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CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL ISSUES IN INDIA POST-PANDEMIC

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EDUCATE TO EMPOWER

NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON EDUCATION 2025

ORGANISED BY THE OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE, CBCI

The **Office for Education and Culture of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI)** is delighted to announce the upcoming **National Consultation on Education 2025**, a landmark gathering of Catholic educators, principals, education experts, and leaders from across the nation.

Dates: 17th – 19th November 2025
Venue: New Delhi

PROPOSED THEME

"Educating for Hope and Transformation: Catholic Education in a Changing India"

This theme calls Catholic educators to renew their vision and commitment — to form students not merely for academic success, but as agents of hope, healing, and transformation in an India marked by rapid technological, cultural, and social shifts.

Educators, diocesan leaders, religious congregations, and policy advocates will come together over these three days for **keynote addresses, panel discussions, and collaborative workshops**, ensuring that Catholic education continues to be a beacon of faith, excellence, and inclusion for generations to come.

Mark your calendars!
Further details on registration, program schedule, and resource persons will be shared shortly.

Office for Education and Culture, CBCI
New Delhi

REKINDLING THE FLAME OF EDUCATION

A Call to Catholic Educators

Education in India stands at a defining crossroads. While classrooms buzz with hope and energy, the cracks beneath are widening. Recent surveys reveal a sobering truth: by Grade 3, nearly **80% of children** in rural India still cannot read a simple Grade 2 text or solve basic subtraction. Pandemic disruptions have deepened this learning crisis—robbing many children of nearly a year's worth of foundational skills in language and math. And as schools race to catch up, educators are grappling with a troubling paradox: degrees are multiplying, yet employability is shrinking.

The heart of the problem is **foundational learning**—the ability to read, write, think, and reason. Without it, every subsequent stage of education is fragile. Initiatives like **NIPUN Bharat** and community-driven models from chalkboard walls to digital micro-learning show promise, but they are only as strong as the teachers who carry them forward. The future of India's children will not be secured by technology alone, nor by policy on paper—it will be forged in classrooms where **inspired teachers meet hungry young minds**.

For Catholic educators, this is not just an academic challenge—it is a **moral mission**. Our schools were born out of a belief that education is a ministry of hope, healing, and transformation. In a nation where poverty, digital divides, and social inequities still keep millions from learning, we cannot allow Catholic education to become comfortable or complacent.

We must lead the way in **renewing the foundations of learning**—not only teaching children to read, but teaching them to dream; not only preparing them for jobs, but preparing them for life. This means reimagining our classrooms as spaces of **encounter and inclusion**, where the poor feel welcome, where technology serves rather than supplants the teacher, and where faith quietly shapes every lesson with meaning.

As we move toward the **CBCI National Consultation on Education 2025**, let us ask ourselves: Are we forming students merely for exams, or for a future built on justice, compassion, and competence? The choice we make today will echo for decades.

The flame of education must be rekindled—not just in policy halls or conference rooms, but in every Catholic classroom across India. The time for reflection is now. The time for **renewed action is urgent.**

FR./DR. MARIA CHARLES SDB
National Secretary

FROM FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING TO COLLEGES AND CAREERS: CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL ISSUES IN INDIA POST-PANDEMIC (PART 1)

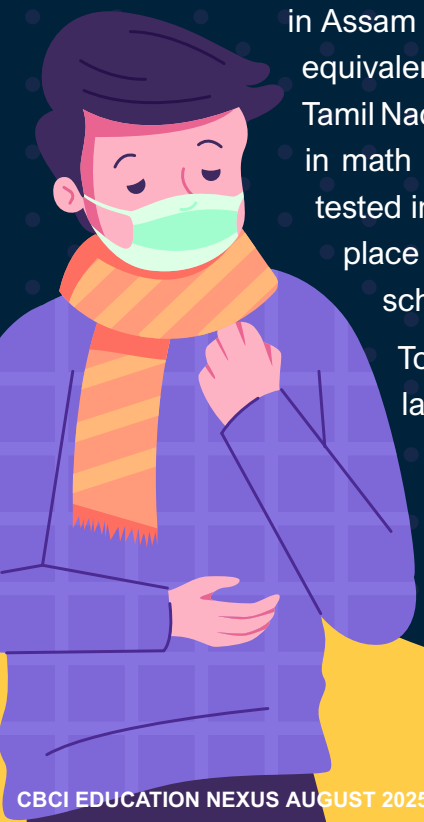
BY T HATCH: JULY 2, 2025

The pandemic disrupted educational services and exacerbated inequalities in India, but did it also create opportunities to improve education more broadly? In this 2-part series, Haakon Huynh explores some of the initiatives that aim to deliver more inclusive, high-quality education for the next generation in the world's most populous nation. This week, part 1 outlines some of the enduring issues in education in India and shares a few examples of the programs and practices trying to address them. A second post will focus on some of the efforts to address concerns that are taking on increasing importance in India post-pandemic including chronic absence, mental health, nutrition, and sustainability. For previous posts related to education in India see: From a "wide portfolio" to systemic support for foundational learning: The evolution of the Central Square Foundation's work on education in India (Part 1 and Part 2); and Sameer Sampat on the context of leadership & the evolution of the India School Leadership Institute.

Foundational learning and academics:

With 248 million people enrolled in the education system, no single description can capture all the educational issues being pursued in India. But by almost any measure, foundational learning has been one of India's major concerns for the government and funders for some time. According to India's Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) in 2018, approximately 80% of grade 3 students in rural areas could not read a grade 2 text or solve basic subtraction problems.

On top of long-standing concerns about improving foundational learning, the school closures also heightened concerns about academic learning overall. The National Achievement Survey, for example, showed a significant decline in test scores, particularly in high school, as class 10 scores fell by about 13% in Mathematics, 18% in Science, and 9% in Social Science. A survey of students in 200 schools in Assam between 2018 – 2022 showed that, during the pandemic, students had lost the equivalent of nine months of learning in math and eleven months in language. A study in Tamil Nadu, in 2021 also found significant learning deficits (or about .7 standard deviations in math and almost .4 standard deviations in language) compared to similar students tested in 2019; however, in contrast to other countries like the US, some recovery took place relatively rapidly, as two-thirds of the deficit was made up within six months after school reopening.



To address these long-standing academic concerns, the Indian government has launched education policies such as the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat). Major efforts to develop and scale-up effective approaches for foundational learning are also supported by groups based in India like the Central Square Foundation and international donors like the Gates Foundation.

NIPUN Bharat, Department of School Education & Literacy:

Within this context, states and schools in India are pursuing a host of specific innovations aiming to support students' ability to read, write and count. These include tech-enabled approaches supported by the Central Square Foundation like digital microlearning video modules delivered weekly to teachers and school leaders in Bihar and a Mentor mobile app used for real-time classroom observations. The HundrED collection of global innovations also features a number of resources and practices that have demonstrated some effectiveness in supporting foundational learning in India. Among them, Building Blocks, a maths app, provides over four hundred interactive games that children from grades 1 – 8 can explore at their own pace to supplement their instruction in school.

At the same time, limited access to computers and the internet in India – where just 4% of rural households own a computer – continue to constrain the reach of tech-dependent efforts to support foundational learning. As a result, other initiatives recognized as part of HundrED's collection of global innovations are trying to develop approaches that do not rely on the internet. Building on the fact that a billion Indians watch nearly four hours of TV every day, BIRD (the Billion Reader's Initiative) adds Same Language Subtitling (SLS) on mainstream entertainment on television & streaming platforms. TicTacLearn (TTL) endeavours to increase access to educational content through a free digital education platform that provides over 14,000 curriculum-aligned videos and assessments in seven Indian languages. While the videos are available on YouTube, TTL also distributes them via pen drives, making it possible to load the content onto school computers in remote areas with limited internet.

HundrED's Global Collection this year also features the Raster Master Three-Generational (3G) Learning Model which shows what's possible without reliance on the internet, television or other technologies. This initiative transforms unused walls in streets and courtyards into learning spaces for the "Teachers of the Street." Painted with chalkboard paint, these walls provide a cost-effective, visible, and accessible platform for teaching letters, numbers, and basic lessons, which are often led by children themselves. Like the Hope House project in Rwanda where secondary school students paint educational murals featuring world maps, alphabets, numbers in English and Kinyarwanda, these low-tech approaches are particularly well-suited to lowering the barrier to participation for first-generation learners and out-of-school children.

Increasing access to college and careers:

Although India has rapidly expanded access to higher education, the pandemic has also intensified concerns about future readiness in India and helped to drive efforts to create new pathways into college and careers. In terms of access, a recent government press release highlights that between 2011–12 and 2021–22, enrolment in state public universities rose from 23.4 million to 32.4 million students, while private universities experienced a staggering 497% increase in enrolment.

These increases included significant gains in access to higher education among marginalized groups. According to the Ministry of Education, enrolment among indigenous communities rose by over 100%,

among protected castes by more than 75%, and among Muslim minorities by 60%. The Gender Parity Index also improved from 0.87 in 2011–12 to 1.01 in 2021–22, meaning 1.01 women were enrolled for every man. At the same time, concerns about equity remain, particularly in private institutions that now account for over a quarter of all higher education enrolment. Private universities are not legally required to follow affirmative action mandates even though they often benefit from public support like land grants and tax exemptions. Under these conditions, the share of historically marginalized students in private higher education has increased moderately but hasn't kept pace with the increased access in public institutions. Furthermore, although increasing the diversity of the faculty might help to build the enrolment of students from historically marginalized backgrounds, only 4.1% of faculty in top-ranked private universities belong to protected caste communities; and faculty positions reserved for such communities in public institutions like Indian Institutes of Managements remain largely vacant with over 83% of these posts unfilled.

In addition to issues surrounding equity, as in other countries, there is a disconnect between the skills taught in academia and what's in demand in industry. This has contributed to high levels of youth unemployment and estimates that only about half (51%) of Indian graduates are considered employable. This underemployment crisis is especially acute among highly educated youth. Two-thirds of India's unemployed are young people with secondary or higher education, many of whom delay entering the job market while holding out for “white-collar” roles. Correspondingly, in sectors like healthcare and engineering a lack of alignment between curricula and labour market needs contributes to a situation where millions of trained graduates are unable to find meaningful employment. The current education system, critics argue, emphasizes degrees over real-world skills, leading to large pools of underutilized talent at a time when India is on the cusp of its so-called demographic dividend – the time where the largest part of its population is in working age.

The paradox of educated unemployment has become one of India's most pressing post-pandemic challenges. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2023–24), the unemployment rate among those with secondary education or higher stands at 6.5%, significantly higher than among those with less education, which is just about 1% for middle school graduates and just 0.2% for those with no formal education. The situation is especially dire for educated urban women, who face an unemployment rate of about 13%, more than double that of their male counterparts at 6%. Despite small year-on-year improvements, these figures show that more education no longer translates to better economic outcomes, and in fact, often exacerbates social inequality.

In one effort to address these challenges following the disruptions of the pandemic, The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) introduced several innovations including academic credit banks, digital systems that allow students to accumulate and transfer credits earned across different institutions. By enabling learners to pause, resume, and combine coursework flexibly, these kinds of innovations could support more personalized pathways to completing degrees. The policy also places greater emphasis on vocational education aiming to expose at least 50% of learners to vocational education by 2025. Of course, putting these elements into policies is only one step, and it remains to be seen to what extent these policies will be implemented and exactly who might benefit.

THE IMPACT OF LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS ON K-12 EDUCATION IN RURAL INDIA

Empowering Rural Classrooms with AI- Perspectives from the Ground:

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT and Bard have revolutionized the global educational landscape. However, their integration into rural Indian education remains underexplored. This pioneering study, conducted by researchers from BITS Pilani, seeks to bridge that gap by investigating the perspectives of 23 student volunteer teachers working in rural K-12 schools in Rajasthan and Delhi. Through a series of in-depth interviews, the study explores how these digital-native volunteers assess the feasibility, benefits, and challenges of AI-based tools in low-resource educational settings.

The research was motivated by persistent educational disparities between urban and rural India. Despite policy efforts like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Digital India, and the National Education Policy 2020, rural schools continue to grapple with insufficient infrastructure, lack of trained teachers, and foundational learning deficits. In this context, the study probes whether LLMs can serve as scalable, cost-effective solutions to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Student volunteers were uniquely positioned to provide insights, being familiar with both urban digital technologies and the everyday realities of rural schooling. Their responses revealed a blend of cautious optimism and grounded skepticism. Many viewed LLMs as supportive tools that can personalize learning, automate tasks, and enhance engagement, especially in multigrade classrooms. Yet they also highlighted critical barriers such as poor connectivity, lack of teacher training, parental resistance, and ethical concerns about over-reliance on technology.

AI's Promise- Personalized, Scalable, and Multilingual:

One of the study's key findings is the potential of AI and LLMs to personalize education in ways previously unattainable in rural settings. Volunteers observed that AI tools can adapt to students' learning levels, generate interactive content, and provide round-the-clock academic support. This was particularly valuable in classrooms where students often perform below grade level.

Participants cited the ability of AI to create simplified explanations, customized learning paths, and culturally relevant content in regional languages as major advantages. Such capabilities are essential for addressing foundational gaps in literacy and numeracy. Visual aids and multimedia content generated by AI were also noted to improve student engagement and memory retention, especially in STEM subjects.

Moreover, AI was seen as a useful assistant for teachers, reducing their workload and helping them design better lesson plans. Volunteers stressed the importance of viewing AI as a complement to, not a replacement for, human educators. A blended learning approach—combining AI-driven tools with teacher-led instruction—was identified as the ideal model for rural classrooms.

However, volunteers warned against unchecked use of AI. They emphasized that without human supervision and ethical safeguards, students might develop passive learning habits or misuse AI for academic dishonesty. Cognitive and ethical development must remain at the forefront of AI integration strategies.

Barriers to Adoption- Infrastructure, Language, and Trust:

Despite AI's potential, the study revealed several practical barriers to implementation in rural India. The most pressing issue is inadequate infrastructure—many schools lack stable internet, computers, or even basic facilities. Mobile access, while improving, remains patchy and often unaffordable for low-income families.

Language barriers also pose a challenge. Most AI tools function in English or Hindi, but many students in rural India speak local dialects or regional languages. Volunteers emphasized the need for AI tools to support multilingual content to ensure inclusivity and comprehension.

Teacher preparedness is another critical factor. Many rural educators are unfamiliar with AI or view it with skepticism, fearing it could undermine their role. The volunteers advocated for targeted teacher training programs and awareness workshops to build trust and digital literacy among educators and parents.

Parental resistance was also noted as a significant hurdle. In communities where traditional education is deeply valued, AI tools are often perceived as unnecessary or distracting. To overcome this, volunteers recommended holding demonstration classes and community engagement sessions to showcase the benefits of AI in improving student outcomes.

Ethical considerations such as data privacy, misinformation, and over-reliance on technology were highlighted throughout the study. Volunteers called for robust policies to govern the responsible use of AI in schools, ensuring that student data is protected and AI-generated content remains transparent and educational.

A Vision Forward- Localized Innovation and Inclusive Implementation:

The study concludes with a call for context-sensitive, ethically grounded, and community-oriented AI integration strategies in rural education. It underscores the importance of designing AI tools that are low-bandwidth compatible, user-friendly for students with limited digital literacy, and aligned with the NCERT curriculum.

In response to these insights, the research team is developing an AI-powered mobile application tailored to rural Indian students from Grades 3 to 12. This tool will provide theory revision, step-by-step solutions to NCERT problems, and regional language support. Importantly, it will function in offline or low-connectivity environments to ensure maximum reach.

The road to AI-enabled rural education is long and complex, but with thoughtful planning and collaborative engagement, LLMs could become powerful allies in India's quest for educational equity. By amplifying the voices of those on the ground—student volunteers who work daily in underserved classrooms—this study offers a practical, empathetic blueprint for the future.

SAINT EDUCATOR SERIES 22

SAINT KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA

(10 FEBRUARY 1805 – 3 JANUARY 1871)

Introduction:

Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara (1805–1871) is revered as a pioneering saint, reformer, and educator in the history of the Catholic Church in India, particularly in Kerala. His legacy as an educator is deeply rooted in his vision of education as a means for personal development, social upliftment, and spiritual growth. He co-founded and served as the first Prior General of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), the first religious congregation for men in the Syro-Malabar Church. He also played a key role in founding a similar congregation for women, the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC).

Early Life:

Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara was born on February 10, 1805, in the village of Kainakary, near Alappuzha in the present-day Indian state of Kerala. He was born into a devout and God-fearing Catholic family belonging to the Syro-Malabar Church. His parents, Iko (Kuriakose) Chavara and Mariam Thoppil, were known for their piety and charitable nature. The family upheld strong Christian values, which had a deep influence on young Kuriakose from a very early age.

From childhood, Kuriakose exhibited signs of deep spiritual inclination and a strong desire to serve God. He was drawn to prayer, the sacraments, and the lives of saints. At the age of 10, he lost his mother, an event that marked him deeply but also strengthened his spiritual resolve. Recognizing his pious nature and intellectual potential, his family and parish priests encouraged him to pursue a vocation to the priesthood.

At the age of 13, Kuriakose joined the seminary at Pallipuram, one of the few centres of ecclesiastical learning at the time, under the guidance of Fr. Thomas Palackal and Fr. Thomas Porukara. These two priests would later become his spiritual mentors and collaborators in founding the first indigenous religious congregation. During his years of formation, he proved to be a diligent student, deeply rooted in prayer, and committed to the service of the Church.

He was ordained a priest on November 29, 1829, at Arthunkal. Even as a young priest, he stood out for his commitment to holiness, education, and reform within the Church. His early life laid the foundation for a lifelong mission dedicated to spiritual renewal, social reform, and educational advancement in Kerala.

Later Life:

Kuriakose Elias Chavara, along with two other visionary priests—Palackal Thoma Malpan and Porukara Thoma Kathanar—set out to live a monastic life rooted in prayer, community, and service. Together, they founded a religious community initially called the Servants of Mary Immaculate. The foundation stone for their first monastery at Mannanam was laid on May 11, 1831, by Porukara Thoma Kathanar.

Following the deaths of Palackal Malpan in 1841 and Porukara Kathanar in 1846, Kuriakose Chavara assumed leadership of the fledgling community. On December 8, 1855, he and ten other priests made their religious profession, taking vows in the Carmelite tradition. Kuriakose Chavara was appointed as the first Prior General of the Mannanam Monastery. The congregation later became affiliated with the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites (TOCD), adopting its spiritual heritage and postnominal initials. This marked the formal establishment of the first indigenous religious congregation for men in the Syro-Malabar Church.

Founding of Education Institutions:

Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara was deeply moved by the social inequalities and lack of access to education that plagued 19th-century Kerala. At a time when education was a privilege reserved for the upper castes and wealthy families, he recognised that ignorance was a root cause of social stagnation, poverty, and injustice, particularly among the lower castes and marginalized communities. Motivated by a profound Christian vision of human dignity and equality, he envisioned education as a powerful means to uplift society and bring about lasting transformation.

In a bold and groundbreaking initiative, Fr. Chavara mandated in 1864 that every parish under the Syro-Malabar Church must establish a school. These parish-attached schools—known as "Pallikkoodams"—were to be open to all children, regardless of caste, religion, or social background. This move challenged the rigid caste system of the time and broke down centuries-old barriers to learning. Through this system, education became a shared mission of the Church and the community. Teachers were appointed, basic infrastructure was built, and learning materials were made accessible—even to the poorest students.

This widespread network of parish schools laid the foundation for what would eventually become Kerala's strong public education system. Because of this visionary step, Saint Chavara is widely regarded as the “Father of the Literacy Movement in Kerala.” His initiatives sowed the seeds for the state's present-day reputation as one of the most literate and socially progressive regions in India.

In addition to accessibility, Fr. Chavara emphasised the importance of a holistic education—one that nurtured not only intellectual growth but also moral, spiritual, and emotional development. He insisted that both boys and girls must be educated, a progressive stance at a time when girls were rarely allowed to attend school. His support for the education of women was further strengthened by the founding of the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC), which took up the mission of educating girls and training female teachers.

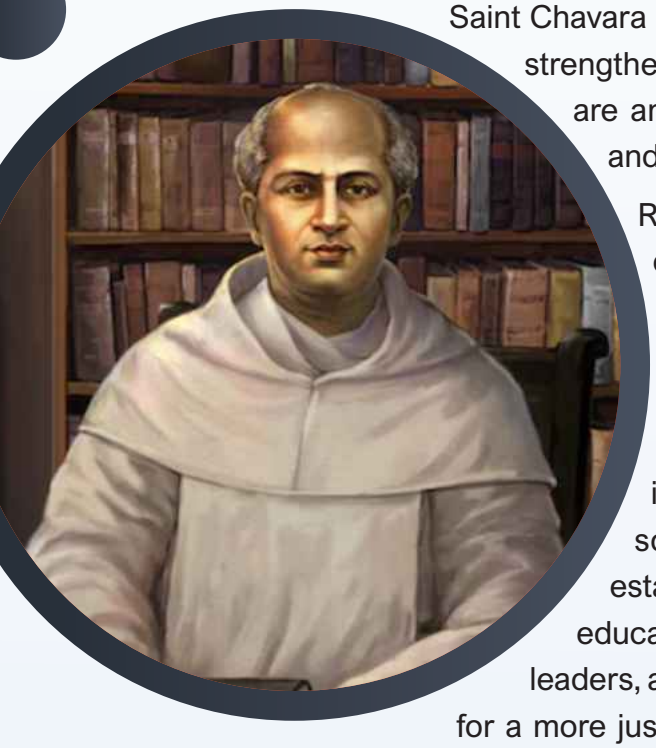
Fr. Chavara also promoted vernacular education, believing that children should learn in their native language to truly understand and grow. He supported the use of Malayalam as a medium of instruction, alongside

lessons in religious values, civic responsibilities, and personal discipline. His model of education fostered not only literacy but also the formation of responsible, value-oriented citizens. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara saw learning not merely as an academic exercise but as a spiritual and social mission, aimed at liberating the human person and building a just, compassionate society.

Founding of Congregations and Contributions to Education:

Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara believed that lasting reform and upliftment of society required dedicated institutions and committed individuals. Guided by this conviction, he took the historic step of founding religious congregations that would carry forward the mission of education, spiritual formation, and social service. In 1831, along with Fathers Palackal Thoma Malpan and Porukara Thoma Kathanar, he co-founded the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI)—the first indigenous religious congregation for men in India. This marked a turning point in the history of the Indian Church, as it empowered local clergy to take up leadership roles and establish institutions rooted in Indian culture and Catholic faith.

The CMI Congregation quickly became a powerful force in the field of education. Guided by Chavara's vision, CMI priests and brothers began establishing schools, boarding houses, orphanages, and seminaries, particularly in rural and underserved regions. These institutions were designed not only to impart academic knowledge but also to foster spiritual values, moral integrity, and social responsibility. Saint Chavara insisted that education must be holistic; enlightening the mind, strengthening character, and deepening faith. Today, CMI-run institutions are among the most respected educational establishments in India and abroad.



Recognising the critical need for women's education and empowerment, Saint Chavara also played a leading role in founding the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC) in 1866. It was the first indigenous religious congregation for women in the Indian Church. Under his guidance, the CMC sisters took up the mission of educating girls—a revolutionary initiative at a time when women's literacy was minimal and societal norms discouraged female education. The sisters established schools, hostels, and training centers that not only educated young girls but also trained them to become teachers, leaders, and religious women. Through this, Chavara laid the groundwork for a more just and equitable society where women could access the same educational opportunities as men.

In addition to founding religious congregations, Saint Chavara recognized the power of the printed word in spreading education and faith. In 1846, he established the first Catholic printing press in Kerala at Mannanam, a groundbreaking move that brought Catholic literature into the mainstream. The press produced prayer books, catechisms, textbooks, and spiritual reflections in the Malayalam language, making Christian teachings accessible to the ordinary faithful. Among its most notable contributions was the publication of Nasrani Deepika, the first Malayalam daily newspaper, which would go on to play a significant role in shaping public discourse and cultural development in Kerala.

The printing press also became a platform for promoting literacy and critical thinking. By publishing in the local language, Chavara ensured that education and religious instruction were not confined to the elite but reached ordinary people, including those who had been previously excluded due to caste or poverty. His use of media was visionary, combining traditional catechesis with modern tools of communication to

spread faith, knowledge, and awareness.

Educational Legacy:

Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara's contribution to education was not limited to founding schools and religious institutions; it was rooted in a profound vision of education as a sacred and transformative mission. He believed that education must not only illuminate the mind but also shape the heart and uplift the human spirit. Deeply inspired by Christian principles and Gospel values, Chavara envisioned an educational system that was spiritually grounded, socially relevant, and universally accessible.

His educational philosophy is best captured in his often-quoted motto:

"The children of today are the citizens of tomorrow."

This simple yet powerful statement reflected his deep awareness of the role of education in shaping future generations. He firmly believed that investing in children's education—especially in their formative years—was the key to building a just, compassionate, and morally upright society.

One of the central pillars of his legacy was his call for compulsory education for all, regardless of caste, class, or gender. In 1864, as the Vicar General of the Syro-Malabar Church, he issued a pastoral letter instructing every parish to open a school and ensure that every child in the community had access to basic education. This revolutionary step made education a right rather than a privilege, breaking down barriers that had excluded large segments of the population for centuries. It is this far-reaching initiative that earned him the title of "Father of the Literacy Movement in Kerala."

Another hallmark of Saint Chavara's educational vision was the integration of moral and spiritual values into the learning process. He did not see education merely as a pursuit of knowledge or academic success, but as a way to form individuals who would live by truth, compassion, and responsibility. His schools emphasized virtues such as honesty, humility, respect for others, and a sense of service to society. He also promoted discipline, regular prayer, and a strong sense of duty among students, ensuring that education nurtured both the intellect and the soul.

Saint Chavara also stood out as a champion for the empowerment of women and the marginalised. At a time when educating girls was widely discouraged, he took

concrete steps to change this reality. Through the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC), he established schools and hostels for girls and encouraged women to become teachers and spiritual leaders. He also insisted that children from disadvantaged backgrounds be given equal opportunities for education, with special attention to the poor and those from lower castes. This commitment to social inclusion continues to be a defining feature of the institutions run by the CMI and CMC congregations.

Today, hundreds of educational institutions across India and around the world—ranging from primary schools to universities—stand as living testimonies to Saint Chavara's vision. Run by the CMI and CMC religious communities, these institutions continue to offer value-based, inclusive, and high-quality education to students from all walks of life. They uphold the ideals of academic excellence combined with ethical formation, social responsibility, and faith in action. His model of education—anchored in love for God and service to humanity—remains a beacon of hope and a blueprint for educators committed to building a better world.

Canonization and Recognition:

The life and mission of Kuriakose Elias Chavara received formal recognition from the Catholic Church when he was beatified on February 8, 1986, by Pope John Paul II during his visit to India. This important step acknowledged Chavara's virtuous life, his unwavering faith, and his pioneering efforts in spiritual renewal and social reform. His beatification brought renewed awareness to his extensive contributions to the Indian Church and society—particularly in the areas of education, care for the poor, and the empowerment of the marginalized. Devotion to Chavara grew rapidly following his beatification, and his life became a source of inspiration for countless individuals across India and the world.

On November 23, 2014, Pope Francis canonized Kuriakose Elias Chavara at the Vatican, declaring him a saint of the universal Church. This canonization was not only a recognition of his personal holiness and dedication to the Gospel, but also a formal celebration of his extraordinary contributions as an educator-saint. By founding two religious congregations, championing education for all, promoting literacy and social equality, and integrating moral values into learning, Saint Chavara transformed the spiritual and educational landscape of Kerala. His canonization stands as a powerful affirmation that holiness can be lived out through service, leadership, and a lifelong commitment to uplifting others—especially through the gift of education.

https://chavaralibrary.in/Public/AboutStChavara.aspx

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

https://saintchavara.org/biography/

INDIA INDEPENDENCE DAY

Together for a Strounger India!

INDEPENDENCE DAY AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Independence Day, celebrated annually on August 15, is a momentous occasion that marks the country's liberation from British colonial rule in 1947. This day not only serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by countless freedom fighters but also reinforces the ideals of justice, liberty, and equality enshrined in the Indian Constitution. For the young generation, particularly school students, Independence Day holds a special place. Schools across the nation play a pivotal role in commemorating this day, instilling a sense of patriotism, responsibility, and awareness of India's rich historical legacy.

Educational institutions are vital in shaping the identity and values of young citizens. On Independence Day, schools organize a variety of programs, including flag hoisting ceremonies, patriotic songs, speeches, cultural performances, and exhibitions. These activities are not merely celebratory; they serve as a medium to teach students about the country's journey to freedom and the principles upon which it was founded. Through stories of Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, Sarojini Naidu, and many others, students are inspired to appreciate the value of freedom and the cost at which it was won.

More than just remembering the past, Independence Day in schools fosters civic consciousness among students. By involving them in plays, debates, and essay writing competitions, educators encourage critical thinking about national identity, social responsibility, and the challenges facing modern India. These activities help students understand that independence is not a static event, but a living legacy that must be continually nurtured through active citizenship, ethical leadership, and a commitment to national development.

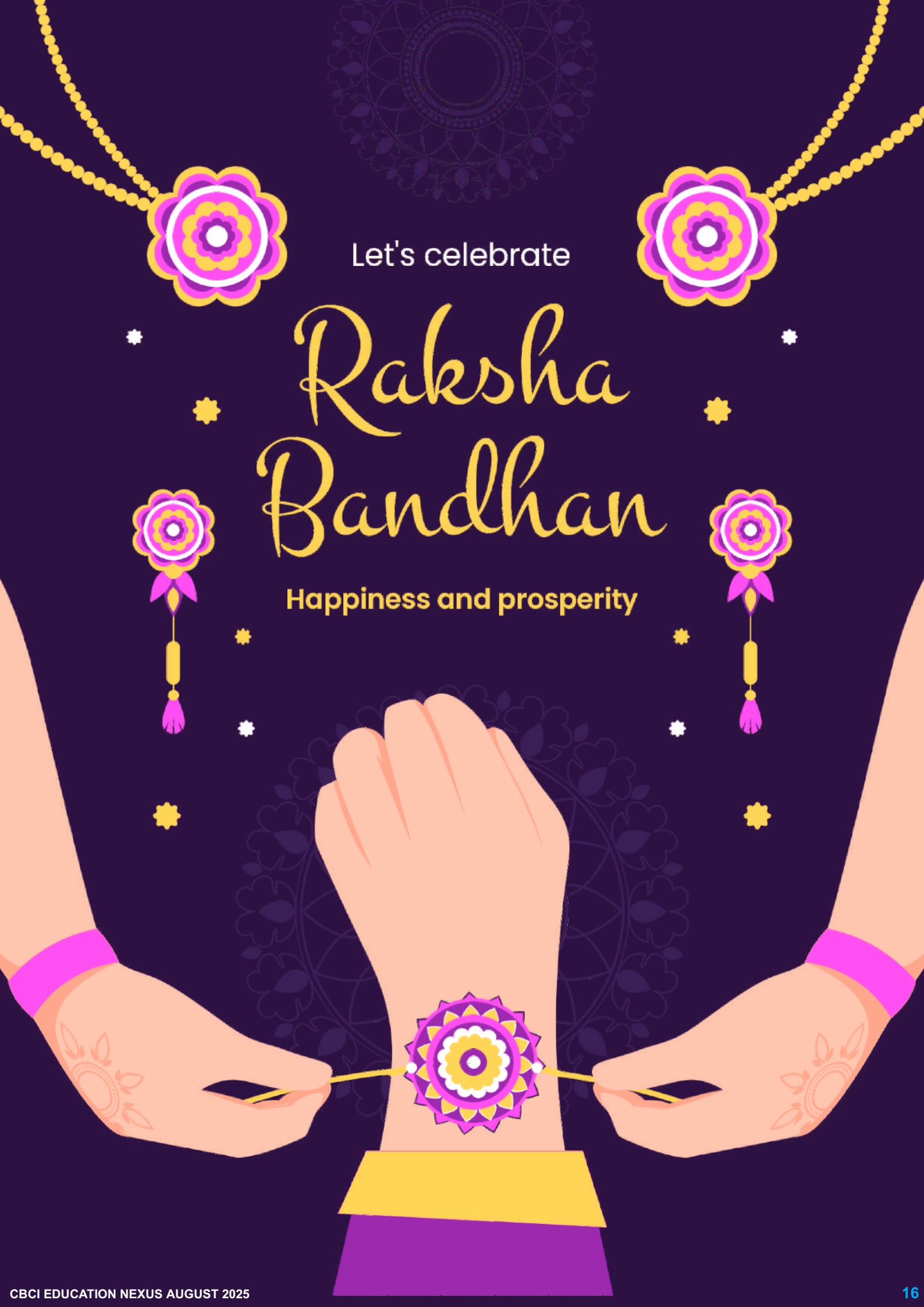
Education also serves as a powerful tool to uphold the democratic ideals that were envisioned during the independence movement. Schools today have the responsibility to go beyond textbooks and cultivate in students the skills and values that promote unity in diversity, respect for constitutional rights, and a spirit of service. Independence Day becomes an ideal moment to renew this commitment by making students aware of their role as future leaders of the nation.

In recent years, Independence Day celebrations in schools have also integrated discussions around contemporary issues such as digital citizenship, environmental protection, gender equality, and inclusive education. This holistic approach to learning on Independence Day connects historical struggles with present-day realities, helping students see their education as a means to contribute meaningfully to society. It also underscores the message that true independence is realized not only in political terms but also through economic empowerment, social justice, and equal access to quality education for all.

Furthermore, the integration of technology in schools has opened new avenues for creative engagement on this national day. Virtual exhibitions, digital storytelling, and multimedia presentations now allow students to express their understanding of independence in innovative ways. In both urban and rural schools, educators are using these tools to bridge gaps in learning and ensure that the spirit of August 15 reaches every corner of the country.

Independence Day, therefore, is not just a ceremonial event in schools; it is an opportunity to educate, inspire, and empower. It helps students recognize the privilege of living in a free nation and the responsibility of sustaining that freedom through knowledge, unity, and action. As the nation continues to move forward, the role of schools in keeping the flame of freedom alive in young hearts remains essential. Through education rooted in the ideals of independence, India can continue to grow as a vibrant, inclusive, and progressive democracy.

-Brandon Arnold John


Let's celebrate
Raksha Bandhan
Happiness and prosperity

RAKSHA BANDHAN 2025

Raksha Bandhan is one of the most cherished festivals in Indian culture. This sacred occasion, symbolising the bond of love and protection between brothers and sisters, transcends biological ties and celebrates relationships of care, respect, and mutual responsibility. While traditionally observed at home within families, Raksha Bandhan has also found a special place in educational institutions, where it is used as a platform to nurture social values, emotional intelligence, and cultural appreciation among students.

In schools, Raksha Bandhan is more than a festival; it becomes an opportunity to impart lessons about relationships, empathy, and unity. Educators utilize this occasion to help children understand the deeper meaning behind tying a rakhi — not merely as a ritual, but as a symbolic act of love, commitment, and moral duty. Classrooms are transformed into spaces of creativity and reflection, where students engage in rakhi-making activities, write essays or poems about siblinghood, and participate in role plays or storytelling sessions that highlight stories of courage, care, and protection across genders and communities.

One of the most significant educational aspects of Raksha Bandhan in schools is the emphasis on gender equality and mutual respect. While traditionally the festival focused on sisters tying rakhi on their brothers' wrists, modern schools are using this occasion to break stereotypical gender roles. Boys and girls are encouraged to tie rakhis to each other, representing a two-way commitment to care and protect. This progressive approach reinforces the idea that every child, regardless of gender, is responsible for supporting and respecting others — a core value in building a just and compassionate society.

In recent years, many schools have also expanded the celebration to include rakhis being tied to soldiers, police officers, sanitation workers, and teachers — individuals who safeguard society in various ways. This encourages students to recognize and appreciate the roles played by everyday heroes, deepening their understanding of the broader meaning of protection. Schools often organize events where students send handmade rakhis to army personnel stationed at borders, fostering a spirit of patriotism and gratitude alongside personal affection.

Moreover, Raksha Bandhan serves as a powerful tool for promoting inclusive education and social harmony. In multicultural classrooms, students from diverse backgrounds are invited to participate, emphasizing that the values of protection, friendship, and solidarity transcend religious or regional boundaries. Teachers use the occasion to discuss themes of unity in diversity and the importance of standing up for one another, helping students cultivate a sense of belonging and respect for pluralism.

Creative engagement during Raksha Bandhan also enhances students' emotional and social development. Activities such as group discussions on the importance of trust, loyalty, and forgiveness in relationships help children articulate their feelings and learn to build healthy connections. The festive atmosphere is combined with structured learning, where lessons in moral science or value education are seamlessly woven into celebration, making the learning experience both joyful and meaningful.

Technology and digital tools are also being harnessed by educators to make Raksha Bandhan celebrations more dynamic and far-reaching. Virtual rakhi exchanges, digital greeting card design, and storytelling videos allow students, especially in remote areas or those learning online, to participate and express themselves. This technological integration ensures that the essence of the festival — emotional bonding and moral responsibility — remains intact even in a changing educational landscape.

Ultimately, Raksha Bandhan in schools is not just about cultural celebration — it is about character formation. It instils in students the virtues of care, responsibility, equality, and solidarity. By celebrating this festival thoughtfully and inclusively, schools contribute to shaping individuals who not only value relationships but are also committed to the well-being of others. As we prepare to celebrate Raksha Bandhan in 2025, schools across India have the unique opportunity to renew these timeless values and strengthen the emotional fabric of the next generation through the power of education.

-Brandon Arnold John

AI AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOLS

Introduction and Context:

The publication "AI and Young People in School" from the OIEC (International Office of Catholic Education) explores the profound and urgent question of how artificial intelligence (AI) is impacting education, especially for the young in Catholic and values-based schools. Rooted in the broader concerns of the digital revolution, the book seeks to address how AI influences not only pedagogical tools but also ethical values, social relationships, and identity formation. It acknowledges that AI technologies—like generative models, data-driven platforms, and intelligent tutors—are already transforming how young people learn, communicate, and even think. In response, Catholic schools are urged to engage critically, creatively, and compassionately with AI.

The document is framed as a call to action for educators, leaders, parents, and students to discern the implications of AI through the lens of human dignity, equity, and the common good. It aligns with Pope Francis' frequent warnings about the "technocratic paradigm" and the need to humanize technology, ensuring that it serves people rather than controls them. The authors affirm that Catholic education must go beyond mere adaptation to digital tools and instead shape digital culture through Gospel-rooted values. AI, in this context, is not merely a topic of computer science, but a cultural force that needs to be guided by moral and spiritual intelligence.

Catholic schools are described as sacred spaces for formation, where learners are not just trained for economic productivity but are formed as whole persons. AI's presence challenges educators to revisit foundational questions: What does it mean to be human? What kind of future are we building? What are the boundaries of knowledge, and how should we navigate them responsibly? These questions are urgent, especially as AI systems increasingly influence assessment, personalization, social interactions, and even school governance. The publication insists that Catholic education must develop a distinct voice and vision in this emerging landscape.

Young People and the Impact of AI:

One of the central concerns of the document is the psychosocial and ethical impact of AI on young people. It discusses how AI-driven platforms such as social media, recommendation engines, and gamified learning tools are subtly shaping students' attention, behaviour, self-esteem, and worldviews. Young people are often unaware of how algorithmic systems influence their choices and identity formation, potentially narrowing their freedom and critical thinking. Moreover, exposure to misinformation, addictive content, and data-driven surveillance raises serious ethical concerns. The document calls for media literacy, digital discernment, and the development of agency among students to navigate this terrain responsibly.

The publication emphasises that Catholic schools must adopt an educational pastoral approach, recognizing the spiritual and emotional needs of students within digital contexts. Teachers are encouraged to foster critical dialogue on AI's ethical questions, such as bias in algorithms, data privacy, the nature of truth, and the commodification of attention. Equally important is the role of teachers as mediators who can accompany students in reflecting on their use of technology, encouraging practices that promote well-being, empathy, and responsibility. AI should never replace the essential human presence in education—it must be a support, not a substitute.

Another key theme is the digital divide and issues of justice. While some students have access to cutting-edge tools and fast networks, many others face digital exclusion, limiting their participation in AI-enabled education. Catholic schools are reminded of their mission to stand with the marginalized, ensuring that digital transformation does not widen inequality. The publication also stresses the

importance of community and encounter, warning against the isolation and individualism that algorithmic systems can reinforce. Catholic education, rooted in communion and dialogue, has the unique potential to cultivate a more relational and inclusive digital culture.

AI in Pedagogy and School Systems:

In terms of pedagogy, the document explores how AI can be integrated meaningfully into teaching and learning. It recognizes the potential of AI for personalized learning, real-time feedback, curriculum planning, and supporting students with special needs. However, it warns that such benefits must not lead to an over-reliance on automation or standardization. Teachers must remain the principal agents of formation, guiding learners through a process that respects complexity, ambiguity, and the interpersonal nature of education. Technology must serve the curriculum, not redefine it in purely utilitarian or data-centric terms.

The authors urge Catholic schools to develop digital charters or ethical guidelines that articulate clear principles for AI use. These might include commitments to transparency, inclusivity, human oversight, and spiritual growth. The aim is not to resist innovation, but to infuse it with wisdom and care. A multidisciplinary approach is recommended, blending theology, ethics, philosophy, and digital competence. Students should be invited into ethical discussions about AI in science, social studies, and religion classes, fostering an integrated moral consciousness. Moreover, digital tools can support global solidarity projects, environmental stewardship, and intercultural dialogue—key pillars of Catholic education.

School leadership is seen as critical in shaping an institutional culture that balances innovation with mission. Administrators are encouraged to invest in staff development, build digital capacities, and collaborate with families and parishes. AI offers exciting possibilities for improving operations—from scheduling to resource allocation—but such efficiency gains should never eclipse the personal and spiritual vocation of Catholic schooling. Importantly, the document affirms the school as a space of discernment. Leaders and educators are called to listen deeply to students' experiences, stay informed about emerging technologies, and remain rooted in the values of justice, compassion, and hope.

A Catholic Vision for AI and the Future of Education:

The final part of the publication presents a vision for Catholic education in the AI era—one that is bold, reflective, and faithful. It invites the global Catholic education community to become leaders in shaping ethical AI cultures. This means forming networks of solidarity among schools, producing shared resources, and engaging with policymakers, tech developers, and civil society to advocate for responsible AI. It also calls for theological reflection on AI: What does it mean to be created in God's image in an age of artificial agents? How can faith communities discern truth, responsibility, and human limits in a world driven by machines?

The document proposes that Catholic education must prepare young people not just to use AI, but to imagine alternative futures shaped by mercy, care, and ecological sustainability. Inspired by Pope Francis' Global Compact on Education, it sees the school as a seedbed for peace, dialogue, and integral development. Students should be educated not merely as consumers or producers in the digital economy but as ethical stewards of a shared world. Catholic schools are urged to integrate ecological thinking, spiritual practice, and cultural critique into their educational programs, offering a deeply humanistic counter-narrative to technological determinism.

"AI and Young People in School" is both a critical reflection and a hopeful roadmap. It affirms that Catholic education has something unique to offer: a vision of the person and society that prioritizes communion over competition, discernment over distraction, and love over algorithmic logic. With courage, creativity, and collaboration, Catholic schools can respond to the challenges of AI not with fear, but with faith—transforming digital disruption into an opportunity for renewal, encounter, and prophetic witness in the world.

For more detailed information, please read the document attached with the Newsletter.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION 5.0

Introduction- Vision, Context, and Evolution of Catholic Education:

The Catholic Education 5.0 framework presented by OIEC represents a visionary response to the changing global context marked by socio-political disruption, climate crisis, technological acceleration, and cultural shifts. The document outlines the historical evolution of Catholic education from its missionary and catechetical roots (1.0 and 2.0) through professionalization (3.0) and digital modernization (4.0), leading to its current iteration—Education 5.0. This new model urges Catholic education systems to address emerging global challenges with a focus on hope, justice, and sustainability.

At its core, Education 5.0 is a transformative paradigm that positions Catholic education as a force for integral human development in the service of the common good. Drawing inspiration from Fratelli Tutti and Laudato Si', it calls for the creation of a "new humanism" rooted in fraternity, ecological awareness, solidarity, and spiritual depth. Catholic schools are challenged not just to educate minds but to cultivate compassionate global citizens capable of engaging with contemporary issues. It reimagines education as a journey of liberation, community-building, and ecological conversion, moving beyond academic instruction to holistic formation.

The document recognizes that education systems worldwide face a deep crisis—one of purpose and relevance. Catholic Education 5.0 seeks to respond by embedding a culture of dialogue, mutual respect, interdependence, and faith-inspired activism. Catholic schools are encouraged to reflect critically on how they witness Gospel values, promote justice, and prepare students to participate meaningfully in the transformation of society. By drawing from both scripture and the lived experiences of communities, Catholic Education 5.0 reaffirms its commitment to the dignity of every person and to a preferential option for the poor.

Pedagogical Principles and Strategic Pillars:

The Education 5.0 model is built upon seven key pillars that redefine how Catholic education should operate in the 21st century. These include promoting the dignity of every person, advancing integral ecology, renewing a culture of fraternity and peace, practicing educational co-responsibility, transforming schools into communities of learning and care, making spirituality central to education, and embracing intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Each pillar functions not as a separate initiative but as an integrated expression of a coherent and Gospel-centred worldview.

Pedagogically, the model promotes learner-centred, participatory, and justice-driven approaches. It invites educators to move away from hierarchical, transactional models of instruction toward collaborative, experiential, and dialogical methods. The emphasis is on critical thinking, ethical reasoning, creativity, and service. Catholic schools are encouraged to develop curricula that balance academic rigor with socio-emotional growth, spiritual reflection, ecological awareness, and civic engagement. Classrooms become spaces of encounter, dialogue, and discernment where students are co-creators of knowledge and action.

Leadership in Catholic Education 5.0 is seen as deeply relational and mission oriented. School leaders are called to embody servant leadership, to act as stewards of community well-being, and

to accompany staff and students with humility and wisdom. The framework also reimagines teacher formation, emphasizing the need for professional development rooted in spiritual growth, pedagogical innovation, and intercultural competence. Catholic educators are not merely transmitters of content but facilitators of transformation who model compassion, justice, and faith.

Global Impact, Implementation, and Call to Action:

In the face of a fragmented and often inequitable world, Catholic Education 5.0 insists that Catholic schools must become agents of hope and healing. This is particularly urgent given global inequalities, digital divides, environmental degradation, and political instability. The model calls for radical inclusion, ensuring that all—especially the marginalized—have access to quality education that affirms their dignity and equips them for meaningful participation in society. The role of the Catholic school is thus political in the noblest sense: to form individuals committed to the transformation of unjust structures and the promotion of the common good.

Global solidarity is emphasised as both a spiritual and educational imperative. Catholic education is envisioned as a global commons, where schools across different contexts share practices, collaborate on initiatives, and advocate for global justice. Digital technologies are embraced not merely as tools for instruction but as means for connection, creativity, and ethical engagement. Catholic Education 5.0 leverages platforms and networks to support innovation, facilitate teacher training, and strengthen institutional resilience in the face of disruption.

Finally, the document closes with a prophetic call to action: Catholic schools must be bold, prophetic, and countercultural. They are invited to imagine and construct new educational futures rooted in Gospel values. Education 5.0 is not a fixed program but a living, evolving pathway of hope—one that requires discernment, courage, and deep communion. It offers a renewed invitation to all Catholic educators, students, leaders, and communities to walk together, inspired by faith, to co-create a world that reflects the Kingdom of God—just, compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable.

For more detailed information, please read the document attached with the Newsletter.

WHAT MAKES A CLASSROOM DIGITALLY SMART?

In recent times, when I've interacted with educators who have installed interactive flat panels, I've observed a common pattern in what they tend to recall about the panels in terms of the below priority where 1 is highest and 4 is the lowest

1. Price of the panel
2. Size of the panel
3. Name of the panel
4. Key features (a few hardware specs, usually with some prompting)

“Smart board” or “interactive panel” is very loosely used nomenclature in schools and colleges. The terminology, I suspect, gives institutions a false sense of completion, as if installing a panel means the job is done. This is akin to what we have seen in cinemas for many years: once the story was over, the protagonists lived happily ever after.

Myth 1

A SMART classroom is only about the purchase of hardware.

It is perplexing to see many educational institutions reduce their procurement process for interactive panels to just hardware specifications. The run-of-the-mill view is that it's all about purchasing a set of specifications.

When educators say, “We were planning to buy a TV but ended up buying an interactive panel,” it

reflects a deeper blind spot. Any digital infrastructure placed in the classroom cannot replace the teacher in the classroom. The interactive element in the panel is about keeping the teachers , the human element central to accentuating the learning, providing seamless support much like what Jarvis is to Iron Man

Questions to Ponder:

How does the digital solution integrate with the planned teaching process?
What should be the key elements in the features that enable and empower the teaching-learning process, contextual to the organizational culture?
How does the solution enable curated, safe, and updated digital assets?
What is the use case of the AI feature that the panel offers?

Myth 2

There is nothing beyond whiteboard features that can be used on the classroom panel.

It is well known that teachers are required to undertake many key activities to deliver impactful learning experiences. There is also a set of allied activities that teachers must manage. These activities have a huge impact on how the classroom teaching is being personalized. By integrating core activities such as attendance, homework, and assignments within the class period itself, valuable teacher time can be freed up, reducing the burden of administrative tasks piling up later.

Questions to Ponder:

How does the solution align with lesson planning exercises?
What is the school's approach toward utilization of digital resources?
How is the digital pedagogy promoting formative assessments and conceptual learning through digital aids?

Myth 3

Driving usage is solely the service provider's responsibility.

From my book *School Excellence – Nine Attributes of a School Leader*:

"It has always been bewildering to witness that technology adoption in schools was squarely led by the service provider. In the initial period, around 2011, when cloud-based servers and hosting were introduced, the meaning was taken literally. It took a lot of explanation about the concept, where manual upgrades were being undertaken and many of the schools found this process to be very cumbersome and yet comforting. Even today, pen drive-based content updates prevail, and many schools have still not moved away completely, even though they are costly, unscalable, and have many operational inefficiencies. The lack of adoption of technology also meant the "monkey was on the back" of the vendor — an extremely intriguing and unprecedented mindset. It's akin to a car being purchased where the manufacturer is responsible for how the owner drives and maintains the car purchased."

Questions to Ponder:

Has the organization defined a clear usage plan for teachers?
Has the organization set up a review mechanism with frequency and key milestones?
Does the organization have a personalized plan for subject wise and teacher wise to enhance usage?

Myth 4

Poor teaching and learning experiences can be completely replaced with smart boards.

Technology when used diligently only amplifies the learning experiences that is required to be delivered to

the students in the classroom and hence it's never a silver bullet for poor teaching strategies. I've heard this from some educators who do not trust some of their teachers in terms of their motivation and capabilities . They believe that installing a panel conveniently would help them bypass the fault lines that exist. Technology only amplifies the learning experiences however learning continues to be an emotive and social process in a classroom.

Questions to Ponder:

- Does the school / college have a teacher development plan around utilization of technology?
- Has the school/college created a playbook outlining how, what, and when technology should be used in the classroom?
- Does the school/college promote a connected ecosystem and include the use of the learning app in its communication with parents and students?

Myth 5

CCTV cameras are enough to promote safety inside the schools / colleges

Deep learning experiences can trigger a sense of vulnerability in the minds of students. It is important to closely understand a student's emotional well-being, not after an incident has occurred, but by identifying and addressing issues at an early stage. Especially during adolescence, there are factors beyond the classroom that often distract from learning within it. When teachers are able to share anomalies or notable emotional responses observed in class, using tools like reaction badges available on the panel - it can go a long way in helping schools respond proactively to emerging concerns

Questions to Ponder:

- How can teachers regularly communicate with parents about the social-emotional well-being of their child?
- Does the panel have the requisite features to ensure that advertisements are not played while streaming open-source content in the classroom?
- Does the panel have inbuilt cameras that can zoom based on participants' involvement in the classroom?

Overall, the use of panels in classroom teaching goes beyond being passive hardware devices used randomly. It is important to have a holistic view, that intelligent panels, when used diligently, can create deeper joy, personalize learning experiences, and reduce barriers between learners. provided schools and colleges believe that calibrated change is not optional, but essential, in the pursuit of excellence.

Sanjay Radhakrishnan
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School Excellence Expert & Author of "School Excellence: 9 Attributes of a School Leader"

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PARAKH RASHTRIYA SARVEKSHAN NATIONAL REPORT (INDIA 2025)

Introduction:

The PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024, conducted by NCERT under the Ministry of Education, marks a significant milestone in assessing student learning outcomes and school effectiveness across India. Rooted in the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the survey emphasized competency-based learning and focused on developing critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and lifelong learning habits. It targeted students in Grades3,6, and9 across government, government-aided, private-recognized, and central government schools throughout all 36 States and Union Territories.

Engaging approximately 75,565 unique schools, the survey assessed over 22,94,377 students in the three target grades. With test booklets comprising up to 60 items (language, mathematics, science, social studies depending on grade), and accompanying questionnaires for pupils, teachers, and schools, the design aimed to capture both competencies and contextual factors driving learning. This initiative builds on the legacy of India's National Achievement Survey, marking a shift toward competency-based evaluation at multiple levels (school, district, state, national), fostering data-informed policy and pedagogy.

Assessment Tools & Duration:

- Grade 3: foundational competencies in language and mathematics, 45 questions, ~90-minute duration.
- Grade 6: language, mathematics, and "The World Around Us," 51 questions, ~90 minutes.
- Grade 9: language, mathematics, science, and social science, 60 questions, ~120 minutes.

Alongside the Achievement Test (AT), separate Pupil Questionnaires (PQ), Teacher Questionnaires (TQ), and School Questionnaires (SQ) gathered context on learning environments, teacher practices, and school infrastructure.

Implementation and Stakeholders:

The implementation rested on a multi-tiered network:

- 180+ State-Level Coordinators (SLCs).
- Over 3,128 District-Level Coordinators (DLCs).
- Field Investigators, CBSE observers, and regional coordinators at local levels.

To ensure fidelity, more than 30 nationwide workshops trained SLCs, DLCs, and Field Investigators in the administration protocol, sampling, OMR handling, and quality assurance measures.

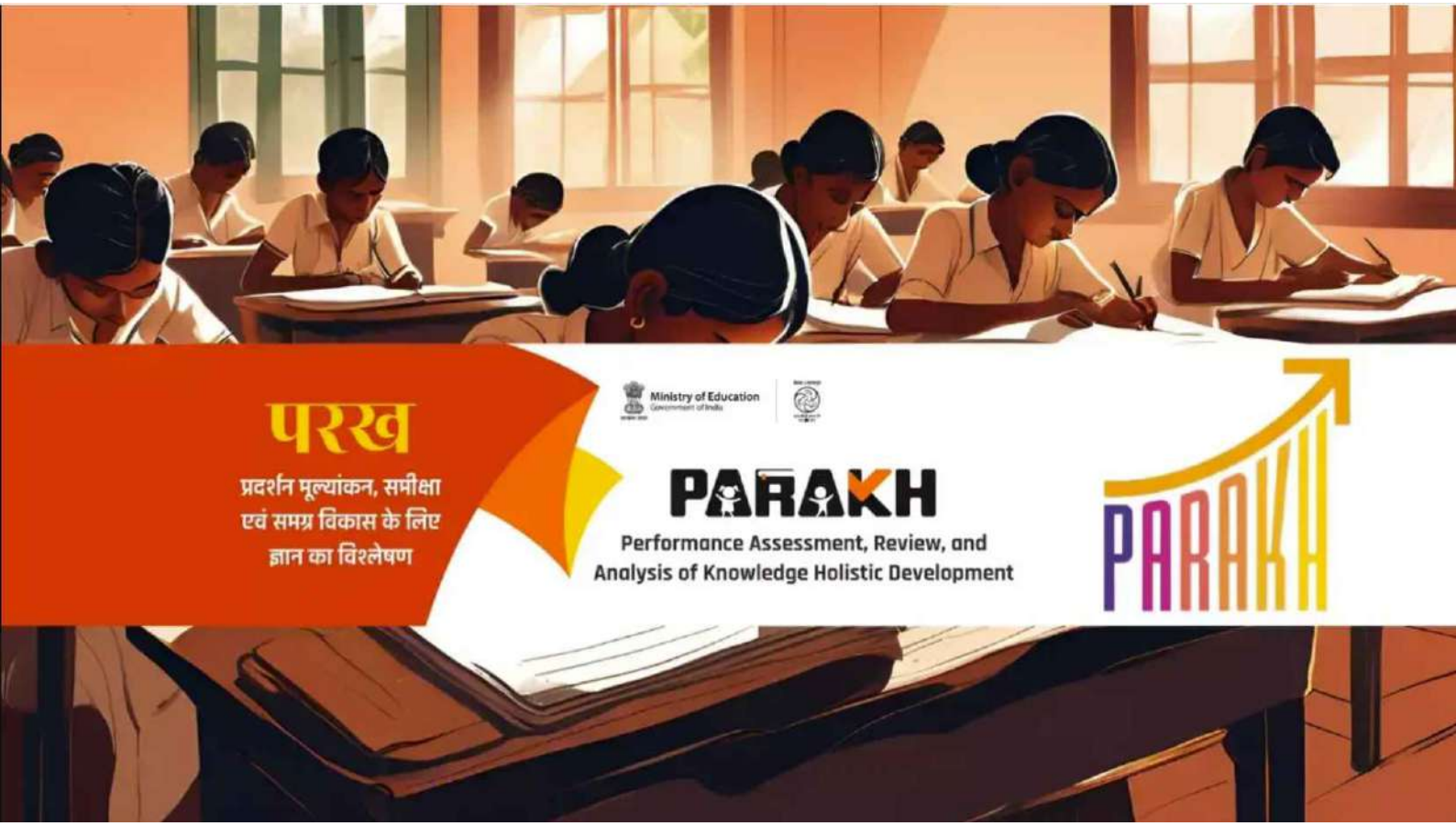
A comprehensive operational manual and guidelines detail roles and duties for observers, field investigators, and resource custodians, specifying procedures from sealed material handling to student

sampling and OMR collection

Competency Findings and Pedagogical Insights:

The survey also assessed subject-wise competency performance. For instance, in Grade 3, students demonstrated high competency in sorting objects, identifying patterns, and basic language comprehension, while struggling with geometry, money transactions, and vocabulary for mathematical terms. In Grade 6, while Language comprehension was satisfactory, major gaps were found in understanding fractions and mathematical conversions. Science and Social Science competencies in Grade 9 showed weaknesses in understanding complex scientific phenomena, data analysis, and civics. Mathematical reasoning, algebraic thinking, and problem-solving also emerged as challenge areas, with less than 40% proficiency in many competencies.

On pedagogical practices, the survey emphasized the importance of innovative and inclusive teaching strategies. Many teachers reported using self-assessment (95%), peer assessment (91%), and project-based learning (92%), though portfolio use remained relatively low (81%). Diverse teaching methods like arts integration (87%) and experiential learning (96%) were widely practiced, though toy-based learning needs improvement. Furthermore, while skill education has gained recognition, less than half of the



schools offered skill-based courses for Grade 9 and above, and only 29% of students were enrolled in them. This reflects the need to boost awareness, infrastructure, and industry partnerships for career readiness. On learning materials, the availability of digital tools and audio-visual resources was decent, but newer initiatives like “Jadui Pitara” were less adopted. Encouraging use of subject kits, teacher handbooks, and digital content via platforms like DIKSHA and NISHTHA can enhance classroom engagement.

Sampling, Administration & Integrity Procedures:

The survey employed randomized student sampling within sampled classes, ensuring up to 30 students per school per grade, selected via a prescribed PIN-code-based algorithm and control sheet procedures. Grade 3 students produced written responses, later transferred by Field Investigators to OMR sheets, while Grades 6 and 9 marked their own answers directly.

Strict protocols governed:

- **Pre-survey logistics** (e.g. observer briefing on December 3, 2024).
- **Survey-day roles:** observer oversight, invigilation, fairness assurances (e.g. “don't penalize students”), and secure collection of OMRs and booklets.
- **Post-test procedures:** packing of used materials, sealed OMR return bags, chained custody back to

distribution centres, and documentation via monitoring proformas and field notes.

Roles and responsibilities were delineated at each level (national experts, district coordinators, resource custodians, observers, FIs), all committed to maintaining integrity and standardized conditions across the country.

Strategic Significance and Policy Utility:

The PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan marks a strategic transformation in India's educational assessment system:

- Through coverage of 75,565 schools and 22.9 million students, the initiative provides a granular view of learning across regions, school types, and population groups.
- The multi-stakeholder model (PARAKH-NCERT, CBSE, SLCs, DLCs, observers, FIs) reflects a systemic commitment to robust data collection and training infrastructure.
- Its competency-based approach- rooted in NEP 2020 and RTE-mandated learning outcomes- aligns assessment with policy priorities and educational practice reform.

Systemic Challenges, Recommendations, and the Way Forward:

A major focus of the survey was on systemic reform and post-assessment action. The report outlines a three-tiered intervention strategy—short-, mid-, and long-term—starting with dissemination workshops from national to district levels. These sessions aim to help stakeholders analyse data, formulate local action plans, and integrate findings into district academic planning and budgeting cycles. The report also identifies systemic gaps such as limited career guidance, inadequate access to laboratories, low adoption of digital tools, and inconsistent use of skill-based and vocational programs. Additionally, socio-emotional learning (SEL) surfaced as an area needing reinforcement. Although most students felt safe and supported, issues like bullying, isolation, and academic stress persist. The Manodarpan initiative and school-based SEL programs are recommended to address these challenges.

On community involvement, schools reported moderate participation from Gram Pradhans and self-help groups but limited support from NGOs and CSR initiatives. Enhancing collaboration with local communities can lead to more inclusive and better-resourced learning environments. The report also highlighted that many students exit the education system after Grade 10 due to economic reasons, family responsibilities, or lack of guidance. Strengthening career counselling, scholarship schemes, and flexible learning opportunities are key to reducing dropout rates. Lastly, the report recommends a stronger push for equity, quality, and inclusion in education. By aligning local educational strategies with national goals under NEP 2020 and leveraging insights from PARAKH's data-driven model, the education system can be transformed into one that truly fosters lifelong learning, holistic development, and future-readiness for every Indian child.

For more detailed information, please read the document attached with the Newsletter.

ENROLMENT DROPS IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS AND PM-POSHAN

By Salvatore Cernuzio and Lisa Zengarini:

This study by BITS Pilani investigates the use of AI tools like ChatGPT in rural Indian classrooms, based on interviews with 23 student volunteer teachers in Rajasthan and Delhi. The research aims to understand whether AI can bridge educational gaps in low-resource settings where infrastructure and teacher shortages persist.

Volunteers noted that AI could personalize learning, simplify complex concepts, and engage students through interactive content. It was especially useful in multigrade classrooms where learning levels vary widely. Tools that support regional languages and offline access were seen as particularly valuable.

However, several barriers were identified. Poor internet, limited access to devices, and lack of digital literacy hinder AI adoption. Teachers were often unfamiliar with AI, and parents were sceptical about its role in education. Volunteers stressed the need for teacher training and community awareness.

The study concludes that AI should support—not replace—teachers, and calls for inclusive, ethical, and localized AI tools aligned with the NCERT curriculum. A new mobile app is being developed to meet these needs, with offline features and multilingual support for students from Grades 3 to 12.

https://edurev.in/t/421109/Indian-Society-and-Social-Issues-July-2025-UPSC-Current-Affairs?utm_source=chatgpt.com#Enrolment_Drop_in_Government_Schools_and_PM-POSHAN

HIGHER EDUCATION: KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

By PIB Delhi: 02 July 2025

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), organized a national workshop titled “Higher Education: Knowledge Economy” in New Delhi. This initiative is part of the lead-up to the 5th National Conference of Chief Secretaries, which will focus on “Human Capital for Viksit Bharat.” The workshop brought together representatives from States and Union Territories to discuss how to optimize existing education schemes, adapt policies to local needs, and promote best practices for strengthening India's higher education landscape.

Senior officials emphasized integrating cutting-edge technologies and innovative reforms in higher education. Dr. Vineet Joshi, Secretary, Higher Education, urged States to engage deeply with the

Concept Note and implement region-specific strategies. Dr. Mangi Lal Jat highlighted the need to modernize agricultural education through AI, ML, and behavioral sciences. Prof. M. Jagadesh Kumar stressed the importance of NEP 2020 reforms and interdisciplinary learning, while Prof. T.G. Sitharam showcased AICTE's tech-driven initiatives such as Smart India Hackathon and the E-Kumbh Portal.

The workshop featured presentations from various States showcasing best practices. Maharashtra shared its vision of becoming a global education hub, while NIFTEM Haryana proposed "Brain Gain Sabbaticals" to reverse brain drain. CCS University, Uttar Pradesh called for equitable funding and infrastructure to elevate State Public Universities, and Karnataka showcased its "Nipuna Karnataka" platform that supports over 4 lakh students. States and UTs are required to submit feedback and state-specific notes by August 2025 to help draft a comprehensive background paper for the upcoming Chief Secretaries' Conference.

https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/PIB2141650.pdf

INDIA OPENS DOORS TO GLOBAL UNIVERSITIES UNDER NEP 2020

By PIB Mumbai: 14 June 2025

In a major milestone toward internationalizing Indian higher education, the Ministry of Education issued Letters of Intent (LoIs) to five globally ranked foreign universities — the University of York, University of Aberdeen, University of Western Australia, Illinois Institute of Technology, and Instituto Europeo Di Design (Italy). These institutions will establish campuses in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, with some expanding to Chennai, under the UGC's 2023 regulations. This move is part of the broader vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to make India a global education hub, offering world-class learning opportunities at affordable costs.

Speaking at the event, Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan highlighted this development as a reflection of India's growing academic credibility and a step towards "Viksit Bharat." He emphasized that India is not only attracting top international universities but also creating ecosystems of research, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri Devendra Fadnavis echoed these sentiments, noting the immense value this initiative will bring to students by reducing the cost barrier to global education.

The universities will offer undergraduate and postgraduate courses in fields such as business, data science, public health, design, and computer science — sectors vital for India's development. The initiative complements India's parallel push to establish its own higher education presence abroad, with IITs and IIMs opening campuses in countries like Abu Dhabi, Tanzania, and Dubai. With over seven LoIs now issued and streamlined approval processes in place, India is redefining the global education landscape by promoting both inward and outward academic mobility.

https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/PIB2136357.pdf

ETHICS OF AI USE BY STUDENTS

By Vidheesha Kuntamalla: July 30, 2025

IIT Kanpur is transforming into an AI-first campus, integrating artificial intelligence across governance, academics, and student welfare. New initiatives include the Wadhwani School of AI and Intelligent Systems, focused on societal challenges like GovTech, healthcare, and sustainable cities. Projects underway range from GPS-free drones navigating hostile terrains to AI systems that manage student mental health, while campus-wide tools assist with grievance redressal and infrastructure operations.

A key concern raised by Director Agrawal is the ethical use of AI in classrooms. He warned that students using AI-generated ideas for assignments constitutes plagiarism, even if language refinement is acceptable. Assessing originality is difficult—AI detection tools exist, but they fail to judge creative thought. IIT Kanpur is considering a mandatory course for all students on responsible AI use tailored to each discipline to help students distinguish proper assistance from academic dishonesty.

Curriculum reform is accelerating in response to the rapid evolution of AI tools. The institute, which typically updates its curriculum every decade, has formed a curriculum review committee to ensure faster adaptation. Agrawal also emphasized students' inclusion in decision-making, especially on mental health initiatives, to maintain a balance between data-driven insights and respect for privacy. Despite these technological shifts, IIT Kanpur remains committed to preserving its core values of openness and flat hierarchy—traits that, he argues, even AI cannot replace.

https://indianexpress.com/article/education/iit-kanpur-director-ai-ethics-students-administration-help-cheating-classrooms-10156293/

MANDATORY TO CONDUCT SAFETY AUDIT IN SCHOOLS

By PTI: July 29, 2025

In the wake of the tragic collapse of a government school building in Jhalawar, Rajasthan on July 25, 2025, which claimed seven young lives and injured 28 others, the Ministry of Education has directed all States and Union Territories to conduct mandatory safety audits of every school and child-related facility. These assessments must comply with national safety codes and the National Disaster Management Guidelines on School Safety, covering structural integrity, fire safety, emergency exits, and electrical safety.

Beyond infrastructure checks, the order mandates comprehensive emergency preparedness training—including evacuation drills, first aid, and safety protocols—for both staff and students. Authorities are also required to establish collaborative training exercises and mock drills with local

agencies such as the NDMA, fire services, police, and health departments. At the same time, schools must set up psychosocial support services, including counselling and peer support, to prioritize students' emotional well-being.

The Ministry has instituted a strict 24-hour reporting mechanism: any unsafe condition, near-miss, or incident posing potential harm to children must be reported to state or UT authorities within a day. Failure or negligence in reporting will result in accountability measures. Parents, guardians, community leaders, and local bodies are urged to remain vigilant, and report concerns about school buildings, transportation, or local public spaces used by children.

https://indianexpress.com/article/education/mandatory-to-conduct-safety-audit-in-schools-govt-tells-states-uts-10154234/

CBSE, NCERT & UNESCO TO EXPAND WELLNESS PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS

By Education Desk: July 28, 2025

UNESCO, CBSE, and NCERT recently held the 11th capacity-building workshop in New Delhi to scale up the School Health and Wellness Programme (SHWP) across 30,000 CBSE-affiliated schools, targeting approximately 15 million adolescent learners. Over 290 principals, teachers, and school leaders—from 22 states and 5 Union Territories including Delhi, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh—participated in training sessions held during June–July 2025.

The initiative aligns closely with NEP 2020's vision of holistic education, emphasizing mental health, gender equality, and inclusive learning. Anandrao V Patil, Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Education, urged educators to embrace their roles as “changemakers” in nurturing empathetic and responsible individuals. Prof. Dinesh Prasad Saklani (NCERT) underlined the importance of educators understanding students' emotional and family contexts to better support them, while Tim Curtis from UNESCO emphasized that “health and education are interlinked foundations for equity, dignity, and opportunity”.

To support rollout, NCERT and UNESCO collaborated on a comprehensive set of resources, including a 24-hour curriculum, facilitator guides, animation videos, and a comic book, all covering 11 core themes—from emotional well-being and internet safety to reproductive health and substance abuse prevention. These materials are available in English, Hindi, and nine regional languages. Since August 2022, a total of 970 Master Trainers have been trained via eleven five-day workshops, and over 40,000 teachers have participated in 754 capacity-building programmes—paving the way for wide-scale implementation across schools.

https://indianexpress.com/article/education/cbse-ncert-unesco-to-expand-wellness-programmes-in-indian-schools-10152485/

OPERATION SINDOOR TO FEATURE IN NCERT LESSONS FOR CLASSES 3 TO 12

By Express News Service: July 27, 2025

NCERT is preparing two specially curated modules—one for classes 3–8 and another for classes 9–12—to introduce students to Operation Sindoor, India's military response to the Pahalgam terror attack of April 22, 2025. Each module will span 8–10 pages and will explain India's coordinated strategic response—including defence, diplomacy, and inter-ministerial collaboration—to help young learners understand national security and military resilience.

These modules are supplementary classroom resources and not part of the standard textbooks. They will feature simplified histories, illustrated narratives, student activities, and reflections—aiming to foster patriotism, civic awareness, and analytical thinking. NCERT regularly publishes such special modules on themes like Mission LiFE, Chandrayaan missions, and national achievements.

Veterans and education experts have largely welcomed the initiative as a step toward embedding contemporary history and defence awareness into school learning. Retired officers described the inclusion of Operation Sindoor as inspiring for students, promoting understanding of India's strategic strength and potentially guiding future career aspirations in service to the nation.

https://indianexpress.com/article/education/ncert-operation-sindoor-classes-3-to-12-school-curriculum-10151871/

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REGISTRATIONS: https://planetfraternity.org/en/registration/

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Starting in September 2025, the proposed formula is as follows.

Planet Fraternity:
2 main topics will punctuate the year
2 partner classes starting in September

Little Planet Fraternity:
3 main topics will punctuate the year – 2 partner classes starting in September

- Who am I?
- Meeting Others
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Register: https://planetfraternity.org/en/registration/

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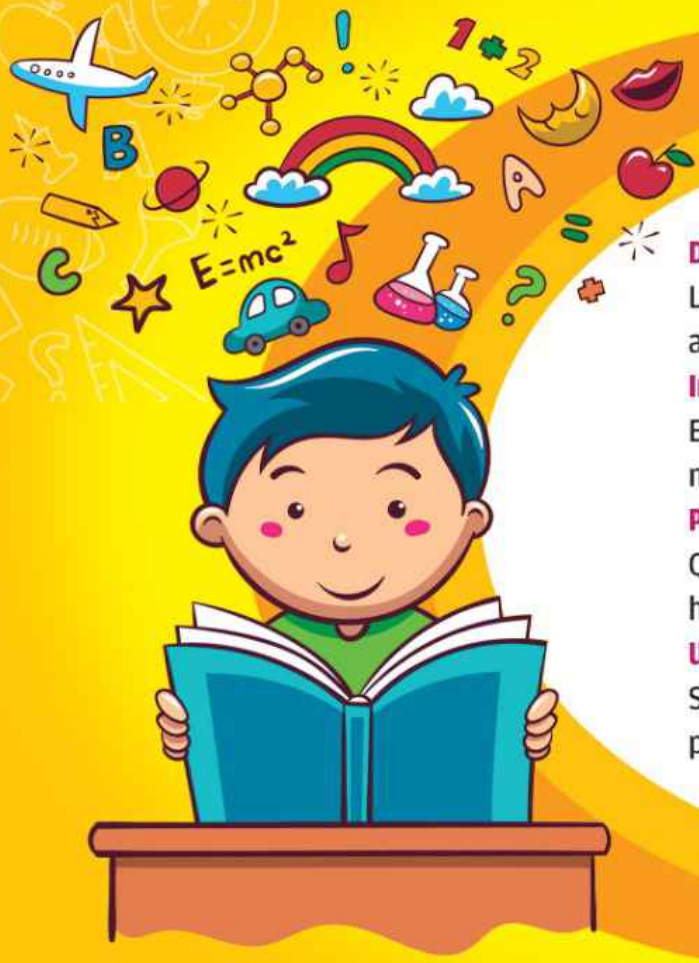

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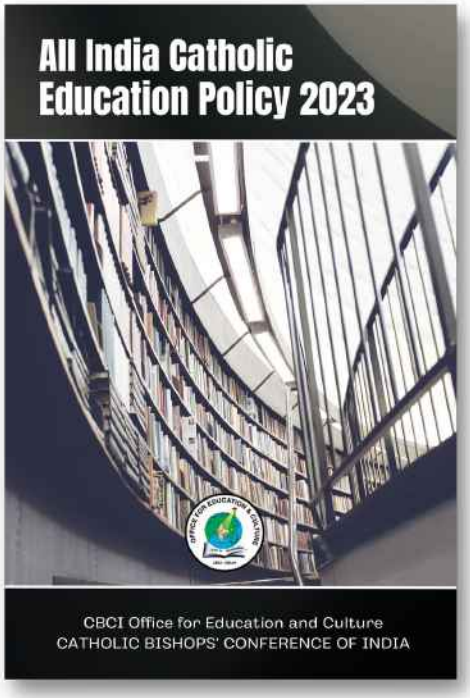
ALL INDIA CATHOLIC EDUCATION POLICY

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.

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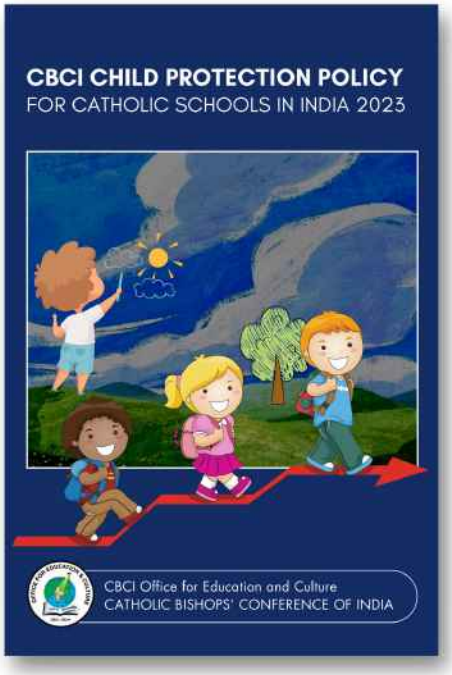

CBCI CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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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