

RECENT TRENDS IN
BRITISH EDUCATION

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In the past ten years there have been many articles written about the changing British educational system. Some authorities feel these changes lean toward the American style of education. This thesis is a library study of the recent changes.

First the history of British education is looked at to determine when certain characteristics developed. The educational history can be roughly divided into four periods. The first period would be that of individual and group control of education which lasted until the nineteenth century. The second period would be that of the nineteenth century. During this time the outstanding features were public committees and private groups studying schools and making specific reports and recommendations. The third period is that of the first half of the twentieth century. This could be called the age of the Great Education Acts. The fourth and final period of history would be the events which have occurred since the important Act of 1944.

The Act of 1944 was the foundation upon which the present structure of British schools is based. The government acts as the main financier, coordinator and advisor. However, each type of school is distinctly individualistic. Infant and Nursery schools are for pre-five year olds and are state supported. Primary schools

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are for children from five to eleven and are similar to our elementary schools. A grammar school educates eleven year olds to eighteen year olds and prepares them for the university. Entrance is selective and only those students who do well on the eleven-plus examination (a series of exams given at the age of eleven) are eligible. A technical school is similar to our technical high schools. A modern school educates all eleven to eighteen year olds who were not accepted in either a grammar school or a technical school. A comprehensive school tries to incorporate all three above school programs and students into one building.

In examining the trends in British education it can be seen that the outstanding feature is that most changes have been gradual ones. The government is playing an increasingly larger role. There is less religious training but it still remains in the schools. More children are being educated for more years but England is still struggling to do more. Curriculum and teachers are improving. However, better methods and atmospheres for teaching are constantly being studied and reported.

Looking critically at the articles in periodicals that say British schools are going American, one can find many exceptions and some proof that perhaps these statements are misleading. The comprehensive schools are not

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as American as they appear to be on the surface. In addition, they serve only a small portion of the total school population. It seems probable that Britain will not do away with the prestigious Public Grammar Schools. Tradition plays an important role in British institutions. Another factor keeping British schools from becoming American is the shortage of money. The English people have many educational problems to solve but it looks like they will be solved gradually, which is essentially a British trait.