(RESEARCH ARTICLE)

Examination reforms during pre-independent Indian education system

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Abstract

In India, examinations play an important part in determining students' career choices, their ability to pursue the appropriate higher degrees, and the degree of knowledge they possess. Global competitive forces and a wave of industry upheavals have resulted in significant changes in skill development and in the decision-making process. India's long history of education has been documented throughout the ages. It elaborates on education systems referenced in various periods such as Upnishshadic, Bhudhist, Medieval, and Modern, as well as the systems used in ancient universities such as Taxila and Nalanda. It analyses education during the Mughal period. When much of the western world made fruitless attempts to go further into the educational area, India saw the growth of excellent, world-class universities. India was at the forefront of scientific knowledge and philosophical research during those eras of heavenly days. In this paper, manly explores the Vadic, Buddhist, and Islamic educational examination systems.

1. Introduction

India's educational progress is a patchwork of notable achievements and stark deficiencies. By all measures, the rate of educational advancement in the years following independence was unparalleled. Perhaps at the same time, there was insufficient focus on public intervention and policy in the delivery of educational services. Particularly in the nation's publicly supported educational system, there are significant disparities in the provision of infrastructure and qualitative elements of education, such as teacher preparation, curriculum, equipment, and training materials. Not every region has had the same successes and setbacks. Inequalities in educational attainment by gender, population segment by income level, and the rural-urban split have significantly decreased, despite the fact that regional variances are still noticeable. Therefore, examination reforms for all educational formats formal in-person, online, and distance learning, among others should focus on the whole development of students in terms of their capacity for critical thought, problem-solving, ethical behaviour, and appropriate application of information. Formal education has a long history in India.

Gurukuls were traditional Hindu residential institutions of study, usually located in a monastery or the home of the instructor. After completing their studies, students from wealthy families made a voluntary donation known as Gurudakshina, although education was free and frequently reserved for the upper castes. Knowledge of religion, philosophy, warfare, medicine, scripture, literature, statecraft, astrology, and history were taught by the instructors at the Gurukuls (Chand, 2016). Examinations are viewed by the student body as an unpleasant experience. Aside from that, there are other significant flaws in the test method. Exams have definite goals. They serve as a tool for assessing pupils' performance and academic accomplishments. On the one hand, such evaluations assist students in modifying their learning plans appropriately, and on the other side, they assist teachers in modifying their lesson plans in

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accordance with exam requirements. Additionally, it offers some encouragement for students to work hard and consistently, as well as for teachers to keep improving their instruction. Students are admitted or denied to higher education schools based on the divisions or grades they receive after their merit and abilities are assessed. There is a widespread belief and a valid one that student' true abilities, accomplishments, and potential are not revealed by the conventional exam system. Reforming exams is therefore necessary.

2. Literature review

Education in ancient India dates back to the third century BC and is a source of information, traditions, and practice cantered on holistic development supplied by the ancient university of higher learning. Ancient universities represent Indian knowledge through multidisciplinary techniques such as philosophy, music, and Ayurveda, with a focus on moral ideals, ethics, and spiritualism (Mahesh, Aithal, and Sharma, 2023). British education was a double-edged sword: it produced an English-educated class capable of administrative responsibilities while alienating them from traditional Indian traditions. This shift resulted in both an intellectual elite and national leaders advocating for India's modernization and independence (Kumar, 2018). There are many people in the world who are not able to receive basic education (3R's) such as reading, writing and arithmetic (literacy) skills (Singh, 2013). India's education system prioritizes evaluation system, skill development, creativity, and practical knowledge (Kashikar 2022). The Indian government developed the NEP-2020 initiative to overhaul the country's educational system. It takes the place of the NEP-1986 in order to satisfy 21st century educational standards. The NEP-2020 aims to make India a global knowledge superpower (Tungoe, 2024).

Objectives of the Study

To explore Vedic, Buddhist and Islamic Periods Examination Reforms in The Pre-Independent Indian Education System.

3. Material and Method

3.1. Research Design

The study's main focus is qualitative. Therefore, the researcher has used descriptive methodologies and historical research as the foundation for his work. The goal of historical study is to understand the past by tracing its history in order to gain a viewpoint. Therefore, it offers an investigative approach to find, characterize, and understand historical events.

3.2. Source of Data

Present study based the historical perspective so the investigator has decided to collect the information from different sources.

- Primary Source. The Primary sources of the data were the governmental document, reports, commission and committee recommendations draft etc.
- Secondary Source- secondary sources included the evolution reforms related works by scholars in various fields and available in the forms of periodicals, paper, journal and book on the topic.

3.3. Techniques of Data Analysis and Interpretation

The researcher has used the historical method and critical analysis processor for his current research. The researcher used a variety of journals, Books and documents from the Internet to find out about the reforms that had taken place in the pre-independence and post-independence exams through this historical method.

The researcher has enriched the research objectives from the various books, journals, research papers, documents obtained through the Internet through historical methods and content analysis to help in the research work. The documents used in the research have been enriched by different historical methods, different criticism procedure and qualitative Content Analysis process which have been used to differentiate the research objectively.

3.4. Interpretation of Content Analysis

Content analysis is a unique method since it can be applied in both deductive and inductive ways and has both a quantitative and qualitative methodology. Media research is where quantitative content analysis first emerged, and

social research is where qualitative content analysis first emerged. Nevertheless, no specific science is associated with any of the types of content analysis.

3.5. The Vedic, Buddhist and Islamic Period Examination reforms historical backgrounds in pre-independent India

Both formal and informal educational systems were in place in ancient India. Home, temples, routes, tools, chitupas, and gurukuls were all places where indigenous people received their education. Young children were taught religious ideals by members of families, communities, and temples. Temples were also places of scholarship, with an intent in spreading knowledge of our old system. Students travelled to viharas and universities to get more information. The majority of instruction was given orally, and pupils recalled and reflected on what they had learned in class. Gurukuls, or ashrams, were residential educational institutions. Many of these are named after sages. Hundreds of students used to learn together in gurukuls, which were located in forests with tranquil and peaceful settings. Women had access to education throughout the early Vedic period. Some notable female Vedic academics are Maitreyan, Sāmbhar, Apala, Gargi, and Lop mudra. During that time, the gurus and their shishyas lived together and assisted each other with daily tasks (Kumar and Aithal, 2016). Realizing one's sinner potential, leading a disciplined life, and obtaining thorough education were the main objectives. Before achieving their goals, students spent years living away from home. The relationship between the guru and the shishya developed over time in the gurukul as well. While continuing their education in various fields like as history, debate, law, medicine, and so on, the focus was not only on the external qualities of the discipline, but also on enriching the interior elements of the personality (Aggarwal and Gupta, 2010).

Instead of requesting money or fees from students or guardians, Brahmin gurus taught via begging. Temples later developed into educational institutions. While secular classes were also offered, religious education was required. It was mandatory for students to be brahmacharis, or celibates. The obligations that a certain group of people in society had to fulfill were often connected to the information in these hierarchies. While the warrior class, the Kshatriya, received instruction in many aspects of combat, the priest class, the Brahmins, received instruction in religion, philosophy, and other related areas. While the working class, the Shudras, were mostly excluded from educational possibilities, the commercial elite, the Vaishya, were taught their trade. The Natyashastra, a treatise on statecraft, the Manu smriti, and the book of laws, were among the most prominent books of the time, reflecting the world's viewpoint and understanding. Secular institutions emerged alongside Hindu temples, mutts, and Buddhist monasteries. These institutes provided practical instruction, such as medicine. From 500 BCE to 400 CE, a number of urban learning centres were increasingly evident, including Taxila (in modern-day Pakistan) and Nalanda in Bihar. These schools transmitted information in a methodical manner, attracting a large number of international students to study Vedic and Buddhist literature, logic, language, and so on. Chanakya, a brahmin teacher, was one of Taxila's most well-known professors and is credited with the establishment of the Mauryan Empire (Aggarwal, 2005).

3.6. Vedic Period education system

The Vedic education period used the Gurukul system. The education was totally controlled by the guru (teacher). The shishyas (disciples or pupils) lived in the gurus' ashrams for years, obeyed the guru's instructions and directions, and learned many aspects of knowledge and skills regardless of their social standing. The Vedic curriculum emphasized religious, spiritual, and materialistic education. The several teaching styles used were oral, thinking, and reflection. The two epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana, were used as educational subjects to describe society, relationships, and dharma. Philosophy, literature, history, war, medicine, and the arts were all taught by the same guru. The quality of training and education remained unquestioned since there was no institution to standardize and benchmark the information obtained by students. The teachers were widely respected, serving as spiritual guides and parent surrogates. The purpose of education was to foster self-realization, overall personality, cultural advancement, and societal responsibility. It imposed tight discipline and increased religiosity. Mass education, women's education, and worldly life were all disregarded. The test was given orally. The kid was compelled to respond orally in front of a group of academics. Similar to today's PhD dissertation defense, he received a degree or title if he fulfilled their prerequisites. Obtaining such a designation required unanimity among the scholar's opinions (Biswas, 2016).

3.7. Examination And Evaluation in Vedic Period education system

3.7.1. Gurukul System

In traditional Vedic education, pupils lived with their instructor in a hermitage or woodland setting. Learning was experiential, with emphasis on the oral transmission of Vedic literature, rituals, philosophy, and practical skills.

3.7.2. Evaluation Methods

Vedic education did not use standardized written tests like the Western system. Instead, pupils' knowledge and understanding were tested by oral recitation of Vedic hymns (mantras), grasp of philosophical principles, and practical application of rites and talents.

3.7.3. Emphasis on Memorization and comprehension

Vedic education requires students to remember large amounts of literature and exhibit profound comprehension via discussions with their guru and peers.

3.7.4. Personalized Learning

The Gurukul approach prioritized individual attention for students depending on their aptitude and learning pace.

3.7.5. Critics of Western Examination Systems

The British education system in India, inspired by Western models, was criticized for marginalizing old Vedic knowledge and practices, which were considered more holistic and spiritually oriented.

3.7.6. Revival Efforts

In the early 20th century, there were attempts to maintain Vedic education and knowledge systems due to perceived cultural and intellectual degradation during colonial control.

3.7.7. Legacy and Influence

Vedic education, including Sanskrit and philosophical studies, is respected in modern India, influencing educational reforms and cultural revival attempts.

The Vedic education system, characterized by its emphasis on oral transmission, personalized learning, and spiritual depth, stood in contrast to the formalized examination-driven approach introduced by the British during colonial rule.

3.8. Buddhist education system

During the Middle Ages, the most important educational system was Buddhism. The fifth century B.C. saw the emergence of the first Buddhist schools. The emergence of Buddhism gave people the opportunity to reclaim their freedom to learn and practice their own religion, as Brahman denied the common people their access to an education. Lord Buddha bestowed to existence an entirely workable shape. As such, a workable area and a workable educational system were no longer fixed parameters for the general public. Buddhism has a monastic educational system. Buddhist Sangh accepted members of all castes. Buddhist Sangha has contributed to reducing the issue of educational disparity that Thai society as a whole face. The history of education during the Buddha era is closely linked to the history of monasteries and viharas since, other from those religious places, there were no other autonomous educational institutions or institutes (Khatun, 2016). It was largely due to their places that Buddhism had begun to spread throughout India by 600 B.C.

The purpose of Buddhist education is to become wise. In ancient Sanskrit, Buddhist wisdom was referred to as "Anuttara-Samyak-Sambhodi," which translates to "perfect ultimate wisdom." The Buddha informed us that achieving ultimate insight was the main objective of our practice or growth. The Buddha also taught us that since this level of ultimate wisdom is innate to who we are and cannot be obtained by external means, anyone can attain it (Mangal and Bairwa, 2013). Restoring our innate nature is the goal of the Buddhist educational system. Additionally, it teaches complete equality, which emerged from Buddha's realization that all sentient beings possess inherent nature and insight. We can realize that inherent, comprehensive, and ultimate wisdom with the help of Buddha's teachings. With wisdom, we can overcome all of our issues and transform sorrow into enjoyment. (Chand, 2016).

During the Buddhist era, monasteries served as the primary educational institutions. The pupil had to present himself to the teacher and ask him to teach him in order to gain entry. The teacher was solely in charge of his students' education. The student then had to react to the teacher's instructions. No other Bhikkhu in the monastery considered the student responsible (Khatun, 2016). A recognized ritual in Buddhist monasteries was pabbajja. It signifies 'going out' (pabbajja). This process stipulated that the student had to give up all familial and worldly ties after being admitted to a monastery. After being admitted to a monastery, a person from any caste can no longer be considered a member of that caste. He

had to change out of his old clothes after getting accepted, along with all of his old habits and attitudes. For the Pabbajja ritual, the minimum age was eight (Chand, 2016).

3.9. Examination and Evaluation in Buddhist education system

Buddhist education was designed to in still moral purity. Buddhist education was designed to help students improve their moral and psychological qualities. One has to reach the level of bodhisattva. The teaching approaches were as follows.

3.9.1. Verbal Education

Writing was a well-developed art form before the Buddhist era. However, verbal teaching was widespread because writing supplies were scarce and unavailable. In the past, kids who knew the lecturers by memory were given lessons. In the past, professors would ask students to memorize the lesson.

3.9.2. Discussion

Because it fascinated everyone, discussion was one of the educational methods used during the Buddhist era. Scholars discussed the key issues. The conversation continued until all questions were answered.

3.9.3. Evidences

Theory, cause, example parallelism, contradiction, evidence, argument, and induction were the eight categories of evidence needed to prove the differences.

3.9.4. Prominence

The importance of conversation promoted reasoning throughout the Buddhist period. The contentious issues could not be resolved without rational reasoning.

3.9.5. Tours

The Buddhist monks' main objective was to propagate Buddhism. As a result, several Acharyas, such as Rahul and Sariputta, emphasized the necessity of educational journeys. After completing their studies, students were encouraged to go on extensive excursions to get actual and practical expertise.

3.9.6. Conferences

On the first day of the month and during the full moon, Buddhist Sangh held conferences. The monks from different Sanghs came together and openly shared their uncertainties. Such courses were mandatory for all monks. A prominent monk dared the entire Sangh to deny his chastity during an annual meeting.

3.9.7. Meditation

Some Buddhist monks prefer to meditate alone in isolated locations, such as caves and forests. Since they had sufficiently spent time in the Sangha and had fully recognized the worldly attraction, only these monks were deemed eligible for solitary meditation.

3.10. Islamic Education System

The main ideas of madrassas are the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, the foundations of Islam, and the recital and memorization of the Holy Quran. During the early modern era in the Ottoman Empire, madrasas offered both specialized and lesser education, with the latter being known as dinasmends. The eleventh-century Mohammedan invasion of India signalled the start of significant changes in the nation's social and political landscape as well as in the field of education and learning. The foreign regulations took the lead in advancing Islamic education. Therefore, the system of education prevalent in the country deprived of the encouragement and support of the state and depended mostly on the charities of the public (Khatun, 2016).

Education was not seen as a state function or community duty during the Middle Ages. It was just a family or personal matter. A scholar's objective was to travel to Mecca and return with a degree from Mecca, which was highly prized in India for securing important jobs. Higher Muslim education was delivered in Arabic and Persian. Persian language remained to occupy the esteemed standing because it was the court language. (Biswas, 2016). The majority of the population that professed Islam had the greatest need for education. The demand for Persian-language instruction

surged when it was adopted as the court language. However, because of changes in the state language and religion as well as the attitudes of the rulers, there is now much less need to study Hindi.

There was no formal examination system in place. Student assessment was a built-in, ongoing procedure. The instructors' own evaluations served as the basis for the promotion. Degrees for in-depth, specialized study in a range of academic fields were given out. Periodic tests were administered to pupils in order to assess their knowledge. Meritorious students were evaluated both orally and in writing, and scholarship awards were given out. The students' opinions were also judged in mushairas and other periodic intellectual gatherings.

3.11. Evaluation system in Maktabs

Children from similar backgrounds were educated in Maktabs. Maktabs emphasized primary schooling. Along with religious instruction, pupils were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. As a result, it is possible to conclude that fundamental literacy skills were prioritized. Aside from fundamental reading skills, children were also given understanding about religious education (Kumar, 2012).

3.12. Evaluation Method in Madrasha

In the Maktabs, instruction was mostly done orally, with memorizing of the allotted lesson. Emperor Akbar promoted writing and attempted to modify the scripts. The emperor attempted to systematize schooling the pupils' education began with the acquisition of letter knowledge, followed by the acquisition of word knowledge, and finally the formation of sentences. In educational institutions, students and teachers were expected to observe rules and regulations and maintain discipline. They were expected to follow the directions provided to them by their professors, who in turn treated them with respect and civility. Teachers and students were expected to collaborate and integrate with one another. Education that was regarded noteworthy was practical education. The pupils were not required to take any year or semi-annual exams. They were often checked on a regular basis using real-life scenarios. Military training, artwork, and handicrafts were regarded as the most important subjects. Women were frequently discouraged from pursuing an education. Women from affluent and royal families might receive an education in the comfort of their own homes. However, at Maktabs and madrasas, girls and women were encouraged to attend school. In other words, the dissemination of education among women began to gain relevance (Biswas, 2016).

Table 1 The Vedic, Buddhist and Islamic Period Examination reforms: Historical backgrounds in Pre-independent India

Pre-independent India	Examinations Reforms
Vedic Period	- Gurukul System of Examination. - Guru executes the instructions and order of examination. - Oral and Discussion was main examination method. - Discipline one of the major examination parts holds Asram education period
Buddhist Period	- Verbal and Discussion Examination Method. - Tour and Conference of the major examination part hold Asram education period. - Oral and Discussion was the main method of examination.
Islamic Period Maktab Examination system	- Oral method of Examination. - Koran reading competition method. - Discussion of Sura, yate etc. in front of Ostad.
Madrasha Examination system	- Oral Discussion method used in Examination - Story telling Examination methods. - Discussion Sura, yate, Hadis, in front of Ostad. - Some practical examination is using this Education system.

4. Conclusion

The examination reforms in the pre-independence Indian school system had a significant impact on the educational landscape. They attempted to tackle difficulties like rote learning, a lack of critical thinking, and accessibility. Reforms ushered in a more organized evaluation system that prioritized holistic growth and practical knowledge. While they established the framework for future educational reforms, their influence was restricted by colonial rules and socioeconomic limitations. Finally, these changes underlined the necessity for an education system that promotes creativity and analytical abilities, laying the groundwork for post-independence educational endeavours. The system has been reformed which has had a significant impact on education and Examination Reforms in India. Ancient India was a major source of knowledge for the world education system. Gradually Vedantic, Buddhist and Islamic education brought a new dimension to the education system in India in particular. The Vedantic education system, especially in India, showed the whole world the way to explore new knowledge at this time. At this time the students would get Ashram-centric education especially in the Gurugriha and after acquiring that knowledge the student would have to prove his knowledge to the Guru again and the whole thing would be oral through which they would continue their important contribution in the society. The Buddhist education system made an important contribution to India in the later period of Vedantic education. This system of Buddhist education awakened a new development and consciousness throughout India and spread to different parts of the world. The Buddhist education system was a fully centralized guru-house (Asrama) where students were taught and then after the guru had to test their knowledge verbally and different behaviors only to measure their learning behavior and through which the education was completed and after the completion of the education degree was awarded to students through a ceremony. India is the cradle of knowledge, so along with the various education systems, the Islamic education system and a new style of education spread in India, and through madrasas, students began to receive Quran-centric education. Students received Quran-centered education through Maktabs and madrasas. At this time, after completing Qur'an-centered education in all these Maktab-Madrasas, they would take examinations orally or in some cases through written or discussion methods with the guru and from then on, they would get degrees in Maktab-Madrasas.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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