



EDUCATE TO EMPOWER

# **CBCI**

## **EDUCATION NEXUS**

### **APRIL 2025**

#### **WORLD EARTH DAY**

A Global Movement  
for Environmental  
Protection and  
Sustainability

**SHOULD  
SMARTPHONES  
BE BANNED IN  
SCHOOLS?**

**INCORPORATING  
EASTER INTO  
EDUCATION: A  
MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
APPROACH**

**NEW PEDAGOGIES  
CHANGING INDIAN  
EDUCATION**

# Table of CONTENTS

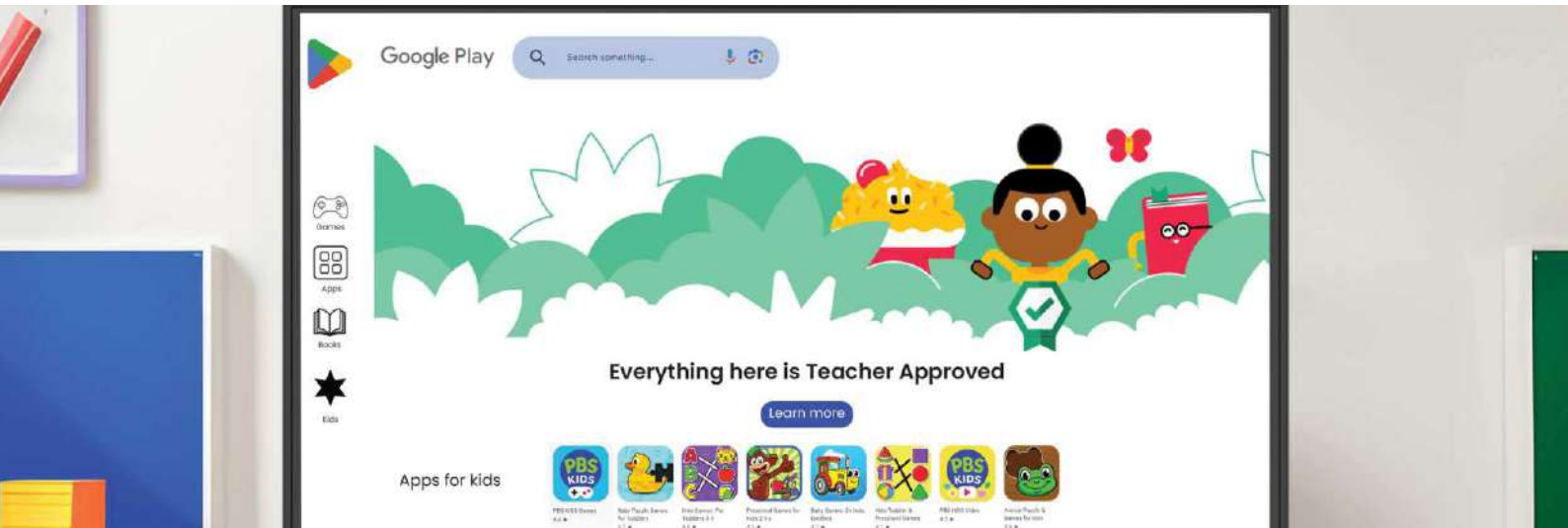
BenQ	01
Editorial	02
Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) Sustainable Practices in CBSE Schools	03
Balancing Digital Learning Should Smartphones Be Banned in Schools	07
Saint Educator Series 18: Saint Anselm of Canterbury	10
Incorporating Easter into Education	13
World Earth Day	15
Research Project on India	18
New Pedagogies Changing Indian Education	20
Suitable Pedagogy for Indian Schools	28
India's Education Conundrum: Envisioning 2025 Amid Ground Realities	34
India Needs Apprenticeship-Based Education, Says Minister Jayant Chaudhary	35
PM-YUVA 3.0: Transforming Young Writers in India's Schools?	36
Madras High Court UGC Regulations 2018 and Government Order (GO. 5)	38
Kerala Assembly passes Private Universities Bill, scripts a milestone in State's educational landscape	39
Children's Digest Ad	40
Advertisement for the Policies	41
Order Form of the Policies	42





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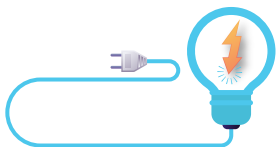
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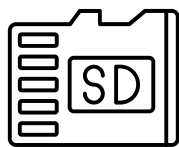
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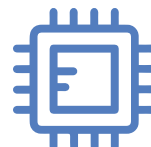
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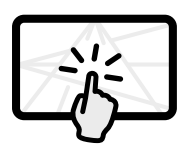
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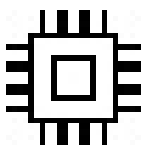
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# THE NEED FOR CONTEXTUAL PEDAGOGY

As India marches towards becoming a global powerhouse in education, it is imperative to rethink our pedagogical approaches to ensure they cater to the diverse learning needs of our students. The modern Indian classroom must be an evolving space—one that integrates traditional wisdom with innovative digital methodologies while embracing the principles of environmental consciousness. As we celebrate World Earth Day on 22nd April 2025, it is an opportune moment to reflect on an education system that fosters sustainability and prepares students for a technologically driven future.

Indian students come from varied cultural, economic, and linguistic backgrounds, necessitating an education system that is inclusive and adaptable. The “one-size-fits-all” model of teaching has proven inadequate in addressing the unique needs of learners. A contextual pedagogy, which acknowledges the local realities and leverages indigenous knowledge, can make learning more meaningful and relatable.

For instance, integrating local environmental challenges into the curriculum can help students connect theoretical knowledge with real-world applications. Teaching sustainability should not be limited to textbooks; it should be a lived experience where schools become models of eco-friendly practices such as rainwater harvesting, waste segregation, and green energy solutions.

As the world grapples with climate change, education must play a pivotal role in shaping responsible citizens. The concept of 'green pedagogy' should be integrated by those who develop curriculum into every subject, emphasizing environmental stewardship. Schools should encourage experiential learning—students to participate in afforestation drives, sustainable farming, and conservation projects, making them active participants in ecological well-being.



Teachers must be trained in sustainable and digital methodologies. Continuous professional development programs focusing on innovative teaching techniques, digital competency, and ecological awareness will empower educators to lead this transformation.

The future of Indian education lies in harmonizing tradition with modernity, digitalization with human interaction, and knowledge with responsibility. As we observe World Earth Day, let us pledge to nurture a generation that is not only skilled and digitally competent but also environmentally conscious and socially responsible.

Educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders must collaborate to design a pedagogy that is suitable for Indian students—one that upholds our cultural heritage, embraces technological advancements, and fosters a sustainable future. Only then can we create an education system that is truly transformative and empowering for the generations to come.



**FR./DR. MARIA CHARLES SDB**  
National Secretary

# LIFESTYLE FOR ENVIRONMENT (LiFE): SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN CBSE SCHOOLS

By Rajiv Jagdishchandra Vora: March 20, 2025



The **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)** initiative, launched by the Government of India, advocates for sustainable living practices that align personal behaviour with environmental well-being. This movement aims to instil a culture of eco-conscious living, focusing on behavioural changes that reduce carbon footprints and promote sustainability at an individual and collective level. In the context of **CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education)** schools, this presents a unique opportunity to engage students, educators, and communities in climate action and advocacy, fostering a sense of responsibility toward the planet.

By adopting the principles of LiFE, CBSE schools can become catalysts for climate action, not only by implementing sustainable practices within their own campuses but also by advocating for environmental responsibility within the wider community. Through climate action initiatives, community engagement, and advocacy, CBSE schools can equip students with the skills and awareness needed to lead efforts in sustainability and climate change mitigation.

## What is LiFE and Its Relevance to Schools?

**Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)** emphasizes the importance of adopting simple, sustainable lifestyle choices in everyday activities. It advocates for reducing waste, conserving energy and water, promoting sustainable food practices, and supporting eco-friendly transportation. In schools, LiFE offers a framework for integrating these practices into students' lives and creating a culture of sustainability. The approach goes beyond just making schools eco-friendly—it's about embedding the values of environmental stewardship and climate action into the ethos of the school, thereby inspiring students to be changemakers in their communities.

For CBSE schools, this means not only incorporating environmental education into the curriculum but also providing students with hands-on experiences, encouraging them to lead sustainability initiatives, and fostering an environment where they can engage in climate advocacy.

## Sustainable Practices in CBSE Schools for Climate Action

To effectively implement LiFE in CBSE schools, climate action must be a central focus. This includes integrating both **sustainable practices** within the school operations and **climate advocacy** within the student body and the larger community. Here are several ways CBSE schools can engage in sustainable practices and climate advocacy:

### 1. ENERGY CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCY

Energy efficiency is one of the most impactful ways to mitigate climate change. CBSE schools can implement a series of measures to reduce energy consumption:

- **Switching to LED lights** and energy-efficient appliances in classrooms, corridors, and outdoor areas.
- Installing **solar panels** to generate renewable energy, thereby reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- Promoting energy-saving habits such as **switching off lights** and electronics when not in use, and utilizing **natural light** during the day.

By reducing the energy consumption on school campuses, CBSE schools not only cut their carbon footprint but also set a powerful example for students on how energy conservation can be a part of everyday life.

## 2. WATER CONSERVATION AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

Water scarcity is a growing concern globally, and it is essential that schools teach students about water conservation. CBSE schools can introduce several water-saving practices:

- **Rainwater harvesting** systems to capture and store rainwater for use in irrigation and sanitation.
- Installing **low-flow faucets, dual-flush toilets**, and water-efficient irrigation systems in gardens and playgrounds.
- Organizing **water conservation awareness campaigns** in classrooms and assemblies to encourage responsible water usage.

Through these efforts, schools can significantly reduce their water consumption and teach students the value of preserving this precious resource.

## 3. Waste Management and Recycling Programs

Waste management is a key area where schools can demonstrate leadership in sustainability. CBSE schools can encourage students and staff to reduce, reuse, and recycle by:

- Setting up **waste segregation stations** across the campus to ensure that materials like paper, plastic, and glass are recycled appropriately.
- **Composting organic waste** from cafeterias and school grounds to create nutrient-rich soil for gardening and landscaping.
- Encouraging the use of **reusable containers** and eliminating single-use plastics in school activities.

Promoting responsible waste management practices teaches students about the lifecycle of products and their environmental impact, encouraging them to make mindful consumption choices.

## 4. SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRACTICES

Food systems contribute significantly to climate change, from agriculture to transportation and waste. To reduce the environmental impact of food practices, CBSE schools can:

- Provide **plant-based meal options** in the school canteen, as plant-based diets generally have a lower carbon footprint compared to meat-based diets.





- Promote **local and seasonal foods** that have a reduced environmental cost of transportation.
- Encourage **waste reduction** in the cafeteria by educating students about food waste and its effects on the environment.

By making sustainable food choices, CBSE schools can help students understand the environmental impact of their eating habits and encourage healthier, more sustainable diets.

## 5. ECO-FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION

Transport is another major contributor to carbon emissions. To address this, CBSE schools can:

- Organize **carpooling programs** where students, teachers, and parents share rides to reduce the number of vehicles on the road.
- Encourage **walking and cycling** to school by providing safe pathways and ample bike parking spaces.
- Arrange for **school buses** that are more energy-efficient or use **electric vehicles** to reduce emissions from the daily commute.

These initiatives not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also promote physical health and well-being among students.

## CLIMATE ADVOCACY THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Beyond individual practices, CBSE schools can amplify their impact through community engagement and climate advocacy. Empowering students to take action and spread awareness within their communities is crucial for creating a larger cultural shift toward sustainability.

### 1. STUDENT-LED SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

Empowering students to take leadership roles in sustainability efforts can have a profound impact. CBSE schools can:

- Establish **eco-clubs** where students can take charge of environmental initiatives such as tree planting, waste collection drives, and community outreach programs.
- Organize **environmental campaigns**, such as “Clean-Up Days” or “Green Week,” where students can advocate for sustainable practices both within the school and the surrounding community.
- Encourage students to **host climate awareness workshops** or debates, bringing in experts from NGOs, environmental organizations, or local government to discuss climate change and its solutions.

Through these initiatives, students not only become active participants in climate action but also develop advocacy skills and raise awareness within their communities.

### 2. COLLABORATING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND AUTHORITIES



Engaging with local communities can amplify the message of sustainability. CBSE schools can collaborate with local environmental groups, municipal authorities, and other stakeholders to initiate larger climate action projects such as:

- Organizing **tree planting drives** in collaboration with local NGOs or government agencies.
- Partnering with local businesses to promote **sustainable practices**, such as reducing plastic waste or adopting energy-efficient technologies.
- Engaging with local authorities to advocate for **green policies** in schools, such as sustainable building certifications or renewable energy investments.

By building strong community partnerships, CBSE schools can extend their sustainability efforts beyond the school grounds and inspire widespread action.

### 3. PROMOTING CLIMATE ADVOCACY THROUGH MEDIA AND SOCIAL PLATFORMS

In the digital age, social media is a powerful tool for advocacy. CBSE schools can:

- **Leverage social media platforms** to raise awareness about climate action, share sustainability tips, and highlight school-led initiatives.
- Create **student blogs, newsletters, or podcasts** to share information about environmental issues and solutions, providing a platform for students to voice their ideas and solutions.
- Use school events, such as Earth Day celebrations, to **engage parents and local media**, amplifying the message of climate action and encouraging community-wide participation.

Through digital advocacy, CBSE schools can broaden their reach and inspire others to join the movement for a sustainable future.

Therefore, the **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)** initiative offers a powerful framework for CBSE schools to lead by example, teaching students the importance of sustainable living and climate action. By incorporating sustainable practices within the school campus and engaging in climate advocacy through community involvement, CBSE schools can become champions of environmental responsibility. The combination of hands-on learning, student leadership, and community engagement not only contributes to the school's sustainability goals but also empowers students to become advocates for a greener, more sustainable future. Through these efforts, CBSE schools can foster a generation of leaders who understand the importance of taking action against climate change and are equipped to make a difference in their communities and beyond.

This article is authored by– Rajiv Jagdishchandra Vora , Coordinator, St. Xavier's School, Rajkot

<https://scooneews.com/news/lifestyle-for-environment-life-sustainable-practices-in-cbse-schools/>







# BALANCING DIGITAL LEARNING: SHOULD SMARTPHONES BE BANNED IN SCHOOLS?

BY DHRUV CHHABRA: MARCH 10, 2025

The debate around smartphones in schools has gained fresh momentum following a Delhi High Court ruling that a complete ban on smartphones for students is “undesirable and unworkable”. This decision aligns with the evolving global discourse on whether restricting mobile phones in schools improves learning outcomes or stifles digital literacy. While concerns around screen addiction, cyberbullying, and distractions in classrooms remain valid, an outright ban may deny students access to essential learning tools, safety, and connectivity.

With 79 education systems worldwide banning smartphone use in schools by the end of 2024 (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2025), India now faces the challenge of formulating balanced policies that regulate smartphone use while ensuring digital inclusivity and responsible online behaviour.

**Delhi HC: Ban is “Undesirable and Unworkable”**

The Delhi High Court, in its February 28 ruling, acknowledged both the harmful and beneficial aspects of smartphone usage in schools. While the indiscriminate use of phones can impact student focus, expose them to cyber risks, and encourage excessive social media engagement, the court recognised that smartphones serve crucial purposes, such as:

- Ensuring safety and coordination between parents and children
- Providing access to educational resources, research tools, and digital learning platforms
- Enhancing student engagement through AI-based and gamified learning apps

Instead of a blanket ban, the court proposed regulated use, allowing schools to create structured policies for monitoring smartphone usage while keeping students informed about digital well-being, online etiquette, and responsible internet use.

**The Court's Guidelines on Smartphone Use in Schools:**

- Schools must educate students on responsible online behaviour and ethical smartphone use
- Students should be counselled on the risks of excessive screen time, social media anxiety, and cyberbullying
- Where possible, students may deposit smartphones upon entering school and retrieve them at home time
- Classroom use must be prohibited, and camera/recording functions should be disabled in common areas and school vehicles



- The policy should be developed with input from educators, parents, and digital safety experts

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Delhi's Directorate of Education have been directed to formulate revised guidelines based on the ruling.

### The Global Perspective: Countries Banning Smartphones in Schools

According to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2025), a growing number of education systems worldwide are implementing strict regulations on smartphone usage in schools. As of 2024, 79 education systems (40%) had introduced bans in some form.

- China: Schools in Zhengzhou require written parental consent to use smartphones for academic purposes.
- France: A “digital break” policy was introduced in lower secondary schools to complement existing phone bans.
- Australia & Spain: Some regions have imposed strict bans, while others allow individual schools to draft their own regulations.
- United States: 20 out of 50 states have enacted restrictions, with some allowing exceptions for students requiring learning accommodations.

Despite these regulations, UNESCO's report warns against over-restricting smartphone use, arguing that technology should only be banned if it disrupts learning and does not support educational outcomes.

### The Learning vs. Distraction Debate

The 2023 GEM Report cited research indicating that smartphone bans in countries like Belgium, Spain, and the UK improved learning outcomes, especially for struggling students. However, it also raised concerns about equity, stating that students must learn to navigate technology rather than be shielded from it entirely.

India has yet to implement a nationwide smartphone policy for schools, but many institutions have internal restrictions on mobile usage. While the Delhi High Court ruling offers guidance, a broader national discussion is required to strike the right balance between technological innovation and student well-being.

### Who Stands to Lose if Smartphones Are Banned?

While privileged students may have alternative access to digital resources at home, a complete ban on smartphones could disproportionately impact lower-income students who depend on mobile devices for online learning, research, and access to educational apps and AI-based tutoring tools. These devices also serve as gateways to government-led digital learning initiatives like DIKSHA and PM eVidya, as well as crucial resources for career counselling, scholarships, and college applications. Eliminating smartphone access in schools could further widen the digital divide, hindering India's goal of building a digitally literate workforce at a time when technology-driven skills are becoming essential in global job markets.

Why Smartphones Are Essential in Education?

### 1. SAFETY AND CONNECTIVITY

In an unpredictable



world, smartphones provide a crucial safety net for students and parents. Real-time communication ensures students can report emergencies, navigate transport routes, and stay connected

with family.

## 2. DIGITAL LEARNING AND AI-BASED EDUCATION

With the rise of AI-driven education, smartphones serve as gateways to:

- AI-powered tutoring platforms that personalise learning experiences
- Online courses, coding platforms, and gamified STEM learning
- Language-learning apps and digital libraries

## 3. ENCOURAGING SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Apps like Coursera, Udemy, and LinkedIn Learning allow students to acquire real-world skills beyond traditional textbooks, preparing them for 21st-century careers.

## 4. BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

For students from rural and underserved areas, smartphones may be their only means of accessing quality educational resources, bridging the gap between privileged urban learners and those in resource-limited settings.

## 5. FUTURE-READY SKILLS

The Delhi High Court's emphasis on digital literacy is crucial; students must be taught not just how to use technology, but how to use it responsibly. Schools should integrate:

- Workshops on cyber safety and responsible social media use
- AI and coding bootcamps to prepare students for future careers
- Digital etiquette lessons to ensure ethical online behaviour

Aim for Balanced Smartphone Policies

As India moves towards Viksit Bharat 2047, its policies on technology in education will shape how well students adapt to the future. Instead of outright bans, schools must:

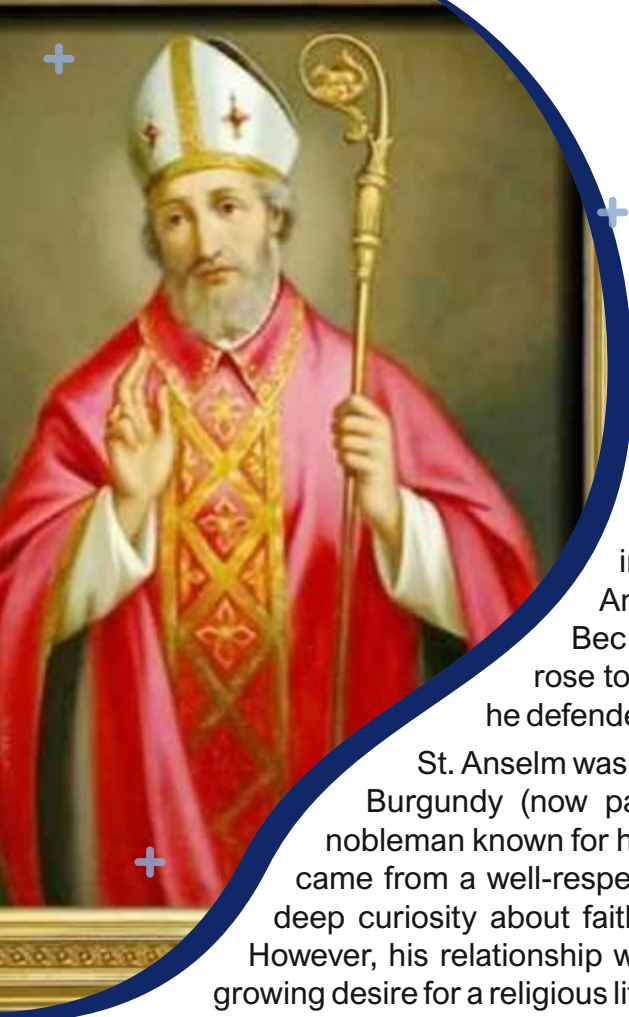
- Develop structured smartphone use policies in consultation with educators, parents, and digital experts.
- Educate students on ethical digital use, cyber safety, and screen-time management.
- Allow controlled use of smartphones for educational purposes while restricting recreational distractions.

Hence, India must find a middle ground—A well-balanced policy will ensure that students benefit from digital learning tools while minimising the risks of excessive screen time and online distractions.

<https://scoonews.com/news/balancing-digital-learning-should-smartphones-be-banned-in-schools/>







# SAINT EDUCATOR SERIES-18

## ST. ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

(1033–1109)

Saint Anselm of Canterbury, OSB (1033–1109) was an Italian Benedictine monk, philosopher, and theologian who profoundly influenced medieval Christian thought. Known by the epithets Anselm of Aosta (after his birthplace in northern Italy) and Anselm of Bec (after the Norman monastery where he studied and taught), he rose to become Archbishop of Canterbury (1093–1109), a role in which he defended the Church's independence amid political turmoil.

St. Anselm was born in 1033 in the alpine town of Aosta, located in the Kingdom of Burgundy (now part of modern-day Italy). His father, Gundulf, was a Lombard nobleman known for his wealth and harsh temperament, while his mother, Ermenberga, came from a well-respected Burgundian family. From an early age, Anselm displayed a deep curiosity about faith and learning, traits nurtured by his pious and gentle mother. However, his relationship with his father was strained, as Gundulf disapproved of his son's growing desire for a religious life.

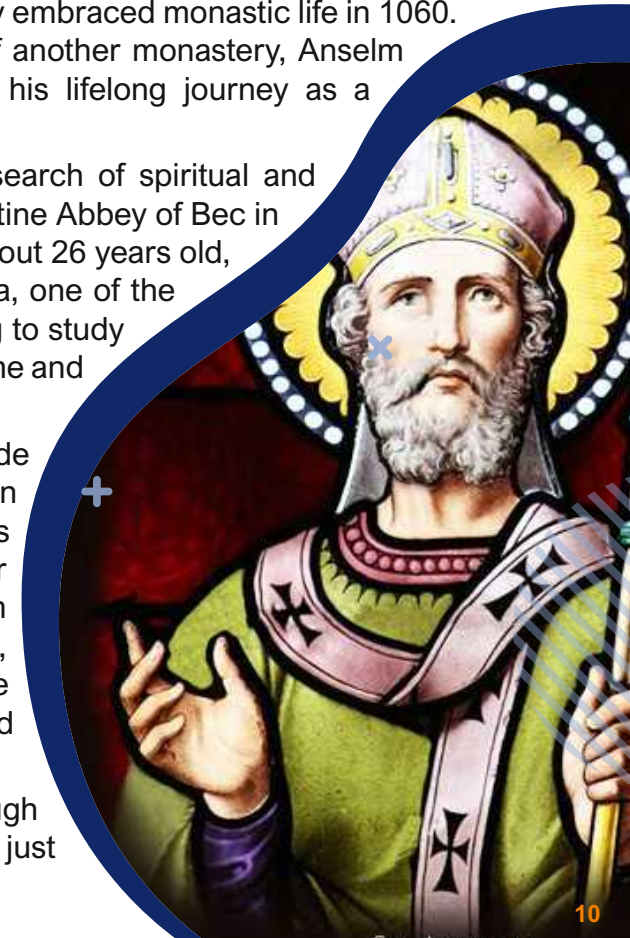
At the age of fifteen, Anselm sought to enter monastic life, but his father refused permission, hoping his son would pursue a more worldly career. After his mother's death, tensions with Gundulf worsened, leading Anselm to leave home in 1056. He wandered through Burgundy and France, studying under various masters and deepening his knowledge of philosophy and theology. By 1059, he arrived at the Benedictine Abbey of Bec in Normandy, drawn by the reputation of its prior, Lanfranc of Pavia, a renowned scholar and teacher.

Under Lanfranc's guidance, Anselm's intellectual and spiritual growth flourished. Though he initially hesitated to take vows, fearing his father's disapproval, he finally embraced monastic life in 1060. Just three years later, when Lanfranc was appointed abbot of another monastery, Anselm succeeded him as Prior of Bec, marking the beginning of his lifelong journey as a theologian, teacher, and leader in the Church.

After years of wandering through Burgundy and France in search of spiritual and intellectual fulfilment, the young Anselm arrived at the Benedictine Abbey of Bec in Normandy in 1059. This pivotal moment came when he was about 26 years old, drawn by the reputation of the abbey's prior, Lanfranc of Pavia, one of the most celebrated scholars of the time. Though initially intending to study briefly under Lanfranc, Anselm found in Bec both a spiritual home and an intellectual proving ground.

Anselm's decision to enter monastic life in 1060 was not made lightly. He struggled with the choice for nearly a year, torn between his spiritual calling and concern for his aging father's disapproval. His final commitment to the Benedictine order marked the beginning of a profound transformation - from wandering scholar to dedicated monk. The Rule of St. Benedict, with its balance of prayer, study and manual labor, provided the perfect framework for Anselm's philosophical mind and contemplative spirit.

As a monk at Bec, Anselm rapidly distinguished himself through both his intellectual brilliance and his deep spirituality. Within just





three years of taking vows, in 1063, he was appointed prior of the monastery following Lanfranc's transfer to Caen. This early leadership role revealed Anselm's gift for guiding others spiritually

while maintaining his own rigorous life of prayer and study. The monastery became under his care a flourishing center of learning that attracted students from across Europe.

Anselm's monastic life was characterized by his famous motto "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*). At Bec, he wrote some of his most important theological works, including the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, while fulfilling all the duties of monastic observance. His approach exemplified the Benedictine ideal of balancing active service with contemplative prayer, showing how deep theological reflection could grow naturally from a life rooted in the Divine Office and *lectio divina*.

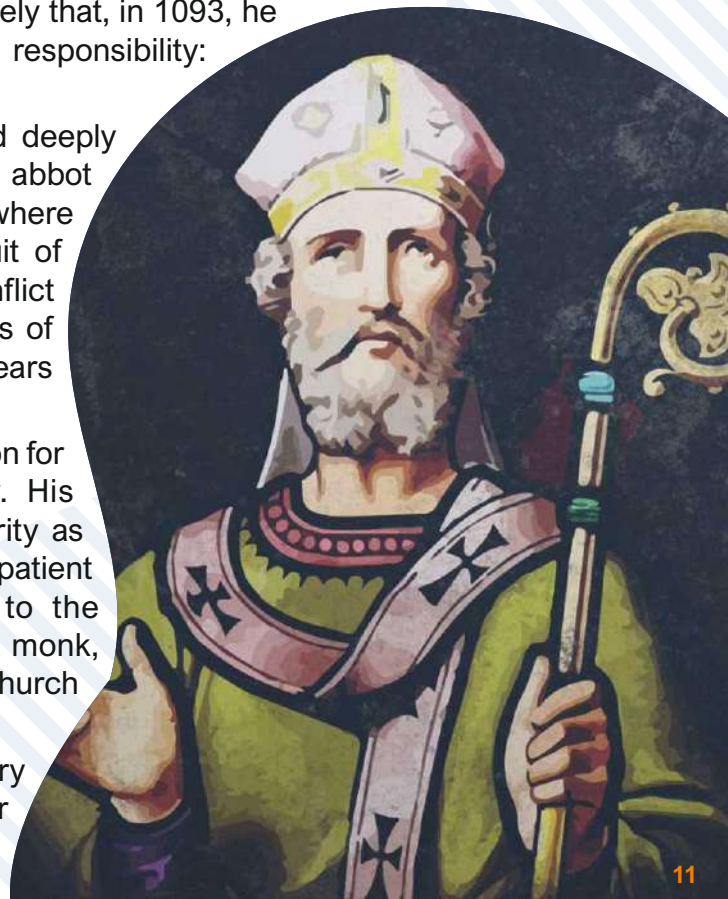
Under his guidance, Bec became renowned for its scholarly rigor and spiritual depth. Anselm encouraged his monks to pursue prayerful study, believing that true wisdom came from uniting faith with reason. His own writings during this period—including the *Monologion* (a meditation on God's nature) and the *Proslogion* (featuring his famous ontological argument)—emerged from this monastic environment. Unlike some medieval scholars who wrote for academic debate, Anselm composed his works as prayers in dialogue with God, reflecting the Benedictine tradition of *lectio divina*.

Anselm's leadership extended beyond theology. He proved to be a wise and compassionate superior, known for his patience and humility. When the monastery faced financial difficulties, he travelled to England to oversee Bec's properties there, demonstrating his practical administrative skills. At the same time, he resisted political pressures that might compromise the monastery's spiritual mission. His reputation as a holy and learned abbot spread so widely that, in 1093, he was reluctantly called to a far greater responsibility: Archbishop of Canterbury.

Even after leaving Bec, Anselm remained deeply attached to his monastic roots. His years as abbot had shaped his vision of the Church—one where contemplation and scholarship served the pursuit of divine truth. Though his later life was marked by conflict with kings, he never abandoned the Benedictine ideals of stability, obedience, and prayer, which had guided his years at Bec.

The quiet years at Bec (1060-1093) formed the foundation for Anselm's later work as Archbishop of Canterbury. His monastic vocation shaped his understanding of authority as service, his approach to theological problems, and his patient endurance in times of trial. Even when elevated to the archbishopric, he remained at heart a Benedictine monk, bringing the wisdom of the cloister to the challenges of Church leadership in a turbulent political era.

St. Anselm died peacefully on April 21, 1109 in Canterbury at about 76 years of age, having served as Archbishop for



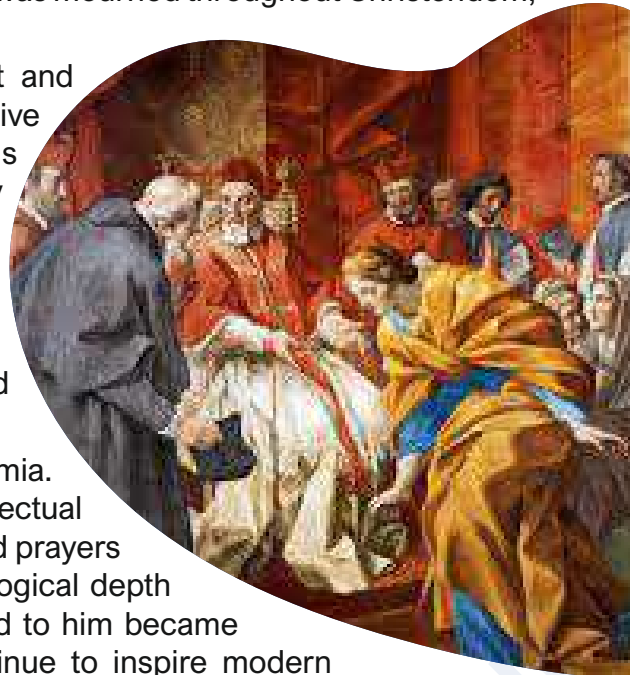
sixteen tumultuous years. His final years were marked by failing health but unwavering dedication to his episcopal duties and theological writing. Though he had spent nearly half his archbishopric in exile due to conflicts with English kings, he returned to Canterbury in 1106 and spent his last years reforming the English Church and completing his theological works. His death was mourned throughout Christendom, and he was immediately venerated as a saint by the local faithful.

Anselm's theological legacy revolutionized medieval thought and earned him the title "Father of Scholasticism." His innovative method of "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*) established a new paradigm for Christian theology that balanced reason with revelation. The ontological argument from his *Proslogion*, while debated through the centuries, remains one of the most influential philosophical proofs for God's existence. His work *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became Man) developed the satisfaction theory of atonement that would dominate Western soteriology for nearly a millennium.

As a spiritual leader, Anselm's legacy extended beyond academia. His monastic reforms at Bec and Canterbury emphasized intellectual rigor grounded in contemplative prayer. His collected letters and prayers reveal a man of profound personal piety who integrated theological depth with heartfelt devotion. The *Meditations and Prayers* attributed to him became standard devotional texts in medieval monasteries and continue to inspire modern readers with their poetic theological intensity.

Anselm was formally canonized in 1494 by Pope Alexander VI and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1720 by Pope Clement XI, earning the title "Doctor Magnificus" (Magnificent Doctor). Today he is venerated as the patron saint of theologians and philosophers. His feast day on April 21 is celebrated particularly by Benedictines and in the Canterbury diocese. Modern scholars continue to study his works, finding in them not just historical significance but enduring insights into the relationship between faith and reason.

The lasting impact of Anselm's life can be seen in how he embodied the Benedictine ideal of balancing action and contemplation. Even as archbishop, he remained fundamentally a monk - a scholar who saw theology as prayer, a churchman who preferred the quiet of the cloister but courageously defended ecclesiastical freedom, and a thinker whose ideas continue to shape Christian discourse nine centuries after his death. His tomb in Canterbury Cathedral became an important pilgrimage site until its destruction during the English Reformation, but his true monument remains his theological works and his example of faithful intellectual pursuit.



<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Anselm-of-Canterbury>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anselm\\_of\\_Canterbury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anselm_of_Canterbury)

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anselm/>



# INCORPORATING EASTER INTO EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH



Easter is a holiday rich in history, culture, and tradition, making it a valuable theme for educational exploration. By integrating Easter into classroom activities, educators can engage students across various subjects, including history, literature, science, and art. This approach not only makes learning more interactive but also helps students appreciate the cultural and religious significance of the holiday. Whether through storytelling, hands-on experiments, or creative projects, Easter provides numerous opportunities to enhance critical thinking, creativity, and cross-cultural understanding.

## **Exploring the Historical and Cultural Roots of Easter:**

One of the most effective ways to incorporate Easter into education is by examining its historical and cultural origins. Teachers can introduce students to the religious significance of Easter in Christianity, discussing the events of Holy Week, including Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Resurrection Sunday. This can lead to meaningful conversations about faith, symbolism, and tradition. Additionally, educators can explore the pagan influences on Easter, such as the Germanic festival of Eostre, which celebrated spring and fertility. Comparing these traditions helps students understand how holidays evolve over time. To make the lesson more interactive, students can research how different countries celebrate Easter, from the solemn processions in Spain to the festive egg hunts in the United States, and present their findings in class.

## **Easter in Literature and Language Arts:**

Easter-themed literature offers a wonderful way to enhance reading and writing skills. For younger students, classic books like *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter or *The Easter Egg* by Jan Brett can spark discussions about themes of renewal and kindness. Older students might analyse biblical passages related to Easter or read poetry, exploring metaphors and symbolism. Creative writing assignments can also be





tied to Easter, with prompts like “What does rebirth mean to you?” or “Write a story about a magical Easter egg.” These activities encourage students to think critically and express themselves while connecting to the holiday's themes of hope and new beginnings.

### **Science and Math Activities with an Easter Twist:**

Easter provides a unique opportunity to incorporate science and math into lessons in a fun and engaging way. Science teachers can use eggs to teach about life cycles, discussing how they symbolize new life in nature. Students can observe the hatching of chicks or the metamorphosis of butterflies, linking these processes to the themes of renewal associated with Easter. Another hands-on activity involves experimenting with eggshells, testing their strength or dissolving them in vinegar to study chemical reactions.

### **Art, Music, and Creative Expression:**

Art and music classes can embrace Easter through creative projects that celebrate the holiday's symbols and traditions. Students can design and decorate Easter eggs using various techniques, such as dyeing, painting, or even creating mosaics. These activities not only foster creativity but also teach students about patterns, colours, and cultural designs. In music class, teachers can introduce hymns like “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” or folk songs about spring, discussing their historical and emotional significance. For a collaborative project, students could create an Easter-themed mural or perform a short play about the holiday's origins, combining art, music, and drama into one enriching experience.

### **Social-Emotional Learning and Community Connections:**

Easter's themes of hope, forgiveness, and renewal can also support social-emotional learning (SEL). Teachers can facilitate discussions on topics like second chances, gratitude, and kindness, encouraging students to reflect on their own lives. Community service projects, such as organising an Easter food drive or making cards for nursing home residents, can help students connect the holiday's message of compassion to real-world actions. Additionally, classroom activities that involve teamwork, like an Easter scavenger hunt or a collaborative storytelling game, can strengthen peer relationships and communication skills.

### **Conclusion- Making Easter a Meaningful Educational Experience:**

Easter is more than just a holiday; it's a gateway to interdisciplinary learning that can inspire students in multiple ways. By incorporating its historical, literary, scientific, and artistic elements into lessons, educators can create a dynamic and engaging curriculum. Whether through exploring cultural traditions, conducting egg-based experiments, or creating festive art projects, Easter offers endless possibilities for enriching education. Ultimately, these activities not only teach academic concepts but also help students appreciate the deeper meanings of renewal, community, and celebration. By weaving Easter into the classroom, teachers can make learning both meaningful and memorable.

**-Brandon Arnold John**





# WORLD EARTH DAY

## A Global Movement for Environmental Protection and Sustainability

Earth Day, observed annually on April 22nd, represents one of the largest civic events in human history, mobilizing over a billion people across more than 190 countries in collective action to protect our planet's fragile ecosystems. Since its inception in 1970, this global observance has evolved from a grassroots environmental teach-in to a worldwide phenomenon that addresses the most pressing ecological challenges of our time.

The historical roots of Earth Day trace back to growing environmental consciousness in the 1960s, when visible environmental degradation became impossible to ignore. The spark that ignited the modern environmental movement came from U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, who was deeply troubled by the devastating 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill and the general lack of political attention to environmental issues. Partnering with activist Denis Hayes, Nelson organized the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970 - a date deliberately chosen to fall between spring break and final exams to maximize student participation. The unprecedented response saw 20 million Americans (about 10% of the U.S. population at the time) take to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment.

14

This massive public demonstration of environmental concern achieved remarkable political results. By the end of 1970, the United States had established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and passed landmark environmental legislation including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act. These policy achievements demonstrated the power of collective environmental action and set a precedent for future conservation efforts. Earth Day went global in 1990, mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries and elevating environmental issues onto the world stage, paving the way for the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Today, Earth Day has grown into Earth Week and even Earth Month in many communities, with coordinated events ranging from neighbourhood cleanups to international policy conferences. The movement has achieved significant milestones, including helping to catalyse the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement, where 196 nations committed to limiting global temperature rise. Earth Day Network, the organization that coordinates global Earth Day activities, has planted hundreds of millions of trees through its Canopy Project, educated millions of students through environmental curricula, and mobilized countless communities to take local action with global impact.



The environmental challenges we face today are more complex and urgent than ever before. Climate change accelerates at an alarming rate, with the past decade being the warmest in recorded history. Scientists warn we may have less than a decade to make dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to avoid catastrophic warming. Plastic pollution has reached crisis levels, with an estimated 8 million tons of plastic entering our oceans annually - equivalent to dumping a garbage truck of plastic into the sea every minute. Biodiversity loss continues unabated, with current extinction rates estimated to be 100 to 1,000 times higher than natural background levels. These interconnected crises threaten not just the natural world, but human health, economic stability, and global security.

Individual actions, when multiplied across communities, can create substantial positive change. Reducing personal plastic consumption by carrying reusable water bottles, shopping bags, and food containers makes a measurable difference. Transitioning to a plant-based diet, even partially, significantly reduces one's carbon and water footprints. Conserving energy through LED lighting, proper home insulation, and mindful appliance use lowers greenhouse gas emissions. Supporting sustainable businesses and boycotting corporations with poor environmental records drives market change. Perhaps most importantly, discussing environmental issues with friends and family helps spread awareness and multiply impact.

Community-level participation amplifies individual efforts. Joining local cleanups, tree-planting initiatives, or community gardens creates visible improvements while building social connections. Attending town hall meetings and voting in local elections ensures environmental concerns reach policymakers. Supporting environmental education in schools cultivates the next generation of eco-conscious citizens. Participating in citizen science projects like bird counts or water quality monitoring contributes valuable data to conservation efforts. These collective actions create ripple effects that extend far beyond any single event or individual.

Systemic change requires engagement at all levels of society. Consumers can pressure corporations through purchasing power and social media campaigns. Employees can advocate for sustainable practices in their workplaces. Investors can support green technologies and divest from fossil fuels. Citizens can demand stronger environmental protections from their elected officials. International cooperation remains essential, as environmental issues recognize no borders. The Paris Agreement demonstrates what's possible when nations work together, though much more ambitious action is needed.

Technological innovation offers promising solutions to environmental challenges. Renewable energy technologies like solar, wind, and geothermal have become increasingly efficient and affordable. Advances in battery storage and smart grid technology are overcoming intermittency challenges. Carbon capture and storage methods may help mitigate existing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>. Biodegradable alternatives to conventional plastics are emerging. Precision agriculture techniques can reduce water and chemical use while maintaining yields. These innovations, coupled with policy support and public adoption, can accelerate the transition to a sustainable future.

Education forms the foundation of lasting environmental progress. Environmental literacy helps people understand the



complex relationships between human activities and natural systems. Schools worldwide are increasingly incorporating sustainability into their curricula. Universities are expanding environmental science and policy programs. Public awareness campaigns translate scientific findings into actionable knowledge. Indigenous ecological knowledge offers valuable perspectives on sustainable living. By fostering environmental understanding from childhood through adulthood, we cultivate the informed citizenry necessary to address ecological challenges.

The economic case for environmental protection grows stronger by the day. Climate change already costs the global economy hundreds of billions annually in disaster recovery, health impacts, and lost productivity. Transitioning to a green economy could create millions of jobs in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and conservation. Ecosystem services like clean water, pollination, and flood control provided by healthy environments have enormous economic value. Sustainable business practices increasingly drive corporate success as consumers demand environmental responsibility. The financial sector is waking up to climate risks and opportunities, with trillions of dollars flowing into ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investments.

World Earth Day 2025 arrives at a critical juncture for environmental action. While the challenges seem daunting, the history of Earth Day proves that collective action can drive remarkable change. From the environmental legislation of the 1970s to the ozone layer recovery to the renewable energy revolution, we've demonstrated our capacity to solve ecological problems when we mobilize our ingenuity and willpower. The solutions to our current crises exist - what's needed is the political will, economic investment, and public participation to implement them at scale.

As we commemorate World Earth Day, we must remember that environmental stewardship is not a single-day obligation but a daily commitment. Small consistent actions, from reducing waste to contacting elected officials, accumulate into transformative change. Each of us has a role to play in building a sustainable future - as consumers, community members, professionals, and citizens. By working together across borders and generations, we can create an equitable, thriving world where both humanity and nature flourish. The time for action is now, and World Earth Day serves as both our annual reminder and our ongoing inspiration to protect this precious planet we all call home.

**-Brandon Arnold John**



# RESEARCH PROJECT ON INDIA (2025)

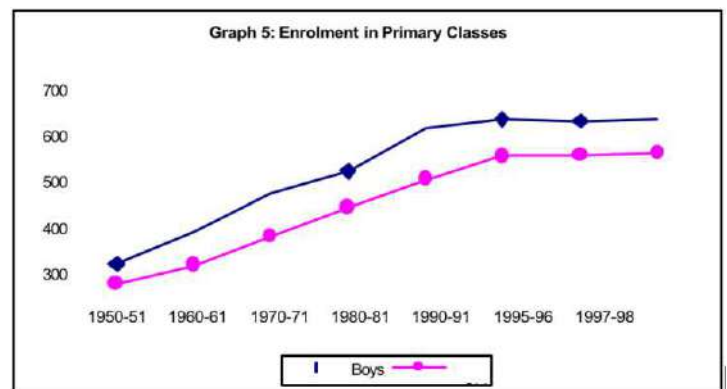
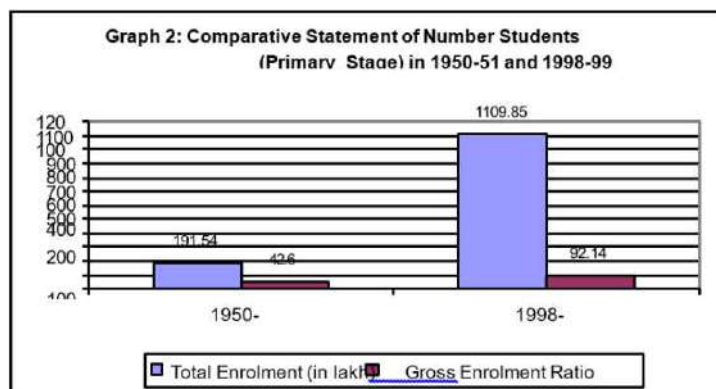
## Introduction:

The Indian Constitution emphasizes providing quality education to all citizens, addressing the diverse needs of the country's societies and cultures. Post-independence, India has made significant strides in expanding its education system, building a robust infrastructure, and fostering scientific, technological, and humanistic capabilities. However, challenges such as disparities in access, quality, and retention persist. This document examines the evolution of India's education sector from independence to the present, analyses current policies and programs, and projects future requirements and scenarios for 2025.

## Section I: Evolution of Education in India:

Since independence, India's education system has grown exponentially. At the elementary level, literacy rates rose from 18.33% in 1951 to 64.20% in 1997, with primary schools increasing from 2.15 lakh to 6.1 lakh by 1998. Despite this progress, universal elementary education remains elusive, with 24 million children aged 6-14 out of school, 60% of whom are girls. The adult literacy rate improved from 52% in 1991 to 62% in 1997, yet India still harbours the world's largest population of illiterates.

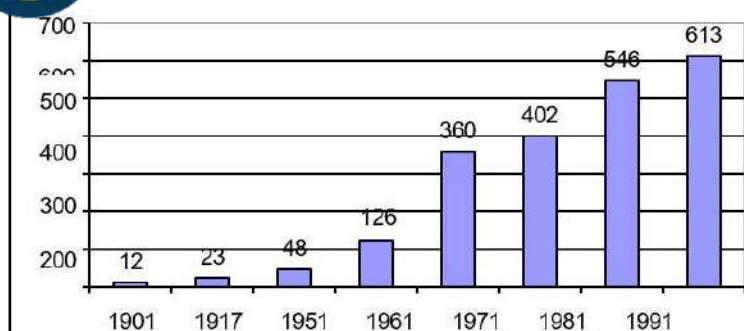
Year	Literacy Rate (%)			Number of Schools	
	Persons	Males	Females	Primary	Upper Primary
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	215036	14576
1961	28.31	40.40	15.34	351530	55915
1971	34.45	45.95	21.97	417473	93665
1981	43.56	56.37	29.75	503763	122377
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	566744	155926



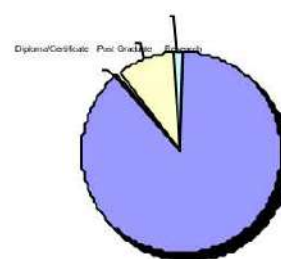
Secondary and higher education have also expanded, but enrolment rates are low, with only 2.70 crore out of 9.66 crore eligible children attending secondary school in 1997-98. Higher education saw enrolment grow from 263,000 in 1950-51 to 6.75 million by 1996-97, yet only 6% of the relevant age group accesses it. Technical and vocational education, though diversified, struggles to meet industry demands, particularly in IT, where India aims to produce 22 lakh professionals by 2008 to sustain its \$100 billion industry target.



Enrolment in Higher Education India, 1901-



Distribution of Enrolment, by Level of Higher Education, 1995-96



## Section II: Policies and Programs:

The National Policy on Education (NPE-1986) and its subsequent revisions form the backbone of India's educational framework. Key objectives include universal elementary education, adult literacy, and vocational training. The NPE emphasizes decentralizing education through local bodies, improving infrastructure, and ensuring quality. Initiatives like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan focus on universal access, while adult education programs target illiteracy eradication, particularly among women and marginalized groups.

Vocational education aims to diversify skills and reduce unemployment, with targets to divert 25% of secondary students to vocational streams by 2000. IT education is prioritized, with policies encouraging computer literacy and industry-institution linkages. However, implementation gaps, inadequate funding, and regional disparities hinder progress.

## Section III: Future Projections and Challenges:

By 2025, India's education system must cater to 229 million children at the elementary level, requiring 7 million teachers and 7 million classrooms. Secondary and higher secondary enrolments are projected to reach 41.4 million and 17.69 million, respectively, necessitating 1.7 million and 0.71 million teachers. The IT sector will need 23.67 lakh professionals, with 100,000 teachers for computer education in schools.

To achieve these targets, India must address critical issues:

- **Funding:** Current education expenditure is 3.6% of GNP, far below the 6% target. Private investment and innovative financing models, like education development banks, are essential.
- **Quality:** Teacher training, curriculum reform, and research & development (R&D) must be prioritized to enhance learning outcomes. R&D investment, currently at 0.7% of GDP, needs scaling up.
- **Equity:** Bridging gender, caste, and regional disparities requires targeted interventions, community mobilization, and decentralized governance.
- **Technology:** Distance education, virtual classrooms, and IT-enabled services can expand access and flexibility, particularly in higher education.

An optimistic scenario envisions near-universal literacy, improved rural-urban parity, and a skilled workforce driving economic growth. However, without systemic reforms, disparities may persist, with government schools lagging behind private institutions in quality.

## Conclusion:

India's education system has made remarkable progress since independence, yet significant challenges remain. Achieving the 2025 vision demands political will, increased funding, and collaborative efforts between government, private sectors, and communities. Prioritizing quality, equity, and innovation will be crucial to transforming education into a catalyst for national development. The journey ahead is formidable, but with strategic planning and sustained investment, India can realize its goal of an inclusive, high-quality education system for all.

# NEW PEDAGOGIES CHANGING INDIAN EDUCATION

Education World November 16 | Education World

Almost 180 years after British educationist Lord Macaulay penned his famous Minute on Education decreeing an education system to train clerks for the British raj, an overwhelming majority of the country's 1.4 million schools are loyally following Macaulay's education system. Fortunately all is not lost – Summiya Yasmeen

1916. Typical school classroom scene in British India. Children are seated at row desks with a teacher at the head of the class instructing students from a textbook. This daily routine culminates in a sudden death memory-testing exam at the end of the academic year.

2016. Typical classroom in post-independence India. Children are seated at row desks with a teacher at the head of the class instructing students from a textbook. This will culminate in a sudden death memory-testing exam at the end of the academic year.

Over the past century, while urban India has moved from the bullock cart to automatic motorcars, from scarce landline telephones to almost 1 billion touch screen smartphones, and from queuing up at ration shops to online shopping, Indian education is still mired in the colonial era. Almost 180 years after Lord Macaulay penned his famous Minute on Education decreeing an education system designed to train clerks for the British Raj, and in the process uprooted “the beautiful tree” of the gurukul system of Indian education based on peer learning pedagogies, the overwhelming majority of the country's 1.40 million schools — especially 1.20 million government primary-secondaries — are loyally following Macaulay's education system designed to churn out armies of government clerks.

“Indian education was redesigned by the British in the 18th century. Its purpose was to produce people who would be useful for administering British rule in India. At the time, India had already been conquered and ruled by people from Central Asia for over 800 years. No trace of its earlier heritage was either evident or in public memory. Indians had forgotten what it was like to be free. British-designed education to produce clerks and factory workers continued after independence. Amazingly, it continues even today. Government schools in particular, go on mindlessly producing 19th century people using 19th century curriculums, 19th century pedagogy and 19th century examination systems. But 21st century learners learn differently.

● We need to factor the Internet into our schools and examinations, and set up collaborative learning spaces in schools”, said Dr. Sugata Mitra, professor of education technology at Newcastle University, UK, in an interview with EducationWorld (May 2016). Dr. Mitra is an awardee of the TED prize (2013) for his Computer-in-the-Wall experiment, and has subsequently pioneered the Internet-enabled SOLE (self-organised learning



Dr. Sugata Mitra with SOLE School in the Cloud children in Hyderabad: “21st century learners learn differently”

environment) and School in the Cloud innovations in K-12 education.

Although post-independence India's middle class has almost entirely opted for early childhood and primary-secondary education provided by the country's 320,000 fees-levying private schools, and even bottom-of-the-pyramid households are abandoning free-of-charge government schools in droves, the quality of education provided by the majority of India's private schools is only relatively superior. According to the Quality Education Study 2011 conducted by Bangalore-based IT major Wipro Ltd and Ahmedabad-based Educational Initiatives Pvt. Ltd which assessed 23,000 students of 89 English-medium private primary-secondaries countrywide, students of India's top private schools are also uncritically learning by rote, and perform dismally in global standardised tests.

In 2010, a batch of 15-year-olds (class X) from government and private secondaries in Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu (ranked among the country's most educationally advanced states) were — for the first time ever — selected to write the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test conducted by OECD (a club of industrialised first world countries), which measures the unprepared, real learning outcomes of 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science. The Indian contingent was ranked 73rd among 74 countries — just above Kyrgyzstan.

"It's imperative that the country's educators abandon their fears and try out new ways of teaching as 21st-century India needs job creators and innovators, not armies of clerks good at following instructions and performing repetitive tasks", says Meeta Sengupta, an alumna of IIM-Ahmedabad, who has worked with several blue-chip organisations including Citibank, JP Morgan and the London Business School and is currently a Delhi-based writer and education and skills development advisor to several think tanks including Centre for Civil Society and FICCI.

Fortunately, all is not lost. A small number of progressive schools led by committed educationists in pockets across the country are experimenting with new pedagogies and processes in their classrooms. If replicated en masse, their example could revive India's moribund education system and enable the country's 260 million school-going children to develop vital skills required to compete in a rapidly globalising 21st century milieu. In the pages following, EW highlights eight pedagogy innovations introduced by schools in the vanguard of an emerging education revolution in India.



**ABL class in Chennai**

### **Activity-based learning**

Designed and tested by the Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre (RVREC) of the pioneer alternative education Rishi Valley School, Chittoor (Andhra Pradesh) in the 1990s, activity-based learning (ABL) is a child-centric pedagogy under which children of mixed ages are grouped in classrooms to encourage peer learning and self-study using activity cards and worksheets, with teachers discharging the role of facilitators.

The pedagogies of peer and self-learning are integral to ABL with children experiencing individual, teacher and group-assisted learning, enabling the teacher to pay personal attention and record the achievement levels of every child. The number of children per class is restricted to 30.

In 2003, M.P. Vijayakumar, then commissioner of the Chennai Municipal Corporation (CMC), adopted the ABL model in 13 corporation schools, which was later expanded to all 264 CMC schools in the city. Subsequently in 2006, when Vijayakumar was appointed project director of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan in Tamil Nadu, he persuaded the DMK government to implement ABL in all 34,871 government primaries of the state.



“There's been remarkable improvement in children's confidence levels, communication skills, interaction with teachers and their ability to understand concepts. This learning-by-doing pedagogy allows children to learn and progress at their own pace. The government is constantly working on improving ABL implementation and we are currently focusing on upgrading students reading and maths skills”, says the headmistress of a government primary in Coimbatore, who insisted upon anonymity as prior permission of N. Arul Murugan, CEO of the TN state school education department, is required for her to speak to the media. Several calls and emails to Murugan by our Coimbatore correspondent Hemalatha Raghupathi elicited no response.

Tamil Nadu's ABL success story has attracted the attention of the Central as well as state governments countrywide. Currently, ABL pedagogy is being implemented in selected government primary schools in Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra and Union territories of Chandigarh and Puducherry.

### **Experiential learning**

Manit Jain is promoter-director of the Heritage Group of three K-12 schools in Delhi NCR with an aggregate enrolment of 6,000 students and 600 teachers. An alumnus of the Harvard School of Education, Jain began implementing experiential learning (EL) in the Heritage School, Gurgaon in 2004. Over the past 12 years, Jain has successfully mainstreamed EL pedagogies in the group's three schools.

### **What is the essence of experiential learning (EL) pedagogy?**

It's centred upon learning about life through real-life experiences. It teaches children how to learn and makes them learners for life. It also implants empathy and shapes young minds to accept multiple perspectives. The modern approach to experiential learning was developed in the 1970s by US-based education philosopher David A. Kolb.



**Manit Jain**

### **What factors motivated you to implement EL in the Heritage schools?**

Traditional classrooms discourage critical thinking and multiple perspectives. All learning has to be distilled into one correct answer to be reproduced in the exam. Workplaces now demand out-of-the-box thinkers and innovators, change managers and leaders who can build teams and leverage team strength. Our current education system has failed children. Dissatisfaction with passive rote learning prompted us to innovate.

### **How did you integrate EL into the Heritage curriculum?**

The three Rs — relevance, relationships and rigour — are the cornerstones of experiential learning. We integrated EL into our classrooms through multi-disciplinary learning expeditions and projects. For instance, through a bicycle expedition, our students learnt basic science (the engineering of a bicycle), social science (history of the bicycle leading to women's empowerment), language (reading and writing about it), visual art (sketching), and math (calculating speeds, distances etc).

To prepare our teachers to deliver EL, we enlisted the help of reputed training organisations including education NGO Eklavya, curriculum development company XSEED and the US-based Expeditionary Learning Schools.



## How satisfied are you with the results of EL implementation in your schools?

Very satisfied. Our children experience a huge sense of meaning in their work. EL has also tremendously improved students academic achievement. Heritage, Gurgaon is ranked among the country's Top 25 CBSE schools in terms of student scores in the class XII board exam.

## Differentiated instruction

Aditya Patil is founder-CEO of the new-age Ascend International School (AIS), Mumbai, promoted in 2011 by the Kasegaon Education Society which runs 46 education institutions with an aggregate enrolment of 26,000 students in Maharashtra. AIS is modeled after its highly-reputed partner institution, the Seattle (USA)-based University Child Development School, and follows the differentiated instruction pedagogy for all subjects including science, math, music, art, design and technology. Currently the school offers the primary years programme (PYP) of the Geneva-based International Baccalaureate to 175 students mentored by 50 teachers.

Dipta Joshi interviewed Aditya Patil in Mumbai.



Aditya Patil

## What are the essential characteristics of differentiated instruction?

Under this pedagogy, teachers tailor instruction according to the learning capability of each student. Thus while lessons are the same for all students in a class, the methodology used to dispense instruction depends on each student's capability and learning style. For instance, to learn multiplication tables, while one student may prefer memorisation, another may prefer the repeated addition method.

Therefore differentiated pedagogy requires teachers to be well-versed with each child's learning capabilities to deliver lessons in the mode and pace which suits the child. Children who learn fast are encouraged to move up to the next level rather than wait for the rest of the class. Obviously, this pedagogy works best in classrooms with small numbers of students — ideally class strength should be not more than 18.

## What is the motivation behind choosing this pedagogy for AIS?

I was educated in India, and am deeply aware of the limitations of the traditional teacher-centric model and its learning-by-heart and one-size-fits-all pedagogy. My father, Bhagat Patil, travelled the world, visiting and studying education innovations practiced in the best schools before choosing the differentiated instruction method followed by the University Child Development School, Seattle.

## How satisfied are you with the outcome?

Very satisfied with the differentiated instruction pedagogy. The personalised instruction our teachers deliver according to varied learning needs, enables all our children to learn joyfully and effectively.

## Flipped classroom model

The flipped classroom model is a high-potential innovation which has turned conventional teaching upside down. The typical classroom lecture and homework elements are reversed. Short video lectures are viewed by students at home, while class time is devoted to exercises, projects and discussions based on the video lectures.

History. American high school teachers Jonathan Bregman and Aaron Sams of the Woodland Park High School, Colorado, are credited with



RN Podar's Awnita Bir: improved learning outcomes

pioneering the flipped classroom model in 2007. During their many years in classroom teaching, they discovered they were spending considerable time bringing children who missed class up to speed. This prompted them to record their live lectures and post them online for reference. Soon, they discovered their online lectures were also being accessed by students who had not missed class, for reinforcement and review. This led to the idea of the flipped classroom model.

R. N. Podar School implementation model. After an initial pilot project, the Mumbai-based CBSE-affiliated R.N. Podar School (estb.1998) formally introduced flipped classroom learning (FCL) in 2012 for classes IX-XII, and subsequently for classes VI-VIII. Currently, the FCL model is being used for maths and science subjects. Over the past four years, teachers in collaboration with an ed-tech company have recorded over 1,100 lecture videos, which are shared online with students. To ensure that students view the prescribed videos at home, the school uses Edpuzzle, a data and assessment platform to track students' online activity. "I was very impressed with the online tutorial videos of the Khan Academy and encouraged students to watch them. However, we found the videos were not in sync with the CBSE curriculum. Thus the idea of recording our own video lessons was born. Simultaneously, I thoroughly studied the FCL model before introducing it in our school", says Avnita Bir, director-principal of R.N. Podar School, which has an enrolment of 2,700 students and 120 teachers on its muster rolls.

According to Bir, FCL has improved learning outcomes in RNP in a big way. "Our teachers have learned to present appealing video content and have tremendously improved their public speaking skills. And students have the opportunity of revisiting lectures multiple times at home. Now they utilise face-to-face time with teachers to ask questions, discuss the lecture, enrich project assignments and develop higher order problem-solving skills", adds Bir, a former member of the governing council of CBSE (2012-15) and a strong proponent of leveraging ICT in education. In CBSE's school-leaving class XII national exam 2016, over 50 percent of RNP students averaged 90 percent-plus.

### **Mixed-age group learning**

S. Jayaram is principal of the new-genre J. Krishnamurti-inspired The Valley School (TVS), Bangalore — ranked India's #1 co-ed day school in the EducationWorld India School Rankings 2016. The CISCE-affiliated class I-XII school introduced mixed-age group learning in primary classes (II-VII) way back in 2004.

### **What are the essential features of mixed-age group learning?**

The essence of mixed-age group learning (MAGL) is to group children of different ages in primary classrooms in which every child learns according to her capability rather than age-prescribed standards. Unlike conventional classroom teaching where the teacher directs the pace of learning, each child is responsible for her own learning. The role of the teacher is to guide and facilitate the learning process of each child. In addition to encouraging self-learning, this pedagogy creates opportunities for younger children to learn from peers and/or older children and vice versa under the supervision of the same teacher for three years.

### **What was the motivation for introducing MAGL?**

The Valley School is based on the ideals of philosopher-educationist J. Krishnamurti who believed that education should not be comparative, competitive or measured by numerics. Schools should be vibrant places where children are comfortable with their inner selves, happy and secure with adults. Teachers must deeply connect with students



Mixed-age class in TVS. Inset: S. Jayaram

as co-learners to explore life and understand its subtler aspects and encourage children's natural spirit of enquiry.

In a conscious effort to move away from same-age classrooms and the one-size-fits-all approach, we evolved the mixed-age group learning programme for children up to the age of 12. Here children play, study and learn in small groups for a three-year period with the same class teacher before moving on to the next group. There are no year-end exams or tests; instead, we have a set of learning objectives to be achieved over three years. Each child's progress is observed and recorded on a continuous basis, rather than through flash-in-the-pan tests.

### **How satisfied are you with the outcome of MAGL pedagogy in primary education?**

Personally and as a community, we are convinced this is the right approach to learning. The feedback from children and parents is that they deeply value this learning experience. When they transition into class VIII, they are initially overwhelmed but our teachers hand-hold them and smoothen the transition. There is no dip in learning outcomes in senior school. This proves that a learning environment which fosters creativity and joy and is not based on comparison, achievement and reward, is not inimical to academic excellence.

#### **Reggio Emilia**

Developed after World War II by psychologist Loris Malaguzzi together with parents of villages grouped around Reggio Emilia, a city in north Italy, the eponymous early childhood education pedagogy is based on the belief that youngest children are capable of constructing their own learning under the supervision of enabling mentors and guides.



**Meera Bhalla**

The IB-affiliated Singapore International School (SIS), Mumbai has adopted this pedagogy. Summiya Yasmeen interviewed Meera Bhalla, lower primary coordinator of SIS and programme director of Reggio Emilia (India) Foundation (estb.2010).

### **What is the essence of the Reggio Emilia pedagogy?**

Reggio Emilia is based on the belief that all children are born curious, wide-eyed with wonder and able to express themselves in several 'languages'. Arousing their natural spirit of enquiry and providing them opportunities to express themselves freely, develops self-belief and drives learning. The adult or teacher in a Reggio setting is a co-learner and researcher who facilitates learning and discovery alongside. The environment is the third teacher. Central to this pedagogy is the 'Atelier' — a studio-like space where children can experiment and play-learn, either in groups or individually.

Moreover, children's progress is documented through photographs, videos, notes, records and reflections to be shared with parents, children, educators and teachers.

### **When and why did you choose to implement Reggio Emilia in SIS?**

In April 2012 five SIS educators visited Reggio Emilia and participated in a week-long orientation programme at the Loris Malaguzzi Centre. I was in this study group and spent the most inspiring seven days visiting beautiful Reggio schools and interacting with highly-driven teachers. Subsequently, the school management decided to adopt Reggio in SIS. The first prep school in Mumbai was inaugurated in 2012 and SIS Prep, Ahmedabad two years ago.

### **Integration of Reggio Emilia in the SIS ECCE curriculum...**

We have successfully adopted the Reggio Emilia philosophy to suit our cultural and pedagogical requirements. Our experience is that Reggio methodology blends well with the primary years programme of the International Baccalaureate as both are based on



inquiry-based learning.

### **Reggio Emilia (India) Foundation objectives and initiatives...**

The Reggio Emilia (India) Foundation has organised several conferences and interactions with 'atelieristas' (teachers) from Reggio Children, Italy, to help Indian educators to understand and apply this pedagogy. Preschool education has been grossly neglected in India in terms of curriculum development, establishing learning milestones and professional development. We hope to change this scenario by sharing our inspiration, experience and learning with early childhood educators.

### **Self-organised learning environment**

Developed by Dr. Sugata Mitra, professor of education technology at Newcastle University, UK, a self-organised learning environment (SOLE) leverages the power of the Internet and technology to facilitate collaborative and inquiry-based learning. In SOLE, children work in small groups to learn and explore using computers with Internet access. In 2014, Dr. Mitra launched the School in the Cloud platform to help educators — teachers, parents and community leaders — to run their own SOLEs. On this platform, teachers and educators pose questions/problems to students who with the help of the Internet and Granny Cloud volunteers (an online community of teachers) discover answers.



**Suneeta Kulkarni: self-learning skills benefit**

History. In the 1990s, Dr. Mitra conducted his famous Hole-in-the-Wall experiment in Kalkaji, a Delhi slum where a computer was placed in a kiosk and children were allowed to use it freely. The experiment concluded that groups of children can learn to use computers and the Internet without formal training, and teach each other. From this experiment, Dr. Mitra developed the concept of SOLE. The first SOLE lab was set up in 2008 in Hyderabad funded by Newcastle University. During this project, it became apparent that children's use of Internet resources was severely limited on account of the English language barrier and lack of adequate teacher resources. Subsequently Dr. Mitra developed the School in the Cloud and Granny Cloud. During a Granny session, 'Grannies' (mostly retired teachers) skype in and answer children's questions, play games etc.

In 2013, Dr. Mitra was awarded a TED Prize of \$1 million. This sum funded seven SOLE labs — five in India and two in the UK. Currently, over 10,000 self-organised learning environments have been created in five continents, and the SOLE toolkit has been downloaded more than 67,000 times.

SOLE labs/School in the Cloud. One of the first SOLE labs in India was set up in the Marathi-medium Pragat Shikshan Sanstha (PSS) School in Maharashtra's Satara district. It transformed into a 'School in the Cloud' in 2014 and incorporates the SOLE approach as well as the Granny Cloud. "The schools newly constructed lab with five computers is connected to a large skype screen where children conduct Granny and SOLE sessions.

Since children work in groups, they are able to help each other and attain comprehension levels that are of much higher level than if they were working individually. Grannies enable children to learn English and more importantly, how to search, reason, think critically while using a variety of online resources", says Suneeta Kulkarni, Pune-based director of Granny Cloud and research director of the School in the Cloud project, who is also a member of the governing council of PSS School.



According to Kulkarni, the SOLE/School in the Cloud at PSS has enabled children to develop self-learning and critical thinking skills. “Our children are self-confident and able to search and use internet resources to find answers, draw conclusions, and present their learning. The schools teachers have also become adept at developing exploratory and inquiry-based test papers”, she says.

### Multiple Intelligences

The multiple intelligences (MI) theory was first propounded by Dr. Howard Gardner, professor of cognition and education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in his seminal book *Frames of the Mind* (1984). In this breakthrough work, he argued that the traditional assessment of intelligence based on IQ testing, is too limited. Instead, he argued that every individual has eight intelligences, in varying proportions. They are the linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, naturalist, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences.



**Nooraine Fazal: special intelligences discovery mission**

Since the mid-1980s, the MI theory has been enthusiastically embraced and implemented by educationists around the world. In India, MI has been adopted in some progressive K-12 schools, to draw out the full potential of children.

Inventure Academy implementation model. Among the handful of education institutions which have fully integrated the MI theory into the curriculum is the Bangalore-based Inventure Academy. Promoted in 2005 the CIE, UK and CISCE (Delhi)-affiliated Inventure Academy's pedagogy is heavily influenced by MI theory. “I visited and was hugely influenced by the Key Learning Academy in Indianapolis — a school world-famous for being the first to be built on MI theory — in 2005. Subsequently, educators from Key Learning visited us and conducted workshops for our teachers. The belief that every child has several intelligences, and that the job of educators is to discover, stimulate, and develop the special intelligences of students, forms the core of our teaching-learning philosophy”, says Nooraine Fazal, an alumna of Boston University and former executive with IBM and Reuters, and currently founder-CEO of the K-12 Inventure Academy.

According to Fazal, several activities and programmes have been woven into the curriculum to develop students multiple intelligences. “Every concept is learnt through a theme or project. Last year, our primary students went on a 'trash trail starting from school to a landfill. Students interviewed people working in the garbage industry (to develop interpersonal intelligence) and reflected on how their actions affect the environment (intrapersonal intelligence). Back in school, they wrote stories about the people they interviewed (linguistic intelligence) and calculated the average amount of garbage generated (logical intelligence). Then, students used differing mediums — dance (bodily-kinesthetic), song (musical) and posters (spatial) — to create awareness about garbage. Through this process every child is given the opportunity to use and develop her special intelligences”, explains Fazal.

**With Dipta Joshi (Mumbai) & Hemalatha Raghupathi (Chennai)**

# NEW PEDAGOGY PRACTICES IN INDIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION: THE VENT BETWEEN VISION AND ACQUISITION IN LIFE/PHILOSOPHY

by Malini Mukherjee

## From Teaching to Facilitation

*How can the Veda be grasped without tutelage*

*Anaditya gurOragrE pratibhaati katham srutih – Bhaarata Manjari 3-21.938*

Acquisition of knowledge through a system where the teacher is the benevolent 'owner' and 'giver' of knowledge, who fills in the students' *tabula rasa* (or empty slate), with knowledge, is as old as the Gurukul system in our country. It was for the Guru to decide:

- *what to learn*
- *how to learn*
- *how much to learn*
- *what is age appropriate*

Hence, the teacher selected texts, delivered or *transmitted* knowledge (mostly through lecture methods), and expected the students to acquire the same knowledge. The students had a passive role, where they *acquired* knowledge from the teacher. Knowledge flow was from the teacher to the students and never the other way round or between learners.

This is much in line with Behaviorism, the learning theory credited to Skinner, which says that learning happens when a response is generated by a stimuli produced by the teacher.

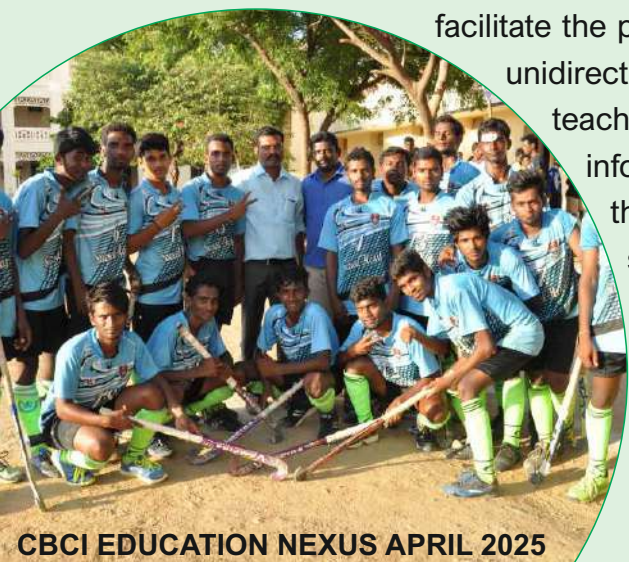
When we consider our own childhood classrooms, most of us shall be able to recall teachers whose instructional designs were based on transacting the textbooks through lectures, rote learning and evaluations. The teacher had an active role to play, whereas the students mostly tried to follow what was being 'taught'.

This perception of 'Teachers, and *only* teachers are responsible for learning' was challenged by Vygotsky's Constructivism, who said knowledge can be 'constructed' by learners, and teachers have the role to

facilitate the process of learning. Knowledge flow need not be necessarily be unidirectional. Also, it must be mentioned, with the advent of internet, teachers' role of sharing information became redundant as every information is available at the tip of the finger. The teacher, now had the more important role of facilitating the process of how students should effectively use the vast information available to them.

This was (theoretically) accepted by the education community worldwide, India being one. This meant teachers would have to design lessons, more or less, in the following manner :

- Teachers to introduce the topic, not limited to lecture method.



- The teacher would set expectations in consultation with students
- The students would have the liberty to explore, experiment, argue, debate, research, and share their findings in innovative ways. They may create *new knowledge*.
- A student may work in isolation, but ideally groups of students would be involved, so that there is ample scope of peer/social learning
- The teacher would provide props/ scaffolds /directions but never 'tell' the answers
- The result or the outcome of the learning might be varied
- It is the *process* which is more important than the *outcome*

Now this posed a challenge, almost a threat, to most of the traditional classrooms.

For ages, in our traditional learning system, the teacher has been assigned the role of *Param Bramha*. There is, hypothetically, no knowledge beyond him. Hence, if he is assigned the role of a facilitator, it is uncertain if 'knowledge' would be attained. The uncertainty is in the minds of the parents, the teachers and even the students. It is deemed most appropriate to *fill in* the minds of the students with knowledge, than leave it to the uncertainty of 'knowledge would evolve'.

Secondly, it was assumed, that the role of a facilitator would diminish the importance of a teacher. However, in actuality, facilitation is hard work. It requires a very methodical and yet, innovative approach to design a lesson which gives ample scope for students to walk the alleys of knowledge, where they acquire several skills as they achieve the learning outcome. Facilitation does not mean merely assigning task and moving out of the room. It involves:

- Designing task
- Assigning task
- Setting expectations
- Creating and Providing scaffolding tools
- Checking for progress
- Redirecting/ reviewing as and when required
- Creating scopes for sharing
- Showcasing learning

Thirdly, *Facilitation* demands time, as is indicated above.

Students must be allowed enough time to explore, make mistakes, revisit findings and come to conclusions with support from teachers. And while the National Curriculum Framework has, time and again, focussed on acquisition of skills rather than transaction of chapters from textbooks, most schools, and even higher education bodies, have made it mandatory for the teachers to *cover* all topics and chapters in a stringent, routine bound, academic framework. Also, there are several chapters to be transacted by the end of the

year. As a result, teachers find it convenient to read and explain the text and expect the students to rote learn and reproduce. Such learning, needless to say, has a short life.

Going back to my experience in the SMART class, which I had mentioned at the beginning of this paper, I can clearly understand why, in a 45 minutes class, the teacher thought it was better to read through the teachers' manual, than allow the students to point out the different parts of the body system, make mistakes, correct themselves and learn.( I would like to point out here that, in my opinion, even the instructed activity is not a very ideal lesson which moves away from the traditional 'teaching'.) In many schools, I have observed, the practical classes are conducted theoretically, just to save time.

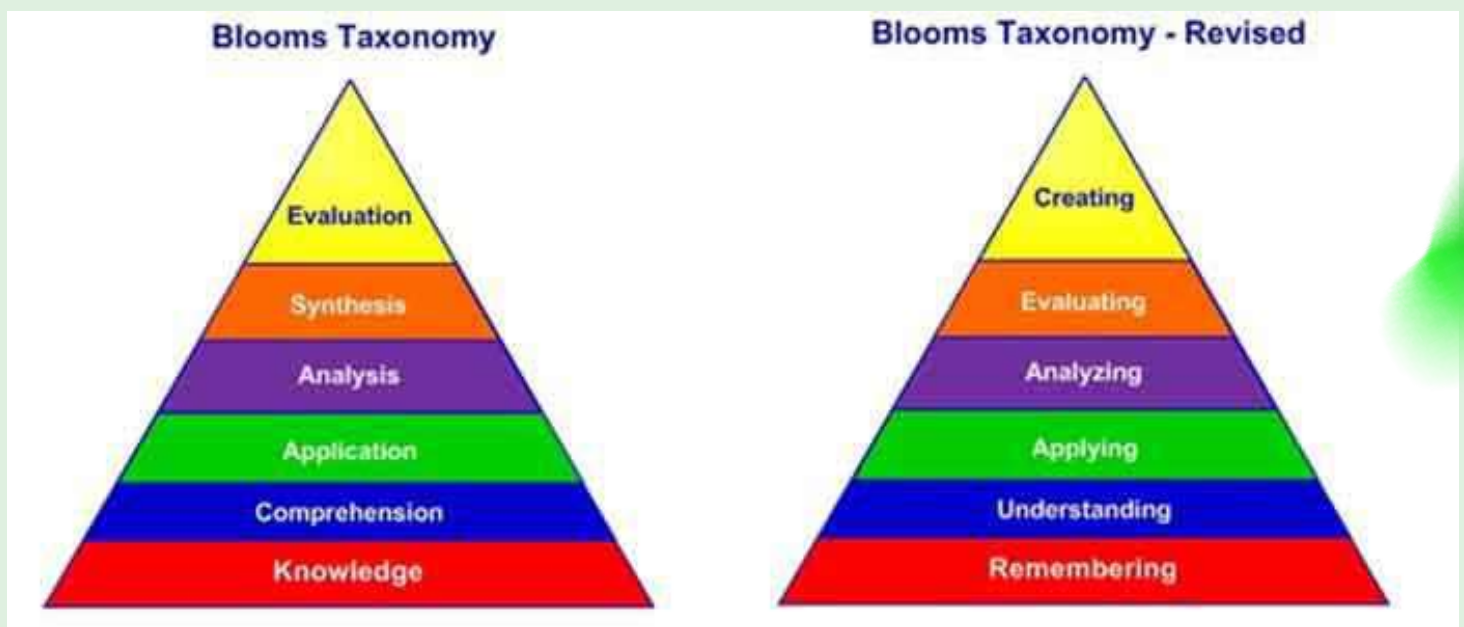
Also, a typical Indian classroom is always designed in a way where the entire class literally *looks upto* the teacher, who is on a raised platform, without any scope to interact with each other. Teacher has very little space to move around, as the furniture blocks the way. There is no question of students moving around, as this is also considered to be indiscipline. There is no interaction space, where students can sit in bunches





and discuss in groups. We have long benches and desks in most schools, and in several government schools, the desks and benches are tied together, limiting any movement of students. Hence, teacher can hardly do anything more than stand on the platform, read from a chapter, explain, write on board and expect the students to grasp what is being taught, take down notes and reproduce the same. There cannot be group discussions, group activities, experimentations, explorations or showcasing. Apart from the fact that most mainstream classrooms have limited space, it is also a mindset which stops us from designing convenient furniture or considering no furniture, arranging a classroom which helps the process of facilitation, or look beyond classroom for learning space. It is tragic that in a country where great educators like Tagore thought and practised open classrooms against the limitations of four walls, we still consider it best, and often respectable, to stick to the confines of a concrete building.

### From Rote learning to Active learning



We may all recall those days in our childhood, where our parents would insist on sitting up straight and studying hard. By 'studying hard', they would often mean learning tables, poems, answers to questions, short notes, scientific principles, names of kings and princes, dates of wars and famines, capitals of countries and states – almost the entire textbooks by heart.

Recall and recognition cannot be ignored totally. It forms the base of the learning ladder of the triangle of Bloom's Taxonomy, which maps the process in which we think and learn. In the diagram below, we see that the lower levels are more fundamental, whereas the higher levels are more complex. We may all recall those days in our childhood, where our parents would insist on sitting up straight and studying hard. By 'studying hard', they would often mean learning tables, poems, answers to questions, short notes, scientific principles, names of kings and princes, dates of wars and famines, capitals of countries and states – almost the entire textbooks by heart.

While earlier the focus was more on the lower levels, with the 'paradigm shift' in Education, the focus moved to the higher order skills – Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation.

The design of the triangle, published by Benjamin Bloom in 1956, underwent revision by a group of cognitive psychologists, curriculum theorists and researchers where Synthesis and Evaluation were replaced by Evaluation and Creation.

Now, a classroom which envisages acquisition of Higher order thinking skills (HOTS, in brief) like Analysis, Evaluation and Creation, cannot solely depend on Rote learning methods. It has to reframe the instructional strategies where the students would be *actively* involved and be in charge of learning. It



involves physical and mental engagement in a more holistic manner, where the learning is joyful, meaningful, engaging and sustained.

This would necessitate –

- multiple learning resources to cater to children with multiple interest and learning pattern
- adequate number of skilled teachers.
- adequate space
- an instructional strategy which ensures activity based/project based/inquiry based methods

Again, the Indian education scenario faced more or less the same hurdles as discussed in the previous section.

Currently India spends 4.6 % of its total GDP on Education. It is in the 62<sup>nd</sup> position in total public expenditure on education per student. The amount can hardly ensure adequate learning resources for all kinds of learners. Not many private schools have a clear idea on what could be appropriate learning resources. Sadly, we have not even achieved the minimum in most schools. For example, children with musical intelligence will hardly have enough resources in a typical Government or private school in India. She/he will have to remain content with resources related to, say, visual intelligence.



The second ask of 'adequate number' of 'skilled' teachers almost sounds unfeasible in Indian education scenario. The allocations of teachers are very scarce in Govt primary schools, and with several tasks assigned to them – from running and management of Mid day meal to conducting govt surveys, it is left to one or two teachers, at most, to run the show. It is physically impossible for one teacher to run from one classroom to another to conduct classes. Sometimes large numbers of students are seated in one big (or small) hall, where the teacher is expected to conduct multi grade teaching. It is almost ridiculous to expect a teacher to create an activity based instructional strategy where children are actively learners. The private schools are in a better situation, with

better infrastructure and more teachers. However, moving away from traditional rote learning methods and strategizing a class for active learners requires open mind and innovative ideas, which is often lacking. Fear of failure is a great deterrent in moving away from rote learning. Our education system has, willingly or unwillingly, instilled this fear in the hearts of students, parents and even teachers. However, failure, if facilitated positively, is the first step in generating curiosity, creating challenge and urge to look for answers. It is this process which is often more important than the end product. But almost no evaluation system acknowledges or rewards the process. As a result, it is considered much easier to 'learn by heart' the correct answers and fetch good marks, and not consider the steps involved in reaching the correct answer. In the previous section, I have already detailed on how lack of open space is a constraint in the learning process which engages active learners.

The question of 'limited time' where children are expected to learn (or rather, show end results) a lot from their textbooks, also cannot create any scope of active learning. Active learning requires deep down research which requires ample structured and unstructured time.

The above reasons would probably help in understanding why the teacher in the classroom I mentioned at the beginning of my paper, was more comfortable falling back to Rote learning than relying on Active learning, which was expected in the lesson plan provided to her. For active learning, she would have to draw a human body (many teachers cannot draw) on ground, which would require enough floor space, ask students to draw the different systems on the human body, with great chances that many would do it incorrectly at the beginning, and hence 'waste' a lot of time, and of course what is the point in doing something wrong, when the correct answer is provided.

## From Unthinking to Thinking

*"If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions."* — **Albert Einstein**

The Bloom's Taxonomy mentioned in the above section talks about the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

"Thinking" has occupied a major portion of contemporary pedagogic thought practices, which involves Critical thinking, logical thinking, reasoning, inferring, problem solving, Creative thinking and, more recently "Design Thinking" (which involves identifying challenges, gathering information, generating ideas, providing solutions and testing its efficacy.)

A coherent pedagogic model is required to analyse, align (with curriculum) and deliver the plethora of Thinking skills in classroom practices.

Some of the requisites of practising Thinking in classrooms are-

- An open ended curricula which allows to explore
- An open mindset which does not expect just one 'correct answer'
- Teachers trained in introducing thinking strategies and thinking tools, approaches and methods which integrates Thinking
- Special 'Thinking' classes
- The leisure of time to 'Think' and not a hurried class
- Apart from an end of the term evaluation system, a continuous and comprehensive evaluation

However, none of the above can be achieved in a 'regular' classroom scenario. Additionally, to the reasons cited in the above two sections, it would be worth mentioning that it is often assumed that 'Thinking' comes naturally and needs no practice. Even an enlightened teacher, who understands the importance of 'Thinking' would tell the students to 'think and answer' after challenging them with a critical question, assuming that the students will use all their mental faculties and come up with a bright answer. It is often not the case, as, unless the students are guided on methods of Thinking, they will reach a nought. However, very few Teachers' training courses include methods of thinking.

It needs also be mentioned that teachers often feel the urge to *tell* the answer than allow the students to ponder on a critical question. It may be said that it is a practise inherent to our traditional belief of acquiring knowledge from forefathers, Gurus or teachers only. Creative thinking and design thinking involves coming up with, perhaps, a new answer to a problem. How can we measure 'new' knowledge? Our evaluation systems are standardized systems and missing out a prescribed 'key words' is penalised severely. Attempting something new is, therefore, unacceptable. A Roald Dahl, with his penchant to create new words like Gobblefunk or Hopscotch will not survive in our classrooms.

So we plug all possible faculties to Think in classroom and rely on the process of 'Unthinking' where the only guidelines are what is written in the textbooks.

And here we need to mention a serious gap in our education system. India is a country of many languages with several dialects in each language. The textbooks are, however, written in just a few languages.

Based on my observations of classrooms in our country and some others, I would like to propose the following :

The focus should be on acquisition of concepts and ideas, instead of studying chapters in isolation. This should help in cutting down on the burden of 'transacting textbooks' and teacher and students might find more time to explore and study in depth. The teachers and students must have the liberty to choose their





own texts (not limited to written materials only, but extending to visual and aural materials, or even real life persons/ space/ objects), if possible. This would help teachers to design the lessons in a way where students use several methods to reach their understanding, without cutting edge restrictions of time. This will only be possible, if syllabus simply highlights the main concepts. For example, in language , *individual experience vis -a-vis collective experience* could be one of the 'ideas' to explore. The teacher and the students could select appropriate texts, as is suited to their level, cultural context, etcetera. The evaluation system should be a continuous one, to strengthen methods of transaction. It should test understanding and application, and not merely stress on memorisation. And while all the Boards of learning concur to this, every test conducted by the boards have a very large percentage of questions based on rote learning – which expects students to memorise names/ numbers/dates/ principles from textbook. What if students were asked to establish a principle of Science by showing the scope of its application in his/her own project? The ownership of knowledge would get transferred from teacher to student. Process should be awarded as much as the product. So, if a student argues a point well, he/she should be awarded marks even if he/she fails to reach the ' correct' answer. There should be more open ended questions, in which students are allowed to interpret in their own way. The Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation system mandated by Right to Education Act in 2009 broke down the 'only summative' evaluation system and called for a formative assessment as well as summative evaluation.

Sadly

Schools should design their space to make it *facilitation* friendly – not teacher centric but learner centric. Students and teacher should be able to face each other allowing free interaction, move about and gather in groups as and when required. Outside space should be optimised as space of learning. Furniture, especially in lower classes, is not a necessity. Free space is.

Most often, even after training teachers for days, I have noticed, teachers would prefer to 'tell' students, and feel very apprehensive about 'leaving them on their own'. This mindset will have to be addressed repeatedly, so that teachers understand that learning happens even when the students are wrong. Very rarely , in teachers' trainings , we include the idea of scaffolding or creating topic based scaffolding tools. Even if it is done, most teachers prefer to give some printouts as handouts, without ever integrating them in the learning process.

Instructional design should accommodate various learners – visual learners, aural learners, tactile learners and others. Teachers could help students choose their preferred way of learning and presentation of learning. This does not mean that the teacher has to 'teach' using several methods, but she should be prepared with several tasks for students, which they will be able to take ahead on their own.

It would be almost audacious to demand a separate 'Thinking' class, but every subject must have clear cut scope to integrate exercises which involves reasoning, logical thinking, critical thinking and all the plethora of Thinking skills which are essential skills. Every evaluation system should have a certain percentage of questions which would pertain to the Thinking skills and students must be marked accordingly. Teachers' training must include strategizing *Thinking classrooms*. The B.Ed and other Education related classrooms should reflect a Thinking classroom, so that future educators get used to a system of learning which promotes. Right now, most B.Ed classrooms teach through lecture method how to teach innovatively. The B.Ed curriculums should align with what is expected in a next gen classroom.





# INDIA'S EDUCATION CONUNDRUM: ENVISIONING 2025 AMID GROUND REALITIES

By Dhruv Chhabra: January 7, 2025



*India will grow only if India reads." But is India truly reading?*

Recent statistics reveal a sobering reality: over the past two years,

**1.72 crore children have dropped out of school.**

The Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) 2023-24

report highlights a worrying decline in school enrolments, **dropping from 26.5 crore in 2021-22 to 24.8 crore in 2023-24.** This marks the first major fall in six years, raising critical concerns about the robustness of India's education system.

*Inspired by a video report by The Quint, highlighting key insights into India's education challenges.*

## A Declining Trend Across States

States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra have witnessed significant drops in enrolments, with Bihar alone seeing a decline of 35.65 lakh students. At the primary level, enrolments have fallen by 46 lakh in the last year, while secondary-level dropout rates remain alarmingly high. Despite the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's ambitious vision of universal access and equity, the stark reality indicates otherwise.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), which measures the proportion of students enrolled in a particular level of education against the age-appropriate population, has seen minor dips at most levels. While retention rates are higher at the elementary level, the secondary level remains a challenge, with dropout rates spiking significantly.

## Reasons for the Decline

UDISE+ attributes the decline to several factors:

1. **Improved Data Collection:** Earlier, children were often dual-enrolled in government and private schools to access benefits. Aadhaar-linked verification has curtailed this practice, reflecting more accurate enrolment figures.
2. **Reverse Migration:** The COVID-19

pandemic saw families moving back to villages, enrolling their children in government schools. As migration reverses, many students are returning to private schools.

However, these reasons fail to explain why the overall enrolment rate has not stabilised or increased. This raises questions about the authenticity of data in previous years and the systemic gaps in ensuring universal education.

## Infrastructure and Teacher Shortages

India's education system faces significant infrastructural and human resource challenges.

**Over 110,000 schools operate with only one teacher, making effective learning nearly impossible.**

States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh report dismal teacher-student ratios, with thousands of teaching positions lying vacant. In Assam, Odisha, and Karnataka, underutilised infrastructure due to low student-to-school ratios further underscores the inefficiency in resource allocation. While digital initiatives have gained traction, only 7% of schools across the country have digital libraries, and fewer have functional computers for educational use. These gaps highlight the urgent need for equitable distribution of resources and investments.

## Vision 2025: A Lofty Goal

The NEP 2020 outlines a transformative roadmap for education by 2025, focusing on universal access, quality improvement, and innovation. It aims to:

- Achieve a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in school education.
- Integrate vocational education into mainstream curricula.
- Promote multilingualism and mother-tongue instruction in early grades.
- Strengthen teacher training and professional development.

While the vision is commendable, the ground realities paint a different picture. Without addressing foundational challenges such as teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities, these goals may remain aspirational rather than achievable.

## The Path Forward

To realise its Vision 2025 and the broader aspiration of becoming a global superpower by 2047, India must prioritise education as a critical driver of progress. Key measures include:

1. **Investing in Teachers:** Teachers are the backbone of any education system. Comprehensive training, better salaries, and improved working conditions are essential to attract and retain talent.
2. **Bridging the Infrastructure Gap:** Adequate infrastructure, including classrooms, laboratories, and digital resources, must be a priority. States with underutilised resources should focus on optimising their infrastructure to ensure equitable access.
3. **Addressing Dropout Rates:** Targeted interventions, such as scholarships, counselling, and after-school support, can help retain students, particularly at the secondary level.
4. **Fostering Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborations between the government,

private sector, and non-profits can enhance resource allocation, innovation, and accountability.

5. **Focusing on Data Transparency:** Reliable data is critical for effective policymaking. Strengthening systems like UDISE+ to ensure accurate and timely reporting can help identify gaps and track progress.

### A Nation's Future Hinges on Education

As India marches towards its centenary of independence in 2047, its aspirations of becoming a superpower are intrinsically linked to the quality of education it provides. A nation's strength lies in its people, and education is the cornerstone of human capital development. Bridging the divide between vision and reality requires collective effort, strong political will, and unwavering commitment from all stakeholders.

<https://scoonews.com/news/indias-education-conundrum-envisioning-2025-amid-ground-realities/?noamp=mobile>

# INDIA NEEDS APPRENTICESHIP-BASED EDUCATION, SAYS MINISTER JAYANT CHAUDHARY

By Team ScooNews: March 24, 2025

Addressing the pressing issue of skill gaps in India's technical sectors, Sh. Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, highlighted the need for industry-academia-government partnerships and an apprenticeship-embedded curriculum to make the country's youth future-ready. Speaking as the Chief Guest of the third annual technical festival EPITOME 2025 at Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV), Vadodara, via video conference, the minister emphasised the role of the education ecosystem in driving both national and individual growth.

"In today's knowledge-driven world, the right skill set gives us both the merit as well as national growth," he remarked, drawing a strong connection between employability and India's ambition for Viksit Bharat 2047.

Themed "Transport 360: Land, Air, Sea and Beyond", the two-day festival at GSV brought together industry leaders, policymakers, educators,

and innovators to explore the future of logistics, transport, and multimodal infrastructure. He called upon stakeholders to work in unison: "Industry, academia, and government must work in synergy to create skilled professionals who can reduce errors, improve efficiency and drive innovation."

Citing government initiatives, he noted the recently announced ₹60,000 crore scheme to upgrade Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and the Ministry's support for start-up culture and sector-specific



skilling programmes, especially with India's start-up ecosystem projected to double by 2030 and generate over 50 million jobs.

#### **A National Model Worth Replicating:**

The minister praised Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya's "industry-driven" approach and encouraged it to mentor National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs), thereby broadening the impact of its reskilling and upskilling initiatives.

Dr. Hemang Joshi, Member of Parliament from Vadodara, reiterated the Prime Minister's vision for Viksit Bharat 2047, identifying GSV as a vital institution in shaping a transport-ready and skilled India. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Manoj Choudhary shared the university's progress under its "industry-driven, innovation-led" vision, pointing to its direct collaborations with organisations like Airbus, Alstom, Tata Advanced Systems, and AMD.

Global experts including Prof. Vinayak Dixit (UNSW Australia) and Andreas Foerster (Tata Advanced Systems) also joined the discussions on how academic institutions can match the rapidly evolving demands of the transport and logistics sectors.

#### **Taking the Model to Schools- The Missing Link:**

While technical universities like GSV are pioneering the way, India's transformation must begin at the school level. To truly bridge the skill gap and foster real-world readiness, Indian schools must begin integrating apprenticeship-based learning and cross-sector collaboration into the secondary and higher secondary curriculum.

Some solutions that can be adopted include:

- Creating industry liaisons in every district to help schools connect with local businesses, logistics hubs, aviation services, or manufacturing units for real-time exposure.
- Embedding skill-based modules within existing subjects—such as using project-based transport models in mathematics or digital simulations in geography and economics.
- Adopting an 'Apprenticeship Lite' model for students in classes 9 to 12, enabling them to shadow professionals or complete internships during school breaks.
- Establishing co-branded certification programmes between CBSE/State Boards and skilling institutions like NSDC or Sector Skill Councils to provide formal recognition for practical skills learned in school.
- Engaging vocational educators in teacher training to ensure skill-based learning is effectively delivered at the classroom level.

With the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocating for integration of vocational education at all levels, now is the time for school systems to act and align with India's larger skilling mission. Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya's model could serve as a blueprint—not just for universities, but for school education that aspires to blend knowledge with employability.

<https://scooneews.com/news/india-needs-apprenticeship-based-education-says-minister-jayant-chaudhary/>

## **PM-YUVA 3.0: TRANSFORMING YOUNG WRITERS IN INDIA'S SCHOOLS?**

**March 19, 2025**



The Prime Minister's Young Authors Mentorship Scheme (PM-YUVA) has returned for its third edition, promising to shape the future of young Indian writers once again. Launched by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the

National Book Trust (NBT) of India on March 11, 2025, YUVA 3.0 seeks to nurture creative talent among individuals under 30, providing them with a structured mentorship programme that equips them with the skills to document India's past, present, and future through literature.

With themes such as the contribution of the Indian diaspora in nation-building, the Indian knowledge system, and the makers of modern India (1950-2025), this year's programme encourages participants to explore diverse facets of India's rich cultural and intellectual heritage. But while the initiative continues to gain traction, can its implementation be optimised in Indian schools to truly create a lasting impact?



### YUVA 3.0: A Gateway for Young Indian Writers:

Following the success of YUVA 1.0 and YUVA 2.0, which saw young authors explore themes of India's freedom movement and democracy, YUVA 3.0 aims to build a stream of writers who can articulate India's contributions across time and disciplines.

Aspiring authors can apply via MyGov India's portal, submitting a 10,000-word book proposal that is evaluated by a selection panel constituted by NBT India. 50 candidates will be selected for a six-month mentorship programme, during which they will:

- Receive financial assistance of ₹50,000 per month

- Attend workshops, training sessions, and mentorship meetings

- Have their books published in multiple Indian languages

- Participate in literary festivals and international book fairs

The New Delhi World Book Fair 2026 will serve as a launchpad for these young authors, offering them an opportunity to showcase their work on a national stage.

### Bringing YUVA 3.0 into Indian Schools- The Need for Institutional Support:

While PM-YUVA 3.0 is a well-structured initiative, a significant gap exists in its reach at the school level. Despite India being home to one of the largest youth populations globally, creative writing as a discipline remains largely underdeveloped in most school curriculums. Integrating this scheme into secondary and higher secondary education could be a game-changer.

### How Schools Can Leverage PM-YUVA 3.0 for Maximum Impact:

1. **Creative Writing Programmes in Schools:** Schools should introduce structured creative writing workshops as an extracurricular activity or an elective subject to familiarise students with long-form writing.

2. **Dedicated Literary Mentorship:** Schools should facilitate teacher-led mentorship programmes, where educators guide students in conceptualising, drafting, and refining their manuscripts before submission.

3. **Regional and Vernacular Writing Initiatives:** Since YUVA promotes multilingual literature, schools should encourage students to write in their mother tongue, ensuring that India's literary landscape remains diverse and inclusive.

4. **Early Introduction to Research and Storytelling:** To cultivate young authors, schools must integrate storytelling, history-based research projects, and structured writing

exercises from middle school itself.

5. **Engagement with Past YUVA Winners:** Schools can invite previous winners for interactive sessions to inspire students, helping them understand the nuances of writing, editing, and publishing.

### Lessons from Past Editions- How YUVA Has Transformed India's Literary Scene:

Since its inception in 2021, PM-YUVA has empowered young authors across India, producing literature that adds to the country's intellectual and historical archives. The impact of the scheme is evident:

- 41 books published under YUVA 2.0 were launched at the New Delhi World Book Fair 2025.

- Books produced under YUVA 1.0 and YUVA 2.0 were translated into multiple Indian languages, broadening their accessibility.

- Participants have received national and international recognition, with some works included in academic and government libraries.

- Young authors have interacted with historians, policymakers, and scholars, gaining real-world insights into writing and research.

However, the lack of structured creative writing programmes in schools has meant that the initiative remains largely restricted to university students and independent writers. Expanding YUVA 3.0's footprint within school education systems will ensure that a younger demographic benefits from this transformative programme.

### Creating India's Next Generation of Writers:

With India ranked third in global book publishing, there is an urgent need to nurture homegrown literary talent that can represent the nation's historical and contemporary narratives on an international stage. PM-YUVA 3.0 is a step in the right direction, but to fully optimise its potential, it must become more accessible to students at the school level.

By encouraging structured creative writing curriculums, mentorship programmes, and regional language engagement, Indian schools can help cultivate the next generation of authors, historians, and literary scholars, ensuring that India's rich literary heritage continues to thrive.

<https://scoonews.com/news/pm-yuva-3-0-transforming-young-writers-in-indias-schools/>

# MADRAS HIGH COURT UGC REGULATIONS 2018 AND GOVERNMENT ORDER (GO. 5)

28 March 2025



Madras High Court holds that UGC Regulations 2018 and Government Order (GO. 5) prescribing selection committee

composition for selection of Principal and Assistant Professors are not applicable to minority institutions.

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice N. Anand Venkatesh held that the provisions in the UGC Regulations 2018 and GO. 5 relating to selection committee infringe upon the fundamental right guaranteed under Article 30(1) of the Constitution of India.

The Hon'ble Judge observed that the dawn of independence heralded a profound commitment to safeguarding the rights of minorities, instilling a sense of security amid apprehensions about their future in a newly sovereign nation. The Constitution of India a beacon of hope, enshrined these assurances, particularly through Article 30(1), which guarantees minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. This provision was not merely a legal formality. It was a promise made by the framers to protect the cultural and educational identities of minority communities. In instances

where these rights are threatened, it is imperative that Constitutional courts intervene decisively to reaffirm this commitment ensuring that the foundational ideals of justice and equality are upheld. The judiciary must recognise its pivotal role in restoring confidence among minorities, acting as the guardian of the rights that were pledged to them, thus reinforcing the very essence of India's democratic ethos and its dedication to unity and diversity.

The Hon'ble Judge directed the Universities to grant qualification approval to the appointments made by the minority institutions without formation of selection committee prescribed by UGC Regulations and GO. 5. The Court also directed the Directorate of Collegiate Education to approve the appointments and release salary for the staff.

Mr. Isaac Mohanlal, Senior Counsel appeared for Loyola College, Chennai, Madras Christian College, Women's Christian College, Chennai, Stella Maris College, Chennai and Sacred Heart College, Villupuram

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfAXXUr0yg6irMT6aHS8uEg/community?lb=UgkxT\\_WhHB\\_rUmrBXZaxLI9A\\_LFFvGY9Qn2eO](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfAXXUr0yg6irMT6aHS8uEg/community?lb=UgkxT_WhHB_rUmrBXZaxLI9A_LFFvGY9Qn2eO)

# KERALA ASSEMBLY PASSES PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES BILL, SCRIPTS A MILESTONE IN STATE'S EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

By Sarath Babu George: March 25, 2025



In a historic move that is set to reshape Kerala's education landscape, the Kerala Assembly passed the Kerala State Private Universities (Establishment and Regulation) Bill, 2025, on

Tuesday (March 25, 2025). This pivotal legislation finally opens the doors to private universities in the state, nearly a decade after the idea was first proposed.

The Bill's passage follows an intense debate extending across three days, during which nearly 1,400 amendments were introduced. The legislative process saw extensive discussions on the provisions of the Bill as lawmakers from various political parties raised concerns and offered suggestions for improvement.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan expressed a cautious stance, stating that while the United Democratic Front (UDF) does not oppose the Bill in principle, they have reservations about some of its provisions. He emphasised that the higher education scenario in Kerala is not the same as it was a decade ago when the concept of private universities was first introduced. Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala also voiced concerns over student migration, urging the government to focus on ensuring high-quality education and ample employment opportunities within the State to

stem the outflow of students to other regions.

Higher Education Minister R. Bindu assured that the government had conducted extensive studies and consultations before tabling the Bill, and emphasised that provisions of the Bill could be amended in the future if necessary.

Nearly a decade after being assaulted by Students' Federation of India (SFI) activists during the Global Education Summit in 2016, former diplomat T.P. Sreenivasan now sees "vindication" in his advocacy for private investment in Kerala's higher education sector. Mr. Sreenivasan, who was then the vice-chairman of the Kerala State Higher Education Council, remains firm in his belief that privatisation is essential to ensuring a robust educational ecosystem. However, he emphasised that higher education required significant financial input, which the State alone could not provide.

Meanwhile, All India Students' Federation, the students' outfit of the Communist Party of India (CPI), a key constituent of the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF), took to the streets in protest against the passage of the Bill. The activists marched to the Assembly, demanding that the decision to permit private universities be reviewed. The protesters clashed with the police as they attempted to scale barricades erected near the Assembly, prompting the law enforcers to use water cannons to quell the agitation.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-assembly-passes-private-universities-bill-scripts-a-milestone-in-states-educational-landscape/article69372401.ece>



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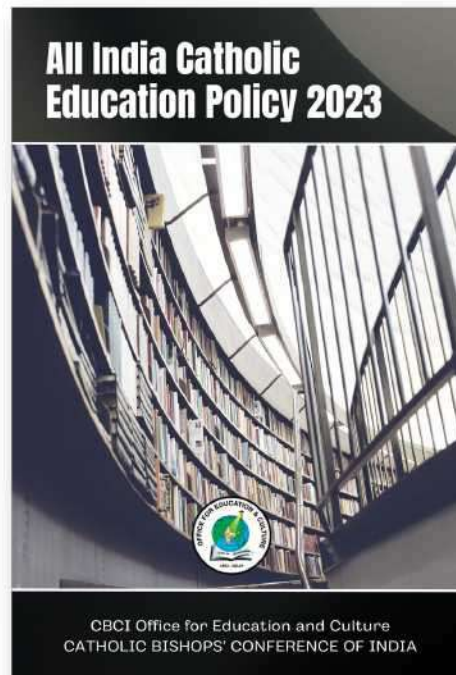


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PUBLISHED BY CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF INDIA. (CBCI)

All India Catholic Education Policy 2023 is brought out by the CBCI Office for Education and Culture of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. This revised edition offers many avenues for relevant pedagogies and educational choices. This comprehensive policy contains norms and directives for all the Catholic educational institutions of India regarding the multi-dimensional approaches of our education ministry. The Policy emphasizes the care of Catholics, especially the poor and the marginalized; the identity and role of the Catholic education ministry in India and our contribution to school education, higher education and technical and vocational education. This policy offers guidelines for a value-based educational climate, administrative and management policy and sets standards for our education ministry in the future.

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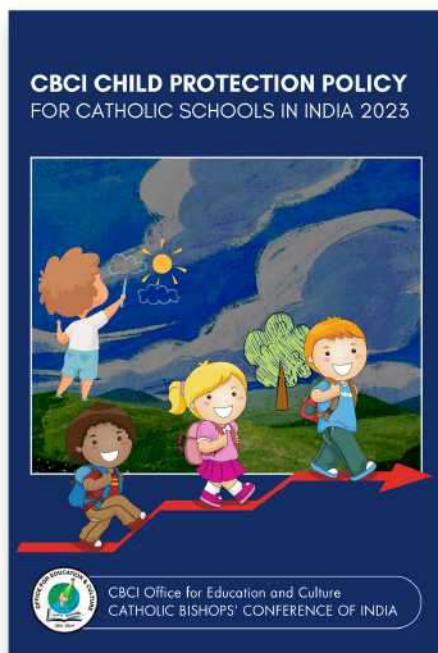


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PUBLISHED BY CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF INDIA. (CBCI)

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**CBCI OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE**  
CBCI Centre, 1 Ashok Place, New Delhi - 110001  
Office: +91 11 23747290 (Office)  
Mobile: +91 9968747667 (Personal),  
+91 9868141139 (Office)  
Email: [cbcieducation@gmail.com](mailto:cbcieducation@gmail.com),  
[cbcieducationinfo@gmail.com](mailto:cbcieducationinfo@gmail.com)  
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St Mary's Block, Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre  
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