

British Education System in India

The British Education System in India marked the beginning of modern education. Before British rule, the Indian education system included religious institutions. Since they came to India for trading and profit-making, they didn't care about the country's education system. However, after they started ruling India, they abolished the ancient gurukulam system. They established certain educational institutions to educate a small section of Indians and sowed seeds of English among them.

History of British Education System in India

Before the British rule in India, gurus provided education to all Hindus without any restrictions. The gurus have given the utmost priority as they teach them how to attain Moksha. Also, the Mughal empire influenced Muslim education. The young students were educated through Makhtabs, Madrasas, Tols, and Pathshalas about their respective religious texts and ancient kinds of literature, along with a bit of awareness of scientific advancement.

After the arrival of the British, a new western education system came into existence. They came up with specific educational policies. The history of British education policies in India can be divided into two sections:

1. Under the East India Company, i.e., before 1857,
2. Under the British Crown, i.e., after 1857.

Development of Education in British India before 1857

Initially, the East India Company wanted some educated Indians to assist them with land administration. Also, they wanted to learn about the local customs, traditions, and laws to understand the country better. The development of British education system in India before 1857 is as follows:

- **1781** - Warren Hastings, [Governor-General of Bengal](#), established the first educational institution, Calcutta Madarasa in Calcutta for Islamic Law Studies.
- **1784** - William Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal to understand and study the culture and history of India. At the same time, Bhagwat Gita was translated into English by Charles Wilkins.
- **1791** - The Sanskrit College was established by Jonathan Duncan, a resident of Benares, to study and understand Hindu philosophies and laws.
- **1800** - Fort William college was founded by Richard Wellesley, governor-general, in Calcutta for training the EIC's civil servants in Indian languages. However, the college was shut down in two years as the British government (in England) disapproved the appointment of Indians as English Civil Servants.

The Charter Act of 1813:

The first noted step taken by the British government towards modern education in India was the [Charter Act 1813](#). According to the act, an annual sum of Rs. 1 Lakh was decided to be utilized

for educating Indian Subjects. During this period, the Christian missionaries were active in education, and however, they primarily focused on conversions and religious teachings.

The English Education Act of 1835:

Macauley's minutes, or the English Education Act of 1835, has the following gists:

- As per this act of the British education system in India, the government should focus on spending resources for teaching literature and modern sciences only in English.
- The medium of education in all schools and colleges should be English.
- The schools at the elementary level were not significant. They emphasized opening the district schools and colleges.
- It neglected mass education.
- Downward filtration theory- The small section of middle-class and upper-class Indians were educated to become the connecting link between the government and the masses.

Also, the Calcutta Medical College and the Elphinstone College of Bombay were established in 1835. The defects in the system of vernacular education were pointed out in Adam's report on vernacular education in Bihar and Bengal in 1835, 1836, and 1838.

- **1843-53** - As an experiment, James Jonathan introduced one model school in each tehsil of North West province. It was suggested that vernacular language should be used for teaching. Also, the teachers were trained in separate schools for these vernacular schools.

Wood's Despatch (1854):

Wood's Despatch, also known as the Manga Carta of British Education in India, was the first attempt to envisage mass education in India. Following were the recommendations of Wood's Despatch:

- It demanded regularizing the education system on all levels, i.e., from the primary to the university level.
- Indians must be educated in their native language and English.
- Every province must hold its own education system.
- At least one government school should be established in every district.
- Women should be educated.
- University of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras was established in 1857.
- The University of Punjab was set up in 1882, and the University of Allahabad in 1887.
- As per Wood's Despatch, it was asked that government should take charge of people's education.

Development of British Education System in India after 1857

After 1857, Rajkot College of Kathiawar and Mayo College of Ajmer was established in 1868 and 1875, respectively. These colleges focused on Indian princes and elites; political training. The commissions like Saddler, Raleigh, and Hunder, established under the British Crown, etc., mainly recommended the establishment of reforms in the British education system in India. The significant developments in education under British rule are as under:

Hunter Commission on Indian Education in 1882:

The Hunter Commission on Indian Education of 1882 asked for an increase in government efforts to achieve the aim of mass education through vernacular languages. It includes:

- It recommended dividing secondary education into two categories, i.e., vocational and literary education.
- It emphasized female education outside of the presidency towns.
- The control of primary education should be transferred to municipal boards and new districts.

Raleigh Commission in 1902:

Viceroy Curzon believed that universities have students with revolutionary ideologies. He recommended the commission review the education system of universities in India, which led to the universities act of 1904.

Indian Universities Act of 1904:

As per the Indian Universities Act of 1904, all universities came under the government's control. It includes-

- More emphasis on research and study instead of revolutionary activities in universities.
- The act reduced the number of fellows, and the government nominated them.
- Against the University senate decisions, the government acquired the veto power.
- It came up with stricter affiliation rules.

Compulsory primary education was introduced in all the territories of Baroda's princely state in 1906. In 1913, the government took a new resolution on Education Policy.

Saddler University Commission (1917-19):

Because of the poor performance of students at Calcutta University, the Saddler University Commission was set up. Perhaps, lately, it ended up reviewing all the universities in India. The critical points of the Saddler University Commission are as follows-

- It focused on secondary education. It follows the ideology that for the improvement of education in universities, there should be an improvement in secondary education.
- According to the Commission, the school should be completed in 12 years.
- It came up with the idea of creating separate boards for secondary and intermediate education.
- It focused on educating females, training teachers, providing technical education, and applying scientific knowledge.
- It emphasizes that all universities should function autonomously as centralized resident teaching bodies.

1916-21 - Universities of Osmania, Lucknow, Dacca, Aligarh, Benares, Patna, and Mysore were set up. In 1929 Hartog Committee was set up that focused on primary education in British India and believed there was no need for a compulsory education system.

Wardha Scheme of Basic Education by INC in 1937:

In 1937, the Indian National Congress organized a conference in Wardha to discuss education. It developed a scheme focused on practical education, i.e., learning through activities based on Gandhi's ideas. It includes-

- The syllabus should consist of basic handicrafts.
- Free and compulsory education should be for the first seven years of schooling.

- Everyone should educate students in Hindi till class 7 and English after class 7. However, it was not implemented as many ministers from INC started after World War II.

Sergeant Plan of Education by the Central Advisory Board of Education:

In 1944, the Sergeant plan of education by the central advisory board of education was introduced. It includes-

- There was free education for students belonging to the age group of 3-6 years.
- Compulsory education for students for 6-11 years.
- A student from 11-17 years of age was given higher education.
- It focused on improving artistic, commercial, and technical education.
- Also, it emphasized the teaching of physically and mentally disabled students.

Impact of British Education in India

Englishmen wanted to spread western education in India for their sake as there was a massive demand for lower-class workers, clerks, and other administrative roles in the East India Company's functioning. During that period, they found it easy to get Indian workers at cheaper rates than Englishmen from England.

The literacy rate was relatively low among Indians; still, the women were deprived of education. Also, they ignored scientific and technical education. The illiteracy rate in British India was 94% in 1911 and reduced to 92% in 1921.