

**THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF INDIA : SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
PARALLEL EDUCATION IN CURRENT SITUATION**

**Dr. Sandhya Sharma**

**Asstt. Prof. Department of Education, Jyoti Vidhyapeeth Women  
University, Jaipur (Raj.)**

**Meera Dhakad**

**Research Scholar, Department of Education, Jyoti Vidhyapeeth Women  
University, Jaipur (Raj.)**

**Mob. No. 6377405807, E-mail: meerakumaridhaked@gmail.com**

**Introduction :**

Historically, Indian education has been elitist. Traditional Hindu education was tailored to the needs of Brahmin boys who were taught to read and write by a Brahmin teacher. Under British rule from the 1700s until 1947, India's education policies reinforced the pre-existing elitist tendencies, tying entrance and advancement in government service to academic education. Colonial rule contributed to the legacy of an education system geared to preserving the position of the more privileged classes. Education served as a "gatekeeper," permitting an avenue of upward mobility only to those with resources.

Post-primary education has traditionally catered to the interests of the higher and upwardly mobile castes. In the nineteenth century, post-primary students were disproportionately Brahmins; their traditional concern with learning gave them an advantage under British education policies. By the early twentieth century, several other castes realized the advantages of education as a passport to political power and managed to acquire formal learning. But even today, the vast majority of students making it through middle school to high school continue to be from high-level castes and middle- to upper class families living in urban areas.

**Key words:** Historically, Brahmin teacher, British education, upward mobility, Majority

**Primary and Middle Education :**

The Indian Constitution made a commitment to make primary and middle grade education (for students ages 6-14) free and universal by 1960,

with the two national policy statements on education in 1968 and 1986 (and revised in 1992) placing much emphasis on this goal. But India's inability to allocate resources effectively and efficiently has made that goal unattainable even 45 years later.

There has, however, been a considerable increase in the spread of educational institutions since India gained its independence in 1947. For instance, during the period 1950-51 and 2001-2002, the number of primary schools grew three-fold, while the number of middle (upper primary) schools increased 16 times. Today India has more than six hundred thousand" primary schools serving 115 million students (the average teacher to student ratio is 1:43) and more than two million upper primary schools serving 45 million students (the average teacher to student ratio is 1:38). Another recent trend is the growth of private schools that receive no government aid and rely on student fees.

The Indian school system follows the British structure. Primary school consists of grades 1-5 (ages 6-11) and middle school consists of grades 6-8 (ages 11-14). Both are compulsory. However, researchers estimate that an average of 70 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 14 semnally attend school.

Yet, the paucity of educational data in India makes it difficult to estimate true numbers of private schools. Recent evidence suggests that the percentage is much higher than the official figures indicated in the table below (closer to 30 percent rather than 15.4 percent).

**Total Student Enrollment by Educational Stage and Percent Enrolled in Private Schools (2001)**

<b>School</b>	<b>Total Gross Enrollment</b>	<b>Percent Enrolled in Private Schools</b>
Primary	99.3%	15.4%
Secondary	50.3%	--
Tertiary	11.4%	--

For those who do attend, there are large gaps in access to education; quality of education; and learning according to gender, social grade, and location. Two out of five first-grade students will not complete the primary cycles of 4 to 5 years (depending on the State),<sup>16</sup> and the learning achievement of those graduating is low. Children from poorer families are at a greater disadvantage. The drop-out rate for the poorest households is about four times that of the richest ones.

While States determine the curriculum used in schools, the following is the national curriculum outline. The quality of teaching varies tremendously school to school and State to State.

*Primary Stage (5 years)*

**The curriculum includes:**

A. Grades 1 and 2

1. One Language- the mother tongue/the regional language
2. Mathematics
3. Art of Healthy and Productive Living

B . Grades 3 to 5

1. One language- the mother tongue/the regional language
2. Mathematics
3. Environmental Studies
4. Art of Healthy and Productive Living

*Upper Primary/Middle Stage (3 years)*

The Grade 6-8 curriculum includes:

- (i) Three Languages-the mother tongue/the regional language, Hindi and English.
- (ii) Mathematics
- (iii) Science and Technology
- (iv) Social Sciences
- (v) Work Education
- (vi) Art Education (fine arts: Visual and Performing)
- (vii) Health and Physical Education

**Out-of-School Population**

One out of every three out-of-school children in the world reside in India. Fifty-three percent of students dropout before completing primary school. The issue today is not a lack of demand, but rather quality of supply. Students often drop out because their public school experiences are often so poor that they learn very little even after being enrolled for 4 to 5 years.

Educating girls is a particular challenge. India's high fertility rates promote a social bias against educating young girls. Parents lack the resources to provide a quality education for all of their children, and therefore invest scarce resources in boys, for whom the market returns to the investment in education are perceived to be higher. It is estimated that for every 100 girls that enroll in school in rural India, 40 will reach grade four, 18 will reach grade eight, nine will reach grade 9, and only one will make it to grade 12.<sup>19</sup>. The PROBE study did find, however, that 98 percent of parents surveyed felt that education was necessary for boys, and 89 percent of parents felt it necessary for girls. Some studies suggest that parents are more likely to incur private expenditure for sons than daughters.

**Secondary Education**

The Secondary Stage consists of grades 9-12 (ages 14-17). India has more than one hundred thousand secondary and senior secondary schools serving 30 million students (the average teacher to student ratio is 1:34). Even though education in government schools continues to be free for grades 9 and above, the majority of enrollment is in private schools whose fees varies considerably.

Although UNESCO data indicates that nearly half of all children enrolled in secondary school in 1999-2000 (up from 30 percent in 1980)", studies seem to indicate that only 20 percent of students actually attend secondary school.

Public exams at the end of grades 10 and 12 drive instruction at the school level. Therefore, there is significant difference in the curriculum offered correlating to the various examination boards.

***Secondary Stage grades 9 and 10 (2 years)***

The curriculum includes:

- i. Three Languages-mother tongue/regional language Hindi, English (Some schools offer as electives other languages such as Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Arabic, Persian. Spanish)
- ii. Mathematics\*
- iii. Science and Technology\*\*
- iv. Social Sciences
- v. Work Education or Pre-Vocational Education
- vi. Art Education (fine arts: Visual and Performing)
- vii. Physical and Health Education.

Mathematics secondary curriculum includes the study of Arithmetical concepts, number systems, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, statistics, measurement, graphs and coordinate geometry. (Additional detail provided in attachment)

Science and Technology curriculum is designed around six major themes: matter, energy, living world, natural resources, environment and the universe. Each student is expected to do 15 exercises involving lab work per school year. (Additional detail provided in attachment)

The typical school schedule is a 9 period day (40 minutes per period). According to the Central Board of Secondary Education, instructional time in grade 10 is spent as follows:

<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Amount Studied Weekly</b>
Language I	280 minutes
Language II	240 minutes
Mathematics	280 minutes
Science and Technology	360 minutes
Social Science	360 minutes
Work Education or Pre-Vocational Education	120 minutes (plus time outside school)
Art Education	80 minutes
Physical and Health Education	80 minutes

Secondary schools are affiliated with Central or State boards which administer examinations at the end of grade 10 resulting in the award of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC), the All-India Secondary School Certificate or the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education.. There are three national examining boards: the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) and the National Open School (NOS) for distance education.

### **Upper Secondary Education**

The majority of students exit school after grade 10 (approximately age 15). For those who stay, schooling becomes differentiated. Based on performance on the 10th grade subject exams, students enter an upper-secondary stream for their last two years of schooling before university (grades 11-12). The most prestigious stream (which also has the highest cut-off in terms of marks required in the grade 10 exams) is the science stream, the second is commerce, and the third is humanities (arts).

Students in the sciences stream almost always study mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Additional subjects may include biology/botany/zoology for those intending to take medical school entrance exams and computer science for those pursuing engineering degrees. Those in the Commerce stream study economics, accounting, mathematics, and commerce. Students in the Humanities/Arts stream study options that include history, geography, political science, philosophy, psychology, languages, arts, music. Most schools only offer a few of these subjects, which obviously restricts student latitude in selecting areas of focus.

Upper secondary education is conducted in schools, or two-year junior colleges (some of which are also affiliated with degree offering colleges). Some of these institutions are privately operated while others are government-operated institutions. Another common institutional form is to have colleges with private management but receiving substantial financial assistance from the government in return for charging low fees. Student enrollment in private, unaided schools grew by almost 10 percent between 1978 and 1993. The curricula for upper secondary institutions are determined by State or Central Boards of Secondary Education and students sit for exams at the conclusion of grade 12.

After completing their upper secondary schoolwork (grade 12), students sit for another set of exams (the Higher Secondary Certificate Examinations) which determines their higher education options. Well known colleges specify cut-off marks for admission in various courses of study, which may sometimes be extremely high (over 90% marks not being uncommon). The cut-off marks or overall entry score can vary between courses in the same university/college, between similar courses in different universities/ colleges and from year to year in the same course. Some courses and some universities/institutions/colleges are in greater demand than others and therefore acceptance is more competitive. Students may also be required to complete pre-requisite coursework.

### **A Three-Tiered System**

In 1964, the Kothari Commission Report on Education presented an in-depth study of primary and secondary education. The Commission roundly condemned this separate, unequal school system which it accused of "increasing social segregation and perpetuating and widening grade distinctions."

Yet little has changed. There are clearly three tiers of schools in India. Ninety percent of the estimated 112 million children who enroll in primary school annually have no choice but to attend ill-maintained government schools, many functioning out of a canvas tent. However, given that the quality of education in these schools is usually quite poor, the fast-increasing middle class prefers to send its children to the government-aided, privately-run schools. The third category, the private schools, caters to the elite upper- grade population, boasting air conditioning and riding lessons.

Summiya Yasmeen, a reporter for India Together (an online news source) offers her opinion on the three tiers of Indian schooling:

*The rich and famous are typically enrolled in five-star English-medium schools affiliated to the upscale CBSE (all India), CISCE (pan India), and IB examination boards which offer globally accepted syllabuses and curriculums.*

*Next in the pecking order are English medium government aided schools affiliated to State-level examination boards to which the children of the middle grade are sent. The 28 State boards offer inferior infrastructure, sub-standard education and less rigorous syllabuses and examination assessments.*

### **Teacher Quality/Teaching Environment**

For most students in India, the learning environment is pretty abysmal. School consists of a one-room schoolhouse, one teacher covering multiple grades, and 40 students per teacher. It should be noted that many rural public schools barely have the most basic of facilities (a closed-in building, drinking water, toilets, a blackboard). In addition to these challenges, many rural schools are seriously understaffed, especially in the larger states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

While one teacher may have 40 students per class on average, the unwillingness of many teachers to accept remote rural postings (and the attempts to get these postings changed via lobbying and court cases) means that the actual student-teacher ratio is much higher in many parts of rural India. High student-teacher ratios are exacerbated by high levels of teacher absence and low levels of teaching activity.

Without efforts to recruit large numbers of new teachers and an investment of resources to upgrade school facilities, India will be hard-pressed to scale up elementary education and improve instructional outcomes for its young children.

Teaching is a well-paid profession in India and teachers are typically appointed based on political affiliations, not on content or pedagogical knowledge. There is no system in place to motivate teachers to improve academic achievement, and very little training available to strengthen teaching practices. For example, while the 1986 National Policy on Education upgraded the standard curriculum with increased requirements in English and in the sciences, the curricular changes were not linked with new ways of teaching and assessing student progress.



The British Council provides the following summary of the typical school day. While this description is likely valid for urban private schools, it is far from the case in the typical government school, where the focus (if at all) is still on rote learning for passing exams.

*A typical school day begins early in the morning anytime between 7-8 am. Students attend school for about 6 hours during the day with each classroom session spanning 30- 40 minutes and a 30-minute lunch break. Some schools operate for a longer duration of time (about 8 hours) and these schools provide two break periods. The school typically begins with a morning assembly for all students and teachers and may include prayers, meditation, important announcements, special assemblies, Mass PT or any other planned activity.*

### **Governance**

With India's independence in 1947, a Department of Education was established within the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The department has three main divisions:

- (i) Secondary and Higher Education.
- (ii) Elementary Education and Literacy
- (iii) Women and Child Development

The department coordinates planning with the States, provides funding for experimental programs, and acts through the University Grants Commission (defined in the higher education section) and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to develop standards, instructional materials, and design textbooks. The NCERT's textbooks serve as models since States are not legally obligated to follow the national syllabus.

The central government drafts five-year plans that include education policy and some funding for education. State-level ministries of education coordinate education programs at the local levels. Administration of urban government schools are overseen by both the state education ministry and the municipal government. In rural areas, either the district board or the panchayat (village council) has oversight on school functioning, which often brings heightened politicization to the teacher appointment process.

The individual State governments provide the majority of educational funding and either directly run schools or support privately-run schools through grants. However, a phenomenon of growing importance over recent years has been the mushrooming of schools in each state that are completely independent of government funding; these are called private, unaided schools. These schools typically pay much lower salaries than government schools, and are therefore able to hire more teachers, reduce multi-grade teaching, and have smaller classes. They are also able to exercise more oversight on teachers and have higher rates of teaching activity.

**REFERENCE:**

- Unesco Global Education Digest 2020 (data from 2020-21 School year).
- Analysis of Budget Expenditure in India, cited in Financing Education in India, edited 2020.
- National Center on Education and the Economy, 2020.
- "World bank Support for Education in India." The world bank Group September 2021.
- Kapur, Devesh and Pratap Bhanu Mehta. "Indian Higher Education Reform: From Half – Baked 2019
- University Grants Commission, 2019-2020.
- Aicte cited in Kapur , Devesh and Pratap Bhanu Mehta. "Indian Education Reform: from 2019-20