

1960's Students' Movement against Sharif Education policy

- In 1959, then president of Pakistan, military dictator Ayub Khan formed a commission headed by education secretary SM Sharif to draft a national education policy that deprioritized education for all. The report, popularly known as SM Sharif Education policy, was published in 1962, its recommendations were so blatantly exclusionary that it sparked a student movement in the former East Pakistan.

- *The Sharif Commission report* recommended that, 1) Urdu should be made the language of the people of Pakistan; 2) English should be made as compulsory from fourth grade; 3) Education should not be offered at a cheaper rate; 4) There are reasons to view investments in industry and education sector at par. Shockingly, the work of the commission was built on the assumption that the concept of free primary education is utopian and education was considered as site of investment.
- Inevitably, students from the then East Pakistan vehemently opposed the policy and demanded that it be repealed. Committees to protest and organise public meetings against the policy was formed in colleges and universities.

- Then came the morning of September 17, 1962. Thousands of students took to the streets protesting at the discriminatory education policy of Ayub Khan's military regime. In demand of equal access to education, students took bullets. At least three people including a student were killed. Since then September 17 is observed as the Education Day by progressive student organisations. This year too was no different.