

# **Development of School Education in Andaman and Nicobar Islands: Issues and Challenges**

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## **Abstract**

**Prior to the advent of the skills of reading and writing, society could be classified as being in the pre-literate cultural stage. The change from pre-literate to literate society is said to have begun somewhere during the fourth millennium BC through a gradual transition from pictography to the use of an alphabet (Golden, 1968). After the advent of the dual skills of reading and writing, the relevance of education to the cultural advancement enhanced significantly. Education is essential for eradicating poverty and mental isolation. It is also necessary for permitting the free play of demographic processes. It is considered as an index of the pace at which the socio-economic transformation of a society is taking place. Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a far flung place away from mainland India and where the sight of economic growth reaches very slow, education plays an important role in its overall development.**

**Keywords: Education, Development, Literacy, Transformation, Relevance, Enrolment**

## **Introduction**

Education is one of the significant factors instrumental to the development of a country. It should be transformed to the needs of the time and changing scenario of the world. It provides an opportunity to critically reflect upon the social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. India has a long history of organised education. The Gurukul System of education is one of the oldest. Gurukuls were traditional Hindu residential schools of learning, typically the teacher's house or a monastery. Education was free but students from well to do families paid gurudakshina, a voluntary contribution after the completion of their studies. At the Gurukuls, the teacher imparted knowledge of religion, scriptures, philosophy, literature, warfare statecraft, mathematics, medicine, astrology and history (Pajankar & Pajankar, 2010).

The current system of education with its western style and content was introduced by British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century following recommendations by Macaulay. After independence, education became the responsibility of the states. The government after independence has adopted policies and programme for improvement of education in India. However, Indian education system has its share of issues and challenges which need to be resolved to provide better and improved education to children, who are the future of the country. Over the years, a lot has changed in the Indian education system and the general educational status has improved but this improvement is not even across region and between genders. Keeping in view, the present study is an attempt to study the changing scenario of school education in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

**Methodology:**

The present study is an attempt to discuss the changes and development in the school education in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The present study is based on secondary data which has been collected from various sources. i.e. census report, statistical handbook, report etc. Various statistical and cartographic techniques have been used in analysing and representing the information.

**School Education Scenario in Andaman and Nicobar Islands:**

The evolution of education in Andaman and Nicobar Islands dates back to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century when the first primary school in the island was established for the prisoners and their children. Slowly and steadily, various other schools were also been developed according to the need of the time. The high school at Sri Vijaya Puram (earlier known as Port Blair) was then affiliated to Rangoon University but with the separation of Myanmar (Burma) from India, this affiliation was transferred to Calcutta University in 1936. In the year 1946, 12 schools were functioning, comprising one high school, one middle school, eight primary school and one each of Karan and Burmese school. The education needs of the territory could receive earnest attention only after independence.

**Literacy:**

Education is a process of human resource development. It not only raises the capacity but also enables to perform economic functions efficiently. Education has been accepted as one of the most important methods of developing human resources (Singh, 2004). Literacy is one of the indicators of education development. Since the independence, the Indian education system has evolved a lot. This development has also shown its imprint in these islands. Andaman and Nicobar Islands have a considerable high rate of literacy as compared to all India. The literacy rate in the Union Territory is about 86% including 90% in males and 82% in females(as per 2011 census).The gap between the male and female literacy has narrowed down from 17% in 1981 to less than 11% in 2001. Similarly, the rural urban disparities in literacy has also declined from 11% in 1991 to about 6% in 2011.The literacy rate in Andaman and Nicobar Islands was about 34% during 1961 and increased up to 51% in 1971 and 60% in 1981 respectively. The Union Territory Administration is making all out efforts to provide the education facilities to all the nook and corners of this Territory, resulted increase in infrastructural facilities, urban growth and in literacy rate.

**Table-1: Andaman and Nicobar Islands: Literacy rate (in %)**

Year	Male	Female	Total
1961	42.43	19.37	33.63
1971	58.82	38.29	51.15
1981	67.32	50.51	60.25
1991	78.99	65.46	73.02
2001	86.33	75.24	81.29
2011	90.30	82.40	86.60

Source: Census report

Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Literacy in %)

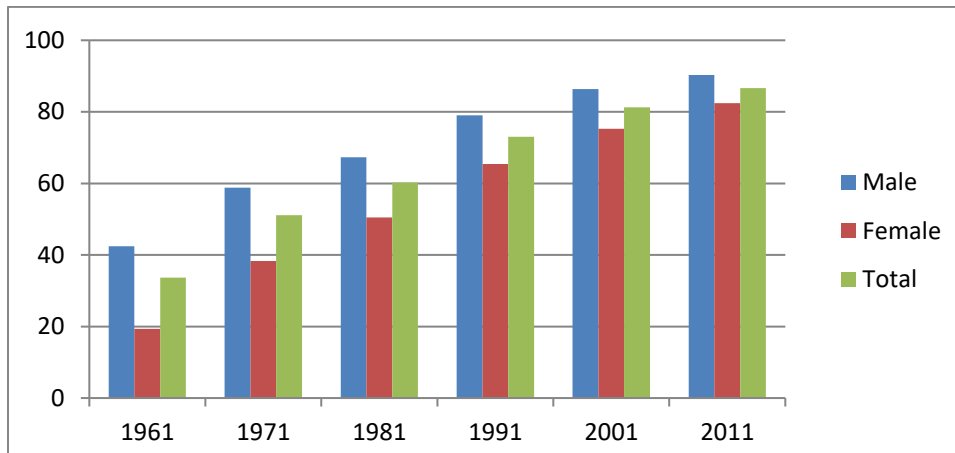


Fig.1

**Enrolment:**

The education system in India, in general and Andaman and Nicobar in particular have undergone changes over the past few decades resulted enhancement in the enrolment in schools at various levels. The following table depicts the status of enrolment at various stages in the Union Territory.

**Table-2: Andaman and Nicobar Islands-Enrolment in school**

Stage	2021-22			2022-23			2023-24		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre Primary	4263	4193	8456	5550	5357	10907	5589	5442	11031
Primary	13293	12671	25964	13041	12285	25326	12283	11663	23946
Middle	9088	8631	17719	8920	8302	17222	8776	8215	16991
Secondary	5796	5834	11810	5880	5836	11716	5802	5677	11479
Senior Secondary	5730	5753	11483	6110	5734	11844	5065	5346	10411
Total	38350	37082	75432	39501	37514	77015	37515	36343	73858

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Andaman and Nicobar Islands

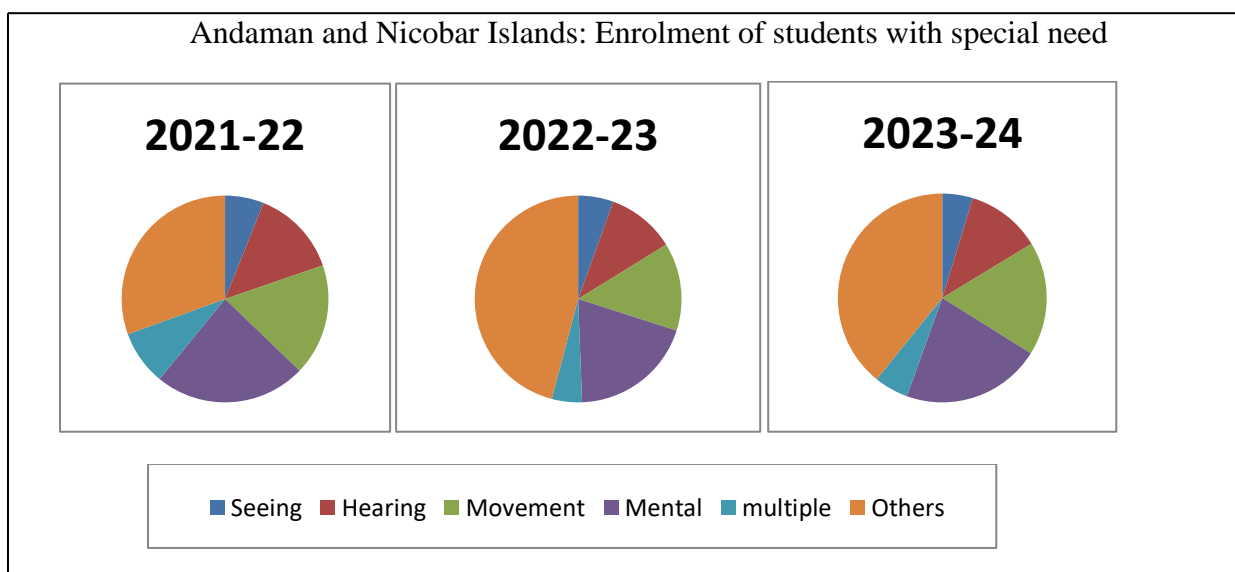
Education is a process of human resource development. The term development is very comprehensive. It includes all aspects of life of an individual and the nation’s cultural, democratic, emotional, economic, intellectual, moral, physical and social. All aspects of development are very important and interrelated also. If one aspect remains underdeveloped, others are also affected (Aggarwal, 1982). Keeping this fact in mind the Union Territory Administration is making all out efforts to provide the education facilities to

all. The education system in Andaman and Nicobar Islands has made great stride in recent years resulted enhancement of enrolment in scheduled tribe students also.

**Table-3: Andaman and Nicobar Islands-Enrolment of scheduled tribe Students**

Stage	2021-22			2022-23			2023-24		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre Primary	189	168	357	273	258	531	252	259	511
Primary	1197	1206	2403	1491	1402	2893	1343	1238	2581
Middle	835	815	1650	919	870	1789	882	847	1729
Secondary	532	569	1101	598	609	1207	564	572	1136
Senior Secondary	341	355	696	541	523	1064	448	526	974
<b>Total</b>	<b>3094</b>	<b>3113</b>	<b>6207</b>	<b>3822</b>	<b>3662</b>	<b>7484</b>	<b>3489</b>	<b>3442</b>	<b>6931</b>

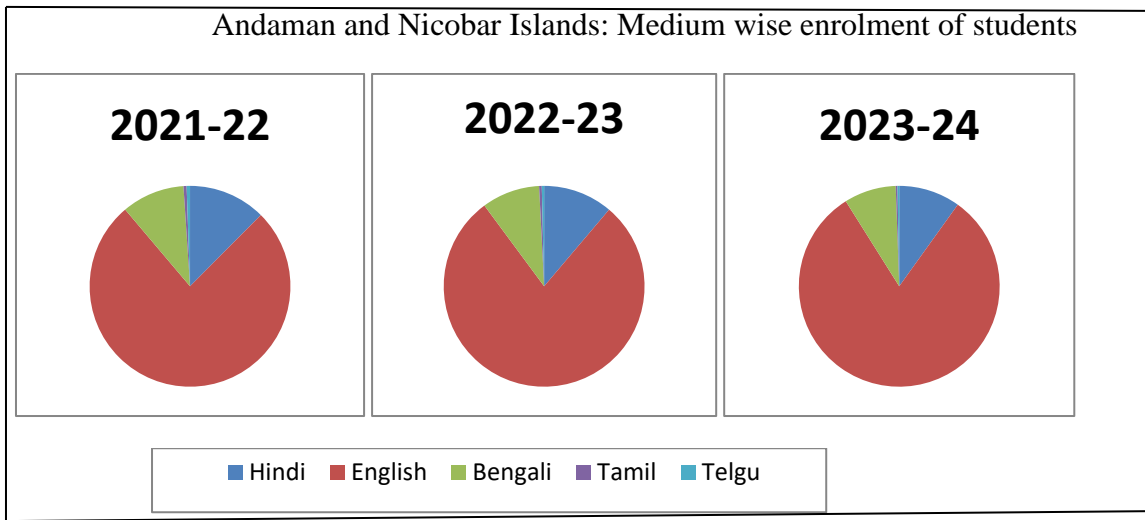
Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Andaman and Nicobar Islands



**Fig. 2**

**Development in Educational Institutions:**

Education is one of the significant factors instrumental to the development of a country. It should be transformed to the needs of the time and changing scenario. Education has been accepted as one of the most important methods of developing human resources and increasing the rate of human capital formation. The more efficient is the education system, the higher will be the rate of human capital formation.



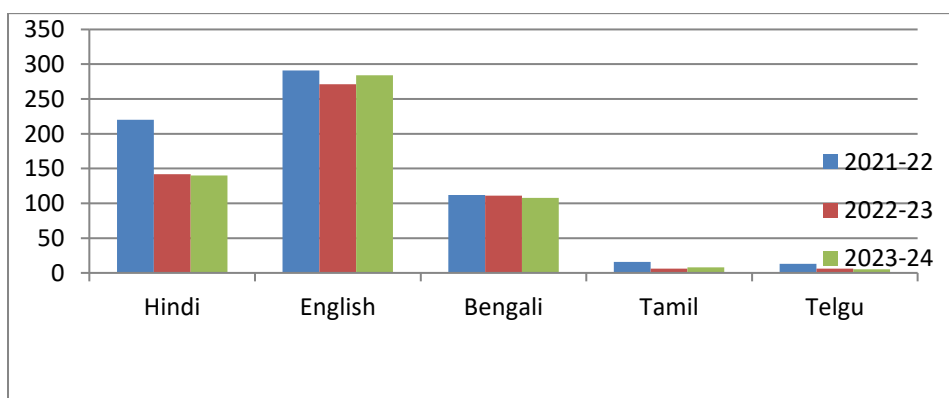
**Fig. 3**

Table-4 and figure- 4 reveals that there has been appreciable growth of number of educational institutions in these islands over a period of time. Since independence, major changes have occurred in education with the continuous implementation of various programmes by the local administration.

**Table-4: Andaman and Nicobar Islands-Growth of schools**

Type of school	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Pre-Primary	30	29	26
Primary	220	214	206
Middle	75	78	82
Secondary	53	53	54
Senior Secondary	68	69	70
Total	446	443	438

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, A & N Islands



**Fig. 4: Medium wise Number of Schools in A & N Islands**

**Teacher- Pupil Ratio:**

Education improves the quality of an individual and his behaviour. It is a process of development and growth of an individual from infancy to maturity. It is a process by which an individual learns how to adopt himself to physical, social and spiritual environment gradually and in various ways. It is a process of organizing and reorganizing experiences.

Teacher is the most important input of educational system. Whole system is dependent on the quality of the teacher. A good school teacher may build the society better. Total liability to human resource development is on the teachers of the institutions. With the expansion of educational facilities in the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the number of teachers has also gone up over the years. Female teachers account more than 50% of the total in all the schools.

**Table- 5: Andaman and Nicobar Islands: Number of Teachers in Schools**

Type of Institute	2021-22			2022-23			2023-24		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Pre-Primary School	8	85	93	7	58	65	6	100	106
Primary	297	605	902	336	676	1012	308	688	996
Middle	267	616	883	281	688	969	256	715	971
Secondary	338	576	914	336	626	962	365	669	1034
Senior Secondary	903	1679	2582	944	1798	2742	896	1812	2708
Total	1813	3561	5374	1904	3846	5750	1831	3984	5815

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, A & N Islands

**Table- 6: Andaman and Nicobar Islands- Teacher-Pupil ratio**

Institution	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Pre-Primary	1:17	1:29	1:16
Primary	1:10	1:9	1:8
Middle	1:10	1:10	1:10
Secondary	1:13	1:13	1:12
Senior Secondary	1:17	1:16	1:16

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, A & N Islands

**Challenges School Education Currently Facing:**

The Indian education system has its share of issues and challenges which need to be resolved to provide better and improved education to children, who are the future of the country. The education system faces many challenges including unequal access to education, out dated curricula, inadequate funding, shortage of faculties and infrastructure and expenditure on education etc.



## Recent Steps Taken:

The education sector plays a pivotal role in shaping the socio-economic development of a state. Historically, India had a knowledge system that not only ensured the effective transfer of a holistic episteme from generation to generation but also its enhancement as per the requirements of age, nation and society (Singh, 2024). A smooth transition of this tradition to the modern day was hampered by successive colonial interference leading to several glaring gaps in the modern education system.

The report of the education commission 1964-66 has observed if the pace of national development is to be accelerated, there is need for a well defined, bold and imaginative educational policy and for determined and vigorous action to vitalize improve and expand education. The commission further observed that education cannot be considered in isolation or planned in a vacuum. It has to be used as a powerful instrument of social, economic and political change.

Recognising the urgent need to plug these gaps and accelerate the development of education, the present Modi government has introduced several reforms aimed at enhancing the quality, accessibility and skill orientation education in the country.

Education is on the concurrent list though major responsibilities for school education lies with the state government. Under this arrangement, the central government and the state government are expected to have a meaningful partnership for education development. The last decade of the century, definitely marks a significant positive note in the history of basic education in the country. Though the constitution has made a commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen, the task of providing basic education for all received high priority with concrete plans of action mainly after the national policy on education. This has been reflected in the higher allocation of resources as well as in terms of clearly defined strategies to achieve the goals of education for all.

The reforms in primary and secondary education under the Modi government represent a paradigm shift towards transformational change. By involving technology, enhancing infrastructure, empowering teachers, these reforms are shaping the education landscape in the country, unlocking the potential and driving the nation towards better and brighter future.

The Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Administration is making all out efforts to accelerate the pace of growth in education by increasing enrolment and retention at school for which various incentives are provided to all especially tribal students and students belonging to BPL families. These includes free text books and note books, stationary, uniform and school bags, cooked mid day meal to the students of classes I-VIII, snacks to the students of pre primary classes, hostel stipends, free travel concession, post metric scholarship, early childhood care and education and reservation of seats in higher courses. To cater to the educational, physical, nutritional and psychological needs of a child in the age group of 3-6 years, the Andaman and Nicobar Administration has provided pre-primary education through pre-primary classes attached to the schools.

The science unit of the Directorate of Education use to arrange science seminar, science quiz programme, mathematics millennium seminar and parliament quiz for students at state level to inculcate awareness and competitive sprit among them. Science and craft exhibitions at school level and zonal



level are being organised in which a number of craft items and science models, all prepared by students, are displayed. It also organises the orientation programme for science teachers. Considering the needs of the special education for the disadvantaged and physically challenged children under the integrated education for disabled, various centres in different schools are functioning. The education department under the Andaman and Nicobar Administration attempts to integrate such children into the normal school system where ever feasible.

The education department is taking all efforts to decrease gender gap in education and to provide a conducive atmosphere for the development of education. Various programmes are being implemented in the Union Territory i.e. Jan Sikhsan Nilayam and non-formal education centres, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, District primary education programme, Lok Jumbish, operation black board and computer education etc. Along with the rest of the country, the Education department of Andaman and Nicobar Islands has also introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to ensure universal education from pre-primary to senior secondary level, focusing on providing quality early childhood education.

A significant initiative in the realm of education in these islands is the Atal Lab (ATC) programme introduced by NITI Aayog with the objective of nurturing, curiosity and innovation among students. Equipped with advanced tools, technology and do it yourself kits, these labs serve as platform to stimulate problem solving and foster an innovative mind set among students.

## **Conclusion:**

A comprehensive analysis of key indicators reveals the significant progress made by Andaman and Nicobar Administration in education and skill development sector in recent decades despite the various restriction imposed by its physical and geographical location. This includes an increase in enrolment, the expansion of educational infrastructure and rise in innovation. The national policy on education aims at ensuring free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality to all children up to 14 years of age. Keeping this as the main thrust area, the objective of the department of education is to provide primary school within 1 km of every habitation with a population of 150 or above. Non-formal education centres have been provided in remote habitations where primary schools are not available.

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