***Introduction.***

Great Britain is one of the most developed countries in the world. Great Britain enters into the number of countries of “large eight”.

We all know that the Britains are very cultural people and many possess an outstanding mind. What makes them similar? National culture, heredity, traditions or may be education? But do many people in our country know about education in other countries? Many students would like to know about how their contemporaries in other countries live. In what schools do they study? Does the state ensure all them with necessary means for studying? What are their chances to obtain higher or technical education for worthy life in the future?

This article opens the curtain above education in Britain and contains sufficiently complete and comprehensive information for the student and school staff. The purpose of this article is to study the system of education in Britain and to look at from an objective point of view.

In the second half of the 20-century qualitative changes in education system occurred in Britain: the system of education began to be more oriented towards the development of useful knowledge. But in spite of this in the British system of education many survivals of the past, which strongly harm education, still remained.

In this synopsis the following reductions are accepted:

* ***A-level (advance level)*** – an examination usually taken by pupils at their final year at school at the age of eighteen. The exam was introduced in 1951. A-levels are needed to enter most types of higher education and a student must usually have three good grades to enter university.
* ***AS level (advanced supplementary level)*** – an examination taken by some pupils in their final year at school when they are taking their A-level. The AS level is a simpler examination than the A-level and can be studied in half the time. The exam was first introduced in 1989 and is intended to give pupils the chance to study a greater variety of subjects.
* ***Cathedral school (choir school)*** – a school in a cathedral city, usually a preparatory school or, occasionally, a public school, some of their pupils sing in the cathedral choir.
* ***College of Further Education (CFE)* –** a local college attended mostly by students between the ages of 16 and 19 who are working for the NVQ’s and practical qualifications; by some students taking A-levels and by mature students doing part-time courses.
* ***College* –** 1. An independent institution of higher education within a university, typically one at Oxford University or Cambridge University. 2. A specialized professional institution of secondary higher education, such as a college of music or a college of education. 3. The official title of certain public schools, such as Eton College.
* ***Comprehensive school*** – a large state secondary school for children of all abilities from a single district, providing a wide range of education. Over 90% of all secondary school students attend a comprehensive school. Comprehensive schools were introduced in 1965 to provide an equal secondary (11 – 18 years old) education. Comprehensive schools put pupils in different classes according to their ability, but there are no entry examinations.
* ***Further education*** – a term used to apply to any kind of education after secondary school, but not including university work (which is higher education).
* ***General Certificate of Education, the (GCE)*** – the standard school-leaving examination. It is taken by school pupils at the end of their fifth year of secondary education, at the age of 16. The GCE replaced the formed dual examination system of GCE O-level (General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level) and SCE (Certificate of Secondary Education, Ordinary Level), and the first GCSE examination were held in 1988. GCSE certificates are awarded for each subject on a seven-point scale, from A to G, and the examination’s syllabus and grading procedures are monitored by the School Examination and Assessment Council.
* ***Local Educational Authority (LEA)*** – the local government body that is responsible for the state schools in a district, as well as further education, and that engages teachers, maintains school buildings and supplies schools with equipment and materials.
* ***National Curriculum (NC)*** – was introduced into the education system in 1989. Until that time LEA decided on the curriculum, the subjects which would be taught in school in their area. The NC is designed to make a national standard for all school pupils between the ages of 5 to 16. The main subjects are English, Mathematics, Science and a foreign language, either French or German. There are examinations for all pupils at the ages of 7, 11, 14, and 16 to check on their progress.
* ***Oxbridge*** – a colloquial term for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, jointly regarded as being superior to other universities and as enjoying and giving special privilege and prestige.
* ***Secondary school*** – a state school or private school education for school children aged between 11 and 18. Other types of secondary schools are grammar schools, middle schools, secondary modern schools, technical schools and public schools. An extension of a state secondary schools a tertiary college.
* ***Nursery school*** – a school for very young children, usually three or four years old (before compulsory education, which begins at the age of five).
* ***Pidgin English (PE)*** – 1. A language made up of elements of English and some other foreign language, especially Chinese or Japanese, originally developing as a means of verbal communication when trading. 2. Loosely, any kind of English spoken with the elements of another language, whether for genuine communication or of comic effect.

***§1. Education.***

The British educational system has much in common with that in Europe, in that:

* ***Full-time education is compulsory for all children in the middle teenage years.*** Parents are required by law to see that their children receive full-time education, at school or elsewhere, between the ages of 5 and 16 in England, Scotland and Wales and 4 and 16 in Northern Ireland.
* ***The academic year begins at the end of summer.***
* ***Compulsory education is free of charge, though parents may choose a private school and spend their money on education their children.*** About 93% of pupils receive free education from public funds, while the others attend independent schools financed by fees paid by parents.
* ***There are three stages of schooling,*** with children moving from primary school (the first stage) to secondary school (the second stage). The third stage (sometimes called the tertiary level) provides further and higher education and includes CFE, technical college, college of higher education, and universities.

There is, however, quite a lot that distinguishes education in Britain from the way it works in other countries. The most important distinguishing features are the **lack of uniformity** and comparativly **little central control**. There are three separate government departments managing education: the Departments for Education and Employment is responsible for England and Wales alone; Scotland and Northern Ireland retain control over the education within their respective countries. None of these bodies exercises much control over the details does not prescribe a detailed program of learning, books and materials to be used, nor does it dictate the exact hours of the school day, the exact days of holidays, school’s finance management and suchlike. As many details as possible are left to the discretion of the individual institution or of the LEA.

Many distinctive characteristics of British education can be ascribed, at least partly, to the public school tradition. The present-day level of ‘grass-root’ independence as well as different approach to education has been greatly influenced by the philosophy that a (public) school is its own community. The 19th century public schools educated the sons of the upper and upper-middle classes and the main aim of schooling was to prepare young men to take up positions in the higher ranks of the army, the Church, to fill top-jobs in business, the legal profession, the civil serves and politics. To meet this aim the emphasis was made on ‘character-building’ and the development of ‘team spirit’ (hence traditional importance of sports) rather than on academic achievement.

Such schools were (and still often are) mainly boarding establishments, so they had a deep and lasting influence on their pupils, consequently, public-school leavers formed a closed group entry into which was difficult, the ruling elite, the core of the Establishment.

The 20th century brought education and its possibilities for social advancement within everybody’s reach, and new, state schools naturally tended to copy the features of the public schools. So today, in typically British fashion, learning for its own sake, rather than for any practical purpose is still been given a high value. As distinct from most other countries, a relatively stronger emphasis is on the quality of person that education produces rather than helping people to develop useful knowledge and skills. In other words, the general style of teaching is to develop understanding rather than acquiring factual knowledge and learning to apply this knowledge to specific tasks.

|  |
| --- |
| ***What’s a “public school”?*** A public school in Britain is not open to everyone; the ordinary, local schools where most people go are called “state” schools. Public schools are schools where parents have to pay money if they want their children to attend. Public schools are old, often traditional and prestigious institutions. Most of the kinds who go to them have very rich parents. Public schools are often single-sex, which means they don’t permit girls and boys to be educated together. There are sometimes boarding schools, that mean that kids live at school during the week. Some famous public schools for boys are Eton college, Harrow and Malvern, and for girls, Benedon and Cheltanham Ladies College. Prince William was educate at Eton and his brother Harry is still a pupil there. Eton is renowned for its academic excellence and some of its traditions. The school was founded by Henry VI in 1440 – 1441 and was intended for 70 highly qualified boys who received scholarships. This dates back to the death of George III. The school wore mourning clothes but this later became established as the official uniform. Weblink: www.etoncollege.com. |

This traditional public-school approach, together with the above-mentioned dislike of central authority, also helps to explain another thing: the NC, the purpose of which was to do away with the disparities in the type and quality of education, was not introduced until 1989 – much later than in other countries.

***§2. Pre-school and primary education.***

There is no countrywide system of nursery (or pre-primary) schools. In some areas there are nursery schools and classes (or, in England, reception classes in primary schools), providing informal education and play facilities, but they are not compulsory and only 25% of 3-4 year-olds attend them. There are also some private nurseries and pre-school playgroups organized and paid by parents themselves where children are brought twice a week for an hour or two.

The present Labour government is working to expand pre-school education and wants all children to begin school with basic foundation in literacy and numeracy, or what is know as ‘the three Rs’ (Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic). From September 1998 it is providing free nursery education in England and Wales for all 4-year-olds whose parents want it.

The average child begins his or her compulsory education at the age of 5 starting **primary school** (**infant schools** are for children between at the ages of 5 and 7 and **junior schools** for those between the ages of 8 and 11).

|  |
| --- |
| LEAs, in the partnership with private nurseries, playgroups and schools, have drawn up ‘early years development plans’ of providing 4 year olds with basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. The plans are designed to show how co-operation between private nurseries, playgrounds and schools can best serve the interests of children and their parents. In addition, the government aims to establish ‘early excellence centres’ designed to demonstrate good practice in education and childcare. |

***§3. Secondary education.***

The majority of state secondary school pupils in England and Wales attend comprehensive schools. These largely take pupils without reference to ability or aptitude and provide a wide range of secondary education for all or most children in a district. Schools take those, who are the 11 to 18 age-range, middle schools (8 to 14), and schools with an age-range from 11 to 16. Most other state-educated children in England attend grammar or secondary modern schools, to which they are allocated after selection procedures at the age of 11.

Before 1965 a selective system of secondary education existed in England. Under that system a child of 11 had to take an exam (known as ‘an 11+’), which consisted of intelligence tests covering linguistic, mathematical and general knowledge and which was to be taken by children in the last year of primary schooling. The object was to select between academic and non-academic children. Those who did well in the examination went to a **grammar school**, while those who failed went to a ***secondary modern school*** and technical college. Grammar schools prepared children for national examinations such as the GCE at O-level and A-level. These examinations qualified children for the better jobs, and for entry higher education and the professions. The education in secondary modern schools was based on practical schooling, which would allow entry into a variety of skilled and unskilled jobs.

Many people complained that it was wrong for a person’s future to be decided at a so young age. The children who went to ‘secondary moderns’ were seen as ‘failures’. More over, it was noticed that the children who passed this exam were almost all from middle-class families. The Labour Party, among other critics, argued that the 11+ examination was socially divisible, increasing the inequalities between rich and poor and reinforcing the class system.

The Labour Party, returned to power in 1965, abolished the 11+ and tried to introduce the non-selective education system in the form of **‘comprehensive’** **schools**, that would provide schooling for children of all ability levels and from all social backgrounds, ideally under one roof. The final choice between selective and non-selective schooling, though, was left to LEAs that controlled the provision of school education in the country. Some authorities decided for comprehensive, while others retained grammar schools and secondary moderns.

In the late 1980s the Conservative government introduced another major change. Schools cloud now decide whether to remain as LEA-maintained schools or to **‘opt-out’** of the control of the LEA and put themselves directly under the control of the government department. These **‘grant-maintained’** schools were financed directly by central government. This did not mean, however, that there was more central control: grant-maintained schools did not have to ask anybody else about how to spend their money.

A recent development in education administration in England and Wales in the School Standards and Framework Act (SSFA) passed in July 1998. The Act establishes that from 1.09.1999 all state school education authorities with the ending of the separate category of grant maintained status.

|  |
| --- |
| There are some grant-maintained or voluntary aided schools, called **City Technology****Colleges (CTCs)***.* In 1999 there were 15 CTCs in England. These are non-fee-paying independent secondary schools created by a partnership of government and private sector sponsors. The promoters own or lease the schools, employ teachers, and make substantial contributions to the costs of building and equipment. The colleges teach the NC, but with an emphasis on mathematics, technology and science. |

So, today three types of state schools mainly provide secondary education: secondary modern schools, grammar schools and (now predominant) comprehensive schools. There should also be mentioned another type of schools, called **specialist schools**. The specialist school programme in England was launched in 1993. Specialist schools are state secondary schools specializing in technology, science and mathematics; modern foreign languages; sports; or arts – in addition to providing the full NC.

State schools are absolutely free (including all textbooks and exercise books) and generally co-educational.

Under the new NC a greater emphasis at the secondary level is laid on science and technology. Accordingly, ten subjects have to be studied: English, history, geography, mathematics, science, a modern foreign language (at secondary level), technology (including design), music, art, and physical education. For special attention there were chosen three of these subjects (called**‘core subjects’**): English, science, mathematics, and seven other subjects are called **‘foundation or statutory subjects’***.* Besides, subjects are grouped into departments and teachers work in teams and to plan work.

Most common departments are:

* **Humanities Department:** geography, history, economics, English literature, drama, PE, social science;
* **Science Departments:** chemistry, physics, biology, mathematics;
* **Language Department:** German, French, English;
* **Craft Design and Technology Department:** information and communications technology, computing, home economics, and photography.

The latter (often as CTD) brings together the practical subjects like cooking, woodwork, sewing and metalwork with the new technology used in those fields. Students can design a T-shirt on computer using graphics software and make-up the T-shirt design. Students can also look at way to market their product, thus linking all disciplines. This subject area exemplifies the process approach to learning introduced by the NC.

It is worth mentioning here the growing importance of PSE (Personal and Social Education). Since the 1970s there has been an emphasis on ‘pastoral’ care, i. e. education in areas related to life skills such as health (this includes looking at drug, discussing physical changes related to poverty, sex education and relationships). There are usually one or two lessons a week, from primary school through to sixth form, and they are an essential part of the school’s aim to prepare students to life in society.

Education in Britain is not solely concentrated on academic study. Great value is placed on visits and activities like organizing the school club or field trips, which are educational in a more general sense. The organization of these activities by teachers is very much taken for granted in the British school system. Some teachers give up their free time, evenings and weekends to do this ‘unpaid’ work. At Christmas teachers organised concerts, parties and general festivities. It is also considered a good thing to be ‘seen’ to be doing this extra work since it is fairly essential for securing promotion in the school hierarchy.

Classes of pupils are called ‘forms’ (though it has recently become common to refer to ‘years’) and are numbered from one to six, beginning with first form. Nearly all schools work a five-day week, and are closed on Saturdays. The day starts at or just before nine o’clock and finishes between three and four. The lunch break usually lasts about an hour-and-a-quarter. Nearly two-thirds of pupils have lunch provided by the school. Parents pay for this, except for the 15 per cent who are rated poor enough and have it for free. Other children either go home for lunch or take sandwiches.

Schools usually divide their year into three ‘terms’, starting at the beginning of September:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Autumn term | Christmas holiday (about 2 weeks) | Spring term | Easter holiday (about 2 weeks) | Summer term | Summer holiday (about 6 weeks) |

Passage from one year to the next one is automatic. At the age of 14 pupils are tested in English, maths and science, as well as in statutory subjects. At that same age, in the 3rd or 4th form pupils begin to choose their exam subjects and work for two years to prepare for their GCSE qualifications. The exams are usually taken in the 5th form at the age of 16, which is a school-leaving age. The GCSE can be taken in a range of subjects (usually five in number). The actual written exams are set by independent Examination Boards, and are marker anonymously by outside examiners, but they must be approved by the government and comply with national guidelines. There are several examination boards in Britain and each school decided which board’s exam its pupils take. Most exams last for two hours, marks are given for each exam separately and are graded from A to G (grades A, B, C are considered to be ‘good’ marks).

16 is an important age for school-leavers because they have to make key decisions as to their future lives and careers. There is a number of choices for them.

##### §4. Education and training after 16.

The government has stated that all young people should have access to high-quality education and training after the age of 16. Young people have two routes they that can follow – one based on school and college education, and the other on work-based learning.

About 70% of pupils choose to continue full-time education after 16. Broadly speaking, education after 16 is divided into further and higher education. Further (and adult) education is largely vocational and covers up to and including GCE A-level and AC qualifications, General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) A-level. Higher education covers advanced courses higher than GCE A-level or equivalent.

Those wishing to go on to higher education stay for two years more into the Sixth form (17 year-olds in the Lower Sixth and 18 year-olds in the Upper Sixth). If their schools do not have the sixth form or do not teach the desired subjects pupils may choose to go to a Sixth Form College. The pupils then concentrate in two or three subjects, in which they take the GCE A-level examination. Good passes are now essential because the competition for places in the universities and other colleges has become much stiffer. The number of subjects taken at A-level varies between one and four, although three are usually required for entry into higher education. The concentration is upon a few subjects a high degree of early specialization in the British system.

Since 1988 there has been introduced a new level of examination: the AS exam, which is worth half an A-level and usually, involves one year’s study. This means that if pupils wish to study more than two or three subjects in the sixth form they can take a combination of ‘A’ and AS’ levels. A-level arts student, for example, can still study science subjects at AS-level.

Some young people want to stay in schools for the period between 16 and 18, not just to do academic work but also get ready for examinations that lead to professional training or vocational qualifications (and because the general level of unemployment is now high).

To the end of September 1992 there were introduced the GNVQ. They are mainly undertaken by young people in full-time education between the ages of 16 and 18 and focus on vocational skills such as business and finance, information and technology. There are three GNVQ levels – Advanced, Intermediate and Foundation. An Advanced GNVQ requires a level of achievement broadly equal to two GCE A-levels. Most commonly the GNVQ’s courses are studied at CFE but more and more schools are also offering them.

|  |
| --- |
| The following five levels of NVQs have been established:  Level 1 – Foundation;  Level 2 – Basic craft;  Level 3 – Technical, advanced craft, supervisor;  Level 4 – Higher technical, junior management;  Level 5 – Professional, middle management. |

There are also job-specific National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

These are the awards, which recognize work-related skills and knowledge and provide a path for lifelong learning. They are prepared by industry and commerce, including representatives from trade unions and professional bodies.

NVQs are based on national standards of competence and can be achieved levels from 1 to 5.

With Britain’s new enthusiasm for continuing education, far fewer 16 years-olds go straight out and look for a job than used to. About a third of them still take this option, however. The importance of creating a ‘gap’ in their education is ever appealing to young people in Britain today. Experience outside classroom is also valued since it demonstrates maturity and a willingness to be independent.

The first step for young people entering the job market is their local Jobcentre or careers office. Some school careers advisors teach such skills as filling out a curriculum vitae or writing letters applying for jobs, which is a problem for many young people. Youth workers of Youth Service organizations also can give advice and counseling. A large number 16 and 17 years-olds enter. **Youth Training Programmes** established by the government as a means of helping young people to gain vocational experience. The government guarantees a place on the scheme to everybody under 18 who is not in full-time education or in work. Such programmes covera wide range of vocational skills from hairdressing to engineering.

To sum up, average pupils usually attempt six or seven subjects, and the basic subjects required for jobs and further education are English, mathematics, science and foreign language. Good GCSE results will qualify pupils for a range of jobs, and for entry to further education if desired. GCE A-level examinations are normally associated with more academic children, who are aiming to entry higher education or to get professions. The dispersion of all 16-17 years olds in Britain in 1990 was following:

* 36% were at schools or colleges;
* 49% were working (employment) or seeking work;
* 15% were in Youth Training placements.

***§5. Higher education.***

As has been mentioned above, there is a considerable enthusiasm for post-school education in Britain. The aim of the government is to increase the number of students who enter into higher education. The driving force for this has been mainly economic. It is assumed that the more people who study at degree level, the more likely the country is to succeed economically. A large proportion of young people – about a third in England and Wales and almost half in Scotland – continue in education at a more A-level beyond the age of 18. The higher education sector provides a variety of courses up to degree and postgraduate degree level, and careers out research. It increasingly caters for older students; over 50% of students in 1999 were aged 25 and over and many studied part-time. Nearly every university offers access and foundation courses before enrolment on a course of higher education of prospective students who do not have the standard entry qualifications.

Higher education in Britain is traditionally associated with universities, though education of University standard is also given in other institutions such as **colleges and institutes of higher education**, which have the power to award their own degrees.

The only exception to state universities is the small University of Buckingham which concentrates on law, and which draws most of its students of overseas.

All universities in England and Wales are state universities (this includes Oxford and Cambridge).

English universities can be broadly classified into three types. First come the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge that date from the 12th century and that until 1828 were virtually the only English universities.

Oxford and Cambridge are composed of semi-independent colleges, each college having its own staff, know as ‘Fellows’. Most colleges have their own dining hall, library and chapel and contain enough accommodation for at least half of their students. The Fellows teach the students, either one-to-one or in very small groups (called ‘tutorials’ in Oxford and ‘supervision’ in Cambridge), the tutorial method brings the tutor into close and personal contact with the student. Before 1970 all Oxford colleges were single-sex (mostly for men). Now, the majority admits both sexes.

Among other older universities there should be mentioned four Scottish universities, such as St. Andrews (1411), Glasgow (1450), Aberdeen (1494), and Edinburgh (1583). The first of these, being the oldest one, resembles Oxbridge in many ways, while the other three follow the pattern of more modern universities in that the students live at home or find their own rooms in town. At all of them teaching is organized along the lines of the continental traditions – there is less specialization than at Oxford.

The second group of universities comprises various institutions of higher education, usually with technical study, that by 1900 had sprang up in new industrial towns and cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds. They got to be know as civic or ‘redbrick’ universities. Their buildings were made of local material, often brick, in contrast to the stone of older universities, hence the name, ‘redbrick’. These universities catered mostly for local people. At first they prepared students for London University degree, but later they were given the right to award their own degrees, and so became universities themselves. In the mid-20th century they started to accept students from all over the country.

The third group consists of new universities founded after the Second World War and later in the 1960s, which saw considerable expansion in new universities. These are purpose-built institutions located in the countryside but close to towns. Examples are East Anglia, Sussex and Warwick. From their beginning they attracted students from all over the country, and provided accommodation for most of their students in site (hence their name, ‘campus’ universities). They tend to emphasise relatively ‘new’ academic disciplines such as social science and make greater use than other universities of teaching in small groups, often known as ‘seminars’.

Among this group there are also universities often called ‘never civic’ universities. These were originally technical colleges set up by local authorities in the first half of this century. Their upgrading to university status took place in two waves. The first wave occurred in the mid-1960s, when ten of them were promoted in this way.

Another thirty became ‘polytechnics’, in the early 1970s, which meant that along with their former courses they were allowed to teach degree courses (the degrees being awarded by a national body). Polytechnics were originally expected to offer a broader-based, more practical and vocational education than the universities. In the early 1990s most of the polytechnics became universities. So there are now 80 universities and a further 19 colleges and institutions of higher education in the UK. The country has moved rapidly from a rather elitist system to one which is much more open, if not yet a mass system of higher education.

Higher education in England and Wales is highly selective; i.e. entrance to British universities is via a strict selection process is based on an interview. Applications for first degree courses are usually made through the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS), in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. After the interview a potential student is offered a place on the basis of GCE A-level exam results. If the student does not get the grades specified in the offer, a place can not be taken up. Some universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge, have an entrance exam before the interview stage.

This kind of selection procedure means that not everyone in Britain with A-level qualifications will be offered the chance of a university education. Critics argue that this creates an elitist system with the academic minority in society whilst supporters of the system argue that this enables Britain to get high-quality graduates who have specialized skills. The current system will be modified by the late 90s and into the 21st century, since secondary system is moving towards a broader-based education to replace the specialized ‘A’ level approach. The reasons for this lie in Britain’s need to have a highly skilled and educated workforce, not just an elite few, to meet the needs of the technological era.

The independence of Britain’s educational institutions is most noticeable in universities. They make their own choices of who to accept on their courses and normally do this on the basis of a student’s A-level results and an interview. Those with better exam grades are more likely to be accepted. Virtually all degree courses last three years, however there are some four-year courses and medical and veterinary courses last five or six years. The British University year is divided into three terms, roughly eight to ten weeks each. The terms are crowded with activity and the vacations between the terms – a month at Christmas, a month at Easter, and three or four months in summer – are mainly periods of intellectual digestion and private study.

The courses are also ‘full-time’ which really means full-time: the students are not supposed to take a lob during term time. Unless their parents are rich, they receive a state grant of money, which covers most of their expenses including the cost of accommodation. Grants and loans are intended to create opportunities for equality in education. A grants system was set up to support students through university. Grants are paid by the LEA on the basis of parental income. In the late 80s (the Conservative) government decided to stop to increase these grants, which were previously linked to inflation. Instead, students were able to borrow money in the form of a low-interest loan, which then had to be paid back after their course had finished. Critics argue that students from less affluent families had to think twice before entering the course, and that this worsened the trend which saw a 33% drop in working-class student numbers in the 1980s.

|  |
| --- |
| Cambridge.  Cambridge is the second oldest university and city in Britain. It lies on the river Cam and takes its name from this river (Cam (*тех.* кулак) + bridge (мост)). Cambridge was founded in 1284 when the first college, Peterhouse, was built. Now there are 22 colleges in Cambridge, but only three of them are women’s colleges. The first women college was opened in 1896.  The ancient buildings, chapels, libraries and colleges are in the center of the city. There are many museums in the old university city. Its population consist mostly of teachers and students. All students have to live in the college during their course.  In the old times the students’ life was very strict. They were not allowed to play games, to sing, to hunt, to fish or even to dance. They wore special dark clothes, which they continue to wear in our days. In the streets of Cambridge, you can see young men wearing dark blue or black clothes and the ‘squares’ – the academic caps.  Many great men have studied at Cambridge, among them Cromwell, Newton, Byron, Tennyson, and Darwin. The great Russian scientist I.P. Pavlov came to Cambridge to receive the degree of the Honorary Doctor of Cambridge.  The students presented him with a toy dog then. Now Cambridge is know all over the world as a great center of science, where many famous scientists have worked: Rutherford, Kapitza and others. |

Students studying for the first degree are called **undergraduates**. At the end of the third year of study undergraduates sit for their examinations and take the bachelor’s degree. Those engaged in the study of arts such subjects as history, languages, economics or law take **Bachelor of Arts (BA)**. Students studying pure or applied sciences such as medicine, dentistry, technology or agriculture get **Bachelor of Science (BSc)**. When they have been awarded the degree, they are known as **graduates**. Most people get **honours degrees**, awarded in different classes. These are: Class I (known as ‘a first’), Class II, I (or ‘an upper second’), Class II, II (or ‘a lower second’), Class III (‘a third’). A student who is below one of these gets a pass degree (i.e. not an honours degree).

Students who obtain their Bachelor degree can apply to take a further degree course, usually involving a mixture of exam courses and research. There are two different types of **post-graduate courses** – the **Master’s Degree (MA or MSc)**, which takes one or two years, and the higher degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**, which takes two or three years. Funding for post-graduate courses is very limited, and even students with first class degrees may be unable to get a grant. Consequently many post-graduates have heavy bank loans or are working to pay their way to a higher degree.

The university system also provides a national network of **extra-mural** or **‘Continuing Education’** Departments which offer academic courses for adults who wish to study – often for the sheer pleasure of study – after they have left schools of higher education.

One development in education in which Britain can claim to lead the world is the **Open University**. It was founded in 1969 in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and is so called because it is open to all – this university does not require any formal academic qualifications to study for a degree, and many people who do not have an opportunity to be ‘ordinary’ students enroll. The university is non-residential and courses are mainly taught by special written course books and by programmes on state radio and television. There are, however, short summer courses of about a week that the students have to attend and special part-time study centers where they can meet their tutors when they have problems.

As mentioned above, the British higher education system was added to in the 1970s, which saw the creation of colleges and institutions of higher education, often by merging existing colleges or by establishing new institutions. They now offer a wide range of degree, certificate and diploma courses in both science and art, and in some cases have specifically taken over the role of training teachers for the schools.

There are also a variety of other British higher institutions, which offer higher education. Some, like the Royal College of Arts, the Cornfield Institute of Technology and various Business Schools, have university status, while others, such as agricultural, drama and arts colleges like the Royal Academy of Dramatics Arts (RADA) and the Royal college of Music provide comparable courses. All these institutions usually have a strong vocational aspect in their programmes, which fills a specialized role in higher education.

***Bibliography.***

1. *Levashova V.A.* Britain today: Life and Institutions. – Moscow: INFRA-M, 2001.
2. 200 Тем Английского Языка./Сост.: Бойко В., Жидких Н., Каверина В., Панина Е. – Москва: Издательство Иванова В.И., 2001.
3. Magazine “CLUB”, №3, January – February 2001.
4. Книга для чтения к учебнику английского языка для 8 класса средней школы./Сост.: Копыл Е.Г., Боровик М.А. Изд. 2-е. Москва, «Просвещение», 1978.
5. Newspaper “English Learner’s Digest” №8, April 2001.
6. *Adrian Room,* An A to Z of British Life; OUP 1992.