



EDUCATE TO EMPOWER

CBCI EDUCATION NEXUS MAY 2025

POPE FRANCIS
AND HIS TEACHINGS

**CELEBRATING
MOTHER'S DAY**

EDUCATION IN INDIA

WHY NEP HAS SO FAR FAILED TO MOVE
THE NEEDLE

**WORLD
LABOUR DAY**

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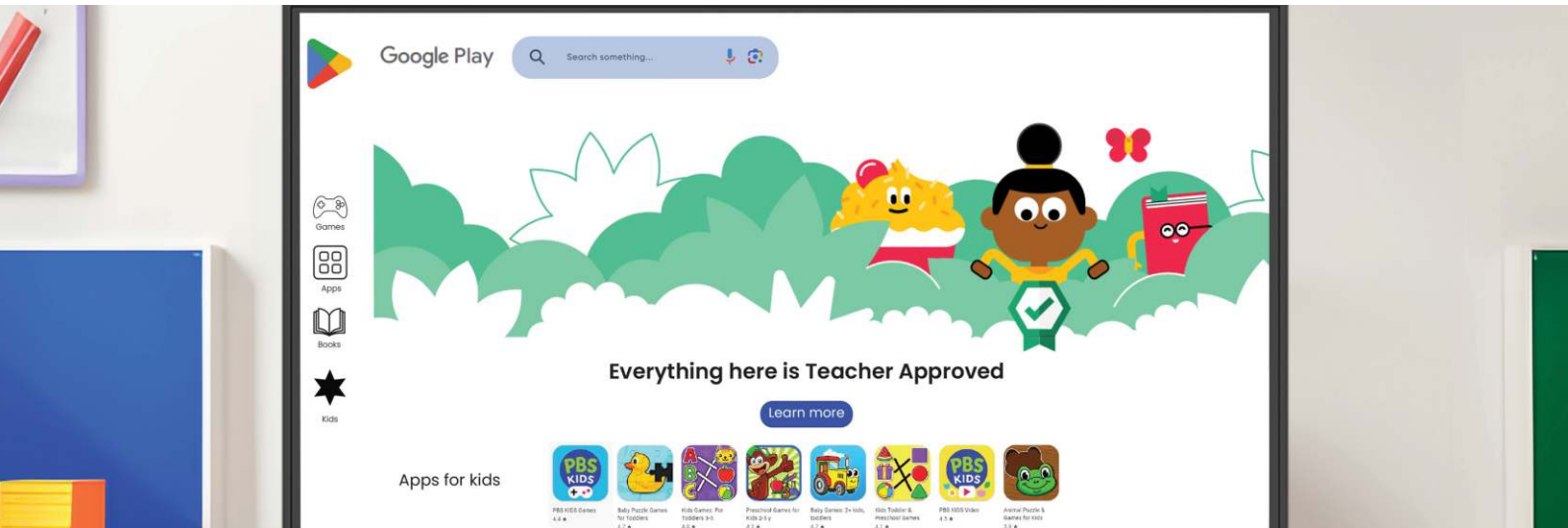
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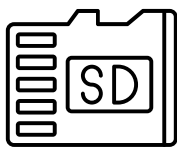
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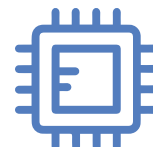
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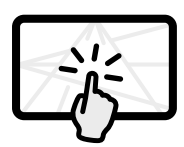
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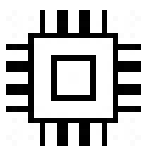
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FOLLOWING THE VISION OF POPE FRANCIS: A CALL FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION TODAY



In an age marked by inequality, conflict, environmental degradation, and rapid cultural shifts, Pope Francis stands as a beacon of prophetic leadership. His voice for the poor, the marginalised, and the forgotten resonates not merely as a moral exhortation but as a profound call to action for every Catholic educator and institution. His vision is not a distant dream; it is an urgent task for today.

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are the same. The degradation of our typical home disproportionately impacts the vulnerable — those whose voices are so often drowned out by the powerful. His call to "integral ecology" is not just about environmental stewardship; it is about a radical rethinking of how we live together, care for one another, and educate future generations with a profound sense of interconnectedness.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis extends this vision into the social sphere, proposing a culture of fraternity and social friendship. Against the tide of individualism, exclusion, and division, he presents a different path — a world where every human being is recognised as a brother or sister. Catholic education, therefore, must be an education for encounter, dialogue, and the construction of peace. It must form not merely the mind, but the heart, cultivating young people who will see beyond boundaries of race, religion, or nationality.

Through the *Global Compact on Education*, Pope Francis calls upon educational institutions worldwide to place the human person at the centre. He invites educators to form individuals who are open to others, capable of understanding diversity and embracing it as a richness rather than a threat. This Compact emphasises the need to rebuild educational systems that are inclusive, transformative, and sustainable — systems that prepare students to be builders of a more just and harmonious world.

The apostolic letter "*Dilexit Nos*," although addressed specifically to consecrated persons, offers profound insights for all Catholic educators. It reminds us that our mission must be rooted in love: a love that flows from Christ, who first loved us (*Dilexit nos*). Education, then, becomes an act of love — a commitment to accompany young people, to help them discover their vocation, and to empower them to serve humanity.

Today, Catholic education cannot remain static, tied merely to tradition or prestige. We are called to a bold renewal. We must follow Pope Francis' vision, forming students who will not aspire merely to success in worldly terms, but who will be leaven in society — agents of mercy, justice, reconciliation, and care for creation. In a fragmented and wounded world, the witness of a vibrant, prophetic Catholic education is more necessary than ever.

Pope Francis challenges us: Will we continue to educate for privilege, exclusion, and competition, or will we educate for solidarity, care, and communion? His vision is clear. The question is whether we will have the courage to embrace it — to build, with faith and creativity, the future he so eloquently dreams of for our world.

As Catholic educators, let us rise to this call. Let us shape hearts as well as minds, rooted in the Gospel and open to the world. In doing so, we will not only be faithful to Pope Francis' vision but also be loyal to Christ himself.



FR./DR. MARIA CHARLES SDB
National Secretary



POPE FRANCIS

AND HIS TEACHINGS

Pope Francis (born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on December 17, 1936) is the 266th Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, serving as the Bishop of Rome and sovereign of Vatican City since his election on March 13, 2013. He is the first Jesuit pope, the first from the Americas, and the first from the Southern Hemisphere. Known for his humility, pastoral approach, and emphasis on social justice, he has become one of the most influential global moral leaders of the 21st century.

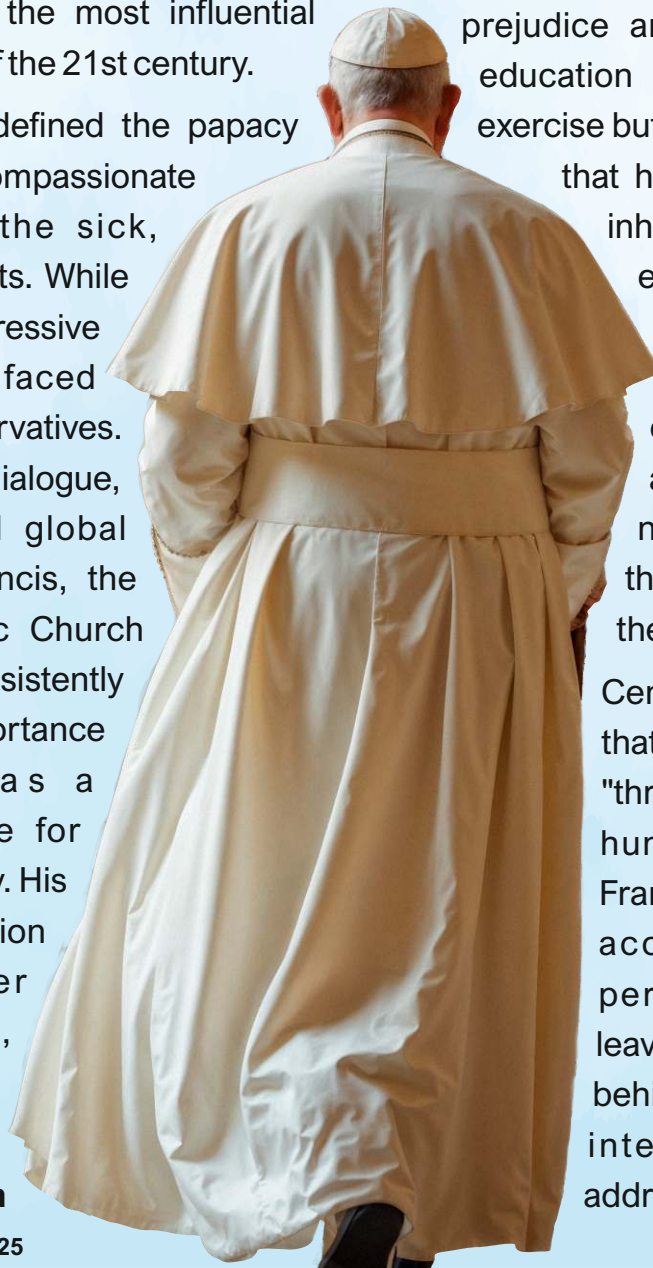
Pope Francis has redefined the papacy with his accessible, compassionate style—embracing the sick, prisoners, and outcasts. While praised for his progressive social stances, he faced resistance from conservatives. His focus on mercy, dialogue, and justice shaped global discourse. Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church since 2013, has consistently emphasised the importance of education as a transformative force for individuals and society. His teachings on education reflect his broader vision of mercy, solidarity, and human dignity.

Education as a Path

to Human Dignity and Fraternity:

Pope Francis consistently emphasises that education must be more than just the transmission of knowledge; it should be a transformative journey that upholds human dignity and fosters solidarity. In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), he argues that true education cultivates a sense of universal brotherhood, breaking down walls of prejudice and indifference. For Francis, education is not merely an intellectual exercise but a moral and spiritual formation that helps individuals recognise the inherent worth of every person, especially the marginalised. He warns against systems that reduce education to economic utility, instead advocating for an approach that nurtures compassion, critical thinking, and a commitment to the common good.

Central to his teaching is the idea that education should combat the "throwaway culture" that devalues human life. In his addresses, Francis highlights how inequality in access to quality education perpetuates social divisions, leaving the poor and vulnerable behind. He calls for an inclusive and integral education, one that addresses not only academic needs



but also emotional, ethical, and spiritual growth. By fostering dialogue and encounter, education becomes a means of building bridges rather than reinforcing societal fractures. For Pope Francis, this is essential in a globalised world where conflicts often arise from ignorance and fear of the "other."

Pope Francis links education directly to the promotion of peace and justice. He believes that schools and universities should be spaces where young people learn to be active citizens, working toward a more just and sustainable world. Drawing from his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, he insists that ecological responsibility must be part of education, teaching future generations to care for creation and each other. Ultimately, for Pope Francis, education is an act of hope, one that empowers individuals to resist despair, embrace solidarity, and uphold the dignity of all people in the pursuit of a more fraternal world.

Inclusive and Integral Education:

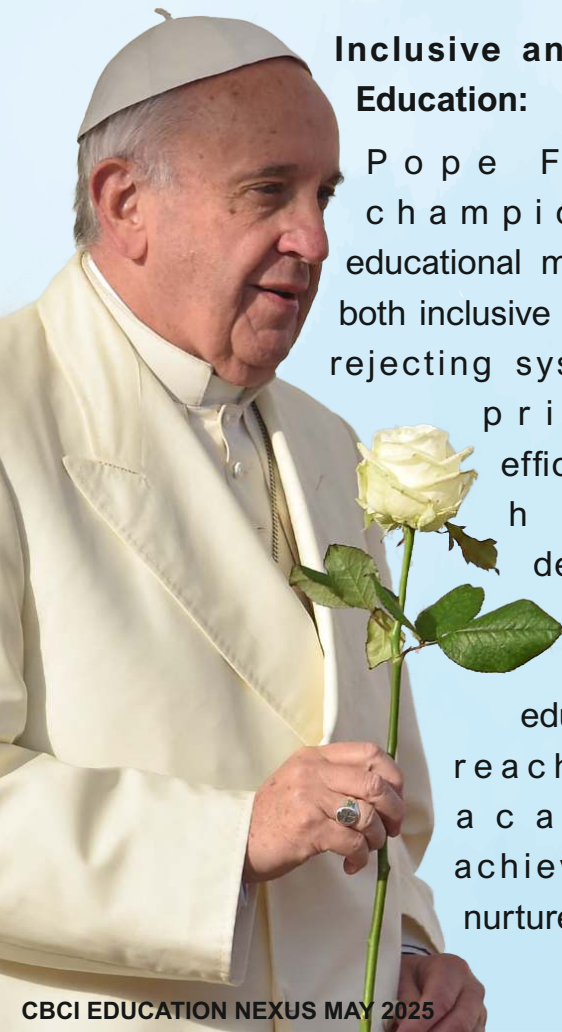
Pope Francis championed an educational model that is both inclusive and integral, rejecting systems that prioritise efficiency over human development. He argues that true education must reach beyond academic achievement to nurture the whole

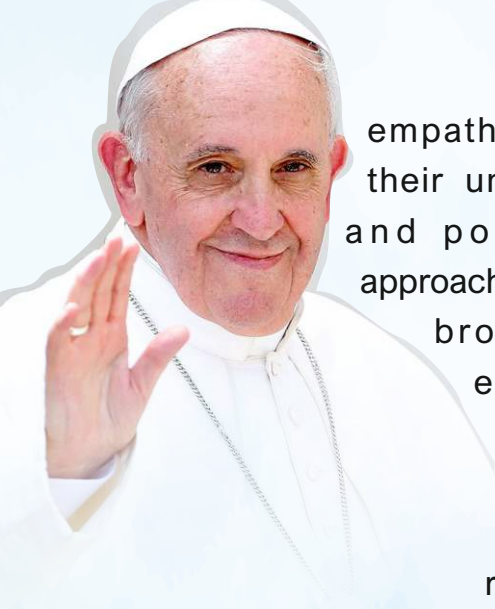
person intellectually, morally, emotionally, and spiritually. In his view, education should be a universal right, not a privilege reserved for the wealthy or powerful. He

has repeatedly condemned the "globalisation of indifference" that allows millions of children and young people to be excluded from quality schooling due to poverty, displacement, or discrimination. For Pope Francis, an inclusive education system is one that actively seeks out those on the margins; refugees, the disabled, and the economically disadvantaged, ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of knowledge and personal growth.

Integral education, in Pope Francis's teaching, goes beyond mere technical or vocational training to cultivate wisdom, ethical discernment, and a sense of responsibility toward others. Drawing from the Catholic tradition of human integral development, he emphasises that education must foster not only individual success but also communal flourishing. In *Laudato Si'* (2015), he connects this vision to ecological stewardship, arguing that education should instil a deep respect for creation and a commitment to sustainable living. Similarly, in *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), he highlights the role of education in breaking down ideological barriers and promoting a culture of encounter, where differences are respected and dialogue is prioritised over conflict.

The Holy Father calls for a pedagogy of accompaniment, where teachers and mentors guide students with patience and





empathy, recognizing their unique struggles and potential. This approach aligns with his broader pastoral emphasis on mercy and accompaniment, where relationships take precedence over rigid

institutional structures. By embracing inclusivity and integral formation, Pope Francis envisions an education system that not only prepares individuals for professional life but also equips them to build a more just, compassionate, and fraternal world.

Dialogue Over Ideological Colonisation:

Pope Francis has emerged as a vocal critic of what he terms "ideological colonisation" in education; the imposition of dominant worldviews that suppress intellectual freedom and cultural diversity. He warns against educational systems that promote a single way of thinking, particularly those influenced by Western secularism or neoliberal economic paradigms that reduce education to mere workforce training.

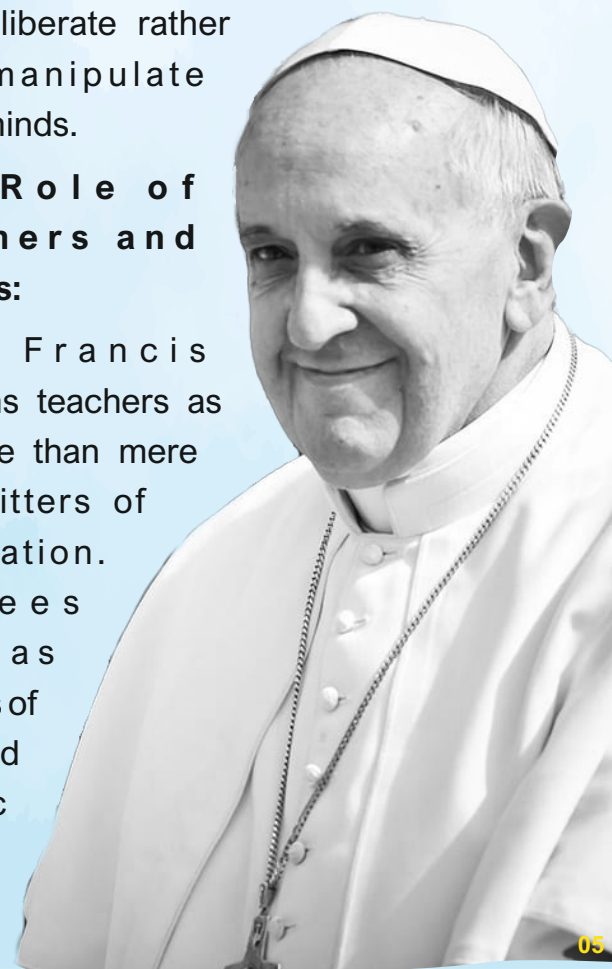
The Pope's concerns about ideological colonisation extend to both content and methodology in modern education. He has specifically cautioned against curricula that exclude spiritual dimensions of human existence or present scientific materialism as the only valid framework for understanding reality. Pope Francis's resistance to ideological colonization also manifests in his defence of parental rights and cultural identity in education. He has repeatedly criticized attempts by governments or international

organizations to impose gender ideologies or value systems that contradict local traditions and family beliefs. At the same time, the Pope insists that rejecting ideological domination should not lead to educational isolationism. Rather, he advocates for an intercultural approach where different knowledge systems can encounter one another with mutual respect.

The Pope's stance against ideological colonisation stems from his deep commitment to educational freedom as fundamental to human dignity. He envisions schools and universities as laboratories of critical thinking where students learn to discern truth for themselves rather than simply absorbing dominant narratives. This position has made Francis an unlikely ally to both conservative religious groups concerned about secular indoctrination and progressive educators wary of corporate influence on education - united by the shared conviction that education should liberate rather than manipulate young minds.

The Role of Teachers and Families:

Pope Francis envisions teachers as far more than mere transmitters of information. He sees them as mentors of hope and architects of the



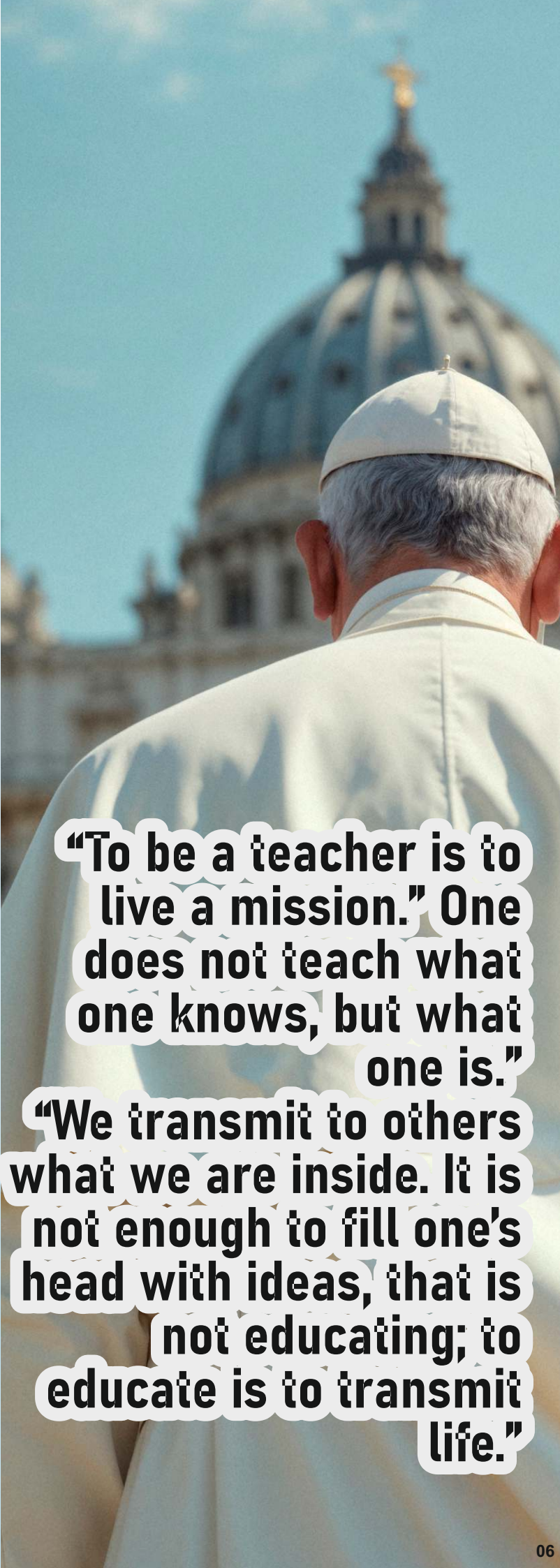
future. In his various addresses, he has emphasised that educators are called to accompany students not just academically, but humanly and spiritually. Teachers, in Pope Francis's view, must cultivate not only the intellect but also the heart, helping young people develop a moral compass in an increasingly complex world.

At the same time Pope Francis places families at the centre of the educational process, describing them as the "first school" where children learn fundamental values, faith, and love. He laments modern tendencies that outsource parenting to institutions or digital devices, insisting that no school can replace the irreplaceable role of families in a child's development. This conviction led him to establish the Global Compact on Education, an initiative calling for stronger alliances between schools, families, and communities. He particularly highlights how economic pressures, and cultural shifts have eroded family time and stability, making intentional educational partnerships more crucial than ever.

The Pope calls for a renewed covenant between teachers and parents; one based on mutual trust and shared responsibility. He urges both to resist the temptation of individualism and instead work together to create "villages of education" where young people are surrounded by consistent witnesses of truth and goodness.

Education for Peace and Environmental Justice:

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015), he calls for an "ecological education" that cultivates a profound respect for creation and inspires sustainable lifestyles. He warns that environmental degradation and social conflict



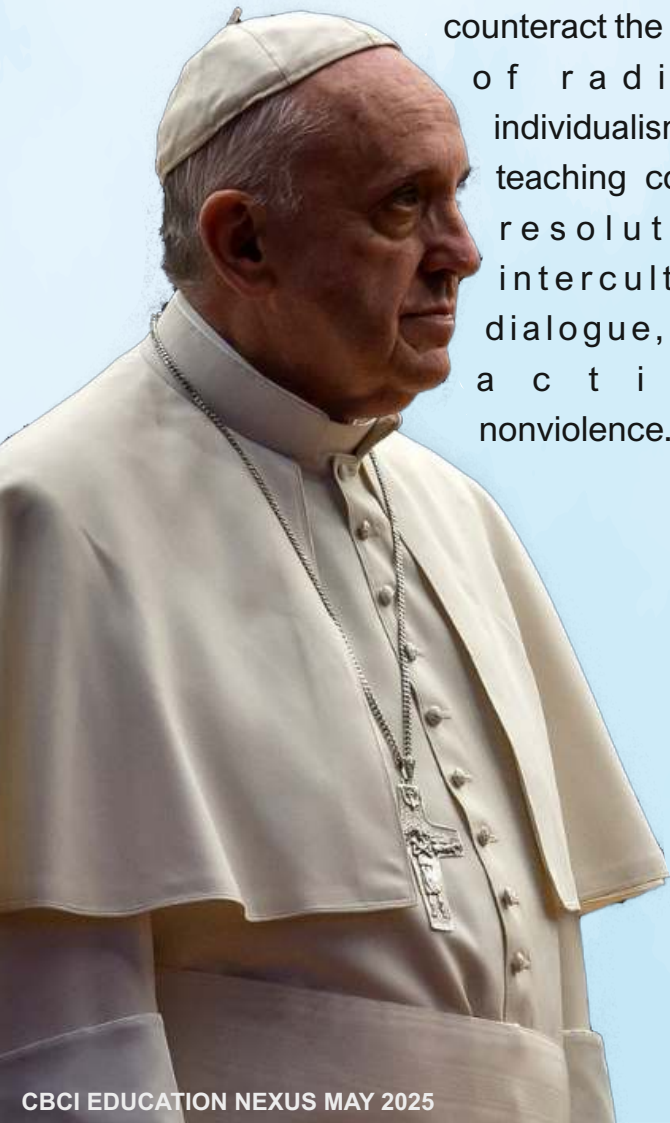
"To be a teacher is to live a mission." One does not teach what one knows, but what one is."

"We transmit to others what we are inside. It is not enough to fill one's head with ideas, that is not educating; to educate is to transmit life."

often stem from the same root, a distorted worldview that prioritizes exploitation over stewardship and individualism over solidarity. He challenges schools and universities to move beyond superficial "green" initiatives and instead foster an ecological conversion; a fundamental reorientation of how we relate to nature, the poor, and future generations. This education must be experiential, connecting learners directly with the earth and marginalised communities, so that environmental justice becomes not just a concept but a lived commitment.

Pope Francis' vision of peace education is equally revolutionary. In Fratelli Tutti (2020), he argues that true peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of social friendship across cultural, religious, and national divides. Education systems, he

insists, must consciously counteract the "virus of radical individualism" by teaching conflict resolution, intercultural dialogue, and active nonviolence.



His global educational pact invites institutions to become "workshops of peace" where students learn to see diversity as a gift rather than a threat. This peacebuilding dimension extends to economic justice; Pope Francis calls for curricula that expose the roots of inequality and prepare students to build economic systems that include rather than exclude.

The Holy Father calls for a paradigm shift where all education measures its success not by test scores alone, but by its capacity to form generations who will heal rather than harm our wounded world. In an era of climate crisis and global tensions, Francis's call for education as a tool of peace and planetary healing may prove to be one of his most enduring contributions to Catholic social teaching and global education discourse.

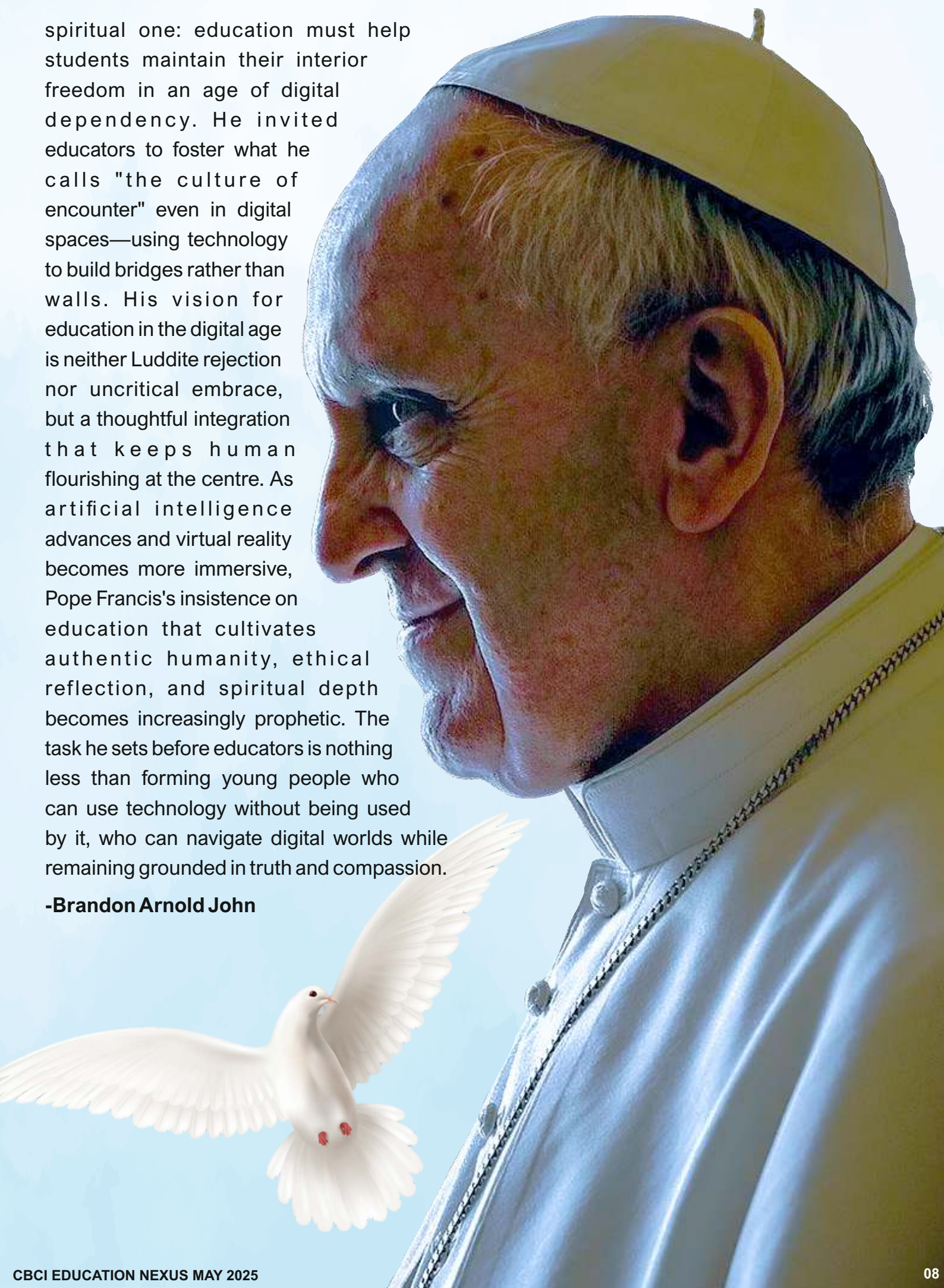
Challenges in the Digital Age:

Pope Francis offered a nuanced perspective on digital technology's impact on education, acknowledging its potential while warning of its pitfalls. He recognised that digital tools could democratise access to knowledge and foster global connections, yet he cautioned against allowing technology to dominate the educational process. In his 2024 message for World Communications Day, Pope Francis warned of the risk of "cognitive pollution", the distortion of truth in an era of information overload and stressed that education must cultivate critical discernment to navigate the digital landscape. He challenged educators to help students distinguish between facts and manipulation, between meaningful content and digital noise, in an environment where algorithms often reinforce polarisation rather than dialogue.

Pope Francis framed the digital challenge as a

spiritual one: education must help students maintain their interior freedom in an age of digital dependency. He invited educators to foster what he calls "the culture of encounter" even in digital spaces—using technology to build bridges rather than walls. His vision for education in the digital age is neither Luddite rejection nor uncritical embrace, but a thoughtful integration that keeps human flourishing at the centre. As artificial intelligence advances and virtual reality becomes more immersive, Pope Francis's insistence on education that cultivates authentic humanity, ethical reflection, and spiritual depth becomes increasingly prophetic. The task he sets before educators is nothing less than forming young people who can use technology without being used by it, who can navigate digital worlds while remaining grounded in truth and compassion.

-Brandon Arnold John



EDUCATION IN INDIA

Why NEP has so far failed to move the needle

Excerpts from the article by Anjali Bhargava, Apr 15, 2025,
Hindustan Times

INTRODUCTION:

The research presents a stark assessment of India's education system, particularly in government schools, where learning outcomes remain alarmingly poor despite decades of policy interventions. Shockingly, 75% of Class 3 students cannot read a Grade 2-level text, and similar deficiencies exist in mathematics, with two-thirds of Class 3 students unable to solve basic subtraction problems. Even by Class 8, over 20% of students struggle with Grade 2-level reading, and only about 45% can perform fundamental arithmetic. These statistics, drawn from the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), underscore systemic failures that persist five years after the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was introduced.

It argues that while minor improvements have been made, they are insufficient to address deep-rooted inefficiencies. Two major, interrelated problems plague the system: the "problem of plenty" (an excessive number of under-resourced schools) and the ambiguous, often hypocritical stance on profit-making in private education.

TOO MANY SCHOOLS, TOO FEW RESOURCES:

India's government school system suffers from severe fragmentation. With over 1 million schools catering to 127 million students, the infrastructure is stretched thin, leading to poorly maintained facilities, inadequate staffing, and subpar learning environments. In contrast, China manages nearly double the student population with less than half the number of schools, highlighting India's inefficiency.

The Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009, which mandated universal access, inadvertently worsened the problem by prioritizing quantity over quality. Many so-called "schools" are little more than decrepit sheds with one or two teachers managing multi-grade classrooms. Amitav Virmani of Education Alliance argues that consolidation is essential; India must define minimum standards for schools (including facilities like playgrounds, labs, and trained staff) and merge underperforming institutions. While NEP 2020 recommends this, data shows most school closures happened before its implementation, raising questions about its effectiveness.

This research suggests that consolidation must be paired with better transportation and infrastructure



to prevent enrolment drops. Without these measures, the system will continue to haemorrhage students to private alternatives, as seen in the 11.1% decline in government school enrolments over four years.

THE CHARADE OF NOT-FOR-PROFIT PRIVATE SCHOOLS:

The second major issue is the legal fiction that private schools must operate as non-profits. In reality, many exploit loopholes to generate profits through opaque transactions, such as leasing land from promoter-owned entities at inflated rates or overcharging for supplies. This creates a black economy within education and deters legitimate investment.

Private school owners are now lobbying for formal recognition of for-profit education, arguing it would:

- Increase transparency by eliminating under-the-table dealings.
- Attract investment from corporations and foreign players, who currently avoid the sector due to restrictions.
- Improve quality through competition, forcing government schools to raise standards.

However, the proposal faces political and ideological resistance. Critics fear that for-profit schools would hike fees, exacerbating inequality, while others argue it would let the government off the hook for improving public education. States like Haryana and Maharashtra are considering reforms, but progress is slow due to vested interests; many politicians and bureaucrats have financial stakes in private schools.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL BATTLES:

The research explores radical fixes, such as requiring government officials to enrol their children in public schools, a move proponents believe would force rapid improvements. However, this would only work if elite government schools (like Kendra Vidyalayas) are dismantled to prevent loopholes.

TV Mohandas Pai and other experts argue that government schools must be held to the same accountability standards as private ones. Meanwhile, some advocate for a hybrid approach: allowing for-profit private schools while strengthening public education through better funding and governance.

CONCLUSION:

The NEP's failure to drive meaningful change stems from its inability to tackle these two elephants in the room. To move the needle, India must:

- Consolidate and upgrade government schools, ensuring minimum standards.
- Clarify the profit question in private education to attract investment and curb corruption.
- Depoliticize reforms by addressing vested interests.

It ends with a plea to discard ideological rigidity and embrace practical solutions. Without bold action, India's education system will continue to fail its students, perpetuating cycles of inequality and underdevelopment.

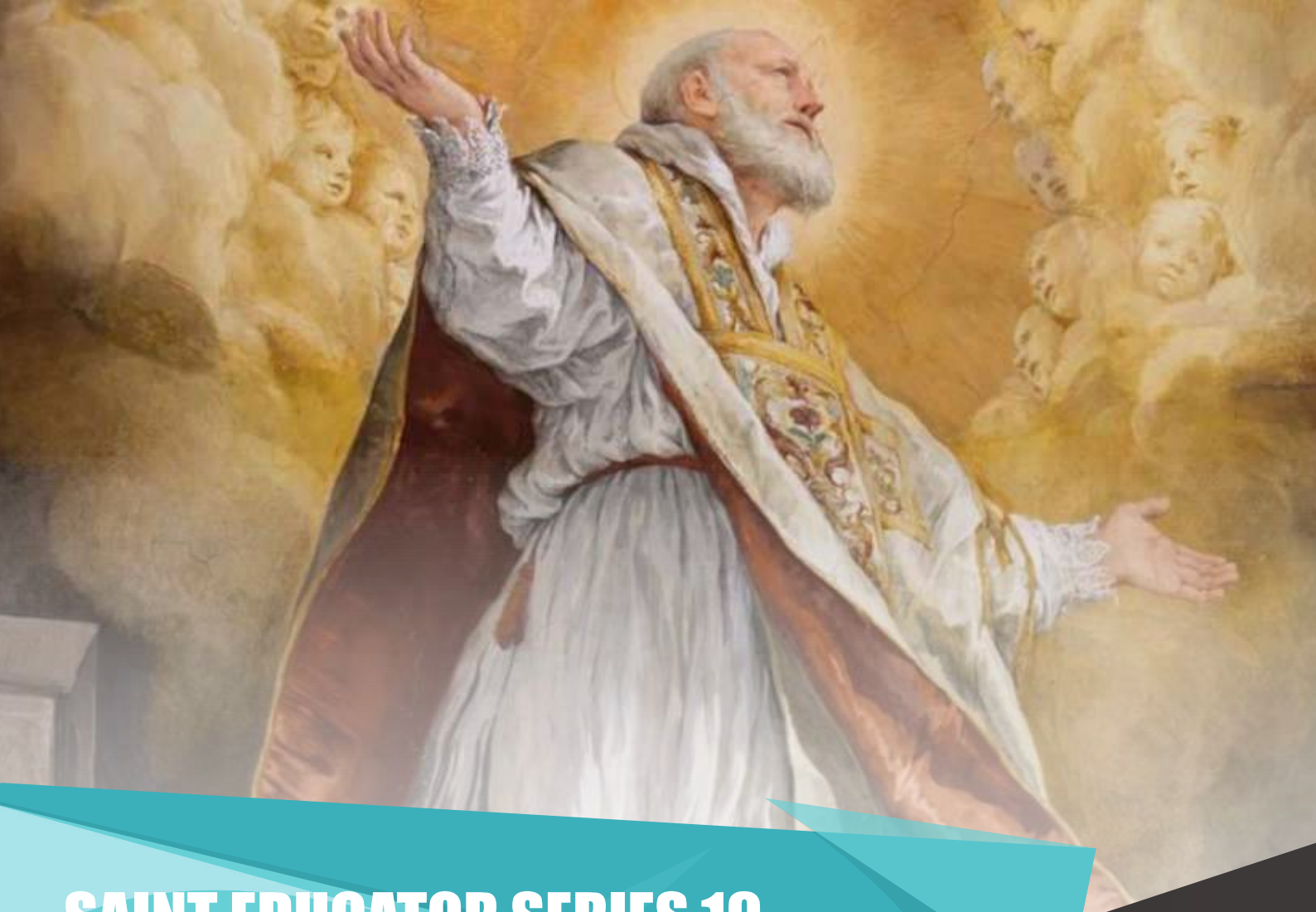
For the complete article you can read:

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SAINT EDUCATOR SERIES 19

SAINT PHILIP NERI

(1515–1595)

St. Philip Neri (1515–1595), known as the "Apostle of Joy," was a beloved Italian priest and founder of the Oratorians, renowned for his infectious humour, deep prayer life, and transformative mentorship of youth. A mystic with a fiery love for God (literally—his heart was found enlarged after death), he evangelized Rome through informal gatherings called Oratories, blending music, discussion, and prayer to make faith vibrant. His playful humility (he once shaved half his beard to avoid praise) and emphasis on inner conversion over rigid piety made him a revolutionary educator. Canonized in 1622, he remains a patron of teachers, students, and joyful Christian living.

Born in Florence on July 21, 1515, to a noble but financially modest family, Philip was known from childhood for his cheerful and generous spirit. At 18, he was sent to work with a wealthy merchant uncle in San Germano, but after a mystical experience—possibly a vision or profound inner calling—he abandoned commerce and journeyed to Rome in 1533. With no formal plans or patronage, he lived as a poor student, studying philosophy and theology while dedicating himself to prayer and serving the sick and pilgrims.

Young Philip often prayed in the catacombs, where the Holy Spirit allegedly filled his heart with such divine

love that it physically expanded his ribs—a miracle later confirmed at his autopsy! (Box Quote)

In the mid-16th century, Rome was a city in spiritual crisis—corruption, apathy, and superficial faith plagued the Church. St. Philip Neri, then a young priest, sought to reignite hearts through a radical approach: informal, joyful gatherings where people could encounter God in a personal way. Around 1575, his small meetings of prayer, discussion, and sacred music in a loft above San Girolamo della Carità church became so popular that Pope Gregory XIII formally recognized them as the Congregation of the Oratory (Oratorians). Unlike traditional religious orders, Philip's Oratory had no vows—just a commitment to communal prayer, intellectual growth, and charity.

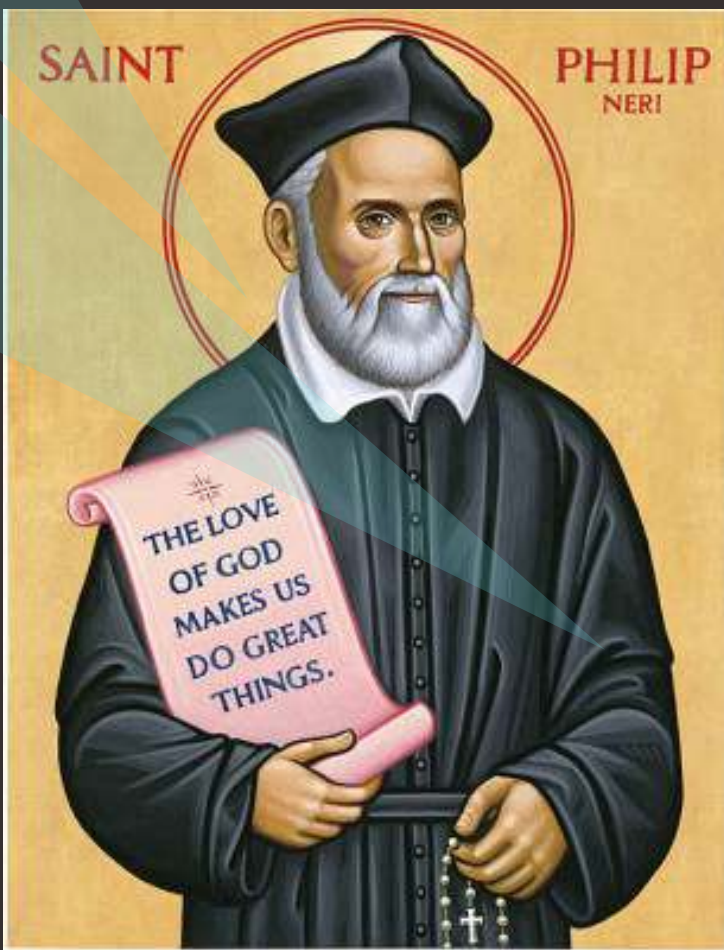
Philip's method was revolutionary. His "Oratories" blended learning with laughter, music with meditation, and friendship with faith. He encouraged debates on Scripture and theology, accompanied by hymns (leading to the oratorio musical form). The community later moved to the Chiesa Nuova (New Church), where it flourished, drawing everyone from cardinals to street children. Today, Oratorian communities worldwide continue Philip's legacy, proving that the best education begins with joy and ends in holiness.

Though St. Philip Neri lived in 16th-century Rome, a hotbed of Renaissance intrigue, papal politics, and the Counter-Reformation, he deliberately avoided direct political involvement. Yet his spiritual influence indirectly shaped the era's power structures. Philip's approach was neither confrontational nor indifferent but strategically apolitical: he won over hearts through humour, holiness, and personal relationships, even with popes and nobles. Philip's Rome was a world of Medici popes, imperial ambassadors, and clerical corruption. While many clergy sought favours or titles, Philip ridiculed ambition, once pretending to read a book upside down to mock a vain scholar. Yet he befriended powerful figures, including Pope Gregory XIV and St. Charles Borromeo, not to gain influence but to soften their hearts. His confessional became a crossroads for cardinals and servants alike, where pride was dismantled with gentle irony.

Though Philip never openly criticized the papacy, his Oratory became a quiet counterforce to decadence. By promoting Gospel simplicity amid Rome's extravagance, he inspired reforms. When the pope once offered him a cardinal's hat, Philip refused, joking, "Paradise is not for cowards!"—a nod to his preference for grassroots renewal over institutional power. During feuds between noble families, Philip intervened not with sermons but with disarming humour. He once convinced two enemies to reconcile by making them share a comically large loaf of bread. His nonpartisan charity during crises (like plagues) earned universal trust, proving holiness could transcend factionalism.

St. Philip Neri's personality was a captivating paradox—a blend of mystical intensity and childlike playfulness that disarmed nobles and beggars alike. His spiritual depth was matched only by his infectious joy, making him one of history's most relatable saints. Philip's humility was never dour or self-conscious. He wore ridiculous clothes (like a half-shaved beard) to mock vanity, let children tease him in the streets, and





once famously paraded a donkey through Rome to humble a prideful scholar. Yet beneath the antics was a profound truth: he believed "true greatness lies in being little before God." Even as crowds flocked to him, he insisted, "I am just an old fool!"—a disguise for his extraordinary gifts of prophecy and discernment.

Philip's heart burned with love for the poor, the sick, and the marginalized. He turned his Oratory into a 24/7 soup kitchen during famines, carried crippled pilgrims on his back, and secretly slipped coins into the pockets of the ashamed. His tenderness extended to sinners; he once greeted a notorious criminal with a hug, saying, "Brother, when will you begin to do good?"—moving the man to tears and conversion. Philip's motto: "Serve God, but let it be with a cheerful heart." Philip's genius was turning ordinary relationships into schools of sanctity. He tailored his advice to each person's temperament—teasing the scrupulous into peace, challenging the lax to rise higher. His confessional was a place of healing laughter; he once told a penitent to sing him a silly song as penance! Yet his playful exterior hid mystical depths: witnesses saw him

levitate in prayer, and his heart literally expanded from divine love (as found in his autopsy).

St. Philip Neri earned the title of "Saint Educator" not through formal pedagogy but through his revolutionary approach to forming souls. Unlike the rigid scholasticism of his era, Philip's method was personal, joyful, and deeply relational, transforming the streets of Rome into his classroom and every encounter into a lesson in holiness. His genius lay in recognizing that true education is not just about imparting knowledge but about awakening love for God and virtue in the heart.

Philip rejected the distant, authoritarian style of teaching common in 16th-century Rome. Instead, he drew people in with warmth and humour, making spiritual growth feel like a joyful adventure. Young students, wealthy nobles, and even hardened sinners became his pupils—not through lectures, but through friendship. He met people where they were, using wit and kindness to open their hearts before gently guiding them toward truth. His famous saying, "Well, brother, when shall we begin to do good?" disarmed resistance and inspired conversion.

Philip's Oratory became a groundbreaking model for education—a place where prayer, music, and intellectual discussion flowed naturally. Unlike the dry academic debates of the time, his gatherings were lively, engaging, and accessible. He encouraged young men to study Scripture, Church history, and the arts, but always with an emphasis on inner transformation over mere intellectualism. His method laid the foundation for what would later become the Oratorian schools, influencing Catholic education for centuries.

Philip's greatest lesson was his own life. He taught humility by laughing at himself, charity by serving the poor in secret, and prayer by spending nights in ecstasy before the Eucharist. His students didn't just hear about virtue, they saw it embodied in a man who radiated joy. Even his penances were pedagogical: when a young man complained about distractions in prayer, Philip told him to balance a book on his head as penance; a humorous yet profound way to teach focus and patience.

St. Philip Neri was called a Saint Educator because he understood that real education shapes character, not just minds. His "classroom" had no walls, his "textbooks" were friendship and laughter, and his "curriculum" was the art of living for God. Centuries later, his approach remains a model for parents, teachers, and mentors, proving that the most effective education begins when the heart is joyfully open to grace.

St. Philip Neri's death on May 26, 1595, was as remarkable as his life. After decades of tireless service, his final years were marked by physical suffering, which he endured with his characteristic humour and serenity. When his physicians warned him to reduce his workload for the sake of his health, he quipped, "Paradise is not made for cowards!" Even on his deathbed, he continued to offer spiritual counsel, blessing visitors and whispering, "Love God, love God!" as his last words. His passing was so peaceful that witnesses described it as a "sleep in the Lord," and Rome immediately mourned him as a saint.

Philip's tomb at the Chiesa Nuova in Rome quickly became a pilgrimage site, with reports of miracles, especially healings, attributed to his intercession. His heart, which had mysteriously expanded during a mystical experience in the catacombs, was found physically enlarged during a postmortem examination, a phenomenon later confirmed as supernatural. Due to his widespread reputation for holiness, Pope Gregory XV canonized him in 1622, just 27 years after his death, an unusually swift recognition that underscored his profound impact.

St. Philip Neri's influence endures through the Oratorian movement, which has spread worldwide, fostering communities dedicated to prayer, intellectual growth, and joyful evangelization. He is venerated as the "Apostle of Rome" and the "Saint of Joy," with his feast day (May 26) celebrated with music, laughter, and acts of charity, just as he would have wanted. Artists often depict him with a radiant smile, holding a book or a lily, symbolising his love for learning and purity. To this day, educators, priests, and laypeople turn to St. Philip as a model of how to teach, inspire, and lead others to God through warmth and authenticity. His dying words remain his most enduring lesson: "Love God and do so with a glad heart."



<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Philip-Neri>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_Neri

https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=97



CELEBRATING *Mother's Day*

In India, Mother's Day is more than just a Western import—it is a heartfelt celebration that resonates deeply with the country's cultural ethos. Celebrated on the second Sunday of May (This year on 11 May 2025), this special day provides an opportunity to honour the

unconditional love, sacrifices, and unwavering support that mothers provide. In a nation where motherhood is often equated with divinity (as seen in the worship of Goddess Durga and Mother Earth), Mother's Day holds profound significance.

THE INDIAN INTERPRETATION OF MOTHER'S DAY:

Unlike in Western countries, where Mother's Day is largely commercialized, in India, the day is celebrated with emotional and cultural richness. Traditionally, Indian families express gratitude through simple yet meaningful gestures—cooking a favourite meal for mom, giving handmade cards, or spending quality time together. The younger generation often combines modern practices, like gifting flowers or gadgets, with traditional touches such as touching their mother's feet for blessings. This blend of old and new reflects India's evolving yet rooted family values.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF MOTHERS IN MODERN INDIA:

Today's Indian mothers are redefining their roles—balancing careers, household responsibilities, and personal aspirations. From being the primary caregivers to becoming entrepreneurs, professionals, and decision-makers, Indian mothers are breaking stereotypes while continuing to be the emotional anchor of their families. However, this dual role also brings challenges, including societal expectations and the struggle for work-life balance. Mother's Day serves as a reminder to acknowledge these multifaceted contributions and support mothers in their journey.



CELEBRATIONS ACROSS GENERATIONS AND REGIONS:

Mother's Day in India is celebrated differently across generations and regions. Urban families might opt for dining out or surprise gifts, while rural households may express gratitude through heartfelt words and acts of service. Schools and colleges often organize events where children perform skits, sing songs, or create art dedicated to their mothers. Social media, too, plays a significant role, with heartfelt posts and dedications flooding platforms like Instagram and Facebook.

BEYOND BIOLOGY- HONOURING ALL MOTHER FIGURES:

In India, motherhood extends beyond biological ties. Grandmothers, aunts, teachers, and elder sisters often play motherly roles, providing love and guidance. Mother's Day is increasingly becoming inclusive, recognizing these nurturing figures who shape lives in profound ways. Many NGOs and communities also use this day to honour single mothers, adoptive mothers, and widowed mothers, highlighting their resilience and strength.

A CALL FOR GREATER APPRECIATION AND SUPPORT:

While Mother's Day is a beautiful occasion, it also sparks conversations about the need for year-round appreciation and systemic support for mothers. Issues like maternity leave policies, childcare facilities, and mental health awareness for mothers are gaining attention. The day serves as a reminder to advocate for better policies that empower mothers in both personal and professional spheres.

A DAY OF LOVE, REFLECTION, AND COMMITMENT:

Mother's Day in India is not just about gifts or social media tributes, it is a celebration of the silent sacrifices, boundless love, and enduring strength that mothers embody. As society evolves, so should our appreciation for mothers, ensuring they receive the respect, care, and opportunities they deserve. This Mother's Day, let us go beyond rituals and make a genuine effort to lighten their burdens, listen to their stories, and cherish their presence every single day.

-Brandon Arnold John



WORLD LABOUR DAY

Labour Day, also known as May Day, International Worker's Day, or Antarrashtriya Shramik Diwas, is celebrated on May 1st every year in India. This day is dedicated to recognizing the invaluable contributions of workers across industries—from farmers and factory labourers to IT professionals and healthcare workers. It serves as a reminder of the struggles faced by the labour force and the ongoing fight for fair wages, safe working conditions, and social justice.



THE HISTORY OF LABOUR DAY IN INDIA:

The origins of Labour Day in India are closely tied to the global labour movement. The first May Day celebration in India took place in 1923 in Chennai (then Madras), organised by the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan. The movement gained momentum as trade unions and workers' associations across the country began advocating for better rights and working conditions.

One of the key milestones in India's labour rights movement was the enactment of the Factories Act (1948), which regulated working hours, safety standards, and minimum wages. Over the years, labour unions have played a crucial role in securing rights such as provident funds, maternity benefits, and social security for workers.

WHY LABOUR DAY MATTERS IN MODERN INDIA:

Despite significant progress, many challenges remain for Indian workers:

- **Informal Sector Struggles:** A large portion of India's workforce is employed in the unorganized sector, with no job security, fixed wages, or benefits.
- **Migrant Labour Issues:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the plight of migrant workers who faced unemployment and hardship during lockdowns.
- **Gender Pay Gap:** Women workers often earn less than men for the same work, and many lack proper workplace



protections.

- **Gig Economy Challenges:** With the rise of app-based jobs (like Swiggy, Zomato, Ola), gig workers lack employee benefits such as insurance and paid leave.

Labour Day serves as a platform to address these issues and push for stronger labour laws.

HOW LABOUR DAY IS CELEBRATED IN INDIA:

- **Workers' Rallies & Marches:** Trade unions and labour organizations hold processions in major cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai, demanding better wages and working conditions.
- **Government & Corporate Initiatives:** Some companies and state governments organize award ceremonies to honour outstanding workers.
- **Political Speeches:** Leaders from various political parties address labour rights issues and announce welfare schemes for workers.
- **Cultural Programs & Awareness Campaigns:** Schools, colleges, and NGOs conduct events to educate people about workers' rights.



THE WAY FORWARD:

While India has made progress in labour reforms, such as the Labour Codes (2020), implementation remains a challenge.

Ensuring fair wages, social security, and safe working conditions for all workers, including those in the informal sector, should be a priority.

Labour Day is not just a holiday; it is a call to action. It reminds us that the nation's growth depends on the dignity and well-being of its workers. As we celebrate this day, let us pledge to support policies that empower labourers and create a more just and equitable society.

-Brandon Arnold John





ASER 2024 AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: SOME KEY FINDINGS



The [NGO Pratham Foundation](#) released the [Annual Status of Education Report \(ASER\) 2024](#) on **learning outcomes of school students in rural India**.

- It is based on a 2024 survey conducted in **17,997 villages across 605 rural districts**.
- It reached **649,491 children in the 3-16 years age group**, and tested the **reading and arithmetic skills** of over **500,000 children in the 5-16 years age group**.

What is ASER?

- **ASER** is a **nationwide, citizen-led household survey** that offers an insightful snapshot of children's schooling and learning in rural India.
- Launched in **2005**, ASER tracks **educational trends and challenges** in rural areas, evolving in **coverage, focus, and frequency**.

Focus Areas:

- **Enrollment:** ASER tracks **school and preschool enrollment** trends, highlighting improvements and challenges by state and age group.
- **Learning Outcomes:** It assesses basic **reading and arithmetic skills**, showing children's progress at **primary and secondary levels**.
- **Digital Literacy:** ASER 2024 evaluates older children's **smartphone skills**, including tasks like setting **alarms, browsing, and messaging**.

What are the Key Findings of the Report?

Pre-primary (Age Group 3-5 Years):

- **Enrollment:** Enrollment in pre-primary institutions ([Anganwadi](#), **government pre-primary class, or private LKG/UKG**) has steadily increased since 2018.

- o E.g., Enrollment of **3-year-olds** rose from **68.1% in 2018 to 77.4% in 2024**.
- **Pre-primary Institutions: Anganwadi centres** are the main provider of pre-primary education, enrolling over **half of 3-4-year-olds**, while **one-third of 5-year-olds** attend **private schools or preschools**.
- **Elementary (Age Group 6-14 Years):**
 - o **Overall Enrollment:** Enrollment dropped slightly from **98.4% in 2022 to 98.1% in 2024**, with **government school** enrollment declining from **72.9% to 66.8%**.
 - o **Reading and Arithmetic Skills:** In 2024, **23.4% of Standard (Std) III** children in government schools could **read Std II-level text**, up from 16.3% in 2022.
 - o In 2024, **45.8% of Std VIII** students could solve **basic arithmetic problems**, showing slight improvement.
 - o **Arithmetic abilities improved more than reading skills**, with **government schools showing faster progress** than private schools.



- **Older Children (Age Group 15-16 Years):**
 - o **Enrollment:** The dropout rate for **15-16-year-olds** decreased from **13.1% in 2018 to 7.9% in 2024**, with **girls** at a higher rate of **8.1%**.
 - o **Smartphone Access and Usage ([Digital Literacy](#)):**
 - § **Access:** Nearly **90% of 14-16-year-olds** have smartphone access, with **boys (85.5%)** using them more than girls (**79.4%**).
 - § **Ownership:** **27%** of 14-year-olds and **37.8%** of 16-year-olds own smartphones.
 - § **Use:** **82.2%** of children use **smartphones**, with **57% for education** and **76% for social media**.
 - § **Digital Safety:** **62%** of children know how to **block/report profiles**, and **55.2%** know how to make profiles private.
- **School Observations:**
 - o **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN):** Over **80%** of schools implemented [FLN activities](#), with at **least one teacher in 75%** of these schools receiving **FLN training**.
 - o **Attendance:** Student attendance increased from **72.4% in 2018 to 75.9% in 2024**, and **teacher attendance** increased from **85.1% to 87.5%**.
 - o **School Facilities:** There were slight **improvements** in the availability of **basic school facilities**:
 - § Usable **girls' toilets** increased from **66.4% in 2018 to 72% in 2024**.
 - § **Drinking water** availability rose from **74.8% to 77.7%**.
 - § The use of **non-textbook books** (e.g., novels, short stories, folk tales) by students

increased from **36.9% to 51.3%**.

§ The percentage of schools with **playgrounds** remained stable at around **66%**.

- o **Difference in Outcome:** There are significant **state-level differences** in **learning outcomes and improvement** since the [Covid-19 pandemic](#).

§ In **Std III**, **reading ability lagged behind 2018** levels in over half the states, but **arithmetic improved** in all but six.

§ In **Std V and VIII**, many states **did not reach pre-pandemic levels**, even in arithmetic.

- **Challenges:**

- o **Poor School Infrastructure:** Of over **14.71 lakh schools** in India, **1.52 lakh** lack functional **electricity**, hindering the use of technology like computers and the internet in teaching.
- o **67,000 schools**, including 46,000 government-run, **lack functional toilets**. Only **3.37 lakh government schools (33.2%)** have disabled-friendly toilets, with less than a **third** being functional.
- o **Limited Access to Technology:** Only **43.5%** of government schools have **computers** for teaching, compared to **70.9% in private, unaided schools**.
- o **Poor Teacher Student Ratio:** India has nearly **lakh schools** with just **one teacher each**.
- o **Social Divides:** Social divides, such as **caste-class, rural-urban, religious, and gender disparities**, affect the quality of education.
- o **Language Barriers:** The **lack** of textbooks and materials in **regional languages** limits education access for those **not proficient in Hindi/English** medium of instruction.



- **Way Forward**

- o **Early Intervention:** Immediate interventions should be made to **increase retention** by focusing on **socio-economically disadvantaged groups**.
- o Introduce **flexible, part-time education** to accommodate children who need to **work or assist at home**.
- o **Literacy for Non-Enrolled Children:** Launch **supplementary literacy programs** for children who have **dropped out or missed school**.
- o **Improve Accountability:** Establish **District School Boards** for local educational planning and development. Increase **school inspectors** to enhance oversight and education quality.
- o **Provision of Schools:** Ensure **school access within 1 km (walking distance)**

<https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/aser-2024-and-elementary-education>

WHY INDIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM NEEDS A RESET

By Punepulse: April 15, 2025

In a thought-provoking LinkedIn post that went viral, Rajiv Khati critically analysed the shortcomings of India's education system and called for urgent reforms. His post resonated with thousands, sparking widespread discussions about the need for systemic change in how India educates its youth.

Khati highlighted how the current system overemphasizes rote memorization at the expense of critical thinking and practical skills. He pointed out that while the system produces excellent exam performers, it often fails to nurture true problem-solvers and innovators. This approach leaves students ill-prepared for real-world challenges, particularly in an era dominated by rapid technological advancements like artificial intelligence.

The education expert also criticized the outdated curriculum that hasn't kept pace with modern demands. Khati emphasized how subjects taught in schools today often lack relevance to contemporary issues such as sustainability, digital literacy, and emotional intelligence. This disconnect between classroom learning and practical application puts Indian students at a disadvantage in the global arena.

Another significant concern raised was the immense pressure on students, leading to widespread mental health issues. The narrow definition of success – primarily limited to careers in engineering and medicine – creates unnecessary stress and ignores diverse talents. Khati argued that this myopic focus needs to expand to include various vocational and creative fields.

Khati's solutions focused on transforming the fundamental approach to education. He advocated for skill-based learning that incorporates coding, financial literacy, and vocational training from an early age. He suggested replacing traditional exams with



more comprehensive, project-based assessments that better evaluate a student's capabilities. Additionally, he stressed the importance of stronger collaboration between educational institutions and industries to ensure curricula remain relevant to job market needs.

The viral post has ignited important conversations among educators, parents, and policymakers. While initiatives like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aim to address some of these issues, Khati's analysis highlights the gap between policy and implementation. His call for an education reset underscores the urgent need to prepare Indian students not just for exams, but for life in an increasingly complex, technology-driven world.

The widespread response to Khati's post indicates a growing consensus about the necessity for fundamental changes in India's education system. As the discussion continues, it brings hope that meaningful reforms may emerge to create a more balanced, practical, and student-friendly approach to learning in India.

<https://www.mypunepulse.com/why-indias-education-system-needs-a-reset-rajiv-khatis-viral-linkedin-post-explains/>



10 INSPIRING QUOTES BY BILL GATES THAT WILL MOTIVATE YOU TO DO MORE

By Etimes.in

1. **On Success:** "Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose."
2. **On being yourself:** "Don't compare yourself with anyone in this world. If you do so, you are insulting yourself."
3. **On taking Risks in Life:** "To win big, you sometimes have to take big risks."
4. **On making Long-term Goals:** "Most people overestimate what they can do in one year and underestimate what they can do in ten years."
5. **On Enabling others:** "If you give people tools, and they use their natural abilities and their curiosity, they will develop things in ways that will surprise you very much

beyond what you might have expected."

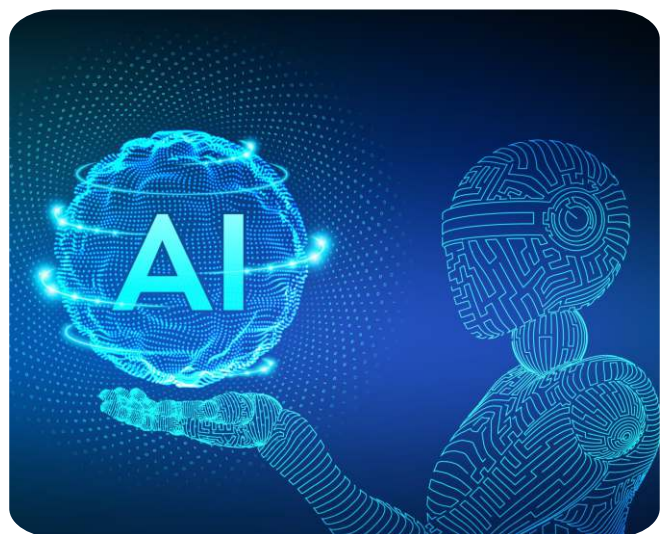
6. **On Reading:** I really had a lot of dreams when I was a kid, and I think a great deal of that grew out of the fact that I had a chance to read a lot."
7. **On Leadership:** "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others."
8. **On the importance of Inter-personal relationships:** "Our success has really been based on partnerships from the very beginning."
9. **On learning from your Mistakes:** "It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure."
10. **Focus on Good things:** "Only through focus can you do world-class things, no matter how capable you are."

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/relationships/web-stories/10-inspiring-quotes-by-bill-gates-that-will-motivate-you-to-do-more/photostory/120150738.cms>

INDIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM IS ABOUT TO CHANGE FOREVER THANKS TO AI

By Vidyashree Srinivas: April 9, 2025

The article highlights how artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to revolutionize India's education system by addressing long-standing challenges and creating new opportunities for personalized learning. With the government's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizing digital transformation, AI-powered tools are being integrated into classrooms to enhance



accessibility, engagement, and outcomes. Key innovations include adaptive learning platforms that tailor content to individual

student needs, AI-driven tutoring systems for remote areas, and automated grading tools to reduce teacher workload.

AI is also bridging language barriers through real-time translation tools, making education more inclusive for non-English speakers. The piece notes the rise of edtech startups leveraging AI to democratize quality education, particularly in rural and underserved regions. However, challenges like digital infrastructure gaps, teacher training, and ethical concerns around data

privacy remain critical hurdles.

Experts predict AI will shift the focus from rote learning to skill development, better preparing students for future job markets. The article concludes that while AI won't replace teachers, its thoughtful integration could make India's education system more equitable, efficient, and future-ready.

<https://analyticsindiamag.com/ai-features/indias-education-system-is-about-to-change-forever-thanks-to-ai/>



LinkedIn's latest analysis reveals the fastest-growing skills in today's job market, highlighting how professionals and organizations must adapt to stay competitive. The report identifies AI and machine learning proficiency as the most in-demand technical skills, reflecting the widespread integration of these technologies across industries. Alongside technical capabilities, soft skills like leadership, communication, and emotional intelligence remain critical, underscoring the need for a balanced skill set in the evolving workplace.

The data shows a surge in demand for sustainability-related skills, including carbon accounting and ESG (Environmental, Social,

SKILLS ON THE RISE IN 2025

By Jen Dewar: March 26, 2025

and Governance) expertise, as companies prioritize green initiatives. Additionally, cybersecurity and data privacy skills continue to grow in importance due to increasing digital threats.

LinkedIn emphasises that continuous learning is no longer optional but essential for career resilience. The report encourages professionals to leverage online courses and certifications to upskill, while advising employers to invest in L&D (Learning and Development) programs to bridge skill gaps. As hybrid work becomes the norm, digital collaboration tools and remote team management have also emerged as key competencies.

The findings reinforce that adaptability and lifelong learning are central to thriving in today's dynamic job market. LinkedIn suggests professionals regularly assess their skill sets against industry trends to remain future-ready.

<https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/learning-and-development/skills-on-the-rise>

WHY LEARNING SOFT SKILLS CAN BE A GAME-CHANGER IN COLLEGE AND BEYOND

April 4, 2025

The Daily Iowan article highlights the growing importance of soft skills—such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and emotional intelligence—in academic and professional success. While technical knowledge remains essential, employers increasingly prioritize candidates who demonstrate strong interpersonal abilities, which are critical for collaboration, leadership, and problem-solving in diverse work environments.

The piece emphasizes that college students who actively develop soft skills gain a competitive edge in internships, job placements, and career advancement. Professors and career advisors note that skills like active listening, conflict resolution, and public speaking enhance classroom performance and prepare students for real-world challenges. For example, group projects and campus organizations offer practical opportunities to hone these abilities.

Beyond academics, soft skills contribute to personal growth, helping individuals build



meaningful relationships and navigate workplace dynamics. The article cites studies showing that employees with strong emotional intelligence often experience higher job satisfaction and career longevity.

In conclusion, the article urges students to invest in soft skill development through workshops, mentorship, and experiential learning, as these competencies are becoming indispensable in today's interconnected, rapidly evolving job market.

<https://dailyiowan.com/2025/04/04/why-learning-soft-skills-can-be-a-game-changer-in-college-and-beyond/>

REMOVE CASTE REFERENCES IN NAMES OF SCHOOLS, COLLEGES: MADRAS HIGH COURT

By Mohamed Imranullah S.: April 17, 2025

the state. The order came in response to a petition highlighting how such names perpetuate caste identities and social divisions, contrary to constitutional principles of equality and secularism. The court emphasized that educational institutions should promote social harmony and avoid endorsing caste distinctions.



The Madras High Court has directed the Tamil Nadu government to remove caste-based references from the names of schools, colleges, and other public institutions across

The bench instructed the government to form a committee to identify and rename affected institutions, ensuring compliance with the directive. While some argue that these names reflect historical patronage by certain communities, the court maintained that modern India must move beyond caste-based nomenclature in public spaces. The ruling aligns with broader efforts to eliminate caste discrimination and foster an inclusive society.

The Tamil Nadu government has been given a reasonable timeframe to implement the changes, with the court stressing the need for sensitization and public awareness to ensure smooth transition. This decision could set a precedent for similar reforms in other states.

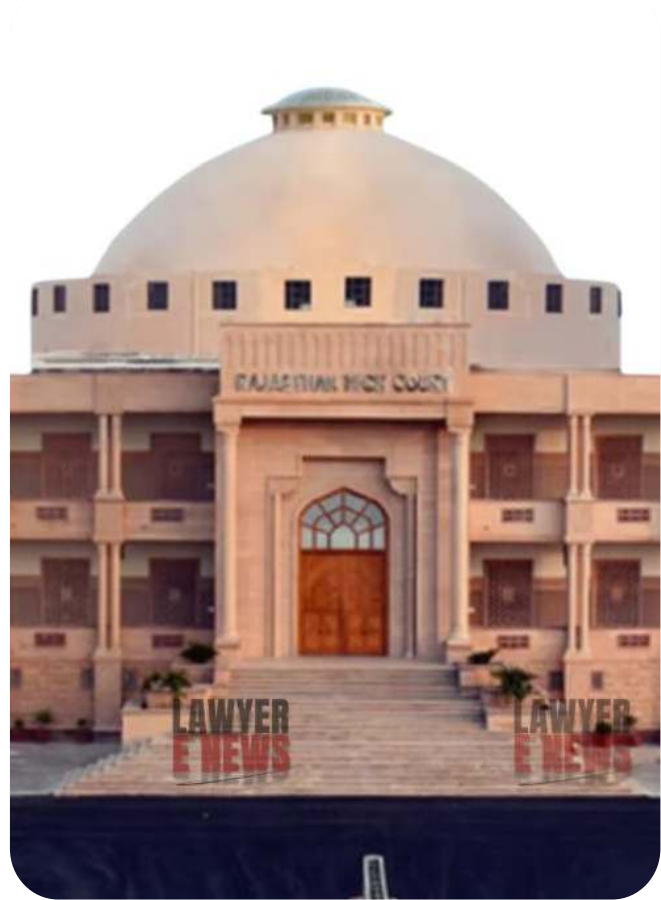
<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/remove-caste-references-in-school-college-names-orders-madras-high-court/article69456771.ece>

APPEAL U/S 19 OF NON-GOVT EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ACT MAINTAINABLE IN SIMILAR MATTERS OF TERMINATION OF TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES: RAJASTHAN HIGH COURT

By Swasti Chaturvedi: 21 April 2025

The Rajasthan High Court recently ruled on a case involving the termination of temporary employees in *Jaipur Managing Committee v. Saurabh Upadhyaya* (2025 RJ JP 14355). The petitioners, temporary employees, challenged their abrupt dismissal, arguing it violated principles of natural justice since they were not given prior notice or a hearing. The court examined whether temporary employees, despite their contractual status, are entitled to procedural fairness before termination.

The High Court held that even temporary employees cannot be terminated arbitrarily and must be granted a minimal opportunity to present their case, especially if their removal stems from alleged misconduct or inefficiency. The judgment emphasized that administrative decisions must adhere to fairness, even in contractual employment. However, the court clarified that if the termination is due to the expiry of a contract or project completion, no hearing is required.



This ruling reinforces labour rights protections for temporary workers in Rajasthan and could influence similar cases across India. The court directed the managing committee to reconsider the terminations in compliance with the principles outlined in the judgment.

<https://www.verdictum.in/court-updates/high-courts/rajasthan-high-court/jaipur-managing-committee-v-saurabh-upadhyaya-2025-rj-jp-14355-temporary-employees-termination-1574858>

CBCI HONORS POPE FRANCIS: CHURCH IN INDIA UNITES IN PRAYER AND MOURNING

22 April 2025

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) has issued an official press release expressing deep sorrow over the death of His Holiness Pope Francis, calling him a "true servant-leader, a father to the poor, and a prophet of hope." The CBCI announced that the Catholic Church in India will observe nine days of mourning and prayer, joining millions around the world in honouring the life and legacy of the 266th successor of St. Peter.

Remembering Pope Francis for his compassionate leadership and fearless advocacy, the CBCI noted his unwavering dedication to the marginalized, refugees, and the environment. His encyclical *Laudato si'*, which called for global ecological responsibility, was especially highlighted as a cornerstone of his papacy. "His Holiness was a tireless voice for justice, unity, and dialogue," the CBCI said. "Through his gestures of peace and outreach to other faiths, Pope Francis built bridges of understanding across the globe."

The CBCI has called upon all Catholic faithful



in India to celebrate a Holy Mass in his memory, either tomorrow or on a convenient day. Special prayers will also be held in all parishes and religious communities on the day of the funeral. As a mark of respect, Catholic institutions across India have been requested to close on the day of the funeral, where local circumstances permit. The press release concludes with a message of gratitude for Pope Francis's life and service, praying for his eternal peace and that his witness may continue to inspire people of all faiths. "May his soul rest in peace, and may his legacy continue to inspire generations to come."

<https://www.cbci.in/news-detail/CBCI-Honors-Pope-Francis%3A-Church-in-India-Unites-in-Prayer-and-Mourning>

POPE FRANCIS' DESIRE TO FOSTER UNITY AMONG CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

By Kielce Gussie: 21 April 2025

Speaking at an ecumenical gathering in April 2025, the Pope grounded his message in Christ's prayer for unity (John 17:21), lamenting that persistent divisions among Christians constitute "a scandal that undermines our witness to the world."

Theological Foundations and Practical Steps:

The Pontiff outlined a vision of ecumenism that balances doctrinal fidelity with pragmatic collaboration. While acknowledging irreconcilable differences on issues like the Eucharist and ecclesial authority, he proposed



In a significant address on ecumenism, Pope Francis renewed his call for Christian unity, framing it as both a divine mandate and an urgent pastoral priority for the modern Church.

"walking together" through three concrete actions:

- **Spiritual Ecumenism:** Prioritising shared prayer, especially the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as a means to overcome "the paralysis of polemics."
- **Collaborative Service:** Highlighting successful joint initiatives such as Orthodox-Catholic refugee relief in Syria and Protestant-Catholic Bible projects in Africa as models for "unity in action."
- **Dialogue with Humility:** Citing the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (2025) as inspiration, he urged theologians to pursue dialogue with "both clarity and charity."

Challenges and Opportunities:

Pope Francis candidly addressed obstacles:

- **Historical Wounds:** He acknowledged "centuries of mutual suspicion" but noted progress in Lutheran-Catholic and Anglican-Catholic reconciliations.
- **New Divisions:** Warned against "culture war" polarization that pits Christians against each other on social issues.
- **Youth Engagement:** Proposed ecumenical

youth forums to counteract denominational prejudices, noting that "the young intuitively grasp the absurdity of our divisions."

A Prophetic Invitation:

The Pope concluded with a striking metaphor: "A divided Church is like a fractured net, unable to bear the weight of the world's needs." He announced plans for an ecumenical summit in 2026 focused on climate justice; a "neutral ground" for shared mission. Quoting his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, he framed Christian unity as essential to global peacebuilding: "How can we preach reconciliation to the world if we remain unreconciled?"

Reactions and Next Steps:

The address drew cautious optimism from Orthodox and Protestant observers, though some noted unresolved tensions around papal primacy. Vatican officials revealed that Pope Francis has established a new ecumenical task force to streamline joint initiatives on migration and religious freedom.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-04/pope-francis-ecumenism-christian-unity.html>



"THE POOR BID FAREWELL TO THEIR SHEPHERD": IN A FINAL ACT OF LOVE, NEEDY GATHER TO HONOR POPE FRANCIS

25 April 2025

In a poignant tribute to a pontificate marked by compassion and humility, the Holy See Press Office has announced that a group of poor and needy individuals will be present on the steps of the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major to pay their final respects to Pope Francis before his interment. Echoing the Pope's lifelong mission, the statement affirmed: "The poor have a special place in God's heart." This sentiment, deeply rooted in the heart and Magisterium of Pope Francis, guided his decision to take the name of Saint Francis of Assisi - the saint of the poor - as a constant reminder of his pastoral priority.

In this solemn moment, the presence of the poor symbolizes the Pope's unwavering

commitment to the marginalized, a legacy that has profoundly shaped the Church and touched hearts around the world. As they gather to say farewell to their beloved shepherd, this simple yet powerful gesture serves as a moving testament to a papacy lived in service, humility, and love.

<https://www.cbci.in/news-detail/%E2%80%9CThe-Poor-Bid-Farewell-to-Their-Shepherd%E2%80%9D%E2%80%9D3A-In-a-Final-Act-of-Love%E2%80%9C-Needy-Gather-to-Honor-Pope-Francis>

21st April 2025

Subject: Request to Identify & Support deserving Catholic Students towards meaningful careers in Public Services (IAS / IPS / IFS / IRS etc)

Respected Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Monsignors, & Fathers,

Greetings of the Season from **JD Academy of eXcellence (JDAX)**, Santhome, Chennai.

JDAX is an initiative of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore, committed to guiding students—particularly those from Catholic and underprivileged communities — toward meaningful careers in public service through structured coaching for UPSC Civil Services Examinations.

In our ongoing efforts to identify and support deserving students, we are conducting a National-Level Online Scholarship cum Entrance Examination. This test is designed to offer scholarships and concessions for students who show potential and commitment to civil service preparation.

Key Details of the Scholarship Test:

- Test Dates: May 11 to May 18, 2025 (*If needed, can have a specific date according to your convenience*)
- Mode: Online (accessible from anywhere)
- Eligibility: Aspirants of UPSC (Graduates and above)
- Age: 21 to 32 & as per UPSC notification
- Purpose: To provide financial assistance and quality coaching to top-performing candidates

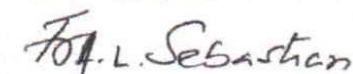
We respectfully seek your support in recommending this opportunity to deserving students in your dioceses, institutions, parishes, youth ministries and other possibilities. Your encouragement can help young minds take the first step toward transforming not only their future but also the communities they belong to.

We would be grateful if this information could be shared through your internal communication channels, notice boards, and relevant networks.

For registration and further information, please visit: www.jdax.in

Thank you for your time and support.

Warm regards,



Rev. Dr. Antony Sebastian

Director

DIRECTOR
JD ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE
SANTHOME, CHENNAI - 4



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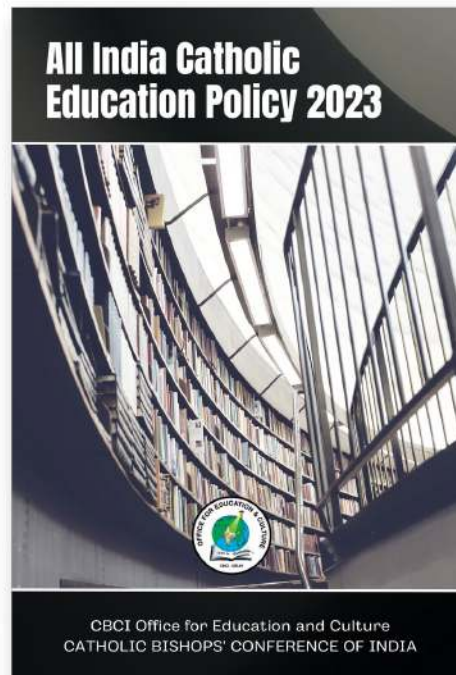


ALL INDIA CATHOLIC EDUCATION POLICY

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.

PRICE: RS. 160

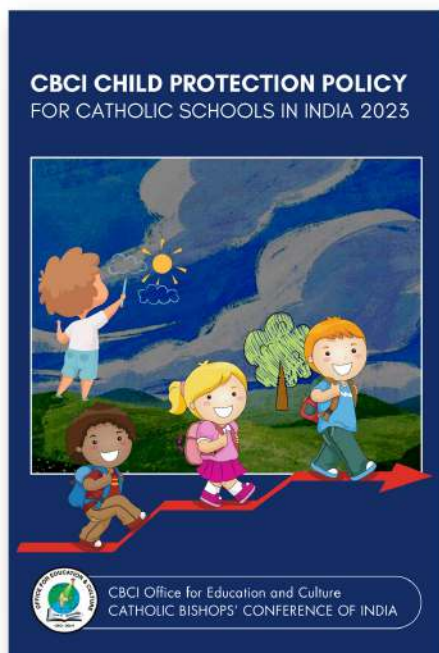


CBCI CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

PUBLISHED BY CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF INDIA. (CBCI)

The Catholic Church in India operates and manages nearly 20,000 educational institutions which include formal primary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges and trade schools. The Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBCI) of India envisions not only providing quality education for the children and youth but also creating a safe and conducive environment for enabling the well-being, growth and development of each child it serves. This child protection policy brought out by the CBCI Office for Education and Culture is an expression of the commitment of the Catholic Church to ensure that each child feels secure and receives an enabling environment for their development. This policy establishes processes procedures and duties for all stakeholders working directly or indirectly with children in their schools.

PRICE: RS. 140



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