

UNIT 9 DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN INDIA BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Sociology of education studies the roles and functions of an educational system in a given society. In order to identify the evolutionary changes and sometimes the drastic changes in education, one has to understand the educational policy followed by the social arrangement that controls education. At this juncture let us first understand the meaning of the term educational policy. Educational policy provides a normative environment for a social activity like education to take place. It defines the content and scope of education. In other words it provides an answer to the following questions:

What constitutes education?

Who should receive education?

Who should impart education?

Who should provide resources for education?

Before discussing these issues, you may do well to recapitulate the issues discussed regarding the role of education in a society in Unit 7.

In the present unit, we will focus on the nature of educational systems that prevailed in different historical contexts in India in terms of the four policy questions mentioned above. Since we are interested in the broad outlines of the policy, the history of education can be divided into four periods as follows:

1. Ancient Indian education from the dawn of civilization to sometime around fourteenth century AD.
2. Medieval Indian education from fourteenth to eighteenth century.
3. Colonial Indian education from nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century.

4. Post-independence Indian education covering the first forty years of the Independent India.

Even though we are going to draw from the history of education, the discussion does not focus on the chronology of events. Instead, it addresses the response of education as a social system in relation to the demands of other social systems controlling it.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to :

- understand the evolutionary nature of the education system in Indian society from the ancient period onwards;
- compare the changes in the education system between ancient period and medieval period;
- compare the changes between medieval period and British period;
- relate changes to the then prevailing social, political and economic contexts in each period;
- understand the subordinate position of education as a social sub-system to other social-sub-systems.

9.3 ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION POLICY

It is interesting to note that the question of who should receive education has been the focus of the Indian society right from the beginning. In the ancient period educational policy was laid down by the religious system. There are three broad strands of educational policy that prevailed during this period. The widespread policy of the Vedic tradition followed the norms as laid down in Smritis which were the codification of the parameters of civil society as endorsed by Hindu religion. The second strand was the educational policy of Buddhism. In parallel, there were also regions in the Indian sub-continent where Jainism prevailed and the norms were according to the Sastras of Jainism. In the early centuries, Vedic religion held sway over society. The social structure was characterised by the Varna system. Theoretically Varna system in the beginning recognised different aptitudes for different social roles and the individual differences in the distribution of different aptitudes. The social stratification was characterised by the Brahmins, the occupational category of intellectual workers, Kshatriyas performing the governing roles, Vysyas performing the distribution role and Sudras performing the production and service roles in the society. But, in practice, the Varna system endorsed the occupational role by ascription based on birth.

9.3.1 Access to Education

Even though theoretically speaking, one's occupation was decided on the basis of one's aptitudes under Varna system, gradually, the occupation became hereditary. Since, the new entrants to the society were socialised in the family, the occupational training was received by practising the skills followed by the elders in the family and thus occupational roles were transmitted from one generation to the other generation. Gradually this phenomenon became normative and the caste system got crystallized under religious sanction into a closed stratification based on birth. It is evident from the recorded history of ancient India that only children belonging to higher castes namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vysyas, were allowed to be educated in the formal sense. They constituted only a minority of the population. Major proportion of the population was socialised by the family. The production technology was not undergoing drastic and rapid changes. Children learnt the family occupational skills by following their elders. But the number of years spent under formal instruction differed for children from different eligible caste categories. For the majority the formal instruction spanned around eight to ten years. But a few students from Brahmin communities, based on their intellectual capabilities were allowed to continue further. Further education beyond the initial eight to ten years may be compared with the present-day higher education. Since education at the elementary level was organised and provided by the local communities, parents and philanthropic rulers or representatives of the ruler, the nature of education imparted consisted of certain common curricular aspects and some local specific curriculum. This is inferred from the fact that the recorded history mostly discusses the differences in the education system across Hindu-

ism, Buddhism and Jainism at a higher level. In Buddhistic and Jain systems there were no restrictions of entry based on one's birth as there was no caste system in these religions.

9.3.2 Curriculum

The nature of education at the lower level probably did not differ across three strands of education sanctioned by the three religions except the religious content and hidden curriculum. Since, after completing the major portion of the product of eight or ten years of schooling, one entered the adult world of civil society and took up occupational roles, the education aimed at development of basic skills of reading, reckoning and written communication using standardized textual materials. It was possible that the schools differed from each other depending upon the academic stature of the teachers. Each school was independent and maintained the comparable standards on the basis of the professional ethics. Much of the educational transactions took place in the oral and recitation mode and writing was kept to a minimum at the initial years to write the sanskrit script.

9.3.3 Educational Financing

Unlike the present-day state controlled monolithic structure of education system, the schools in ancient India were locally supported with an occasional grant from the rulers for the maintenance of the teachers. Education being a restricted commodity and open to only well-to-do classes, parents bore the major cost of education. Supporting education was also a moral act revered by the religious sanctions, poor eligible and deserving students were supported by the well-to-do families as an act of charity.

9.3.4 Teacher

Since occupation was decided by birth and only Brahmins went beyond the basic level of education, invariably males from Brahmin castes were eligible to become teachers. This may not be the case in the educational system sanctioned by the Buddhist and Jain religions. Teachers were given high status in the community and teaching was practised as a profession. The families sending children to the school run by a teacher paid 'Gurudakshina' in cash or kind. Reputed teachers also received the patronage of the rulers of the land. At higher education levels learning centres similar to residential universities of the modern time were functioning under the patronage of rulers and were attached to temples or 'mathas' or monasteries. Records of the foreign visitors extolling the greatness of 'vidyalayas' at Nalanda in Bihar and Bhavnagar in western India indicate that students from far off places came to these centres in search of reputed Gurus. All such institutions were residential in nature. They were supported by the grants of royal lands. Smaller institutions of that kind had students sharing the maintenance and lived in self-sustaining communities under the care of the chief Guru.

One important fact to be borne in mind is that the legitimacy of education was derived from religion. Religion also legitimized the other social systems like polity, economy, etc. Therefore changes in the polity did not affect the educational policy for a long time throughout the ancient historical period. Very minor changes occurred in the form of structural elaboration when greater parts of the sub-continent came under Muslim rulers.

Check Your Progress

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the block.

1. What was the curriculum content of ancient Indian education?

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2. How was elementary education organised in ancient India?

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3. What was the status of teachers in ancient India?

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9.4 EDUCATION IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD - STRUCTURAL ELABORATION

Mohammadan rulers did not interfere with the education of Hindus. In the beginning, for a couple of centuries rulers did not give prominence to education. Only the Muslim religious leaders were concerned with the education of the younger generation and hence started their own schools in their places of worship and some towns become centres of higher learning. Akbar was the first emperor to recognise the importance of education and organized education in a systematic way. A State machinery for educational administration as we see today did not exist till the end of eighteenth century. Education continued to be self-directed and self-controlled decentralized institution. Each educational institution, be it a village school or a school run in homes of rich patrons exclusively for their own children or a 'pathashala' run in a temple was an autonomous and self-managing institution. Hence the advent of Muslims did not have any immediate impact on the education system. But, two things happened when greater parts of India came under the rule of Muslim kings which had a long-term consequence on Indian education. The court language changed to Persian wherever they gained supremacy and Muslim religion gained dominance claiming its share in education. Emperors like Akbar and his successors encouraged starting and maintaining elementary schools called Maktabas in mosques. Madrassahs were established as the centres of higher learning to teach Persian history, Persian literature and Koranic theology. This development took place in parallel to the existing education. But the separation of Hindu religion from state had a greater impact on the access-related factors. We mentioned earlier that religion controlled and legitimized the state. In other words the kings sought the approval of the religion for rule. But, with the advent of Muslim rulers the Hindu religion lost its superior position. Now the people had to obey the alien ruler in addition to their religion. Consequently the hold of caste system on education started becoming weak. But the curriculum and teaching practices continued to function in the same way. In the absence of state control and interference, all types of educational institutions continued to function under local patronage under the overall supervision of religion. There was no change in the content and process of education. The clientele eligible to obtain education remained more or less the same. Till the advent of the Britishers there was no need for any survey to understand the status of education in India. Hence, the changes in the norms of access and quality remained unknown. Generally, the clientele of education obtained schooling to carry out their traditional occupations. Mobility of educated people in search of jobs were rare. Hence, institutions of learning were not subjected to comparisons. The spread of indigenous education came to light only when the British administrators conducted a survey of schooling in various parts of the country under their rule in the early nineteenth century. At this point of time the Western education had not been introduced under the British rule. The surveys were conducted to estimate the then prevailing educational efforts in the society and to help the government to make policy decisions. These reports give the status of indigenous education which had evolved over the centuries in India and show some interesting features reflecting the changes in the normative structure of education at that point of history.

9.4.1 Access to Education during Later Medieval Period

Historians have gone through the archival materials of the surveys conducted by the British administrators in Madras presidency and in Bengal-Bihar districts and have pointed out that the surveys give a revealing picture of the social background of the students and teachers. These surveys were conducted during the period between 1820 and 1840 A.D. Dharampal observes that, "It is, however, the Madras Presidency and Bengal-Bihar data, concerning the backgrounds of the taught (and in the case of the five districts of Bengal-Bihar, also of the teachers) which presents a kind of revelation : the data reveal a picture which is in sharp contrast to the various scholarly pronouncements of the past 100 years or more, in which it had been assumed that education of any sort in India, till very recent decades, was mostly confined to higher castes amongst the Hindus, and amongst the Muslims to those from the ruling elite. The actual situation which is revealed was different, if not quite contrary. As will be noted later on, for at least Hindus, in the districts of Madras Presidency (and dramatically so in Tamil-speaking areas) as well as the two districts of Bihar, it was instead those termed Soodras, and castes considered below them who predominated in the thousands of the then-existing schools in practically each of these areas."

The above quotation from the book called **The Beautiful Tree** shows that the education had evolved in such a way as to reach all castes in many parts of India. In Madras Presidency alone there were as many as 11575 schools with a student strength of 1,57, 195 and 1094 colleges (centers of higher learning). Representation of males belonging to Soodras varied from 17 to 48 percent in non-Tamil speaking ten districts of the Presidency and in nine Tamil-speaking districts percentage averaged to more than 60 per cent. Even the castes below the Soodras in the hierarchy were studying in schools whose percentage varied from 5 to 30. At the same time the coverage of the girls was not as widespread as the boys. But, even the small percent of girls studying in schools had a considerable proportion from the lower caste.

9.4.2 Curriculum and Financing of Education

The survey also collected the data on the age of the child at the time of their entry into schools and the duration of schooling. Usually in these districts children entered the school at the age of five to seven and stayed at school for varying periods from place to place ranging from two to ten years. The survey revealed that the schools taught reading, writing and arithmetic. The books varied according to the student background but it used to be normally a religious text like Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bhagavatha. These books were supplemented by the regional epics. There were many schools run by the village governments of those days which collected taxes for the purposes of education in addition to the tuition fee paid by rich families to the school.

Check Your Progress

- Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.
ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the block.

4. What were the chief characteristics of education in medieval India?

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5. What kind of books were studied by students in medieval India?

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9.5 EDUCATION UNDER THE COLONIAL RULE

Developments in the field of education are fairly well-documented during the rise and fall of the colonial rule. Developments in the education field during the colonial regime can be discussed under two different educational policies. The first was the policy followed by the East India Company till 1813. This policy got drastically changed from 1813 onwards till the second world war.

Colonial era started with the entrenchment of East India Company as a mercantile interest in the sub-continent. Initially they had no role to play as they had no political control over the land. However, the Company was obliged to bring Christian missionaries on their ships and protect them according to the charter of the Company. The Christian missionaries did start their proselytizing activities and opened schools for the converted among lower castes and taught them Bible alongwith other basic skills. As we mentioned earlier, elementary education was highly decentralized and education at all levels existed outside the control of the State. The Missionary activity in education become another instance of structural elaboration of the indigenous education system.

9.5.1 Orientalist Policy

The situation changed when the East India Company started conquering territories and ruling over them under the protection of British empire. Missionary activities were received with hostility by the Indian upper castes whose support was required by the Company in consolidating their precarious position in India. Hence, they did not want to interfere in the educational spheres even though they came under pressure from a section of the British statesmen. But the politico-economic compulsions of the period compelled the rulers to adopt a pro-native education system policy. In 1781, Calcutta Madrassah was started to conciliate the influential Muslims and Hindus. This was followed by the starting of Benaras Sanskrit College in 1791. The students from these colleges, mostly belonging to elites of Hindu and Muslim religion obtained higher posts in the Company and there by obtained their support. However, apart from starting a few Sanskrit and Persian higher learning centres, and restricting the activities of the Missionaries in their own political interests, the Company did not spend any money on the education at school level. In the political and civic fields, the company rulers took active interest in governing the population according to their native religious jurisprudence. A meagre sum of one lakh of rupees was earmarked for the Company to spend on education in India. This was implemented only in 1823 when a General Committee was set up to implement the educational mandate of the Charter Act of 1813. This phase of the educational policy is termed as orientalist policy. The Committee started supporting the existing centres of higher learning like the Calcutta Madrassah and the Benaras Sanskrit College.

9.5.2 Anglicist Policy

The British had already consolidated their position and the mercantile interest had been replaced by industrial interests who saw India a market for their products. Right from 1797, Charles Grant, an influential statesman, who later became the Chairman of the Board of Directors of East India Company was advocating that English education to be introduced in India. His lobby called Anglicist challenged the policy of the orientalists. Lord Macaulay, The Law Member of India heard the arguments of both the parties and rejected the position of the Orientalists. The famous minutes for Macaulay forcefully supported the cause of English Education in the Indian territories. According to Macaulay, the immediate objective of education was to prepare a class of people who can occupy the subordinate positions in the colonial Government and help in administering the natives. In the long run the education was meant for Westernizing the elites who in turn could influence the masses to facilitate the conversion of India into a market to consume the industrial products of Europe and supply the industries based in Britain with the raw materials. This approach is termed in the literature of education history downward filtration theory.

The company decided to spend the money for the spread of English education. In 1837, the English language became the official languages and soon a demand for English education was created by throwing open the subordinate positions in the Government for the native in 1844. This policy attracted the native ruling classes towards English educational institutions. Apart from a lot of public discussions both in India and in the homeland of the rulers regarding the approach of the Company, there was no significant physical investment by the Company on educational matters. They did not bother about the lower levels of education.

Check Your Progress

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the block.

6. What is "Downward filtration theory"?

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7. What was the attitude of the East India Company towards Indian education?

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9.6 EDUCATION UNDER IMPERIAL RULE

In 1854 Charles Grant who looked into the educational policy of the Company while supporting education through the English language also suggested education through the native languages. He wanted the Company to develop a system of education encompassing primary, secondary and university stages. He also wanted to promote women's education. Even though it was a comprehensive review of the policy, no action was taken due to the political changes that took place immediately after it was submitted to the Company.

9.6.1 Education under Direct British Rule

In 1857, Indian territories came under the direct rule of the British Crown. During the same year the Government of India started universities at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. These universities merely functioned as examining bodies and there was no teaching. The students appeared for the examinations through their own study under a tutor or studied in affiliated private educational institutions

Primary education suffered from neglect till 1882 when the Indian Education Commission which examined the status of state-sponsored education in each of the provinces and recommended providing a proper share of public funds for the same. In 1884, the report of the Commission was accepted. The management of primary education was transferred to the local bodies set up under the Local Self-Government Acts passed during the period. The Government also developed grant-in-aid codes to encourage private enterprise in the field of education. However there was a spate of private colleges and secondary schools which mainly functioned under private managements charging fees.

Another noteworthy development during this period was the creation of the Indian Educational Service in 1896. This was an All India Service, recruitment for which was done through competitive examinations in England. Theoretically it was open to Indians, but they had to go to England to take this examination. The intention was to attract capable persons from England to work in India. Consequently most of the posts in the Education service were held by Englishmen. This arrangement continued till 1919.

While the Colonial government showed concern for primary education on paper, there was a rapid growth of private schools and colleges. The indigenous schools in the countryside decayed and disappeared.

9.6.2 Development of Education during 1902 to 1921

Immediately after transferring the governance of the Indian territories from the Company to the Crown and the shifting of the decision-making centre to the Government of India located in Calcutta from London in 1857, education in India started expanding. This education system was the one which replaced the indigenous educational efforts which flourished till the middle of the nineteenth century. Initially there was large scale expansion of schools under the local bodies and the private enterprise. There was also an expansion of university education. This period saw the starting of 5 universities. But, the Government did not allocate funds for these developments. The schools while increasing in the quantitative dimension failed in qualitative dimensions. The beginning years of the twentieth century saw a change in the situation. During this period under the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon things started happening in the field of education. This period presented several distinctive features in education, namely:

- a) Large finances were available for education as a result of general prosperity all over the world and there was a stable relationship between the provincial and the central governments.
- b) The Government assumed a more active role in the field of education. The Government strengthened the inspection and supervision of private schools, maintained institutions at all levels of education as models.
- c) The policy shifted towards the improvement of quality of education imparted in the recognized educational Institutions.
- d) There was an unprecedented expansion of education during this period. The Table 9.1 gives the picture of quantitative expansion during this period.

Curzon started a drive to improve the quality. Survey of educational results showed that the expansion took place in the preceding period at the cost of quality. While trying to regulate the growth of education, an effort was made in 1901-1902 onwards to improve the quality through various measures at all levels of education. The Indian University Commission was constituted which resulted in making the Indian universities teaching institutions. The Indian University Act was passed in 1904 to make universities set examples of quality by starting direct instruction and also making affiliation of colleges more strict. All affiliated colleges were subject to periodic inspection.

At the secondary level, all schools, whether aided or unaided were required to obtain recognition both by the department of education and also by the university for which the school sent their candidates for matriculation examination. Secondly, the training of teachers at the secondary level was given high priority and the professional training institutions were started.

At the primary level, Curzon emphasized expansion to go with the improvement in quality. This needed financial assistance to the provincial governments to support the expansion of education. The programme also emphasized the need for a large number of training institutions to train primary teachers. The overall policy of Curzon had a significant effect in the field of education. The data on progress of education during 1901-1902 to 1921-1922 is given in the table below.

Table 9.1 : Progress of Education between 1901-1902 and 1921-22

Types of Institution	No. of Institutions (1901-02)	No. of Institutions (1921-22)	No. of Scholars (1901-02)	No. of Scholars (1921-22)
Universities	5	10	NA	NA
Arts Colleges	145	165	17,651	45,418
Professional Colleges	46	64	5,358	13,662
Secondary Schools	5,493	7,530	6,22,768	11,06,803
Primary Schools	97,854	1,55,017	32,04,336	61,09,752
Special Schools	1,084	3,344	36,380	120,925
Unrecognised Institutions	43,081	16,322	6,55,407	422,165
Total	1,47,708	1,82,452	45,21,900	78,18,725

Source : Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik, 1971.

From the above information, it can be seen that there was a large-scale expansion of Government-supported and Government-recognised institutions of education at all levels. Student enrolment became more than doubled at higher education levels and it was almost double at the secondary and primary education levels. There was a decline in the number of unrecognised institutions. But the expansion of primary education was far from satisfactory. Literacy as an indicator of the effectiveness of primary education showed a disappointing increase between 1901 and 1921. The percentage of literates of both sexes and of all ages was 7.2 per cent in 1921 and the increase in male literacy was only 1.4 per cent over 1891 and the female literacy increased by 1.3 per cent. Another indicator of primary education was age group enrolment. It was around only 18 per cent of school aged population.

But, simultaneously there was an under-current of growing nationalism during this period. This development was bringing pressure on the government for more responsibility and participation for the Indians and it demanded education to be responsive to the national aspirations. When the Britishers started to think about education on their lines in India, the situation of education in England in terms of its size and access was far limited than what it was in India at that time in the form of indigenous education. The demise of indigenous education was a setback for the Indians. Meanwhile the host country progressed in the field of education. Indian nationals were exposed to the progressive democratic philosophies. National leaders like Gokhale fought for compulsory primary education at an all India level. In fact many provincial governments passed compulsory education bills. But these efforts did not make much headway at the implementation levels. The only improvement was in the field of the training of teachers, teaching in Government and local body schools.

9.6.3 Educational Developments under Diarchy - 1921 to 1937

In 1919, the Government of India Act introduced a New Constitution which introduced changes in the activities of the provincial governments. Certain departments of the provincial governments were deemed to be administered by the Governor with the assistance of some executive councillors and the Governor had to report directly to the Secretary to State for Indian affairs through the Government of India. Some other departments were to be administered by the Governor with the help of ministers answerable to the Provincial Legislature which was an elected body. This system is termed Diarchy in historical literature. Under Diarchy the governance of education was under the Legislature. But the financial arrangements were with the Government of India. This worked adversely to the administration of the transferred departments to the legislature and the ministry. Thus, on the one hand Indians got control over education but were crippled to act upon the Indian interest through the restriction imposed on the finances. Another development was the conflict of interest between the elected representatives and the officers of the Indian Education Service. This conflict was resolved by making provincial governments responsible for future appointments in the department of education while continuing with the IES officers. In many provinces the executive officers were not sympathetic to the efforts in reforming by the elected ministers. In spite of such hurdles the progress of education was considerable.

Table 9.2 : Growth of Education between 1921-22 and 1936-37.

Types of Institution	No. of Institutions (1921-22)	No. of Institutions (1936-37)	No. of Scholars (1921-22)	No. of Scholars (1936-37)
Universities	10	15	NA	9697
Arts Colleges	165	271	45418	86273
Professional Colleges	64	75	13662	20645
Secondary Schools	7530	13056	1106803	2287872
Primary Schools	155017	192244	6109752	10224288
Special Schools	3344	5647	120925	259269
Unrecognised Institutions	16322	16647	422165	501530
Grand Total	182452	227955	7818725	13389574

Source : Syed Nurullah and J. P. Naik, 1971.

In spite of the difficulties encountered in the administration of education in the new dispensation of the diarchy, there was a widespread growth in the numbers of educational institutions and the number of scholars. This has been attributed to the faith of people in the value of education and the inclination of the parents to make sacrifices to educate their children. While there was a widespread response of the people to education, the situation within the education system was far from satisfactory. The report of the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission popularly known as the Hartog Committee expressed the view that the expansion of primary education had not resulted in the commensurate increase in literacy as many children enrolled in class I dropped out before they reached class IV. This wastage was more serious in the case of girls. At the secondary level there was an advance in the number of teachers, an improvement in their training and their status. But, the goal of the secondary education was reduced to that of preparing students for the universities.

One of the important developments of the period was the use of modern Indian languages as the medium of instruction at the secondary level. But, the obstacle in this direction was that the sole medium of instruction at the university level was English and the secondary education was a mere appendage of the university and it functioned to prepare students for the Matriculation examination.

9.6.4 Education under Provincial Autonomy 1936-37 to 1946-47

This decade was the last period of the colonial rule. There was a change in the political structure. The Government of India Act of 1935 abolished diarchy and gave autonomy to the provincial Governments. The structural hurdles and difficulties in the financing of education were reduced during this period. Initially there was great expectation regarding the advancement of education under provincial autonomy. But, these expectations were belied as the elected provincial governments under the Indian National Congress resigned from the office in 1939 and the Second World War broke out in the same year.

There was a considerable expansion of higher education during this period. But the pace of the expansion of secondary education slackened. Nurullah and Naik while explaining this phenomenon observe that the secondary education became selective by this time and the basis of the selection was not intellectual but economic. But the expansion of primary education was halted during this period. There were 167,700 primary schools in India in 1945-46 as compared to 192,244 schools in 1936-37 and there was a marginal increase in the number of students from 10.22 million in 1936-37 to 13.3 million in 1945-46. In other words the schools became overcrowded.

9.6.5 Origin and Development of Basic Education

When the Congress Governments assumed office, the need for liquidation of illiteracy was urgently felt by the Government. Both primary education and adult education attracted attention of the policy makers. The Congress Governments were committed to introduce universal, free and compulsory primary education. But they faced the pinch of resources. Mahatma Gandhi came forward to propose a system of primary education which attempted to make education self-supporting. His idea was given shape with details by a committee under the presidentship of Dr. Zakir Husain. The report became the policy document of the Congress Governments. But the changes in the political situation and the Second World War did not allow any further progress in this field.

9.6.6 Education as a Subordinate Social Sub-system

In order to capture the essence of the development in the field of education through the ages it is necessary to have an understanding of the role of education in a given society. The main role of education is to help the society to maintain its structure while allowing changes in the cultural aspects in a controlled way. The two functions it performs are socialization of the new generation and preparation for adult roles through selection partly controlled by the system itself or by providing required training to the members selected and allocating occupational roles by other social sub-systems in a given society.

The formal system of education as it exists today is an evolved version of the system transplanted from nineteenth century Britain. Before the British system of education was introduced, the indigenous system of education in the Indian sub-continent flowed underneath the social arrangements and it was highly decentralized and autonomous in its functioning. It was regulated by cultural norms and internalized values passed on from generation to generation in specific local contexts. In fact it was evolved to cater to the changing educational needs

of the social structure. The demise of the indigenous system is a clear example of the subordinate role of education compared to other dominant social systems and so long as the controlling systems retain their hold on the society, education supported by it will retain its validity. Once such support is gone as in the case of the indigenous education system which lost its support of religion, the educational efforts of the system becomes irrelevant in terms of its social functions.

Our narration indicates how the support of the education system becomes necessary when a new regime, not legitimized by the religion tried to consolidate its power. Initially, the Britishers showed interest in the oriental (Indian) education so as to assure the powerful educated sections who were the product of selection process through rules of caste-based social stratification. Later, when the regime established itself, it was the stratification which tried to persuade the rulers to expand the education system to ensure their participation in the governance of the masses. In between the two social systems, the educational system grew to balance the demands of the community and the State. It was done by adhering to the broader goals of preparing educated classes of people to assist the colonial and later imperial regimes at the system level and catered to the traditional norms of access prevalent at the local level. Norms of access to education was governed by the traditions of each locality. Wherever the upper castes dominated in the community, the access was denied to lower castes by school practices. The State was not particular about this aspect and hence there was no regulation governing access applicable to all types of institutions.

We also narrated how resources to education flowed during the ancient, medieval and most part of the colonial era. It flowed mostly from the users of education and local community. Supporting education was considered as a value and society recognised such acts by rulers and rich individuals. Even today the philanthropic act of donation to educational causes commands wide respect and administration in the Indian society.

We also narrated the role and functions of teacher in indigenous system. Teaching was considered as a profession and it was governed by ethical considerations. Teachers used to practice their profession and the community provided for their physical needs. The advent of English education changed the situation. The teacher needed special preparation to take up the profession. The control became external and a separate role of educational administrator entered into the structure of education.

Check Your Progress

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the block.

8. What was the role of the Government in education during Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty?

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9. What were the problems of education under the diarchy?

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10. What was the rationale behind the development of Basic Education?

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9.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we took a montage view of evolution and discontinuity of one education system and emergence and continued evolution of another system in India. For a layman education is benevolent and venerable. In India people in general value education but many think it not in their fate to get education. We have to understand that education is a social sub-system with its own definitions and culture. It gets designed by other agencies in interaction with itself to serve for some broadly defined social categories. The system developed during the colonial period continued after Independence. The leaders who had derived benefit from the same education system assumed that education would serve to translate the constitution into reality. We are going to discuss in the next unit whether this assumption was valid in the light of the development that took place in education during the early decades of the Constitutional rule.

9.8 UNIT-END ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss the implications of English Education in a country like India, keeping the historical perspective in mind.
2. How has the freedom struggle influenced the development of education in India?
3. As a teacher, do you feel that the system of indigenous education has to be developed in India to reduce disparity and oppression?
4. How closely is the political system linked with the educational system of a country? Discuss in the light of the Indian situation.