

# Unit 17

## Education: Expansion and Growth

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### Learning Objectives

Following the study of this unit, you should be able to:

- know about the growth of education through different ages;
- understand the limitations and strengths of the past systems of education;
- appreciate the growth of education in terms of its ability to reach the masses; and
- develop awareness about the recent trends that have led to the expansion of the educational scenario.

## 17.1 Introduction

In this unit we shall trace the growth of education in India and also study its expansion. As we know, growth refers to vertical increase while expansion usually connotes lateral enhancement with increased scope for accommodation as well as diversification into various forms and types. However, at the very beginning we would like to tell you that growth and expansion of an abstraction like education are closely interrelated processes and it is difficult to separate one from the other in a clear cut manner. In the first part of the unit we shall concentrate on the growth of education. Starting from the Vedic period, we shall trace the growth of education through the Buddhist, Mughal, and British period and thereafter we shall reach the post independence period. Thus we shall study under growth of education, the inception of formal education and the major changes it underwent to reach the present form. Our study of expansion of education will mainly deal with the enhancements in the ability of our educational system to include millions of aspirants, the expansion of physical facilities for imparting education and the emergence of diverse forms and types of education that has been taking place due to the rapidly expanding knowledge base resulting in new specialised areas of knowledge. Thus, expansion of education has been taking place mainly in response to the rapidly changing socio-economic changes in modern India, and it is all the more true for the post independent period.

## 17.2 Growth of Education: A Historical Overview

As a process, education is as old as the progression of human race. Right from the time of evolution of human beings, education began in one form or the other. Knowledge and skills related to processes of fulfilling basic human needs, such as gathering food, hunting, covering the body, preparing tools, protecting oneself, etc. These were passed on from one generation to the next. Education during the early period was totally informal in nature; nevertheless it was bound by certain well-defined objectives. These objectives were to fulfill the immediate needs pertaining to bodily wants such as hunger, thirst, protection, etc. and enhance the level of comfort. Thereafter with the growth of civilization,

the need of formal education for the development of the individual as well as the society was realised and gradually education got institutionalized.

Education has not remained stagnant but with the passing of time, it has undergone great changes. We could say that education has grown considerably since the form in which it existed as testified to by the earliest records. Indian history dates back to the times of the Indus valley civilization. Following that there was the Vedic age and thereafter the Buddhist period. Then India passed through the medieval age and traveling through the Mughal period, it went under colonial rule for about two hundred years. After independence, growth as well as expansion of education has been by leaps and bounds unlike the slow progress made in the past and this has been a matter that concerns us the most. Therefore, the growth of education has been taken up beginning from historical to pre-independence to post independence periods.

The post independence period, which has witnessed the rapid growth of education, merely spans a period of fifty eight years. But the period before independence stretches back to thousands of years. The growth of education since the historical past shall be studied through its different periods, namely Vedic period, Buddhist period, Mughal period and finally the British period.

### Vedic Period

Let us first study the educational system during the Vedic period. Differences in opinion exist as to the exact date of this period. According to some, it could have extended between 1500 and 500 BC. The contribution of this era towards the generation of knowledge and emphasis on learning is immense. It is claimed that during the early part of Vedic period, education was not restricted for the male members of society and women too got equal opportunities regarding education. Women scholars of this period like Vishvarava, Atreyi, Maitreyi, Gargi, Lopamudra and many others are a testimony to this. However, later on during this period education for women lost its popularity.

Education had started acquiring a formal nature during this period. Education was imparted at centers of learning called gurukuls, ashrams, parishads, etc. Young students were sent from home to the residential schools where they stayed with the guru (teacher) and his family. Education was imparted for years together. Teaching-learning started following an initiation process into the world of education called *upanayan*. Education during this period mainly aimed at achieving salvation. It aimed at balanced development of the pupils and their physical, moral, intellectual, social and cultural developments were taken care of (Singh, 1992) Taxila, Patliputra, Varanasi became some of the renowned seats of learning.

The teacher used to be an expert in both theory as well as practice. The teacher was highly revered for his knowledge and integrity. He was supposed to be the epitome of erudition, character, morality, righteousness and nobility. He was therefore considered to be the representative of God. He was wholly responsible for the education and general welfare of his students. Although the concept of *gurudakshina* (fees) was there but gurus or teachers taught not for the sake of money but because it was their sacred duty. Teaching was thus not an occupation in the strict sense but rather a duty discharged toward, society.

The students were supposed to be hard working and refrain from a life of luxury. They were also supposed to lead a life of chastity, be humble and be fully obedient to their teacher. The concept of working at the teacher's place, while learning prevailed in this period. This made the pupils not only educated but also adept in the skills required in day-to-day life. Education was individualised and each learner was well cared for by the teacher. They spent

their time in gaining knowledge and skills but also had to cultivate the teacher's land, tend his cattle, beg for alms and perform the tasks assigned to him by the teacher (Sharma 1992).

The curriculum was rich and diversified with components such as mathematics, languages, grammar, literature, warfare for the kshatriyas (warriors), administration, scriptures, astrology, astronomy, etc. Stress was laid on character development. Thus as underlined by Singh, (1992) education aimed at moral development, spiritual consciousness, and was also humanitarian with salvation as the ultimate destination. There were rigid rules to regulate the conduct of pupils. These rules pertained to hygiene, morality, religious performances, etc. The students following the initiation ceremony would put on the sacred thread and spend fourteen years away from their home in the seclusion of an ashram or gurukul (James and Mayhew 1988). Teaching - learning were mainly through oral activities. Listening, contemplating, internalizing, reciting were emphasised over reading and writing (Sharma 1992). Even the literature of the then popular language, Sanskrit has its origin in an oral tradition and gave rise to the holy texts of the Vedic era. Panini developed Sanskrit grammar and since then a lot of literary contributions were made such as the shastras, epics, lyric poetry, stylized drama, etc. (*Academic American Encyclopedia* 1983).

Education during this period was not for the masses but only for the elites of society. Only the members of the upper castes namely Kshatriyas and Brahmins were allowed to avail the opportunities regarding education. Women's education too did not receive its due share. The entire system of education was entrusted to the Brahmins. Education for the other classes was informal, unorganized and neglected. This was a drawback of the educational system prevailing then. However, the scholarly contributions made during this period are so rich that they have acquired the status of classics. Another important feature is that the students were like the members of the teacher's family and although the concept of *gurudakshina* i.e. fees happened to be there but knowledge was held to be too sacred to be commodified for sale and profit making.

#### Reflection and Action 17.1

Collect information about the curriculum and teaching methods of a *gurukul* of ancient India and compare it with that of modern times. According to you what are the strengths and weaknesses of the former over the latter.

#### Buddhist Period

About the sixth century BC, rigidities of Vedic rituals and sacrifices along with the overwhelming dominance of the Brahmins over the lower castes became responsible for the disenchantment of the masses with the prevailing system (*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*). Gautam Buddha, the great religious leader as well as social reformer preached non-violence and social equity. He vouched for a casteless society. As a result the social discrimination in the field of education that was prevalent in the Vedic period was challenged during this period and it was the first attempt towards providing education to the masses. During the Buddhist period education was institutionalized. Educational institutions enjoying great repute, as Takshashila, Nalanda and other flourished during this period. These institutions attracted students from several countries. Young children were admitted to these institutions and education was imparted for a fixed period of time as in modern times.

During this period *sanghs* came up that were the centers of all religious instructions and activities. Later on these *sanghs* emerged as the centers that were also involved in educational activities. The *gurukuls* and *ashrams* of the Vedic age were thus substituted during this period by institutionalized *sanghs* or monasteries. These institutions were akin to the universities of the modern world. During this period entrance tests were common in educational

institutions. Only those successful at these tests were allowed to avail of the educational services provided at these institutions. The number of students in educational institutions was quite high. There were thousands of students and teachers at these institutions. Therefore, Buddhist educational institutions had a wide perspective. This was a step forward from the individualised and exclusive functioning of the *gurukuls* of the Vedic period. The educational institutions of this period being open to all sections of society were more inclusive in nature and had a collective participation.

In order that the common man did not have to grapple with the complexities of Sanskrit, which was the medium of educational and literary activities earlier, the languages commonly used, Pali and Prakrit, were resorted to. In spite of marked differences between the educational systems of the Vedic and Buddhist periods, the curriculum followed in the latter period still reflected a continuation of that of the Vedic period. Dharma or religion was the main curricular component at the monasteries. The curriculum included components such as theology, philosophy, literature, astronomy, administration, etc. Professional studies like medicine, surgery, etc. were also carried out in these institutions (Sharma 1992).

Education was imparted following the payment of fees by the students. This was the beginning of education becoming a paid service. As in the Vedic period the students were supposed to observe celibacy and be fully obedient and respectful towards their teachers. Just as the Brahmins were in charge of imparting education in the Vedic period, during this period, the monks at the monasteries were in charge of it. The monks were celibates and spent their time in prayer, meditation, and studies (*Academic American Encyclopedia* 1983). Huen Tsang, (quoted by Sharma 1992) had recorded that thousands of priests who were men of highest abilities and talent, with great distinctions and whose conduct was pure, sincerely followed the moral law. They spent their time in discourses. Thus the teachers of this period as in the Vedic period were revered in society because they were persons of character and erudition.

We thus see that during the Buddhist period the first attempts were made to impart education to the masses. There was greater social equity in imparting education. However, the education of women did not receive its due importance and the educational scenario continued to be dominated by men. The Buddhist period did not last in India and became popular abroad. For 500 years from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD to the close of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of the Gupta dynasty and its successors, there was a remarkable advancement in several areas. The rulers patronized scholars and remarkable contributions were made in different areas such as science, mathematics, astronomy, art, literature, etc. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*).

### Reflection and Action 17.2

State some educational contributions that had been made during the Vedic times. What are the similarities in the educational system of the Buddhists and the Vedic period?

### Medieval period

This period can be traced back to about the twelfth century AD. Muslim invaders repeatedly invaded during this period and it resulted in Islam taking firm roots in India. Political instability due to repeated invasions and aggressions adversely affected the existing educational system. During this period the education system underwent far-reaching changes. Madrasas and *makhtabs* were opened to impart education. The madrasas, which in Arabic mean 'schools', were the institutions of higher learning. They function even today as theological seminaries and Islamic law schools. The curriculum would be centered on the study of the Quran, hadith, Arabian grammar, logic, languages,

etc. The study of Islamic jurisprudence was stressed. The *makhtabs* were Muslim elementary schools that made the students competent to read the religious texts. Elementary knowledge of writing, grammar, etc. was also imparted to the young children (Srivastava 1989). Instructions were imparted mainly orally in *makhtabs* and madrasas. Memorisation of Islamic texts was emphasised. The wealthy people of the society would fund these educational institutions.

Theological considerations dominated educational institutions like madrasas and *makhtabs*. Education during this period is said to have had an excessive theological bias. This was probably due to the bias of the rulers who patronized education during this period and the ulema, who controlled the educational scenario, towards theological aspects. The emphasis was thus on religious issues although the main goal was to do away with illiteracy and advance knowledge. This trend resulted in nurturing madrasas that were essentially schools of theology with auxiliary linguistic studies. These institutions provided a steady supply of quazis, muftis, and other experts in jurisprudence and administration for the state (Srivastava, 1989).

During medieval India too poets, scholars and philosophers were greatly respected and patronized by the rulers and some from abroad visited India. During the times of Firozshah Tughlaq and Sikandar Lodi special interest was taken in education and renowned madrasas as seats of higher learning were opened. Thereafter the Mughal period started in India with Babar as the first Mughal emperor. The Mughal period extended from the early part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and extended till the middle of the nineteenth century. The Mughal emperors too were interested in providing education to their subjects. They patronized learned men and institutions of learning.

During the Mughal period the credit for organising education on a systematic basis goes to Akbar. He opened a large number of schools and institutions of higher learning for both Hindus and Muslims (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online). He even introduced certain curricular reforms. The curriculum emphasised, besides theological aspects, also the study of science, history, geometry, mathematics, etc. He also opened educational institutions for his Hindu subjects where Sanskrit, its grammar, Vedant, literature, etc., were taught. The need for moral education was also emphasised. During this period, many Hindus joined Islamic educational centers and learnt Persian since it was the language used for judicial purposes. Aurangzeb opened many madrasas and *makhtabs* and scholarships were paid in his time to the poor but deserving students (Singh 1992).

#### **Box 17.1 : Expansion of Education during Mughal period**

Art and architecture flourished during this phase and calligraphy was an important component of the curriculum during this period. Education was provided free of cost so that people from all classes of society could avail of it. Obedience towards teachers and respect for learned people still continued in this period as in the earlier periods. Institutions for imparting education to the Hindus continued to exist if not flourished and Sanskrit, literature, mathematics, etc. were taught in these institutions. Varanasi, Mithila and Mathura were some of the centers for higher learning for Hindus. Women's education continued to be neglected and was confined only to the women from the higher classes of society. Women from well to do Hindu and Muslim families were provided with educational facilities at their homes by tutors appointed by their families.

During the Moghal period even when it flourished and reached its peak, education was still not recognized as a tool for national development and the collapse of the Mughal empire brought with it the ruin of the educational system. Developments in science and literature both among Hindus and Muslims

had taken a back seat. There was almost moral anarchy as testified to by the acquisition of power by the British in Bengal and the subsequent conversion of India into a colony. It was more a phase of treason, treachery and open rivalry for power. This had started with the death of Aurangzeb and education as a system started losing its vigour towards the close of the eighteenth century (James and Mayhew 1988). What remained was an indigenous system of education with tols and madrasas imparting Hindu and Arabic education respectively. The infrastructure of the educational institutions that were usually single teacher schools was often poor and learning was mostly in the open. The notable change was that the role of teacher was no longer the monopoly of Brahmins all over India. In Bengal, for instance, members of other upper castes too taught in schools for hindu children. But in the institutions of higher learning Brahmins still continued as teachers. Education in this period mainly comprised the study of texts. Investigative studies, experimentation, scientific studies were not given importance. Since Persian remained the court language, many Hindu boys too learnt it. Mainly mathematics, grammar, literature, religious texts, languages, were taught. Illiteracy was widespread among the people belonging to the lower castes (Basu 1982).

### Reflection and Action 17.3

Explain some of the educational achievements during the Mughal period.

#### British Period

The British period started with the decline of the Mughal empire in the middle of the eighteenth century. The missionaries from Europe had already started arriving in India to propagate Christianity and along with the British regime, they had an active role in shaping the educational system of this period. Warren Hastings was the first Governor General of India who recognised the duty of the government to provide education to its subjects. He founded and also endowed the Calcutta Madrasa, which happened to be the earliest educational institution to be set up by the British rulers. Soon after a Sanskrit College was established in Benaras by Jonathan Duncan, the then Resident in Benaras and it was also provided with substantial funds. A college for Hindu learning was also opened at Poona by Mountstuart Elphinstone. The newfound interest in the Oriental, especially Indian literature, sacred texts and other sources of knowledge, her history and culture, led to the revival and even encouragement of a learning system that had existed prior to the arrival of the British in India. As a result Hindu educational institutions and also institutions where Arabic learning was there were encouraged by the then British regime (James and Mayhew 1988).

This trend continued till the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The evangelicals, the liberals and the utilitarians questioned this early policy of encouraging Oriental education. They were all agreed that Indian society had to be reformed (Basu, 1982). The Christian missionaries had by then started taking an active interest in the education of the natives. English education was felt to be necessary by some of the evangelists to propagate Christianity and regenerate Indian society. Although their aim was to use education as a tool for achieving the evangelisation of the natives, the cause of education too was served. Schools and colleges were opened in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Christian missionaries at Kolkata, Serampore, Chennai, Mumbai and other places. The continuing craze for admission to Christian convent schools and the desire for western education can be traced back to this period. The people from the upper classes and even the middle classes of Bengal and other places had started realizing that western education provided in these institutions was more useful as well as liberating than that provided at the pathshalas, tols, and madrasas. Social reformers and educationists had realized the need for taking the best from the west for the progress of the Indians. Even the social reformer,

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was in favour of imparting western education, especially its science education so as to liberate the minds of Indians and modernize them. Along with indophiles like David Hare and Sir Edward Hyde East, he opened the Hindu College at Calcutta in 1817 to impart modern education. In 1823, when the first Committee on Public Instructions was set up, he pleaded against the setting up of a Sanskrit school, which he felt would teach things that were 2000 years old. He requested that a liberal system of instruction that included mathematics, science, philosophy and other subjects that were more suitable in that period be started.

Macaulay's minutes of 1835 that laid the foundation of the modern education system along the patterns of the British model is often blamed for superimposing a western model of education on the structure of education that had evolved for thousands of years. His motives are also questioned and he is still accused that the education system that has been established on account of his minutes was intended to prepare clerks for the British rulers. He is also blamed for vouching for English and disregarding Indian science, literature and other knowledge existing in other disciplines and for deriding the prevailing knowledge as antiquated. But as mentioned earlier, before Macaulay's minutes, the missionaries had already established schools and colleges imparting modern education and even the Hindu College was opened in Kolkata. Indians had started desiring western education. Macaulay had argued that advancements in the field of education made by the west should not be withheld from the natives who are craving for it. Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy too had expressed such views (James and Mayhew 1988).

#### **Box 17.2 : Attempts for Equitable Distribution of Education in Modern India**

Wood's dispatch of 1854 is looked upon as a charter of educational privileges. It considered it as a sacred duty of the government to provide education to the Indians. It was felt the masses could be taught in their mother tongue but nevertheless the knowledge of English was required. The despatch also recommended a grants-in-aid system for educational institutions. It also made several recommendations to strengthen the system of education and make its access more equitable (Singh, 1992). After a long gap since the period of Nalanda, Taxila and other such institutions, following Wood's despatch, the first universities of modern India were opened in present day Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. Hunter's Commission presented its report in 1882. It had recommended the careful withdrawal of the government from the field of higher education, and its being taken over by private enterprise while the state paid more attention to primary education. It also emphasised the moral side of education with strict discipline being maintained in educational institutions (James and Mayhew 1988).

In 1910 Gopal Krishna Gokhale mooted the idea of free and compulsory primary education for children all over the country. The plan was shelved at that point of time but its popularity and utility remain till today. During this period the need for teacher training and adult education were also expressed. One of the recommendations made by the Sadler Commission in 1917 stressed the need for substantial increase in the output of trained teachers. In 1920 the Central advisory Board of Education (CABE) was set up to advise the government on issues related to education. It was subsequently dissolved and set up again in 1935. The need for adult education was realized by the proponents of mass education. However till the early part of the last century not much attention had been paid to it. During 1937-39 the CABE committee stressed the need for adult education to be taken up on a wider scale and also suggested that voluntary organisations may also be involved in this cause. The Sargent Commission (1944) spelt out that the responsibility for providing adult education should be shouldered by the state. During this period Indians like Vivekananda,

Mahatma Gandhi, Gijubhai Bedeheka, Rabindra Nath Tagore were actively involved in the educational process. Not only did they start educational institutions but also based them upon philosophies that were more suited to the needs and culture of India. At the same time the curriculum could also respond to the needs of modern India.

Education in the colonial period was thus markedly different from which that prevailed in the past. In spite of two hundred years of British rule, the literacy rate was abysmally low. This was especially true for the socially and economically backward sections of the society. The dropout rate was high. The transition rates from one level of education to the next higher level were also very low. The social progression was not to the extent that people would feel the indispensability of formal education. Education was also removed from the socio-cultural requirements and was considered more suited to fulfill the demands of a regime that belonged to an alien culture. It has been stated by Raza (1991) that in the colonial period education, especially at the higher levels was concentrated in and around the cities of Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai where the British had constructed ports. Thus there was enclavisation of higher education. In comparison, the other areas were neglected. It is also alleged that spreading English education was not an act of selfless magnanimity but rather a ploy to further the interests of the British government by preparing a work force that was well versed in English and make the Indians feel that the British were not aliens. It is also alleged that education was too literal in approach and areas such as vocational education and technical education were neglected. Mass education was also neglected (Basu 1982).

However, there were also certain positive aspects. For the first time the goals of education and the curriculum reflected a pragmatic approach which was more in sync with modern times. Changes in the school curriculum, diversification of education, concepts like teacher education, mass education, free and compulsory education, adult education, etc. also came up. Above all the foundations of modern education were laid during this period. The education system, when it was being established did not make any attempt to withhold the advancements made in different fields in the west from the natives but rather encouraged them towards such learning.

#### **Reflection and Action 17.4**

What were the strengths of the education system prevailing during the British rule in India?

### **17.3 Growth of Education in the Post Independence Period**

The educational system inherited from the British was fraught with serious problems such as extremely low literacy level, poor retention, abysmally low educational opportunities for the backward sections of society and women and so on. These problems needed to be addressed and the educational system needed to be transformed in a major way so that it could be the means for the transformation of a nation enslaved for centuries to a modern and developed nation. The first task was to expand the educational system so that it reached the millions, especially to those at the fringes of society. There was the need to initiate the eradication of illiteracy, vocationalise education and bring about other necessary reforms in the curriculum.

In order to facilitate the growth of education, experts had to be involved. Therefore several commissions and committees were set up. In 1948 the first Education Commission of free India namely, University Education Commission, was set up to suggest reformative measures in the field of higher education.

Thereafter the Secondary Education Commission was set up in 1952 to strengthen the secondary education system. In 1966, the Indian Education Commission under the chairmanship of D.S. Kothari submitted a report that covered all aspects and level of education. It was rather a blueprint of reformative action for the entire educational system of India. It came up with a unique and integrated national system of education. (Singh 1992). Discussions and deliberations on these recommendations led to the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968. As a result a uniform pattern of education, 10+2+3 system was initiated all over the country by 1975. In 1977 under the chairmanship of Dr. M.S. Adisheshia, the National Review Committee reviewed the curriculum of the +2 Stage of school education and emphasised the need for vocationalisation of education. Thereafter NPE, 1986, was formulated and to implement it, the Programme of Action was also developed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). Meanwhile Operation Black Board was launched in 1985 to equip primary schools with the basic infrastructural facilities. In 1990, to further review the recommendations and implement NPE, 1986, Acharya Ramamurthy Committee submitted its report (Aggarwal 1992). Apart from all these, since independence there have been other commissions and committees too to strengthen the educational system and usher in effective reforms.

### **Growth of Education Facilitated by Constitutional Provisions**

The Indian Constitution came into force in 1950, when India became a republic. The constitution has several provisions regarding education. Education was initially a state subject but following an amendment (42<sup>nd</sup>) to the Constitution in 1976, it became a concurrent subject. As a result both the center and the state can legislate on it. The center however mainly coordinates and monitors the functioning of the states in educational matters. At the center the MHRD, is entrusted with educational matters.

Among the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution, right to education too has now been included The Directive Principle of State Policy, which earlier required the state to impart free and compulsory elementary education now requires the state to provide early childhood care and education. The Constitution has provisions that require the state to care for the educational interests of the backward sections of society and also promote with special care the educational interest of women. There are also provisions to uphold the educational rights of the linguistic and religious minorities. Besides, there is a provision that requires the medium of instruction to be the mother tongue at the primary level.

In order to fulfill the constitutional obligation regarding universal elementary education (UEE), programmes like the District Primary Education Programme had been launched. The latest attempt in this direction is through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan launched in 2000. Besides, there are several other programmes like *Janshala*, *Shiksha apke dwar*, etc. initiated by the local governments as well as non government organisations for achieving the target of UEE.

### **Growth of Literacy Rates**

Ability to read, write and comprehend empowers people and also leads to gainful employment. Illiteracy is the greatest block in the path of socio-economic development. In the British period the need for the education of the masses was realised but not much was achieved. Soon after independence, in 1951 the literacy rate was a mere 18.33% with only 8.86% literacy among women. It was realised that literacy leads to awareness about rights and duties. Enhancing literacy was also felt to be the most effective tool for arresting the population explosion. Therefore, a campaign was started to provide education to the masses and especially to the deprived sections of society. Eradicating illiteracy from a vast country like India with over a billion people,

geographically remote places, and years of neglect and backwardness has not been very easy. Hence the National Literacy Mission was set up in 1988 to take up earnestly the cause of adult education. The results have been, if not very encouraging at least better than that made on this front in the colonial period. In 1991 the literacy rate was a little over 52% but in 2001 the literacy rate stood at 65.38%. Thus about 13% gain had been made in the literacy rate during the last decade and the goal of achieving 75% threshold literacy rate appears to be achievable. Another achievement has been in the field of female literacy. Even in 1991 female literacy was only 39.42% but in 2001 it was 53.7%. Also as per the 2001 census report the rural-urban gap in literacy has come down from 31% in 1991 to 21.7%.

#### Reflection and Action 17.5

Explain the education scenario immediately preceding the British period. Elaborate the gains in terms of the literacy rates of the Indian population since independence.

Thus we see that since independence in the last five decades there has been significant growth in education in comparison to the British period. However, literacy merely refers to the ability to read, write and comprehend and is only a small achievement when a comprehensive term like education is considered but nevertheless attainment of literacy is the first step in all future educational attainments. Therefore, eradication of illiteracy is the prime necessity for any sort of educational growth.

In spite of great efforts being made to achieve UEE, we are still far from achieving it. Deadlines had been fixed for achieving it but they have been missed. The greatest impediment to educational growth has been the poor retention rate in primary schools. There has been a sustained campaign for UEE and as a result there have been great achievements in terms of enrolment. But the number of children dropping out is enormous. Therefore, the high enrolment ratio is unable to take us anywhere near the achievement of UEE. In spite of the enrolment ratio being as high as about 97%, the dropout rate is 36.3% in grades I-V, which means one third of the children enrolled drop out. It is still higher at 53% in grades V- VIII. Thus we see that poor retention is impeding the achievement of UEE. Enrolment as well as retention are all the more in a dismal state when it comes to the weaker sections of society namely the backward communities and female members. These are some of the factors that are slowing down educational growth.

### 17.4 Expansion of Education

We have already discussed that growth and expansion of education are closely interrelated terms. The ability of the education system to expand or reach out to all sections of society is increasing. Earlier education was the privilege enjoyed by the elite. But after independence it was realised that human resource development cannot ignore large sections of society and the education system has to be such that it can accommodate the masses. Hence efforts are being made to reach out and raise enrolment at different levels of education. For this educational facilities are being increased. Special attention is also being paid to the education of women and backward sections of society. Alternative means of providing education are also being explored. At the same time there is an ongoing diversification of educational streams due to changing social needs and expansion of knowledge base. Let us study some of the aspects leading to expansion of education.

#### Expansion of Education in Terms of Enrolment

In 1951 the population was just 36 crores. The literacy rate of 18% indicates the restricted access to educational opportunities. *Today the population has*

more than tripled but that the literacy rate having crossed 65% indicates that the scope of the educational system has widened. In 1951 only 27% of males and 8.86 % of females were literate but today 75% of males and about 53% of females are literate. Enrolment at the lower primary level is about 109 million and in the upper primary level it is about 40 million. There are about 1.705 million and 1.082 million teachers respectively at these levels (Gopalan, 1998). The enrolment at the primary level in 1951 was about 19.2 million. It has enhanced by about 5.75 times. For girls, enrolment since then has enhanced by about nine times in 1996-97. At upper primary level the net increase since 1951 has been about 13 times, while for girls the increase has been by about 32 times. At the secondary and senior secondary levels the net increase has been by 21 times since 1951 and for girls it has been by 49 times. The gross enrolment ratio in 1950-51 at the primary level was 42.6% while in 2002-03 it rose to 95.4%. Elementary education today in our country with 149.4 million children in the age group of 6-14 years and 2.9 million teachers is the second largest in the world. These figures as indicated by Table 17.1 reflect the inclusiveness of education and its expansion

Table 17.1: Enrolment by stages from 1950-51 to 2001-2002 (in million)

Year	Primary (I -V)			Middle/Upper Primary (VI-VIII)			High/Hr. Sec./Inter/Pre-Degree (IX-XII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	13.8	5.4	19.2	2.6	0.5	3.1	1.3	0.2	1.5
1955-56	17.1	7.5	24.6	3.8	1.0	4.8	2.2	0.4	2.6
1960-61	23.6	11.4	35.0	5.1	1.6	6.7	2.7	0.7	3.4
1965-66	32.2	18.3	50.5	7.7	2.8	10.5	4.4	1.3	5.7
1970-71	35.7	21.3	57.0	9.4	3.9	13.3	5.7	1.9	7.6
1975-76	40.6	25.0	65.6	11.0	5.0	16.0	6.5	2.4	8.9
1980-81	45.3	28.5	73.8	13.9	6.8	20.7	7.6	3.4	11.0
1985-86	52.2	35.2	87.4	17.7	9.6	27.1	11.5	5.0	16.5
1990-91	57.0	40.4	97.4	21.5	12.5	34.0	12.8	6.3	19.1
1991-92	58.6	42.3	100.9	22.0	13.6	35.6	13.5	6.9	20.4
1992-93	57.9	41.7	99.6	21.2	12.9	34.1	13.6	6.9	20.5
1993-94	55.1	41.9	97.0	20.6	13.5	34.1	13.2	7.5	20.7
1994-95	60.0	45.1	105.1	22.1	14.3	36.4	14.2	7.9	22.1
1995-96	60.9	46.2	107.1	22.7	14.8	37.5	14.6	8.3	22.9
1996-97	61.4	46.8	108.2	22.9	15.2	38.1	15.3	8.7	24.0
1997-98	62.3	48.0	110.3	23.6	15.9	39.5	16.1	9.3	25.4
1998-99*	62.7	48.2	110.9	24.0	16.3	40.3	17.3	10.5	27.8
1999-00*	64.1	49.5	113.6	25.1	17.0	42.1	17.2	11.0	28.2
2000-01*	64.0	49.8	113.8	25.3	17.5	42.8	16.9	10.7	27.6
2001-02*	63.6	50.3	113.9	26.1	18.7	44.8	18.4	12.1	30.5

\*-Provisional data

Source: <http://www.education.nic.in>

### Expansion Of Educational Facilities

In the last five decades the number of education institutions has grown manifold. From 1950-51 to 2001-02 the number of schools of different levels have grown by many times. Table 17.2 indicates the growing trend in educational facilities.

Table 17.2: Growth of recognised educational institutions from 1950-51 to 2001-2002

Years	Primary	Upper Primary	High/Hr.Sec/ Inter/Pre. Jr. Colleges	Colleges for General Education	Colleges for Professional Education (Engg., Tech) Arch., Medical and Education colleges)	Universities/ Deemed Univ./ Instt. of National Importance
1950-51	209671	13596	7416	370	208	27
1955-56	278135	21730	10838	466	218	31
1960-61	330399	49663	17329	967	852	45
1965-66	391064	75798	27614	1536	770	64
1970-71	408378	90621	37051	2285	992	82
1975-76	454270	106571	43054	3667	** 3276	101
1980-81	494503	118555	51573	3421	** 3542	110
1985-86	528872	134846	65837	4067	** 1533	126
1990-91	560935	151456	79796	4862	886	184
1991-92	566744	155926	82576	5058	950	196
1992-93	571248	158498	84608	5334	989	207
1993-94	570455	162804	89226	5639	1125	213
1994-95	586810	168772	94946	6089	1230	219
1995-96	593410	174145	99274	6569	1354	226
1996-97	603646	180293	103241	6759	1770	228
1997-98	619222	185961	107140	7199	2075	229
1998-99*	626737	190166	112438	7494	2113	237
1999-2000*	641695	198004	116820	7782	2124	244
2000-2001*	638738	206269	126047	7929	2223	254
2001-2002*	664041	219626	133492	8737	2409	272

\* - provisional data

Source: <http://www.education.nic.in>

Today due to the efforts made during the last several decades since independence, about 94% of the population has access to a primary school within a radius of one kilometer. We thus see that apart from the growing number of learners leading to the expansion of the educational system another major indicator of its expansion is the development in the number of educational institutions that are today catering to millions of learners.

There are several new dimensions related to the expansion of education. Let us examine a few.

#### a) Development of Women's Education

As mentioned earlier even during the colonial period women's education was greatly neglected. Since independence greater attention has been paid to this and enrolment of women at all stages of education has been increasing steadily through the years. Since 1950-51 enrolment of girls has increased many fold in Primary, Middle, Sec./Hr.Sec stages and Hr. Education levels from 28.1% to 44.1%, from 16.1% to 41.8%, from 13.30% to 39.5%, and from 10.0% to 39.9% respectively.

Table 17.3: Per centage of girls' Enrolment to total enrolment by stages

Year	Primary I-V	Middle VI-VIII	Sec./Hr.Sec./Intermediate (IX-XII)	Hr. Education (Degree & above) level)
1950-51	28.1	16.1	13.3	10.0
1955-56	30.5	20.8	15.4	14.6
1960-61	32.6	23.9	20.5	16.0
1965-66	36.2	26.7	22.0	20.4
1970-71	37.4	29.3	25.0	20.0
1975-76	38.1	31.3	26.9	23.2
1980-81	38.6	32.9	29.6	26.7
1985-86	40.3	35.6	30.3	33.0
1990-91	41.5	36.7	32.9	33.3
1991-92	41.9	38.2	33.8	32.3
1992-93	42.6	38.8	33.9	33.2
1993-94	42.7	39.1	34.3	33.5
1994-95	42.9	39.3	35.9	34.0
1995-96	43.1	39.5	36.1	36.0
1996-97	43.2	39.9	36.4	36.7
1997-98	43.5	40.3	36.6	37.5
1998-99*	43.5	40.5	37.8	38.1
1999-2000*	43.6	40.4	38.9	38.7
2000-2001*	43.7	40.9	38.6	39.4
2001-2002*	44.1	41.8	39.5	39.9

\* Provisional

Source: <http://www.education.nic.in>

Expansion of education cannot be holistic and inclusive if women's education is neglected. Today there are several hundred women's college and quite a few universities only for women. The number of women enrolled per 100 men in institutions of higher education in 1950-51 was just 14 but during the last decade it was about 46. However, women's participation is still below fifty per cent at all stages of education. The literacy rate of 53% is also less than 75% for men. The average number of years spent by girls in schools is also much less than that spent by boys. The situation continues to remain grim in case of women belonging to the backward sections of society and rural areas.

Besides lower enrolment of women at different levels of education, another trend that is being noticed is the relatively much lower enrolment of girls at the higher secondary level and above in the science stream and in technological courses. Most of the women learners enroll in the humanities stream. Hence, growth of women's education is yet to catch up with that of men. From female literacy of 14% in 1951 to reach a literacy rate of 53%, it has taken about 50 years. It can be expected that with sustained efforts like the *Mahila Samakhya* Project in rural areas that emphasises the centrality of education to achieve equality and the efforts of the government and non-government agencies to enroll and retain girls, 100% literacy will be attained for women in a much shorter time.

#### b) Development of Alternative Forms of Educational institutions

We have already discussed the growth of institutions offering education at different levels. But today even such an expanded system of education fails

to accommodate every aspirant. There are still many who have been left behind. Therefore, alternative modes of offering education have been developing in addition to the conventional educational system. Education imparted through the distance mode and the non-formal education systems are forces to be reckoned with. These alternatives are greatly aiding the expansion of education and are parallel to the conventional system.

#### Reflection and Action 17.6

Collect information on the rising enrolment of people belonging to the backward sections of society and compare it with that of the period when India became independent.

#### c) Distance education

Since the first correspondence courses offered by Delhi University in 1962, distance and open learning system has covered a long way. In 1982, the first Open University was opened in Andhra Pradesh. In 1985, a Central Open University, Indira Gandhi National Open University, was opened and today we have about a dozen state open universities. Apart from the institutions that are offering education exclusively through the distance mode, there are several universities and academic institutions that are offering education in a dual mode, i.e., through face-to-face mode and also through the distance mode. The National Open School provides education at the school level. Together these institutions are catering to the educational needs of millions of students.

Open learning centers have been contributing a lot towards the expansion of education as they are capable of taking education to the doorsteps of those aspiring for education but cannot join conventional systems due to various reasons. The distance education system on account of its greater flexibility regarding time of learning, pace of learning and even educational background of the learner, coupled with its ability to accommodate a much larger student population, is gaining popularity rapidly. Development of distance education system has been greatly contributing towards the expansion of education, especially in the field of higher education. Through their regional / study centers they are actively providing education that includes even professional courses. There are facilities to take care of the practical component too and hence, courses in science, engineering, medicine, nursing, teacher training, etc, offered through the distance mode are quite common today.

#### d) Non-Formal Education

Non-Formal Education (NFE) comprises systematic and organized educational activities that are carried out outside the framework of the formal system of education. It mainly intends to serve those who cannot or could not attend educational systems and especially the dropouts. It also intends to provide education to those pursuing an occupation so that they may function in a better manner. Its aim is at generating awareness of contemporary social issues that concern us like AIDS. It thus provides need-based education to a particular section of society. Different media are used to provide non-formal education. The sixth five-year plan emphasised its need and from rural areas it has reached urban slums, hilly areas, deserts, tribal areas, etc. Assistance is provided to the state governments for running NFE centers by the central government (Aggarwal, 1992). The National Policy on Education, 1986, stressed the need for non-formal education for school dropouts, girl children who could not attend school and other such people deprived of regular educational facilities.

Apart from the print medium, electronic media like radio, television, audio and video cassettes, toll-free telephonic helplines, etc. are used to impart non-formal education. The educational programmes offered through the non-formal mode thus commonly aim to generate awareness, develop literacy, and enhance competence in those who are pursuing an occupation. It is provided by government organisations as well as by non-government ones. Even formal

educational institutions may be the providers of non- formal education, for instance that provided to farmers, teachers, etc. through the extension services of universities and colleges.

## 17.5 Diversification of Educational Streams

The educational system of our country has undergone expansion due to the inclusion of a higher per centage of student population in comparison to the pre independence era at every level of education. There has also been expansion in terms of increase in terms of educational facilities. Besides these, expansion of education has another connotation, namely diversification of educational streams or in other words, we can say the branching out of general education into new specialized areas. Education today thus has a much wider scope than in the past.

As we have been discussing, in ancient times the curriculum included only a few areas of study such as religious texts, literature, grammar, mathematics, etc. Much later, during Muslim rule, components of the curriculum changed according to the prevailing philosophy and needs. During this period the study of Persian language began to be studied by both Hindu and Muslim students because of its utility as the court language. Later on, with British rule, the western system of education was started. Systematic study of science and social sciences became parts of the curriculum. Various branches of science such as chemistry, physics, etc., were studied. With the use of English as the court language and also with the influence of the British rulers, English was studied by the Indians from different communities.

Following independence, the study of the freedom struggle became an integral part of the curriculum of schools. Vocationalisation of education led to the addition of new areas of study. During the last few decades, due to the changing socio-economic needs and changing outlook, several new areas of study have been introduced. New disciplines have come up in response to new demands. For instance, in response to industrialization, studies related to technology as well as management of industrial organisations started. Later on the study of management further branched out with the development of new types of organisations and their growing complexities. Today we have management studies related to educational institutions, hospitals, hotels, etc. Similarly, with the invention of computers and their growing utility in all sectors, studies related to the computer sciences are very much in demand. Studies related to Information Technology are common today. Exploration of the space, the oceans, underground mines, deep forests etc, has given rise to new dimensions in these areas. Genetic engineering, biotechnology, nanotechnology, etc. are some of the upcoming areas. Population education, environmental education; peace education, etc. have come up due to the present day requirements.

Apart from the socio economic needs, the other equally important factor is the rapidly expanding knowledge base in every sphere. This is leading to specialized knowledge in different areas. Along with the emergence of new technology, there is also the ongoing phenomenon of technology getting obsolete due to rapid advancements in knowledge. Therefore, the scope of education today holds many more disciplines and in this sense education can be said to have expanded.

### Reflection and Action 17.7

What is the role played by distance education in educational development in India?

## 17.6 Conclusion

Education is a dynamic concept that has changed with changing times. It has grown in response to the socio-economic demands of the day as well as the philosophy prevailing during a particular period. In Vedic times education was mainly for the elite of society. It was imparted in ashrams, gurukuls, etc. Study of religious texts, literature, grammar, mathematics, etc. were considered to be important. Students stayed with their teachers and were like members of his family. There was thus a close relationship between the teacher and the taught. Disciplined life was expected from them. In the Buddhist period the expansion of education started, reaching out to include students from different sections of society. Education was also institutionalized during this period and was imparted at monasteries. However, the curriculum reflected the continuation of the components of the Vedic period. In the medieval period the form of education changed and madrasas and *makhtabs* were opened as centers of learning. Learning of religious texts, jurisprudence, Persian, etc. started. In the British period western education with emphasis on the learning of science and English began. Women's education, which had so far been neglected, also started picking up.

After independence special efforts were made to strengthen the education system. The rate of enrolment was dismal. The rate of dropout was very high and much needed to be done for women's education and for the people of the backward communities. Several commissions and committees have been set up to review educational issues and policies have been framed. The Constitution also includes provisions to strengthen the educational system. The conditions regarding the education of the marginalised sections like women, backward communities and people from rural areas have today improved considerably. Expansion of education although closely related to its growth has taken place in the true sense since independence. It has been in terms of student enrolment at different levels of education, enrolment of women and other marginalized sections at different levels, increase in the number of educational facilities and also due to the diversification of general education in response to the dynamic socio-economic conditions and rapid expansion of the knowledge base.

## 17.7 Further Reading

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