 1930, enrolment had reached approximately 150.

The institution is historically significant for two reasons. First, it illustrates the State's willingness to introduce modern residential and public-school models into Hyderabad. Second, it reveals the class character of educational policy. While educational expansion created opportunities for wider sections of society, elite institutions such as the Jagirdars' College were specifically designed to reproduce and modernize the education of the ruling and landed classes.

Consequently, the educational reforms of the Nizam period should not be interpreted exclusively as a story of democratization. They simultaneously contributed to the modernization of elite groups and the development of a broader public educational system.

Education, Social Change and the Limits of Reform:

The educational reforms of Nizam VII had several long-term consequences. They contributed to the expansion of literacy, the creation of trained administrators and professionals, the development of scientific and technical education, and the emergence of Hyderabad as an important intellectual centre.

At the same time, the reforms operated within the hierarchical social and political structure of the Hyderabad State. Access to education was uneven across class, caste, gender, region, language, and community. The existence of specialized institutions for elites alongside expanding public education illustrates this dual character.

The introduction of vernacular education also involved a complex linguistic politics. Urdu became increasingly important in higher education and administration, particularly through Osmania University. Yet Hyderabad was linguistically diverse, with Telugu, Marathi, Kannada, Urdu and other linguistic communities. Consequently, the educational policy of the State needs to be studied not merely as an administrative reform but also as a question of language, identity and political power.

Conclusion:

The educational reforms undertaken during the reign of Nizam VII constituted one of the most significant dimensions of the modernization of Hyderabad State. Beginning with the reorganization of primary and secondary education and the recommendations of Arthur Mayhew, the State gradually developed a more systematic educational administration. Intellectuals such as Allama Shibli Nomani contributed to debates over the relationship between traditional and modern learning, while Sir Ross Masood subsequently gave the educational system an international dimension through his study of Japan.

The establishment of Osmania University represented the culmination of these efforts. Its use of Urdu as the medium of higher education, combined with compulsory English and modern scientific and professional disciplines, constituted a distinctive experiment in vernacular higher education.

At the same time, institutions such as the Jagirdars' College demonstrate that educational modernization was not socially neutral. The State simultaneously expanded public education and created specialized institutions for the aristocratic and landed elite. Education therefore functioned both as an instrument of modernization and social reproduction.

For historical research on the Nizam period, the educational reforms should consequently be examined through a dual lens: the expansion and modernization of educational institutions on the one hand, and the unequal distribution of educational opportunities on the other. Such an approach allows the history of education to be connected with the broader questions of class, caste, language, gender, political authority and social mobility in Hyderabad State.

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