

## The Evolution of Emotional Development in Indian Educational System: A Psychological Analysis from Ancient to the Contemporary Era

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### Abstract

This research investigates how psychological principles implicitly integrated within India's higher education system—from ancient through the present era—contribute to students' emotional development. A qualitative research design, including historical and analytical methods, was used. Secondary data were collected by reviewing the higher education systems of Ancient (Vedic and Buddhist), Medieval (Islamic\Mughal), Modern (British\Colonial), and Present (Post-Independence) India, and the relevant information was organised sequentially. Such as the places and institutions where higher education has been provided, the curriculum, and teaching methods. Additionally, the acts, policies, and committees introduced by British education to present education have been also included. Data were analysed excluding similar components, relevant patterns, and themes from each educational system that align with present psychological principles and aspects indicating emotional development. The results found that various psychological principles embedded in educational systems have contributed to students' emotional development and wellness from ancient times to the present. This indicates that emotional development has been an integral part of Indian education. So we can conclude that emotional development is an inherent component of education. Integrating the elements of each educational system can help build a more holistic education system, for future generations and a developed India can be witnessed.

**Keywords:** Educational system, emotional development, Ancient to Present India, psychological principles and aspects.

Education can never be defined as a narrow term and never be under a boundary. Education is not only about acquiring knowledge and cognitive skills, learning new things, passing exams, getting a job, and earning degrees. It goes beyond these aspects and is not limited to achieving a respectful status in life. Instead, it must enhance emotional and moral development with cognitive and intellectual growth. Learning should enhance empathy, compassion, love, and kindness along with academic knowledge which helps in creating a peaceful society. Without considering these dimensions education becomes incomplete, indicating the holistic development of an individual. Education prepares the individual to contribute meaningfully to society with both their minds and hearts. Education is dynamic and it reflects changes in culture, tradition, values, and societal norms. As a key tool for social progress, education enhances knowledge, health, living conditions, social equality, and productivity (Spiel et al., 2018). With all these changes education demands transformation in its systems over time to meet society's needs and challenges. From the past to the present India has undergone several changes in its educational system, which is a sign of development. If we look closely, we can notice that behind every reform in the educational system, various psychological principles and aspects are hidden that play a crucial role in

shaping individual development in multiple ways. Such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. Here, our major focus is on exploring emotional development in each educational system. Before going deeper it is important to understand what an educational system is.

### **Educational System:**

The term educational system is very complex and is not easy to define. It is not limited to a particular aspect of education. Simply, we can say that the concrete and abstract structure of education including infrastructure, curriculum, methods, means, acts, or policies that operate together to provide education is called the educational system. Some define it in the sense of different levels (Ganguly, 2024), Some view it as the method included in the system, while some describe it as the channel through which education is delivered (Top Hat, n.d.). According to UNESCO's ISCED system, nine levels of education, from pre-primary (Level 0) to doctoral (Level 8) are recognized (UNESCO, 2012). In another sense, the educational system is referred to as a structure of all institutions that provide learning opportunities to people of a specific country (Wallace, 2009). Even though there are multiple ways of defining the educational system, it is certain that with different levels of education, the system varies in providing education. For example, the structure of

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institutions changes according to different levels of education. In the current educational system where very low levels of education are provided in kindergarten or nursery schools, on the other hand, primary and secondary levels of education are given in institutes called schools and the last level of education called higher education is given in colleges and universities. Like this, the curriculum, methods, and other components of education vary with the level of education.

Narrowing down the educational system, our purpose is to focus only on the higher education system. We aim to explore how the psychological principles and aspects integrated implicitly within the higher educational system—from ancient times through present India—contribute to students' emotional development. This study can be instrumental in providing valuable insight into how the higher education system has been shaping students' emotional growth over time. The findings could guide future changes in education to better support students' emotional growth and contribute to developing an emotionally mature generation. If students are emotionally developed we can expect a peaceful and good-natured society which can help in a developed and peaceful India.

### **Method**

It is a qualitative research design that includes historical and analytical methods. Secondary data was collected by reviewing higher educational systems of various periods including Ancient (Vedic and Buddhist); Medieval (Islamic or Mughal); Modern (British or Colonial); and Present (Post Independence) India and the relevant information was organised sequentially. Such as the places and institutions where higher education has been provided, the curriculum or syllabus, and the methods of teaching. Additionally, the acts, policies, and committees introduced by British education to present education have been also included. The sources of gathering this information were books, journals, research papers, articles, and various online websites. Data were analysed excluding similar elements, relevant patterns, and themes from each educational system's components that align with present psychological principles and aspects indicating emotional development. This included higher thinking, logic, and the cognitive skills of the researcher.

### **Ancient Educational System**

The education system in ancient India includes two forms of education: Vedic, and Buddhist (Ghonge et al., 2020).

### **Vedic Educational System**

In India, the history of the educational system began during the Vedic period when the Gurukul system was the hallmark of education. In this period higher education was provided in Gurukul which was situated in serene environments like forests (Goudgeri, 2022, p.374). The Vedic educational system was centred on the study of the Vedas—Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda—along with key associated texts such as the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads (Ramani, 2018). The curriculum was comprehensive, addressing not only religious and philosophical teachings but also subjects like grammar, logic, mathematics, language, astronomy, astrology, war, economics, music, and Ayurveda (medicine). The way of instruction was deeply personal, emphasising the oral transmission of knowledge through memorisation and recitation (Chaudhari, 2024, p.f 11). This method ensured that knowledge was preserved and passed down accurately. Students engaged deeply with concepts through various methods such as listening, contemplation, and focused reflection. Teachers used storytelling to impart knowledge, while interactive learning was encouraged through students' questions and discussions. Regular seminars and debates further enriched students' understanding (Ghonge et al., 2020).

### **Psychological Interpretation**

Interpreting the Vedic educational system it is found that its some components integrate the following implicit psychological aspects that might have supported emotional development:

- a) Personalised Instruction and Relationship Building:** The personalised approach to instruction and the close relationship between teacher and student likely fostered a supportive environment that enhanced emotional growth and stability.
- b) Contemplation and Reflection:** This introspective practice could help in the development of self-awareness and emotional intelligence.
- c) Storytelling and Interactive Learning:** It likely provided students with relatable experiences and moral lessons which helped them manage their emotions and develop empathy.
- d) Regular Seminars and Debates:** These activities would have allowed students to express themselves, engage in critical thinking, and handle differing viewpoints. This process can help in developing resilience

and confidence which enhance emotional development.

- e) **Serene Environments:** The Gurukuls were often situated in a natural and serene environment that might have contributed to their emotional well-being. Because it provided relaxation and mental clarity.

These elements suggest that while the Vedic educational system may not have explicitly focused on emotional development, its methods and environment provided a strong foundation for students' emotional growth.

### **Buddhist Educational System**

This is the second educational system in ancient India that was based on the teachings of Lord Buddha. Before the Buddhist educational system education was restricted to the higher caste, particularly Brahmins. However, with the arrival of Buddhism, the system transformed and became inclusive and free from discrimination. It allowed education for all segments of society, leading to societal progress (Shastri, 2022, h195-196). Buddhist higher education was primarily provided in *Viharas* (monastic schools) and monasteries (Singh, 2015). These institutions served as the educational centres for both spiritual and secular learning. Major sites for Buddhist education included well-known ancient universities such as Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Taxila in India (Jaral, 2023). These centres attracted scholars from various countries and played an important role in fostering academic and cultural exchanges. According to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) during the Buddhist period, institutions like Takshashila and Nalanda University offered higher education with a diverse curriculum. At Takshashila, the curriculum included the study of ancient scriptures, law, medicine, astronomy, military science, and the eighteen *silpas* or arts. Nalanda University similarly provided a wide range of subjects for advanced study. The students were taught various subjects such as the *Vedas*, fine arts, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, politics, and the art of warfare. The Buddhist teaching method was structured in stages: The first involved recitation, the second was discussion, and the third focused on direct teaching by the teacher. According to Deb (2023), a notable feature of the spread and teaching method of Buddhist teaching is that the more this education reached the masses, the more language problems arose in education. It led to the use of local languages for better understanding. Initially, Pali

became a key medium of instruction, and later both Pali and Sanskrit were important in Buddhist education p.107).

### **Psychological Interpretation**

The Buddhist educational system, though not described in modern psychological terms. It included several features that likely helped with emotional development.

- a) **Inclusivity and Equality:** The Buddhist educational system broke down social barriers and made education accessible to all segments of society. This inclusivity may have fostered a sense of belonging and self-worth among students from diverse backgrounds that contributes to positive emotional development.

- b) **Holistic Education:** The diverse curriculum offered at institutions like Nalanda and Takshashila covered both spiritual and secular subjects. This holistic approach might have helped students develop a well-rounded sense of self and emotional resilience by addressing various aspects of their lives and experiences.

- c) **Structured Learning Stages:** The Buddhist teaching method involved recitation, discussion, and direct teaching. This structured approach could have provided students with a sense of progression and achievement, which is important for building confidence and emotional stability.

- d) **Use of Local Languages:** This emphasises clear communication. It may have reduced frustration and enhanced students' emotional comfort with the learning environment.

- e) **Community and Social Interaction:** The Viharas and monasteries served as communal living spaces where students interacted with each other and with teachers. This communal aspect could have provided emotional support through peer relationships and a sense of community.

- f) **Cultural and Academic Exchanges:** The role of ancient universities in enhancing cultural exchanges might have exposed students to diverse perspectives which helped them develop emotional adaptability and resilience.

These elements of the Buddhist educational system suggest that, while not explicitly labelled as psychological principles, the methods and values promoted emotional development in students.

### **Medieval Educational System**

The Islamic and Mughal educational systems replaced the Vedic and Buddhist education

systems in the Medieval period (Kapur, 2018). In this system, Madrasas, Jamias, and Dar-ul-Ulooms were the main places of higher education (Khan, 1983) which offered a broad and advanced curriculum. Madrassahs provided education in Arabic grammar, literature, tafsir (Koranic commentary), hadith (tradition), fiqh (Islamic law), usul-e-fiqh (jurisprudence), mantiq (logic), kalam (Islamic philosophy), and tasawwuf (mysticism). Jamias and Dar-ul-Ulooms functioned as centres for higher learning, as modern universities that cover a wide range of disciplines. These institutions included subjects such as ethics, arithmetic, economics, administration, physics, logic, natural philosophy, algebra, and divinity. During Akbar's reign, the curriculum was expanded to include secular subjects like astronomy, physics, geography, medicine, and economics, reflecting a blend of religious and practical knowledge (Khan, 1983). In Islamic higher education, particularly in Madrassahs, teaching methods included oral instruction with a focus on memorisation and rote learning, especially for Quranic verses. The system evolved to incorporate lectures followed by discussions, which encouraged critical engagement with the material. Practical and experimental work was included in various subjects, alongside analytical and inductive methods to understand students' cognitive processes. Teachers had significant freedom in deciding punishments. They often used harsh corporal punishment to discipline students. (Prasad, 2020, p.3403).

#### **Psychological Interpretation**

The Islamic and Mughal educational systems also had several elements that likely supported emotional development.

- a) **Inclusive and Broad Curriculum:** The broad curriculum in institutions like Jamias and Dar-ul-Ulooms could have fostered a sense of well-roundedness and purpose which contributes to students' emotional stability and confidence.
- b) **Lectures and Discussions:** This approach provides students with a platform to express their thoughts and emotions which fosters a sense of intellectual empowerment and emotional validation.
- c) **Practical and Experimental Work:** This could have helped students experience a sense of achievement and competence, which are important for building self-esteem and emotional resilience.
- d) **Community Learning Environment:** The communal nature of education in Madrasas, Jamias, and Dar-ul-Ulooms likely provided students with social support and a sense of belonging, which are crucial for emotional well-being.
- e) **Adaptation and Expansion of Curriculum:** During Akbar's reign, the expansion of the curriculum to include secular subjects reflected a willingness to adapt and integrate diverse knowledge. This flexibility might have helped students develop a broader perspective, contributing to emotional maturity and adaptability.

These aspects of the medieval Islamic and Mughal educational systems suggest that, while not explicitly labelled as psychological principles, the methods and environment provided opportunities for emotional development and resilience among students.

#### **Modern Educational System**

The modern educational system replaced the Islamic educational system when the British started ruling India. This includes British educational systems where English was introduced as the main language (Ghonge et al., 2020). This period is also called Colonial rule. India's current education system is shaped by this Colonial rule where the British used the university system to spread British culture and values (Nivedya, 2020). During this rule, India's education system underwent significant changes. Various acts, committees, and initiatives were introduced that shaped India's education system (Srimathi & Krishnamoorthy, 2020; Chand, 2015) are described as follows:

1. **Charter Act of 1813:** This act promoted science education and allocated funds to support education in India, but did not regulate the establishment of schools and colleges. It leads to debates on the medium of instruction and the curriculum.
2. **Mountstuart Elphinstone's Minutes (1823):** Elphinstone's Minutes emphasised the need to establish schools. It recommended teaching English and European sciences while retaining Indian institutions and integrating a Western curriculum with Indian heritage.
3. **Lord Macaulay's Minutes (1835):** These minutes focused on promoting English education through the "Downward Filtration" theory. It aimed to create a class of educated Indians who would support British rule. Macaulay's approach emphasized Western literature and science over oriental works.

4. **Wood's Despatch (1854):** This despatch made the British government responsible for education, introduced scholarships, encouraged women's education, and promoted vocational education. It also recommended the establishment of universities in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai, modelled after London University.
5. **Hunter Commission (1882):** This commission reviewed primary, secondary, and higher education, recommending free education, monitoring of educational institutions, and priority for underprivileged groups. It led to the establishment of Punjab University (1882) and Allahabad University (1887).
6. **Indian University Act (1904):** This act increased government control over higher education and provided substantial funding for universities.
7. **Sadler University Commission (1917-19):** It recommended a twelve-year school course, intermediate examinations before university admission, and a three-year degree course following the intermediate stage. It also emphasised women's education, teacher training, and science and technology in the curriculum.
8. **Inter-University Board (1925):** It was formed to promote university education and resource sharing, this board laid the groundwork for what would become the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).
9. **Sapru Committee (1934):** It proposed the abolition of the intermediate stage, vocational education after secondary school, and a three-year degree course post-secondary education.
10. **Sargent Report (1944):** It suggested comprehensive reforms, including pre-primary, primary, high school, and degree education, and highlighted vocational education, teacher training, and special education.

#### Psychological Interpretation

The British educational system in India during the Colonial period included various reforms and policies, aimed mainly focused on administrative and cultural goals. However, it also had implications for emotional development.

- a) **Inclusive and Structured Education:** The establishment of schools and universities under the Charter Act of 1813 and other reforms aimed to broaden educational access. This inclusivity likely helped students from diverse backgrounds feel a sense of belonging

and worth, contributing to their emotional well-being.

- b) **Focus on Science and Vocational Education:** Wood's Despatch (1854) emphasized vocational education and women's education. Providing practical skills and opportunities for women could enhance self-esteem and emotional resilience by offering a sense of purpose and achievement.
- c) **Teacher Training and Curriculum Development:** The Sadler University Commission (1917-19) emphasized teacher training and a comprehensive curriculum. Well-trained teachers and a diverse curriculum can provide students with better emotional support and a more engaging learning environment that fosters emotional development.
- d) **Women's Education:** Reforms such as those recommended by Wood's Despatch and other committees promoted women's education. Empowering women through education could improve their self-esteem, autonomy, and emotional well-being.
- e) **Structured Educational Pathways:** The recommendations for structured educational pathways, such as the Sadler University Commission's suggested twelve-year school course and intermediate examinations, provide students with a clear progression and goals, which can enhance motivation and emotional stability.
- f) **Educational Access for All:** The focus on expanding education to various social strata and regions through institutions like the Hunter Commission and the Indian University Act contributed to a more inclusive system. This inclusivity can foster a sense of equality and emotional security among students.
- g) **Inter-University Collaboration:** The formation of the Inter-University Board (1925) to promote resource sharing and collaboration among universities likely facilitated a supportive academic community. It enhanced students' emotional experience through a sense of shared purpose and cooperation.

These elements reflect various ways in which the British educational system had implicit psychological benefits that supported students' emotional development.

#### Present Educational System

British educational systems were not the last reformation in the educational system rather after post-independence various reforms can be seen

in the educational system which can be referred to as the present education system. After independence, the educational policies, acts, and reforms that were introduced till the present era (Alam, 2022) are as follows:

#### **Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49)**

It emphasised high-quality teaching and recommended that students with intermediate education should be admitted to universities. It recommended that PhD programs last at least two years, with fellowships provided to research scholars, and that higher degrees like D. Litt and D.Sc. should be awarded only for original research. Financial assistance from the government was also suggested. Additionally, it called for recognition of diverse course studies, including vocational education, and better facilities for women's education. The commission proposed compulsory teaching of religious texts to second-year graduate students, research in Ayurvedic and Unani medicine, and specific limits on medical college admissions. The importance of teaching national and regional languages was highlighted, along with the establishment of new universities in rural areas.

#### **Indian Education Commission (1964-66)**

While it was not for higher education, it led to future higher educational reforms. It focused on free and compulsory education, the Three Language Formula, and the equalisation of educational opportunities. The commission recommended residential facilities in schools, improvements in women's education, and the inclusion of moral and religious education. It also advocated for adult education, vocational training, and co-curricular activities, as well as enhancements in teaching methods, textbooks, and curriculum.

#### **National Policy on Education (1968)**

It continued the focus on free and compulsory education, the Three Language Formula and aimed to equalize educational opportunities and improve science education and research. The policy proposed an educational structure of 10+3+2 and addressed women's illiteracy. It recommended delinking degrees from job requirements, establishing rural universities, and significantly increasing government funding for higher education. A target of spending 6% of GDP on education was set for the first time.

#### **National Policy on Education (1986)**

It aimed to provide access to education for all students, regardless of caste, creed, or gender. This educational policy emphasized free and compulsory elementary education and the

establishment of Open Universities and Open Distance Learning institutions. The policy introduced Operation Black Board to improve elementary education quality and advocated for setting up Navodaya Schools in each district. It focused on skill-based learning, delinked degrees from jobs, and proposed the creation of the Indian Education Service and National Testing Service. The policy granted constitutional status to the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and supported the establishment of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs). Special attention was given to disadvantaged groups, including women, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backwards Classes (OBC), and those with physical disabilities.

#### **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (2013)**

This aimed at improving higher education by upgrading autonomous colleges to universities which provided infrastructure grants to colleges and universities, and established new model colleges. It focused on equity initiatives, faculty recruitment, and teaching improvements. The program emphasised capacity building, research, and quality improvement in Indian education.

#### **National Education Policy (2020)**

It is the last and most recent reformation in India's educational system that tries to transform the Indian education system to meet 21st-century needs. It aims to address literacy and numeracy issues, focus on early childhood care, and restructure curriculum and pedagogy. The policy has proposed a new curricular structure of 5+3+3+4, eliminated rigid separations between academic and vocational streams, and introduced a National Testing Agency for common entrance exams. Undergraduate degrees are to be four years with multiple entry and exit options, and a new system for academic credits and assessment has been introduced. The policy also calls for increased international collaboration, the establishment of new research foundations, and the setting up of multidisciplinary education and research universities. Its goal is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) to 50% by 2035, abolish M. Phil degrees, and integrate interdisciplinary courses by 2040. The government has planned to allocate 6% of GDP to education and establish a Central Advisory Board of Education to oversee educational quality.

#### **Psychological Interpretation**

The present educational system in India also incorporates several implicit psychological principles or aspects that support students' emotional development.

- a) **Inclusivity and Equal Opportunities:** The National Policy on Education (1986) emphasized access to education for all students regardless of caste, creed, or gender. This inclusivity helps foster a sense of belonging and self-worth among students from diverse backgrounds, which is crucial for emotional development.
- b) **Focus on Holistic Education:** The National Policy on Education (2020) has restructured the curriculum to integrate academic and vocational streams and introduced interdisciplinary courses that aim to address various student needs and interests. This holistic approach supports students in finding their passions and building self-esteem, contributing to emotional well-being.
- c) **Emphasis on Skill-Based Learning:** The National Policy on Education (1986) focused on skill-based learning and vocational training. It helps students gain practical skills and confidence. Mastery of skills and the ability to apply them effectively can enhance emotional resilience and a sense of accomplishment.
- d) **Support for Disadvantaged Groups:** The National Policy on Education (1986) gave special attention to disadvantaged groups, including women, SCs, STs, OBCs, and students with disabilities that aims to provide equitable educational opportunities. This approach helps in reducing feelings of inadequacy and promoting self-efficacy among these students.
- e) **Enhanced Teacher Training and Support:** The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49) recommended improving teaching quality and providing better facilities for teachers that can lead to more supportive and responsive teaching environments. Supportive teachers contribute to positive emotional experiences and development for students.
- f) **Mental Health and Well-Being Focus:** The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) included moral and religious education. This can be linked to emotional development by providing ethical and moral frameworks that support students' emotional growth and resilience.
- g) **Accessibility to Higher Education:** Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (2013)

afforded to improve access to higher education and infrastructure. This helped student's feel valued and encouraged to pursue their academic and emotional growth.

- h) **Student-Centric Learning Approaches:** The National Education Policy (2020) has introduced flexible curricula and multiple entry and exit options for undergraduate degrees allowing students to personalize their education to their needs and interests, which can enhance motivation and emotional satisfaction.
- i) **Promotion of Research and Creativity:** The National Education Policy (2020) has increased focus on research and establishing new research foundations. It encourages intellectual curiosity and creativity, which can foster a sense of achievement and emotional fulfilment among students.

These principles and policies collectively aim to create a supportive, inclusive, and flexible educational environment that addresses various aspects of students' emotional development.

### Conclusion

This research has comprehensively traced the evolution of the Indian higher educational system from historical times to present reforms. Analysing each period's data it has been found that various psychological elements and principles that could help in the emotional development of students have lain implicitly under each period of the educational system's components. Many common patterns and themes indicate that some similarities have still been transmitted despite various transformations. This indicates that emotional development has been an integral part of every educational system. So we can conclude that educational systems hold emotional development on their own which has been helping individuals live a balanced life from the ancient to the present era. So recognising the components of each educational system which have helped in the emotional development of students we can reform a much better educational system for future generations and a developed India could be witnessed.

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