

History

India has a long history of organized education. The [Gurukul](#) system of education is one of the oldest on earth but before that the guru shishya system was extant, in which students were taught orally and the data would be passed from one generation to the next. Gurukuls were traditional Hindu residential schools of learning; typically the teacher's house or a monastery. Education was free (and often limited to the higher castes), but students from well-to-do families paid Gurudakshina, a voluntary contribution after the completion of their studies. At the Gurukuls, the teacher imparted knowledge of Religion, Scriptures, [Philosophy](#), [Literature](#), Warfare, Statecraft, [Medicine](#), Astrology and "History" ("[Itihaas](#)" — actually mythology). Only students belonging to Brahmin and Kshatriya communities were taught in these Gurukuls. However, the advent of Buddhism and Jainism brought fundamental changes in access to education with their democratic character. The first millennium and the few centuries preceding it saw the flourishing of higher education at [Nalanda](#), [Takshashila University](#), [Ujjain](#), & [Vikramshila](#) Universities. Art, Architecture, Painting, Logic, Grammar, Philosophy, Astronomy, Literature, [Buddhism](#), [Hinduism](#), [Arthashastra](#) (Economics & Politics), Law, and Medicine were among the subjects taught and each university specialized in a particular field of study. Takshila specialized in the study of medicine, while Ujjain laid emphasis on astronomy. Nalanda, being the biggest centre, handled all branches of knowledge, and housed up to 10,000 students at its peak. [British records](#) show that education was widespread in the 18th century, with a school for every temple, mosque or village in most regions of the country. The subjects taught included Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Theology, Law, Astronomy, Metaphysics, Ethics, Medical Science and Religion. The schools were attended by students representative of all classes of society. Traditional structures were not recognized by the British government and have been on the decline since. [Gandhi](#) is said to have described the traditional educational system as a beautiful tree that was destroyed during the British rule.

But [scholars](#) have questioned the validity of such an argument. The village pathshalas were often housed in shabby dwellings and taught by ill-qualified teachers. Instruction was limited mainly to the three Rs and the native mahajanilzamindari accounts. Printed books were not used, and most writing was done on palm leaf, plantain leaf, or on sand. There was no fixed class routine, timetable, or school calendar. There was no annual examination, pupils being promoted whenever the guru was satisfied of the scholar's attainments. There were no desks, benches, blackboards, or fixed seating arrangements. The decline probably started in the mid- 1700s. By the 1820s neither the village schools nor the tols or madrasas were the vital centers of learning. In 1823, Raja Rammohan Roy wrote to the governor-general, Lord Amherst, requesting that he not spend government funds on starting a Sanskrit College in Calcutta but rather employ "European Gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences." "The current system of

education, with its western style and content, was introduced & founded by the British in the 20th century, following recommendations by Macaulay.

Up to the 17th century

The first millennium and the few centuries preceding it saw the flourishing of higher education at [Nalanda](#), [Takshila](#), [Ujjain](#), & [Vikramshila](#) Universities. Art, Architecture, Painting, Logic, Grammar, Philosophy, Astronomy, Literature, [Buddhism](#), [Hinduism](#), [Arthashastra](#) (Economics & Politics), Law, and Medicine were among the subjects taught and each university specialized in a particular field of study. Takshila specialized in the study of medicine, while Ujjain laid emphasis on astronomy. Nalanda, being the biggest centre, handled all branches of knowledge, and housed up to 10,000 students at its peak. this is

Education under British Rule

[British records](#) show that indigenous education was widespread in the 18th century, with a school for every temple, mosque or village in most regions of the country. The subjects taught included Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Theology, Law, Astronomy, Metaphysics, Ethics, Medical Science and Religion. The schools were attended by students representative of all classes of society. But [scholars](#) have questioned the validity of such an argument. They argue that proponents of indigenous education fail to recognize the importance of the widespread use of printed books in the West since the sixteenth century, which led to a remarkable advancement of knowledge. Printed books were not used in Indian schools till the 1820s or even later. There were institutions such as Gresham's college in London that encouraged scientific learning. In fact, there were a number of such academic and scientific societies in England, often supported by Puritan and non-Conformist merchants, the like of which probably did not exist in India. The entire claim of indigenous education proponents is based on the thesis advocated by [Dharampal](#) which says that there was a general decline in Indian society and economy with the coming of British rule. In the process, indigenous education suffered. This, however, is too broad a generalization, and the exact impact of British rule on different regions at different times has to be studied more carefully before we conclude that the curve everywhere steadily declined. He argues that pre-British schools and colleges were maintained by grants of revenue-free land. The East India Company, with its policy of maximizing land revenue, stopped this and thus starved the Indian education system of its financial resources. Again, we need more detailed evidence to show how far inam lands were taken over by the government. More often, military officers, zamindar, and talukdars were deprived of revenue-free land rather than temples, mosques, madrasas. Recent research has revealed that inam lands continued to exist well into the nineteenth century, much more than was previously suspected.

The current system of education, with its western style and content, was introduced & funded by the British in the 19th century, following recommendations by Macaulay. Traditional structures were not recognized by the British government and have been on the decline since. [Gandhi](#) is said to have described the traditional educational system as a beautiful tree that was destroyed during British rule.

The British established many colleges like [St. Xavier's College](#)^[disambiguation needed], [Sydenham College](#), [Wilson College](#) and [Elphinstone College](#) in India.

According to Prof. Emeritus [M.G. Sahadevan](#), F.R.C.P. (London), the first medical college of [Kerala](#) was started at [Calicut](#), in 1942-43, during [World War II](#). Due to shortage of doctors to serve the [military](#), the British Government decided to open a branch of [Madras Medical College](#) in Malabar, which was under Madras Presidency then. After the war, the medical school at Calicut was closed and the students continued their studies at Madras Medical College.

After Independence

After independence, education became the responsibility of the [states](#). The Central Government's only obligation was to co-ordinate in technical and higher education and specify standards. This continued till 1976, when the education became a joint responsibility of the state and the Centre.

Education Commission

The Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. [D. S. Kothari](#), the then Chairman, University Grants Commission, began its task on October 2, 1964. It consisted of sixteen members, eleven being Indians and five foreign experts. In addition, the Commission had the benefit of discussion with a number of internationally known consultants in the educational as well as scientific field----

After 1976

In 1976, education was made a joint responsibility of the states and the Centre, through a [constitutional amendment](#). The center is represented by [Ministry of Human Resource Development](#)'s Department of Education and together with the states, it is jointly responsible for the formulation of education policy and planning.

NPE 1986 and revised PoA 1992 envisioned that free and compulsory education should be provided for all children up to 14 years of age before the commencement of 21st century. [Government of India](#) made a commitment that by 2000, 6% of the [Gross Domestic Product](#) (GDP) will be spent on education, out of which half would be spent on the [Primary education](#).

The 86th Amendment of the Indian constitution makes education a fundamental right for all children aged 6-14 years. The access to preschool education for children under 6 years of age was excluded from the provisions, and the supporting legislation has not yet been passed.

In November 1998, [Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee](#) announced setting up of Vidya Vahini [Network](#) to link up [universities](#), [UGC](#) and [CSIR](#).

Recent developments

The Indian Education System is generally marks-based. However, some experiments have been made to do away with the marks-based system which has led to cases of depression and suicides among students. In 2005, the [Kerala](#) government introduced a grades-based system in the hope that it will help students to move away from the cut-throat competition and rote-learning and will be able to focus on creative aspects and personality development as well. [iDiscoveri education](#) started by Alumni of Harvard, XLRI is a pioneer in this field. This organization has already developed 5 model schools.

Outdoor Education in India

[Outdoor education](#) is relatively new to schools in India, though it is quite well established abroad. Acceptance is slowly increasing with a few schools advocating outbound adventure based programmes among students, to enhance personal growth through experiential learning and increase awareness about various subjects like the environment, ecology, wildlife, history, archaeology, geography and adventure sports. Some organisations that currently offer such programmes for schools are [OETS](#) and [Wide Aware](#) in [Mumbai](#), [Youreka](#) & [Ozone](#) who offer open summer programs based out of Delhi in north and Bangalore in South.

Expenditure on Education in India

The Government expenditure on Education has greatly increased since the First [five-year plan](#). The Government of India has highly subsidized higher education. Nearly 97% of the Central Government expenditure on elementary education goes towards the payment of teachers' salaries.

Non-Formal Education

In 1979-80, the [Government of India](#), Department of Education launched a program of Non-Formal Education (NFE) for children of 6-14 years age group, who cannot join regular schools. These children include school drop-outs, working children, children from areas without easy access to schools etc. The initial focus of the scheme was on ten educationally backward states. Later, it was extended to urban [slums](#) as well as hilly,

tribal and desert areas in other states. The program is now functional in 25 states/[UTs](#). 100% assistance is given to voluntary organizations for running NFE centers.

Bal Bhavans

Bal Bhavans centers, which are operational all over India, aim to enhance creative and sports skills of children in the age group 5-16 years. There are various State and District Bal Bhavans, which conduct programs in fine-arts, aeromodeling, computer-education, sports, [martial arts](#), performing arts etc. They are also equipped with libraries with books for children. [New Delhi](#) alone has 52 Bal Bhavan centers. The National Bal Bhavan is an autonomous institution under the Department of Education. It provides general guidance, training facility and transfer of information to State and District Bal Bhavans situated all over India.

Distance education

India has a large number of Distance education programmes in Undergraduate and Post-Graduate levels. The trend was started originally by private institutions that offered distance education at certificate and diploma level. By 1985 many of the larger Universities recognized the need and potential of distance education in a poor and populous country like India and launched degree level programs through distance education. The trend caught up, and today many prestigious Indian Universities offer distance programs. Indira Gandhi National University, one of the largest in student enrollment, has only distance programs with numerous local centers that offer supplementary contact classes.

Education for special sections of society

Women

Under Non-Formal Education programme, about 40% of the centers in states and 10% of the centers in [UTs](#) are exclusively for girls. As of 2000, about 0.3 million NFE centers were catering to about 7.42 million children, out of which about 0.12 million were exclusively for girls.

In engineering, medical and other colleges, 30% of the seats have been reserved for women.

SC/STs and OBCs

The Government has [reserved seats](#) for [SC/STs](#) in all areas of education. Special scholarships and other incentives are provided for SC/ST candidates. Many State Governments have completely waived fees for SC/ST students. The [IITs](#) have a special coaching program for the SC/ST candidates who fail in the entrance exams marginally.

Seats have been reserved for candidates belonging to [Other Backward Classes](#) as well in some states like Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The struggle for reserving seats for students from OBC categories in elite institutions like IITs, IIMs and AIIMS and Central Universities is still going on. The Supreme Court of India is obstructing this reservation for the reason that there has been no caste-wise census since 1931 and the population share of OBCs cannot be based on 1931 census. The Department for the Welfare of SC/ST/OBC/Minorities introduced the SC/ST tuition-fee reimbursement scheme in 2003-2004. The scheme applies to SC and ST students of Delhi who are enrolled in recognized unaided private schools and who have an annual family income of less than Rs. 1 lakh. It provides a 100% reimbursement of the tuition fees, sports fee, science fee, lab fee, admission fee and the co-curricular fee if the student's family income falls below Rs. 48, 000 per annum and a reimbursement of 75% if the family income is greater than Rs. 48, 000 per annum but less than Rs. 1 lakh. The subsidy provided by the scheme covers between 85% and 90% of the beneficiary's total running expenses in studying in a private school.

Post Graduate Classes at Correctional Homes

The Government of West Bengal has started the Post Graduate teaching facilities for the convicts at the Correctional Homes in West Bengal. The first of its kind has already started at Alipore Central Correctional Home, Kolkata where Utthan Paul, a life convict is pursuing his Post Graduation in Political Science from [Netaji Subhas Open University](#). [Dr. Imankalyan Lahiri](#) , Lecturer in Political Science of Netaji Subhas Open University is taking his classes.

Criticism of Indian Education System

Modern education in India is often criticized for being based on [rote learning](#). Emphasis is laid on passing examinations with high percentage. Very few institutes give importance to developing personality and creativity among students. Recently, the country has seen a rise in instances of student suicides due to low marks and failures, especially in metropolitan cities, even though such cases are very rare.

The presence of a number of education boards ([SSLC](#), [ICSE](#), [CBSE](#), [IB](#)) leads to non-uniformity. ICSE and CBSE boards, are sometimes favorably considered at the time of admission, although it cannot be said with certainty that their syllabuses are harder. A large number of [SSLC](#) (State board) students therefore complain that their ICSE and CBSE counterparts are given an advantage during college admissions, which are extremely competitive and sought for. Most colleges though account for these differences during admissions. The syllabi prescribed by the various boards are accused of being archaic and some textbooks (mostly ones written for the SSC) contain many errors.

The boards are recently trying to improve quality of education by increasing percentage of practical and project marks. However, critics say even this is memorized by students (or even [plagiarized](#)). This is attributed to pressure from parents who are eager to see high scores more than overall development.

Many people also criticize the [caste, language and religion-based reservations](#) in education system. Many allege that very few of the weaker castes get the benefit of reservations and that forged caste certificates abound. Educational institutions also can seek religious minority (non-Hindu) or linguistic minority status. In such institutions, 50% of the seats are reserved for students belonging to a particular [religion](#) or having particular [mother-tongue](#)(s). For example, many colleges run by the [Jesuits](#) and [Salesians](#) have 50% seats reserved for [Roman Catholics](#). In case of languages, an institution can declare itself linguistic minority only in states in which the language is not official language. For example, an engineering college can declare itself as linguistic-minority ([Hindi](#)) institution in the state of [Maharashtra](#) (where official state language is [Marathi](#)), but not in [Madhya Pradesh](#) or [Uttar Pradesh](#) (where the official state language is [Hindi](#)). These reservations are said to be a cause of heartbreak among many. Many students with poor marks manage to get admissions, while meritorious students are left out. Critics say that such reservations may eventually create rifts in the society.

The general [corruption](#) prevalent in India is also an issue in the Education system. Engineering, medical and other lucrative seats are sometimes sold for high prices and ridden with nepotism and power-play.

[Student politics](#) is also a major issue, as many institutions are run by [politicians](#).

[Ragging](#) used to be a major problem in colleges, but tough rules and regulations have curbed it. Some state governments have made ragging a criminal offence.

Chronology of main events

- 1935: Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) set up.
- 1976: Education made a joint responsibility of the states and the Centre.
- 1986: National Policy on Education (NPE) and Programme of Action (PoA)
- 1992: Revised National Policy on Education (NPE) and Programme of Action (PoA)
- [December 17, 1998](#): The [Assam](#) Government enacts a law making ragging in educational institutions a criminal offence.
- November 1998: [Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee](#) announces setting up of Vidya Vahini [Network](#) to link up [universities](#), [UGC](#) and [CSIR](#).
- September 2006: [Education Reforms In India](#)

See also

- [Literacy in India](#)
- [Labour India](#) Educational Research Centre
- Speech on [Education in India](#) by [Keshub Chandra Sen](#) delivered at London on 24th May 1870.
- [Asian Academy Of Film & Television](#)

Further reading

- http://www.hinduwisdom.info/Education_in_Ancient_India.htm. Education in Ancient India.
- [The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth Century](#) by Dharampal (Biblia Impex, Delhi, 1983)
- Marie Lall, The Challenges for India's Education System, [Chatham House](#): London, 2005 (ASP BP 05/03)
- Meenakshi Jain et al. (2003) History in the New NCERT Textbooks Fallacies in the IHC Report, National Council of Educational Research and Training, [ISBN 81-7450-227-0](#)
- [Rosser, Yvette](#). Curriculum as Destiny: Forging National Identity in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (2003) University of Texas at Austin. [PDF link](#)
- [Shourie, Arun](#). [Eminent Historians: Their Technology, Their Line, Their Fraud](#) New Delhi, 1998.
- [Hunter Education Commission Report \(1884\)](#) - Fascinating report detailing the history of education in India (from the coloniser's perspective of course)
- [India Education Diary - The Eden of Education](#)

Notes

1. [^ Foreign Univ Bill '06 gets GoM okay](#) 30 Nov, 2006
2. [^ a b Central Universities](#)
3. [^ Higher Education](#)

External links

[Wikinews](#) has related news:

[India subsidizes girls' education to offset gender imbalance](#)

- [Government official education website](#)