

EDUCATION IN INDIA: HISTORICAL TRADITIONS AND MODERN INNOVATIONS

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The topic is of relevance, as it has not yet become the object of dynamic analysis neither in Russian nor in foreign papers. Some aspects of the research are only being introduced into scientific discourse. The authors of the article attempt to look at the Indian system of education in a new way. The basic approach is conceptual and scientific interpretation of peculiarity of studying the topic for specific and historical, theoretical and practical analysis of the problems set here. The main results of the research are connected with broadening the understanding of the phenomenon of conventional, as well as innovative aspects of Indian education. The materials of the article allow to substantiate facts of history of education in India from ancient times, and may be helpful in understanding its current mainstreams and prospective future trends. The authors of the article attempt to prove the need for constant enrichment of the topic with new worldview evaluations and conclusions.

Keywords: History, Indian education system, Historical tradition, Modern innovation.

INTRODUCTION

The understanding of India in common people still paints a stereotypical image of the country of elephants, holy cows and total illiteracy of the population. Elderly people may not be that literate, but the myth of low level of education of the younger generation gets unveiled the first minutes you arrive in the country. Historically, Indians strived to bring up a universal person able to understand what the world, beauty, tradition, prosperity and perfection mean. They have always remained committed in the areas they were interested in, delighted to create and determined to do their work, as the word «work» is related to the so widespread Sanskrit notion «karma» (Mratkhezina & Nasrutdinova, 2015).

Peculiarity of the Indian system of education is interesting not only for its traditions, but also for innovations demanded by modern globalization. Today's Indian students have become more creative and ambitious, and they are quickly rising in the world. Today Indian educational establishments offer a wide range of courses in the world, and India comes short of the scale of the system of education compared only to the USA and China. (Mratkhezina, Fayzullina et al., 2015). This is why the legacy of Indian education is that important, as it might be borrowed by Russian and Tatar scholars and educators (Khayrutdinov & Karimov, 2015).

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METHODS

Methodology and research technique of this topic enable mastering the previous development of Indian education, multifaceted teaching methods and tactics nowadays.

The systemic approach broadens the systematic understanding, differentiation and integration of knowledge about the system of Indian education. This approach allows to cover all the main components of theory and practice of this system as well.

The comparative historical method employing matching and parallelism allows to highlight the peculiarities of Indian education in a certain historical period.

The method of periodization allows to create a dynamic image of the progressive system of Indian education. Real facts and events are viewed from the point of their continuity, and on top of that, this method being applied makes it possible to isolate common and specific features of Indian education.

The historical method allows to regard events and phenomena in temporal sequence and logical succession, when the stages of Indian education are regarded as a relatively independent and completed cycles possessing certain organizational, educational and scientific components.

The actualization method allows to make scientific forecast of the projected growth of Indian education based on identification of its leading trends. The perspective technique allows to define its prospective educational and scientific trends.

The concrete-historical analysis allows to study the conditions, circumstances and factors of shaping the system of Indian education.

RESULTS

First of all, we will consider the historical aspect of the topic under discussion. Conventionally, the Indians leaned to the intellectual «food». From of old and in various periods of historical development in India, philosophy played the greatest role there, be it reflections of monks or pragmatic trends, ideas of individual liberation or saving the humankind. India is the land of people holding a special worldview, and it is apparent that education there would not look too mundane. The impression of Indian cities with intellectual «stuffing» says that such type usually embodies the brightest outcomes of educational endeavors. Yet, the ancient tradition of teaching in India is different—due to the Sanskrit language and the phenomenon of Sanskrit literature. Its masterpieces exemplify rich literary traditions, and besides, the epic «Mahabharata» explains the relationships between man and society, and the «Ramayana» investigates the theme of human existence and the notion of *dharma* (principles, the course of nature), and it is nothing else than education. A lot of technical, scientific, philosophical and religious (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain) texts were also written in Sanskrit (Bobkov, 2000).

It is conventionally believed that such higher educational establishments as Cambridge or Sorbonne are the oldest in the world. Yet, the title of the most ancient one is borne by the Indian university center Taxila (or Taksha-shila), first in the world, founded in AD 700. More than 10 thousand students from all parts of the world studied over 60 subjects there, the epic «Mahabharata» was first performed there, and this happened to be long before the Current Era. Another example, the university of Nalanda was built in the 4th c. A.D. and grew into one of the greatest achievements of ancient India in the area of education (Mratkuzina, 2015).

It should be noted that, as far as school education in ancient India is concerned, there was the so-called *gurukula* system—learning at teachers' homes or monasteries, with *guru* the teacher and *shishya* the learner. That system was a Hindu one, but the teacher imparted to the learners the knowledge of religion, philosophy, literature, art of government of state, medicine, astrology and history. All of that was for free, and only on the completion of the studies a voluntary contribution *gurudakshina* was welcomed, in order to thank the teacher. *Gurukulas* emerged as early as in the period of Vedantic civilization, which signifies the beginning of Indian culture, literature and science. The Aryans of those times already strived for scientific progress, and for children and adolescents they set out a special period of preparation for such feats—Brahmacharya, – whereas in the history of many other countries it was substituted at best by the stage of apprenticeship. Under the *gurukula* system, anyone who wanted to learn went to the *guru*'s house and requested to be taught. If the *guru* admitted him as *shishya*, the matriculated student helped him around the house, learning to housekeep at the same time. And the *guru* in the meantime told about everything the child wanted to learn, from Sanskrit to sacred texts, from mathematics to metaphysics. The learner stayed with him as long as he pleased, until the *guru* felt that he had already taught him everything he knew himself. The teaching was natural, true to life, and was not limited to remembering separate pieces of information.

By the way, the *gurukula* system has not disappeared in India. Modern *gurus* are thought to be the embodiment of knowledge, ethics and care, and the type of *shishya* increased the conative component, but still he is a learner full of respect who considers his teacher a beacon lightening the right path. Ancient Hindu treatises reflect the exploratory teaching process where teachers and learners jointly search for the truth by means of reasoning and exerting to questions. Those texts only depicted an even earlier oral tradition where the «teacher–learner» relationships all but the main religious component of Hinduism. In traditional Indian texts, some people teach, others are taught, and those who teach are not always holders of a higher status by default. On the whole, the Indian way of teaching is perceived as a sacred duty, mission, act of ethics, social obligation, whose proper implementation means welfare of the society. The teacher leads the learner from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, takes the lid off the lamp of teaching and

releases the light into the world. The Sanskrit *anddhakara* (darkness) means not only intellectual ignorance, but also spiritual blindness which the teacher should be able to eliminate. The ancient philosophy of education even peculiarly considered knowledge to be the mind's eye in a person.

However, the colonial period became a new stage in Indian education. From the 30s of the 19th c. the process of cultural modernization of the British Raj begins. In 1835 at the instigation of the English administration, universities according to the British pattern open in the country: University of Calcutta, University of Bombay and University of Madras. The lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, who was one of the originators of the Indian educational system of European type, considered it necessary to introduce mainstreaming of education for the purposes of uniting the multi-ethnic Indian society and, of course, English as the mandatory language of instruction. In most cases, teaching in modern universities is also conducted in English. The English language as the inheritance of the British Empire has become the common part of communication and the system of education in India, now independent. Most universities and institutes offer higher education in that language. Nevertheless, the option of indigenous languages of Indian regions is available in many universities when pursuing Bachelor and Master degrees. But if you are aiming at PhD, English is more preferable in any university. Efforts of the British in enlightenment of Indian society led to forming a whole generation of domestic pundits in India. In the course of time and under their influence, specific features of Indian system of education emerged (Saydasheva, Bobkov *et al.*, 2017).

Of course, the colonial period of Indian history is now in the past, and moral truths are already balanced with exact knowledge by other means. As early as in 1945, couple of years prior to appropriation of independence by the country, the All-India Board of Education was founded, planning and coordinating different areas of education, and as achievements of Indian specialists show around the world, that was successful enough. Central Board of Education, founded even earlier, in 1935, continues to play the major role in the development and control over the policy and programs in the educational area, the principal among them being the National Policy in the Area of Education (1986), the Route Map (1986) and updated versions of these documents (1992). Until 1976 the area of education was under the authority of the states, whereas the central government coordinated and defined the standards of vocational and higher education. In 1976, in compliance with the Constitution amendment, the governments divided responsibility for the area. Since that time, decisions on defining the structure of education are made by the states. The quality and standards of education are defined by the central government. The Department for Education of the Ministry of Human Resource Development shares responsibility with the states concerning the issues of planning (Vanina, 2000).

We should also note that today's system of pre-school education in India is such that there is no notion of kindergarten in the country, such that would be commonplace for a European. Mother plays the nurse and the first teacher until the child gets to primary school. If both parents have problems with time as they have to constantly earn their daily bread, the child is sent to stay with relatives during the day. If even that is impossible, then the children go to special groups at the premises of preparatory schools. To feel more comfortable, the children are split into age groups and hours they spend there. This kind of day-to-day presence in a group directed by an educator is quite enough for the child to grasp some of the learning basics and catch up before admission to school. Children learn not only foundation of nature, but also languages – Hindi and English. Parents can leave their worries for their children behind, as having had training in such groups the children automatically become first-graders when they reach certain age. But sometimes parents still have to trouble their head about where to place their child to continue education. Some children before transition to school will face a rigorous lesson—to pass rather hard tests in order to confirm they know alphabet, can write letters and simple words, are able to count to 100 and add numbers. Having passed this exam, the learners receive the first in their life grading document. On that basis schools make a decision about admitting a certain child. To get the necessary knowledge at this level, a lot of parents send their children to preparatory schools from age 3. Preparatory schools represent 4 kinds of groups:

- “Play ground” – classes for the youngest pupils. Even two-year-olds can get there. They stay in those groups up to 3 hours every day, but attendance is optional;
- “Nursery group” – its attendance is mandatory. Studies here are prevalent over games, although almost half of the time the children learn by playing. It is still difficult for a three-year-old to study, but education in India for such children already requires home assignments to be presented next class;
- “Lower Kindergarten” – a conventional group very common for Europeans. Five-year-olds quite decently know and write all English letters and several Indian letters in Hindi, count within 100;
- “Upper Kindergarten” – is the final stage of pre-school preparation. After that, the children can read aloud and write Hindi alphabet, easily say and reproduce words of 5-7 letters in the English language, write any number within one hundred, solve simplest math problems, tell which number is greater than the other. On completion of this group, the child has only one path to go, to school.

Today, at the dawn of the 21st c., according to the national policy in the area of education, all children younger than 14 must receive mandatory free education of

adequate standard. As a result of efforts of the central government and state governments, practically each settlement in rural districts has primary schools: 94% of rural population have primary schools at the disposal located within a radius of 1 km, secondary schools within a radius of 3 km are accessible for 84% of rural dwellers. Following independence, admission of children aged 6 to 14 to primary and secondary schools increased to 87 and 50% respectively. From 1950 to 1997 the number of those schools grew from 223 thousand to 775 thousand, whereas the number of teachers there for the same period rose from 624 thousand to 3.84 mln. The number of girls studying at school also increased significantly. At a certain stage the central government and state governments worked out the strategy to register children leaving school before their time, as well as the policy aimed at improving academic performance of pupils, the principal attention being paid to: increased parents involvement; enrichment of the school curriculum and teaching process improvement (minimal level of education); district program of general education and national nutrition program for comprehensive schools. To confirm the universal right and duty to receive primary education, the Upper Chamber of the Parliament introduced amendment 83 to the Constitution. Later, a group of experts on education funding, created to study the need for additional resources necessary to administer mandatory education for children aged 6-14, presented a report being considered by the government. Also, the National Organization on Issues of Primary Education. In order to outline the way to administer mandatory universal primary education, the National Committee of the States Ministers of Education was created, chaired by the Minister of Human Resource Development (Vanina & Kashin, 2003).

It is peculiar that the system of school education in India does not envisage tuition fees, but well-off parents try to send their child to any private school or prestigious state institution. Although monthly tuition in such establishments may be about one hundred dollars, the level of knowledge received is sequence higher than at free schools. The children acquire deeper linguistic knowledge which enables them to communicate in English, Hindi and the local dialect. It is not an easy task to find a good state pedagogical institution, but parents try to do everything they can for their children to be admitted to any school, as it is only there that boys and girls can get minimum required amount of information. One of the features Indian schools possess—all the pupils are provided with free meals. This is not to say that they are going to be treated to restaurant menus, but they will surely be fed. In 1987, the special Operation Blackboard Scheme program was launched, aimed at providing all primary schools of the country with the required learning environment, in particular, accommodate each school with two teachers and school equipment. In 1993, the number of teachers envisaged by the program was reconsidered and increased from two to three if admission exceeded 100 children. Also, within the program, secondary schools increased the number of teachers, and additional

teaching aids were allotted for school needs. The central government fully covers expenses for schoolbooks and study guides and pays salary to teachers during the enactment period of the plan. Building schools is the states responsibility. In 1997-1998, all primary and secondary schools were allotted 522,902 and 125,241 textbooks respectively. The position of the third teacher was approved to introduce in 53037 primary schools, whereas extra teachers came to 71614 secondary schools. In 1999-2000 it was offered to approve introduction of 30000 more positions of the third teacher in primary schools and 20000 extra teachers in secondary schools (Ivashentsov & Ivashentsov, 2009).

Moreover, in 1979, the Non-Formal Education Program was launched, aimed to provide education for children aged 6-14 on the sidelines of formal education. The main focus of the program embraced 10 states with low level of education, yet it was implemented even in urban slums, mountainous, tribal and other backward districts.

Further on, evaluating the system of higher education, we can claim that nothing else is as widely developed in the country as the system of higher education. Today over 220 higher educational institutions function here, among them 16 are central ones, others work in compliance with the state regulations. The total number of colleges in the country is more than 10.5 thousand. In India, some universities hold all-India significance, and others represent organizations offering higher education in a certain state (which started as early as in 1857 with the opening of the first universities of the European pattern in the British Raj, whereof it has been mentioned above). The state universities oversee the functioning of the many colleges and institutes which are authorized to offer PhD programs. Indian higher educational institutions enjoy global fame thanks to the level of education they provide. Indian education also has a whole list of ranked teaching:

- Classical, starting from the Patha Bhavana school in the small town of Santiniketan where in 1901 the writer Rabindranath Tagore established the «ideal school» to Bangalore University, the Indian Silicon Valley famous for its developed IT branch full of research institutes and hi-tech companies, where half a thousand colleges and 300 thousand students interact. The now legendary name of Nalanda University is reviving today: the institution resumed studies in 2014. There are a number of narrow focus universities in the country. The Indira Kala Sangeet University teaches those who wish Indian language, Rabindra Bharati University, the Bengali language and Tagore studies. However, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi universities are believed to be the most prestigious ones.
- Deemed universities—higher educational establishments that have received special recognition and autonomy. Among them: the Institute of Mathematical Sciences in Chennai, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Science in Allahabad, Modi Institute of

Management and Technology, and Birla Institute of Technology and Science.

- Virtual universities are emerging all over the world. This trend also came to India. Thus, Chennai (Madras) University opened a Virtual University in partnership with the University of Mumbai (Bombay), University of Calcutta; partnership is established between Indian and foreign universities for implementation of virtual curricula. Many Indian universities and professors share lectures free of charge under NPTEL – The National Programmer on Technology Enhanced Learning, a government-supported cooperation program in the area of engineering education.
- Distance learning is also rather developed. A bright example is the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), with the largest number of students in the world, approximately 4 mln, who reside in different countries.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is well known that in the Vedantic civilization education was freely accessible. Yet, with the development of the caste system this liberty came to an end. Bureaucratization manifests even in concurrent existence of different certificates of secondary education – the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC), the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and others, not to mention secured in legislation reserved workplaces for certain representatives of various allowances. Despite structural difference, most Indian universities function by the same rules, also pertaining to examinations. Such abbreviations as IIT-JEE, GATE, UGC-NET, CAT, UPSC, AIMS are not a mere name for an Indian. In India, there is a lot of entrance examinations both for various categories of state jobs and for getting higher education. Some of those tests are really difficult and are even listed as the toughest exams in the world. The situation with scholarships and grants for Indian students is quite favorable: this kind of funding is provided both by the government and state funds, and the interaction between the center and the states since 1956 is the responsibility of the University Grants Commission. Exams like GATE, UGC-NET offer scholarship options. The purpose of most scholarships depends on different factors – academic achievement, examination results.

In essence, the whole system of education in India is a replica of the British educational system. Having completed studies, a young specialist can gain one of the three academic degrees – Bachelor, Master or Doctor. It is evident that, as dissimilar as they might be, these and other higher educational institutions of one and the same country follow the same line—go ahead for knowledge! Education in India is gradually getting to a new level, highly qualified specialists mastering

cutting-edge technologies are coming into fashion. The level of literacy in India has recently considerably increased. For the first time from attainment of independence, the number of the illiterate in the country reduced during the last decade more than by 31.9 mln people. The outcomes of census in 2001 demonstrated that from 1991 to 2001, when the growth of the population in the age group of 7 and older made 171.6 mln, another 203.6 mln people became literate. At present, the number of the literate is 562.01 mln people, 75% of them male and 25% female. Today India continuously wages heavy struggle not only to abolish the caste system and reduce illiteracy, but also to setting up such pedagogical function which would differ from the system of education where only the rich-born and offsprings from well-off families could have an opportunity to get knowledge, and the poor had to make do with rough labor. Nowadays there is a reasonably good chance to get quality education at state no-tuition institutions of the country, break out from poverty and obtain a decent employment (Bongard-Levin, 2003).

Finally, different innovative projects are gaining ground, for example, Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan. Its aim is to provide education for everyone. In 1997-1998, a school census was conducted at 4006 villages, 383 primary schools opened, 227 primary schools acquired the status of secondary schools, and 2326 informal centers opened under the project, 286 sororities established. In general, the project «People's Movement for Countrywide Education» facilitated the improvement of quality of education. In compliance with the National Policy in the Area of Education, in 1995 the Indian government established the National Council for Teacher Education. Its task is regulatory activity and keeping standards and regulations in pedagogical education, creating sustainable institutional infrastructure, academic and resource base for teaching and further pedagogical training of school educators, teachers for adults and non-formal educational establishments, as well as specialists in the area of teachers' retraining. The word «teacher» itself today is quite well-respected in India, as everyone understands the important role of this person both for education and for the society of the whole country. The Teacher's Day is celebrated on September 5, the date of birth of Doctor Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and this is the day of remembrance of the great teacher (Gazieva, 2006).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus, today Indian government takes care of its nation's future, as well as of preserving the cultural heritage. The example of India shows that the nation might need philosophy of education. According to the traditional Indian understanding, education is transformation of human existence, liberation of mind, which in the midst of everyday chores helps remember the higher purpose, renounce one's egotistic illusions for the sake of being involved in life, go from the narrow thinking to universal thinking. And «education» which discards the meaning of life and the sense of fullness, is no education at all.

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