



CBCI OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE NEWS AND VIEWS

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Education Ministry in India: Challenges and Way Forward **Report on the National Consultation of Catholic Regional Education Secretaries and National Education Coordinators**

Organised by CBCI Office for Education and Culture
08 October 2022, CBCI Centre, New Delhi - 110001

On the 8th of October 2022, CBCI Office for Education and Culture had organised a national consultation with the Regional Secretaries of Education and the General Councillors/Coordinators of Education from various Religious Congregations.

The meeting started at 9:30 by a Prayer by Fr. Vincent Pinto, the Regional Education Secretary of the Agra Region, followed by the Welcome speech by Fr. Jervis D'Souza, the Deputy Secretary General of the CBCI. The Inaugural address was given by the Chairperson of the CBCI Office for Education and Culture, Most Rev. Thomas D'Souza. He had spoken about rendering quality Catholic Education to the poor and cautioned that our educational institutions need to be prepared to face various challenges.

With introducing of National Education Policy there are bound to be many changes and challenges, he pointed out. He encouraged all the leaders to courageously take education forward in our country.



The first session commenced at 10:00 am with the theme 'Identity of Catholic Schools for a Culture of Dialogue'. It was presented by Fr. Maria Charles, the National Secretary of the CBCI Office for Education and Culture.

The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue,

He presented the document prepared by the Congregation (Dicastery) for Education in the Vatican and highlighted the need for holding on to the Catholic identity of our educational institutions and to take up programmes as envisaged in the Global compact on Education. A lively discussion ensued and many members reiterated that the Catholic Church should continue to be on the side of the poor and ensure an uninterrupted education for them.

(Chairperson)

Most Rev. Thomas D'Souza
Archbishop of Kolkata,
Archbishop's House,
32- Mother Teresa Sarani,
Kolkata- 700 016.

(Member)

Most Rev. Andrews Thazhath
Archbishop of Trichur,
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Trichur- 680 005, Kerala.

(Member)

Most Rev. John Moolachira
Archbishop of Guwahati,
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(National Secretary)

Fr. Maria Charles SDB
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This was published as an Instruction on 22 January 2022, offers to all Catholics working in school education, a refreshing focus that can safeguard Church unity and communion. This instruction which has been published by the Dicastery of Education in Vatican, insists upon an identity in common for all the Catholic Schools all over the world. Offering a courageous and innovative fidelity to our faith, we must welcome students of all faiths, cultures and

communities with a sincere dialogue so that our education becomes meaningful to everyone who receives it. All our Catholic Schools, this instruction says, offer the Good News of Jesus and help to construct a humane society. (Please find a pdf version of this document, "**The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue**" in the attached file)

The second session commenced at 11:00 am with the theme '**Implementation of NEP 2020: Challenges and Way Forward**', which was presented by Fr. John Ravi SJ, the Secretary of the JEA South Asia. He had presented strategies for implementation of National Education Policy 2020. He said that there are two main things that schools need to do to effectively implement NEP 2020 and they are: **Changing the pedagogical structure** and **Transforming the teaching-learning process**.

He stressed on certain aspects of NEP which need to be looked at carefully:

1. Since the school structure is now inclusive of the Nursery, and two years of Pre-Primary, the fees charged at these stages can now come under the purview of the Fee Regulation Act, 2011. The various heads under which the schools collect fees will now come under scrutiny and can be challenged.
2. The NEP 2020 suggests that all teachers across all boards will have to complete the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET). This could lead to a situation where our schools may lose the right to appoint their own staff on grounds that the Teachers do not have a TET certificate. Perhaps the government will put in staff that could have Hindutva ideologies in our schools.
3. The NEP 2020 does not mention Minority rights. Nor does it acknowledge the special concerns of minority managed institutions. This is a far cry from the rights given to minorities in the Right to Education Act.
4. The NEP 2020 has suggested that to "promote social cohesion during non-teaching /schooling hours, schools to be used as a "*Samajik Chetna Kendra*". As minorities, we need to be aware that our institutions could be used when schools are closed by forces that may have a different value system from ours.
5. NEP 2020 recommends mother tongue/home language/local language at the foundational stages. In many of our schools which are not vernacular medium, i.e. English medium, the state government can insist that English is not a medium of instruction but merely a subject to be taught.

The third session commenced at 11:45 am with the theme 'Challenges and Concerns of the Regional Secretaries and National Coordinators'. This session was moderated by Fr. Teles Fernandes, Secretary of Gujarat Catholic Education Board. A survey had been conducted among

the Regional Education Secretaries and the National General Councillors of Education on the challenges we face in taking education forward and also their suggestions for future course of action for the Church in India. Each Regional Secretary and the General Councillor had presented their suggestions. It was an enriching moment as everyone in the meeting learnt about challenges in education ministry at the pan India level.

Our National Office had collated the responses on concerns and challenges from various regions. They are presented in the order of priority. Some of them are:

- Interference and pressure from the State and Central Government.
- Difficulties with the appointment and improvement of the staff of the educational institution. Lack of personnel.
- Financial instability and issues.
- Rapid change in technology and the issue to keep up with the changing times. Students are getting addicted to technology.
- Implementation of NEP.
- False propagandas and allegations of conversion.
- Political, Media, and religious outfits pressurizing the schools.
- Commercialization has affected the enrollment rates of English and Hindi medium schools as the children flow to government institutions.
- Stress in admission due to a smaller number of students enrolling after the pandemic.
- Contrary values of society for the Education Ministry.
- School leadership in ensuring the quality of Education.
- Good salary not being paid to the teachers, due less fees being paid by students from financially backward class.
- To maintain the multi religious numbers among staff and students.
- Better infrastructure must be provided especially in Government Aided schools. Since Government is now focusing on digital education, they must undertake steps to provide all necessary facilities in the Government aided schools and rural areas as well.
- Loss of the spirit of personal commitment and running after publicity and worldly recognition.
- Overanxious about the future of our educational institutions.

At 12:45 pm, “Hello Students”, a book by Dr. C.J. Joseph, was released by the Chairperson of the CBCI Office for Education and Culture, Most Rev. Thomas D’Souza. This was followed by a Lunch Break at 1:00 pm.

The fourth session commenced at 2:15 pm with the theme **‘CBCI Child Protection Policy for Catholic Educational Institutions’**. It was presented by Fr. Maria Charles SDB, the National Secretary of the CBCI Office for Education and Culture, and Mr. Pradeep, Director of Children Against Child Abuse (CACA). This was already presented in the CBCI Standing Committee. Participants appreciated the presentation and suggested that this policy needs to be there in every school. We shall present the various aspects of this policy in a separate newsletter.

The fifth session commenced at 3:00 pm with the **theme 'Catholic Education Ministry in India: The Way Forward- Presentation and Discussion'**. This session was moderated by Fr. Maria Charles. He presented the suggestions given by various regional and national secretaries to help improve education ministry both at national and at state level. Some of them are:

- Make value education compulsory. Try, if possible, to make the matter available. If possible, in the form of textbooks. If possible, those who have the subject matter ready then that can be made available on the YouTube for the benefit of the teachers and the students.
- One Nation one agenda from CBCI center for all minority schools.
- Kindly list out dos and don'ts that will come in the purview of JJ Act and POCSO Act in the Amended version of the Child Protection Policy. Our institutions bear the blame of ignorance of these Laws.
- Organize more awareness drives, workshops and seminars on current issues that affect our institutions.
- Organize updating programmes for Principals, Managers and Administrators of institutions.
- Create opportunities for academic-exchange programs between regions and states.
- Proper coordination with all the associations and regions.
- Include regional secretaries in both the associations (schools & HEIs).
- Support the Regional Education commissions in the wake of filing cases in the Supreme Court and also assistance in obtaining minority certificates.
- Creating a forum with likeminded forces and secular groups to protect and fight for our educational rights.
- Revising our Catholic Education Policy in tune with our time and emerging challenges.
- Practical remedies in the wake of implementation of NEP 2020.
- Seminar to understand NEP 2020 and on how to Implement certain directives contained in it.
- Challenge orders or notices adverse to minority status and provisions in the court of law.
- Quick response to forward information regarding issues related education if any.
- We need to strengthen the school leadership to be more competent and professional in their administration and to be pedagogical leaders.
- We need to deliberate collectively as catholic Schools on the planning of strategies and resources for the implementation of NEP 2020.
- A timely interference and information as and when needed at the time of policy making by the Government agencies.
- To empower all our Catholic institutions under the CBCI Office for Education.
- Pay attention to rural schools and pair rural catholic schools with city Catholic schools so that the rural schools also can come up!
- Identify and Appoint a Team of Top Advocates and Prominent Educationists to advise us to deal with Challenges and Problems in education related issues.
- Provide professional assistance to evaluate the relevance of the Education Ministry of many of the Catholic Schools to Upgrade them.

- Enable more and more of authentic catholic/Christian students to opt for civil services so that our society may be free of corruption. Free education to be provided in rural areas and scholarships for deserving students
- The Church should go ahead with higher education institutions.
- Enable more and more cooperation and collaboration between the congregations and the dioceses
- Educate our Catholics for taking up responsibly in the future, especially in running our institution as there is decline in genuine vocation to religious life.
- Vision, goal, and common policies for all the Catholic Schools.
- Revision of Catholic Education Policy in the background of NEP.
- Efforts for effective networking of catholic educational institutions for enhanced co-operation.
- The education commission has to be sub divided into categories. This will help better to understand the issues at different levels and find suitable solutions.
- To help congregations and dioceses tap government resources and use the influence of the church to safeguard the institutions which are centers disseminating values of Christ.

This was followed by the CBCI EDUBASE Presentation of the Regional and National Data and the Chairperson had requested all the Secretaries to help in getting the data updated. We shall present some features of CBCI EDUBASE soon in another newsletter. This was followed by the Planning for National Convention of Catholic Educators 2023. The members unanimously agreed that we should have a summit of National Catholic Education Leaders and month suggested was September 2023 to be held in New Delhi.

The concluding session commenced with the concluding remarks given by Most Rev. Thomas D'Souza, the Chairperson of the CBCI Office for Education and Culture.

- The Chairperson suggested that we have a small committee that can help to get suggestions for the National Curriculum Framework. The names suggested were Fr. Maria Charles SDB, Fr. John Ravi SJ, Bro. Mani Mekkunnel. The members were suggested to give suggestions which could be passed on to NCERT.
- There was a discussion on AINACS and about its relevance and the outcome of the meetings. It was also suggested to have a few regulations set in about its governance and its meetings. Fr. Maria Charles, Secretary of CBCI OEC who is also an ex-officio member of AINACS accepted to take it up with the Governing Body and with the Chairperson for further discussion.
- Both President and the Secretary of the Xavier Board of Catholic Higher Education were present for the meeting and mentioned about the forthcoming 24th Triennial Conference to be held in Goa. In the recent past there has been a huge collaboration and networking among the Higher Education Institutions, observed Fr. Maria Charles and suggested a drive to include more and more higher education institutions in the Xavier Board.
- It was observed that though we had given many suggestions to the Ministry of Education, Government of India, yet the contribution of Christians have not been acknowledged and we are not included in any of the committees which make the curriculum framework or

any policy changes. The Chairperson observed that the political climate does not favour the minority groups but nevertheless we need to continue to make efforts to contribute.

- It was observed that we need to animate our Principals and Teachers more often and the National Secretary could form a team which is available for animation in different regions and in dioceses.
- Fr. Maria Charles said that as the Child Protection Policy has been revised and has been sent to the Standing Committee of CBCI for permission, he said the Catholic Education Policy is also being revised and soon this would come for a discussion with the Regional Secretaries and National Coordinators before being presented to the Standing Committee of CBCI for permission.

The members were very happy about the meeting and expressed that we need to have this meeting regularly.

The vote of thanks was given by Sr. Mary Josephine Antony Raj, National Coordinator of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA). The meeting concluded with tea at 4:30 pm. (Report compiled by Fr. Maria Charles SDB, National Secretary CBCI OEC)

Some important News and Resources:

Meeting with Dr. Sridhar Srivastava, Joint Director of NCERT

During the CMI Education Conclave held at Christ University, Bengaluru, Dr. Sridhar Srivastava, Joint Director of NCERT and Fr. Maria Charles, Secretary to CBCI Office for Education and Culture who had shared the Inaugural panel had a discussion at the sideline and I had expressed our desire to make contribution to the curriculum. He had shared links with which our Catholic Educators could contribute to the formulation of curriculum to school secondary level. We shall soon arrange a meeting with him online for all our leaders in education to have a discussion with him. (The links are given as part of the attached file)

National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for Foundational Stage 2022

In his foreword to the NCF for Foundational stage, K. Kasturirangan, Chairperson National Steering Committee for National Curriculum Frameworks, says, “The NCF is one of the key components of NEP 2020, that enables and energizes the transformation, informed by the aims, principles, and approach of NEP 2020. Its objective is to realise the highest quality education for all our children, consistent with realising an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution. This is the first ever integrated Curriculum Framework for children between ages 3-8 in India. It is a direct outcome of the 5+3+3+4 ‘curricular and pedagogical’ structure that NEP 2020 has come out with for School Education. The Foundational Stage envisions an integrated approach to Early Childhood Care and Education; for children between ages 3-8. The transformative nature of this phase of education is expected to qualitatively improve the contents and outcomes of education, thereby, impacting the lives of our children towards a better future.”

The preparation of this Framework has gone through a huge process. It has benefited from the engagement of over 10 lakh interested citizens including students and parents, and over 1.3 lakh teachers and educationists from across the country, over 1550 district level consultations from 32 States and Union Territories, and 35 groups of institutions. These consultations are in addition to over 500 papers on 25 specifically relevant themes written by groups constituted by the States and Union Territories which all together had over 4000 experts, and 25 papers on these themes developed by expert groups with over 175 members, constituted by the National Council for Educational Research and Training. (Please find a pdf version of “National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage” as an attached file!)

National Credit Framework 2022

We speak about quality education which enables a young person to be employable, entrepreneurial and someone who contributes to the society. Combining academic education with vocational training was part of decades-long discussion in India. The National Credit Framework (NCrF) has been jointly developed by a High-Level Committee constituted by the Government with members from UGC, AICTE, NCVET, NIOS, CBSE, NCERT, Department of School Education and Learning & Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, DGT, and Ministry of Skill Development.

“The high-level committee constituted by the Government to formulate a unified credit accumulation and transfer framework for both vocational and general education, from school education to higher education, has developed “National Credit Framework” encompassing three main components such as credits earned from academic grade, skill programme and relevant experience. The framework will enable establishing equivalence and mobility between general education and vocational education so that lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning, multiple entry and exit, and continuous professional development are encouraged in the system” says Prof. Jagadesh Kumar, Chairman, University Grants Commission. (Please find a pdf version of “National Credit Framework” as an attached file)

Early Identification and Intervention for Mental Health Problems in School Going Children and Adolescents: Modular Handbook for Teachers and Allied Stakeholders 2022

Minister for Education, Hon. Dharmendra in his message to this guide prepared by a group of experts, says, “Positive mental health plays an essential role in the overall development of children and a fundamental part to our overall health and well-being. It is as important as physical health for achieving developmental milestones which helps children with their social, emotional and psychological well-being. Research demonstrates that students receiving mental health support throughout their schooling achieve better learning abilities and well directly help in getting better performance in classrooms. In addition, mentally healthy children function well at home, in school, and in their communities and have greater chances of leading a happy and successful life.”

This book deals with:

- Understanding mental health of children
- Pedagogical Model for Psycho-Social Support to Students
- Early Identification and Management of Common Mental Health Concerns
- Adolescent Mental Health Issues & Concerns Flag Signs, Causes and Risk Factors, What Teachers Can Do
- Emotional and Behavioural Emergencies in Schools
- Planning Sensitization & Collaboration with Stakeholders
- Emerging Concerns for Children with Special Circumstances; Mental Health Perspectives

(Please find a pdf version of “Early Identification and Intervention for Mental Health Problems in School Going Children and Adolescents” as an attached file.)

Fr. Maria Charles SDB
National Secretary, CBCI Office for Education and Culture