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The 21st Century Education System in India: Barriers to Overcome in Learning

Dr. Yashpal Azad*

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, ACA&SS, Eternal University, Baru Sahib, Himachal Pradesh, India.

ABSTRACT

The primary goal of education is to direct an individual's life in a useful and meaningful manner. Education is regarded as essential for a person's success in society. The path of educational development in India was deeply rooted in its history. The Indian education system has evolved in different phases from the ancient education system to the medieval period and the modern education system. In 21st-century globalization, innovation in audio-visual aids, and demands of advanced technology in the domain of learning and education systems have transformed the learning and educational environment to new horizons of ways to learn from the ancient methods of gurukula. New expectations and challenges have emerged alongside the changes. The first goal of our education in independent India was to achieve aspirants' holistic development. Due to a lack of moral values in curricula, increasing competition, rapidly changing technology, commercialization of education, privatization, and decreasing educational quality, lack of communication due to diverse cultural and demographic regions, gender disparity, low female literacy rates, casteism in rural areas, discrimination against minority groups, a lack of infrastructure, transportation quality education seems a dream only. The Indian Constitution established six fundamental rights, including the Right to Education, as well as a provision in Article 45 requiring free education for all children aged six to fourteen. The educational system is separated into pre-primary, primary, elementary, and secondary education, with higher education coming last. However, there are numerous flaws and loopholes in this system that, if addressed, can benefit the educational aspirant's overall development. Therefore. This article looks at the current challenges and potential solutions for Indian education in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Education System, Globalization, Right to Information, Digital Era, Advanced Technology

Introduction

Education has a significant impact on the advancement of human civilization. People's learning styles have evolved significantly since the dawn of time, and this trend is expected to continue as technology advances. Online learning environments, however, are becoming more popular than traditional classrooms as a result of the Internet and other digital technology. The current educational system has completely eliminated the spatial restriction of a physical classroom, benefiting a diverse range of students worldwide at the same time. To understand the pros and cons of the modern education system we need to evaluate the Indian education system from the past to the present. Therefore, this paper is divided into three segments i.e., the education system in ancient India, the education system in the medieval period, and the emergence of the modern education system. After evaluating the pros and cons of the education system in the ancient, medieval periods, and current times we will be able to assess the potential gaps, and characteristics and will be able to suggest apt remedies for overcoming these gaps. The description of the education system is given in the below sections.

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ANCIENT INDIA

The Gurukula emerged as India's first educational system in ancient India. During the Vedic period, there was a residential schooling system in place, with shishya (student) and guru (teacher) living in the guru's ashram (home) or Gurukula or in proximity to the guru. Students were treated as if they were members of the Guru family. The Guru is the master or teacher (Kashalkar-Karve & Damodar, 2013). This allowed for the formation of an emotional bond prior to knowledge transmission. For communication, the ancient Sanskrit language was used. The foundation of learning included information memorization and a child's holistic development incorporating their physical, mental, and spiritual health. Religion, holy scriptures, medicine, philosophy, warfare, statecraft, astrology, and other subjects were taught. Simultaneously, the students were taught human values such as self-reliance, empathy, and creativity, as well as strong moral and ethical behavior (Kachappilly, 2003). The primary goal of the gurukul system was to maintain self-control, character development, social development, personality development, intellectual development, spiritual development, knowledge, and culture preservation, and so on to enable students to meet life challenges (Manikandaprabhu, 2016).

Organization of Education (The Curriculum and Educational Institutions)

The curriculum developed was dynamic and focused on learners' physical and mental well-being which incorporated Vedas, Vedangas (Shiksha, Chanddas, Vyakarna, Niyuktas, Jyotisha, and Kalpa), Upanishdas, Puranas, Darshnas (Nayaya, Vaisheshika, Yoga, Vedanta, Sankhya, and Mimansa), Tarkshastras, Algebra, Geometry, and Grammer (Panini). Aside from Gurukula, a second education system that evolved during the Vedic period was Buddhist education, with Pali as the medium of communication. Pitakas, Abhidharma, and Sutras are all part of the curriculum. Both systems flourished in ancient times, and Hindus were also involved in Buddhist learning. The ancient education system used oral storytelling and debates to teach students based on their knowledge and skill levels. Books

were not available in ancient times, so memorization of the facts taught by the teacher played an important role in learning, and students developed methods of active listening and concentrated contemplation for exploring the learning domain. The feedback was obtained through face-to-face questions and answers by the teachers. Teachers' primary goal was to provide practical knowledge of the subject matter. The rulers used to help in the advancement of education by organizing seminars (Goshti) and debates (Pratiyogita) from time to time and used to donate their wealth for education. During this time, Gurukula was the final adobe of students, where students came after performing certain rituals and stayed until they finished their education. As far it was concerned with educational institutions the parishads and academies were the highest levels of educational institutions. Ashrams were another educational center where students came from all over the country to learn from sages. Vidyapith was a spiritual learning centre at the time. Agraharas were Brahmin establishments, whereas viharas were Buddhist educational establishments. Takshashila was well-known for teaching ancient scriptures, law, medicine, sociology, astronomy, military science, and the 18 silpas, among other things, whereas Nalanda was well-known for teaching Vedas, fine arts, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy (Ghonge, Bag, & Singh, 2020).

Advantages of Ancient Education System

- The advantages of the ancient education system enlist all-round development of students.
- Students learn practically in place of mere theoretical knowledge
- The focus of guru (teacher) was mainly that students must acquire knowledge in place of rank
- The learning take place in an open environment under the sky which enable pleasant study environment for the learners
- Students was not forced to lean they are allowed to learn as per their skill level to learn effectively
- The curriculum was developed by gurus was dynamic not static covering different stages of life or development which was mainly focused on physical and mental development of learners.

Disadvantages of Ancient Education System

- The biggest disadvantage of ancient education system was that women has no place in this education system and they are not admitted to the Gurukulas.
- Secondly, the phenomenon of caste discrimination was also prevalent and the learners from royal families, elite castes (Kshatriyas, Brahmins) were admitted to the gurukulas.

Education System in Medieval India

Organization of Education (The Curriculum and Educational Institutions)

Education in medieval India was prevalent from the 10th century A.D. to the middle of the 18th century before the Britishers to rule India. The invasion of Muslim rulers replaced the ancient Brahminic and Buddhist education system with Islamic education. The renowned institutes of ancient India viz. Nalanda (the international center of learning) was destroyed by the Muslim rulers. The main goal of

education at the time was to spread knowledge and propagate Islam, its principles, and social conventions, as well as to make people religiously aware. During this period the rulers helped to spread Islamic education by establishing and funding the different educational systems. There was no control of rulers on the institutions and the student-teacher relationship was also good. The elementary education was provided in pathshalas organized under the open space under a building or tree and students do not pay any fixed amount as a school fee. The parents of the learners gave some presents to the teacher and the learners rendered some personal services to their teachers. The institutions that provide school education were known as mastabas (run by public donations) and higher education was provided in madrasas maintained by the rulers themselves (Bhat, 2020). Books were not available at the time, so students had to write on taktis (wooden slate). The main areas of learning were calligraphy, grammar, and pahara learning (multiple numbers), and students were encouraged to learn from the beginning of alphabet. The recitation of the Quran became mandatory and was an important part of the curriculum. The method of instruction was oral discussions and recitations of lessons emphasizing practical knowledge, and students were evaluated in real-life situations. In the medieval period, Emperor Akbar urged students to improve their reading and writing skills, as well as to reform the scripts. He desired a structured education system and advised teachers to first teach students about the alphabet, then word knowledge, and finally sentence formation. Running madrasas established the following subjects: Arabic, Persian, Grammar, Philosophy, and Astronomy in Delhi, Culture, Fine Arts and Crafts in Agra, Political Science, Warfare, History, and Philosophy in Jaunpur, and Islamic Technology, Culture, Medical Science, Astronomy, History, and Agriculture in Bidar. More emphasis was placed on the practical application of concepts. There were no mid-term or annual exams to assess students' knowledge levels. Rather, they are evaluated based on real-life scenarios (Bhat, 2020).

Advantages of Medieval Education System

- The merits of medieval education were that they focused on practical education.
- The relationship between teachers and students were recognized through the traits of courtesy, kindness, correctness, and friendliness.
- The students were taught from basics to formation of sentences.
- The number of students in a class were limited and teachers were able to pay individual attention to the students.
- The teachers in this period was educated and hardworking towards their job performance; students and teachers have to follow strict discipline.
- Vocational education was also developed in this period and learners developed abilities and skills for the production of handicraft and artwork to meet the life challenges and earn their livelihood.
- The rulers used to support the development of education by donating their wealth for educational development.

Disadvantages of Medieval Education System

- Religious and Islamic education were given more importance during this period, learners were focused on leadership for ruling the nation in place of learning life skills.
- No satisfactory provisions were made to improve female education; it was only allowed for women from elite classes or the royal family.

Modern Education system

Colonial Period

British invaded and conquered India and they introduced modern education system in the twentieth century, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay introduced the English language and modern education system to run British administration in India. When the British invaded and conquered India in the middle of the mediaeval age, they introduced modern education. In the twentieth century during 1835, Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay introduced the English language and modern education system to run British administration. The curriculum was limited to "modern" subjects such as science and mathematics, with metaphysics and philosophy deemed unnecessary. Teaching was confined to classrooms, and the connection with nature, as well as the close relationship between the teacher and the student, were severed. The Britishers' main goal was to spread Christianity and produce learners for the administrative setup of their time (Pandya, 2014). With the advancement of Science, Technology, and Innovations, the educational system began to evolve and entered a new era of knowledge acquisition. Education remains in high demand, as it did in the ancient and medieval periods. The urgent need is to develop an education system capable of meeting the demands of a changing environment through scientific, technological, and industrial development innovation.

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

Following independence, the National Policy of Education (1992) set a number of objectives for the development of India's educational system, but not all of them were met. Modern education's primary goal was to instill values such as equality, secularism, universal education, and environmental protection. Aside from that, in order to promote nationhood and personal development, every student must be provided with a minimum level of education, as well as education for those who are below the poverty line and cannot afford to educate their children or themselves. To accomplish this dream, the government of the Republic of India established a directive policy in Article 45 of the constitution to provide compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14. But, even after more than a half-century, this goal remains elusive (Juneja, 2015).

Organization of Education (The Curriculum and Educational Institutions)

The student-teacher relationship remained unchanged in the modern era, but instead of living with the teacher in a gurukul, ashram students used to attend a school, college, or university to fulfill their

educational requirements. Books and study materials have been abundantly published as commodities by printing machines. The subject matter has been developed in accordance with advances in subject matter, and theories and principles have been developed through the scholarly and literary work of research scholars, scientists, and philosophers in various disciplines of the educational domain. With the advancement of technology, the field of education is expanding, and new methods of learning and teaching are emerging. Students, for example, are learning new concepts through online platforms such as YouTube, MOOCS, SWAYAM, and others. Students can attend online lectures via an educational institution's online learning management system (LMS) while also referring to notes and study material. The curriculum of India's modern education system is divided into three sections: primary (1st to 10th), secondary (10+1 and 10+2), and graduation (choice of a field for further studies). Early on, primary education focused primarily on learning the alphabet, counting words, and poem recitation, and later on, students were taught subjects such as history, geography, mathematics, social science, political science, Hindi, and English. Languages may differ from one state to the next. Physical education, extracurricular activities, and cultural activities have also been included to promote children's physical and psychosocial development. Student's doubts are dispelled through discussions, debates, and the administration of quizzes. Mid-sessional and annual examinations, as well as practical exams, were used to assess students' knowledge.

In modern education, the role of administration and government is critical. Unlike in ancient and mediaeval education systems, where government played a minor role, government plays a key role in managing and implementing the curriculum and policies for educational development. Previously, school education was a state subject, with the state having full authority to decide education policies and implement them, and the role of the Government of India (GOI) was to coordinate and maintain higher education standards. After the constitutional amendment in 1976, the scenario changed, and the policies and programmes of school education were suggested at the national level by the GOI through the state government. Following this, boards and committees were formed to oversee educational policies. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), established in 1935, continued to monitor educational policies. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), a national organisation for developing policies and programmes, was established as an autonomous body by the Government of India in 1961. Each state has its own counterpart, known as the State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT). These are the organisations that primarily recommend educational strategies, curricula, pedagogical schemes, and evaluation methodologies to state education departments. The SCERTs generally adhere to the NCERT's guidelines. However, states have significant latitude in implementing the education system. Accordingly, the Indian government established the University Grants Commission (UGC) to promote and accelerate India's education system. This commission is primarily concerned with the advancement and improvement of higher education in India.

Advantages of Modern Education System

- Modern education has many advantages and has proven to be superior to traditional education in many ways, such as the fact that traditional education had no place for women except for a few upper-class women. Women have been included exclusively in modern education systems, and education is focused on overall well-being and women empowerment.
- In contrast to traditional education, modern education is open and accessible to all. There is no prejudice based on caste, gender, religion, or culture. Modern education covers multiple subject options including the potential interest of the learners.
- In many ways, modern education is more flexible than traditional education because it allows for different modes of learning, such as supplemental classes and online learning, in addition to the traditional method of chalk and talk only. Use of technology in learning has enabled learning innovative and interesting.
- Establishment of world-class universities and colleges for higher education with world-class infrastructure, resulting in increased employment opportunities.

Disadvantages of Modern Education System

- To prepare children for the twenty-first century, the Indian education system is still pursuing a syllabus from the nineteenth century, a syllabus that lacks market knowledge and functional applicability of knowledge.
- Lack of quality teaching due to increased work-load, lack of professional training especially in rural areas, absence of proper monitoring and feedback system to evaluate teachers' performance, lack of professional qualification and as a result appointment of ad-hoc teachers, wide spread corruption managerial politics, internal politics etc.
- Private school and college education is expensive. Due to the increase in fees, low-income families cannot afford education, resulting in an increase in the number of unemployed laborers in India.
- Poor grading system, with a greater emphasis on theoretical learning, as well as a lack of moral values and practical knowledge to meet life's challenges. This has an impact on students who are weak in certain subjects. The emphasis is solely on theory subjects, which limits a student's ability to look beyond the main subjects that he or she selects.
- The education system divides the streams based on subjects, and a student cannot choose a subject based on his or her preferences.
- As a result of increased competition schools, which admit an increasing number of students in order to expand their business and compromise quality education, there is a greater emphasis on commercial education in the private sector.
- Marks are more important than overall learner development. Given the legacy influence of the British education system, our system currently defines "education" too narrowly - our

classrooms produce a way of thinking that is only concerned with exams and test scores, rather than being valued for our school contexts and purposes, with little preparation for the real world.

STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS IN MODERN EDUCATION

- Improving the grading system should be the primary importance. Scholastic and non-scholastic aspects should be given due importance in the final assessment of the student.
- Rote learning should be avoided and practical knowledge should also be given along with the theory learning.
- The curriculum should be framed according to the present needs of the world. It should focus on the wholistic development of a learner.
- Well qualified and trained teachers should be recruited on fair recruitment policy for improving the quality of education from elementary to higher education.
- Teachers and faculties should be provided with periodical faculty developmental training programs to update their skill level. The government and other entities need to understand the importance of quality and education.
- Implementing a new education policy (NEP-2020) could provide a solution to the disadvantages of modern education in many areas viz. The new proposed education policy proposed the 5+3+3+4 structure, which implies that a child must perform the school lifespan at different ages. This concept derives the precise age/stage at which a child should be provided with the highest quality education.
- By introducing creativity, learning, experiments, visualisation, and art into the education sector, the new education policy has the potential to drastically change the lives of many high school and college students.
- As a means of instruction, the Mother Tongue / Regional Language is given weightage in NEP. So that students can learn concepts in their native languages up to the fifth grade.
- In NEP, students at the undergraduate level can choose to study for 1, 2, 3, or 4 years. They can aim to complete their desired courses in one year, receiving a certification over time, a diploma for completing any two-year course, and then degree courses lasting three or four years. It will also assist students in selecting the best course for their abilities.
- The goal of NEP is to promote education to all genders, castes, categories, and disabilities. Everyone has the same opportunity to receive a good education. Every child in the world has the right and power to an education. This concept aids in the provision of educational opportunities to people of different castes, categories, and genders. This concept is always committed to providing education to children who are overlooked by society due to their low caste, transgender status, or disability.

- To ensure the maximum registration in higher education NEP, aims to reduce the number of entrance examinations held for students seeking admission to various recognized universities.
- It is focused to producing different ways of Learning like online classes, such as introducing digital education in an online platform.

SUMMARY

The Indian education system has a long history that can be divided into three periods: Ancient Vedic times, Mediaeval times, and modern pre and postcolonial eras. The ancient Indian education system and culture were highly regarded in the form of the gurukul system. During the mediaeval and Buddhist periods, education flourished at Nalanda, Takshashila, Ujjain, and Vikramshila Universities, earning prestige and reputation around the world. Traditional methods of education became more Islamic in nature with the arrival of Mughal rule in India, and Urdu and Arabic supplanted Sanskrit as a medium of instruction. Islamic educational institutions established traditional Madresas and Maktabas, rejecting previous educational systems in India.

The modern educational system is an exact replica of the British educational system, which Macaulay introduced and established in the twentieth century in order to introduce the English language and produce the clerical staff required by the British to run colonial India's administration. British higher education did not do enough to help India develop science and technology during the colonial period, instead focusing on the arts and humanities. Despite issues and disparities in educational objectives and implementation, India's current education system has made significant progress and will continue to improve in the future.

Poor education quality, inappropriate curriculum, insufficient teacher selection parameters, a lack of professional training, increased educational fees in private educational institutions, a lack of infrastructure and other resources in rural and remote areas, caste discrimination with students in rural areas, a lack of female involvement in education in rural India, and a lack of online resources and technological tools in rural and remote areas are all examples of educational barriers. The New Education Policy 2020 has the potential to play a pivotal role in improving or overcoming existing educational barriers, and it should be implemented universally in order to achieve the goal of wholistic education for all.

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