# **WEB CONFERENCE**

# **CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN COVID ERA AND BEYOND**

# CHALLENGES & POSSIBILITIES

## **ORGANIZED BY CBCI OFFICE FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

## **IN COLLABORATION WITH**

## **DON BOSCO HIGHER EDUCATION INDIA NETWORK (DBHEI)**

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| **July 2020** | **August 2020** |
| **17th** | **24th** | **31st** | **7th** | **14th** |
| **11.30 am – 01.00 pm, Via Airmeet** |

*We are hard pressed on every side, but never consumed (2 Cor 4:8)*

The Covid-19 and national lockdown has forced the closure of schools, colleges and universities for 120+ days with a rare chance of reopening before September 2020. Economy and education are bidirectionally related. As the Indian economy is affected by pandemic lockdown, Indian education system has major setbacks. It throws unprecedented challenges to the educational leaders, managers and administrators.

Will our institutions, struggling with pandemic and financial crunch fall further behind or leap forward with new paradigms? There is a silver lining to the pandemic to focus on radical reforms, redefining conventional education models. It is opined that even if Covid vaccine is developed in a few months, pedagogies, academic processes and education objectives will change forever.

CBCI Office for Education and Culture organizes this conference together with DBHEI (Don Bosco Higher Education India Network) to bring Catholic education leaders on a digital platform, to probe deeper at the challenges and have online consultation on Catholic Education in COVID and beyond: Challenges and Possibilities.

The Conference focuses on five themes.

* Digital Transformation
* Student Empowerment
* Teacher Engagement
* Governance and Management
* Apostolic Metanoia

Starting from Friday, 17th of July, from 11.30 am to 01.00 pm, this series will be held on each of the topics on subsequent Fridays. Information is being sent to all the Bishops, Regional Secretaries, Diocesan Secretaries and related networks. High profile resource persons will guide the sessions and there will be time for open discussion as well. Reports of each of this consultation will be shared with all the Bishops. Registration link will be sent by 13th July 2020.

Each theme has two speakers to highlight the challenges and present possibilities to experiment and strategize. Participants can clarify the expounded concepts and contribute with their outlooks and case works.

# Theme 1: Digital Transformation

Teachers and students are becoming digital savvy with online learning. The transition from brick-and-mortar classroom to blended learning model is realized quickly in affordable institutions. And yet, for most of the institutions, the major challenges are low internet bandwidth, lack of access to digital devices and untrained teachers.

The families of many a children do not have access to digital devices and high-speed internet connectivity. Will it widen the digital divide? Are there ICT integration possibilities for all groups of students, low- or high-income level and offer inclusive education?

The mental strain that teachers and students suffer due to excessive screen time and the struggle of parents to supervise home learning are also to be addressed.

**Points for Reflection:**

1. What is your experience of digital education in your school? Is it positive?
2. How has the digital education/digital divide affected your school?
3. Are there ways in which we can democratize digital education?
4. Are there ICT integration possibilities for all groups of students, low- or high-income level and offer inclusive education?

# Theme 2: Student Empowerment

The general poor learning outcome of millions of Indian children and youth needs a radical reform in pedagogy and delivery. Many children (nearly 56% as per ASER Report 2018) in primary schools do not attain basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

New forms of pedagogy with appropriate adoption of technology is an opportunity for change. Catering to diversity of students is a possibility with blended personalized learning. If Covid-19 is to stay, students must adopt themselves to online style of learning and be provided with the necessary equipment to have nonstop learning.

With social, technical, biological and political disruptions around, students need to be accompanied to understand their goals in life and attain true happiness. Many children from marginalized families may drop out of schools. Thousands may enter the child labor force and become vulnerable to trafficking and/or pushed into early marriage.

Twenty-first century skills (learning, literacy and life) must be universalized by incorporating into any course offered in a school or college. More of these skills to be imparted using virtual learning environment than in traditional classrooms. eLearning must extend to co-curricular education such as dance, music, arts and crafts, yoga, physical fitness and sports. For instance, senior students can engage safely in local communities to handle pandemic and their real experiences in society can be guided and directed.

**Points for Reflection:**

1. Is there a possibility of a new form of pedagogy with the adoption of technology?
2. How can students in our care be continued to be accompanied during and post COVID days?
3. How can life skills be imparted using virtual learning environment than academics?
4. Have you evaluated your online education to see if values and competencies are delivered to the students?

# Theme 3: Teacher Engagement

Getting the teachers accustomed to the new normal of online teaching is a major challenge. Teachers need to apply creative and innovative methods in migrating to online platform. Adoption to digital technologies, using seamlessly the e-learning resources provided by the government and handling the diversity of students require upskilling of teachers.

Teachers must also interact with the parents to enable their children to participate in blended learning from the conventional system.

Teachers need accompaniment too. Adapting to a new way of teaching and accompanying students has put a lot of stress on teachers. Besides knowledge in academics, the teachers need to learn new dynamics to cope with attention-deficiency, mental health of children and creative ways of assessing children’s learning capacity. Teachers need training in accompanying children virtually. Teachers need a new set of pedagogy to cope with teaching children whom they do not interact with face to face. What would be the basics of new pedagogy?

**Points for Reflection:**

1. How has the school empowered the teachers to accompany the students, by way of knowledge and skills?
2. Have the teachers been left on their own to find the technology as well as other resources to continue with online education or has the school provided them with?
3. How have your teachers adopted digital technology? Do you have any courses planned for them to be more productive and innovative?
4. Will there be emergence of digital educators and what type of pedagogy will they have to adopt?

# Theme 4: Governance and Management

Covid-19 has provoked the dire need for digital infrastructure, teacher capacity and curriculum revamp towards holistic formation. It may not be a reality for our institutions for the disadvantaged and in rural areas. It is attainable with competent and visionary leadership. Better perspective and strategic planning are needed at the national, diocesan/provincial or institution level.

Catholic Community is blessed with a great pool of committed and passionate faithful. We need progressive and innovative leadership. It demands deep training, clear policies and procedures and well-remunerated faculty.

The Indian private school system has a serious risk of extinction with fund crisis. Fee waivers/deferment directives given by the government widen the risk. Financial management and fundraising need a revamp.

We need leadership development programs to improve our administrative practices, fund management, fund raising, building R&D culture and change management. For instance, many alumni are ready and willing to contribute donations to develop their alma mater.

**Points for Reflection:**

1. What type of leadership is needed to cope with COVID and beyond COVID Education?
2. Will our Private schools survive the financial crisis and what plans have you made to avert major crunch of funds?
3. Is there credible management system in your school and what innovative systems have you created in the recent past to build up a resilient institution?
4. Is your institution community-centered? Have you received support from the community by way of financial support and otherwise?

### Theme 5: Apostolic Metanoia

With introspection in every walk of life at this juncture, the Indian Catholic Church shall reexamine her identity as ambassadors of His Kingdom and disciples of Jesus Christ. The Church is for the poor and for the people of God. How do we respond to the cry of the incomeless teachers, aimless students and hopeless parents?

The Covid-19 should serve as a period of purification – metanoia. Our education institutions must come out of the pandemic, converted and revitalized with new paradigms, praxis and results. The renewed Church will accompany the downtrodden children and young, affirm the competency and contribution of the teachers, account management and administration with transparency and accredit our purpose of existence with the vision of Our Lord to become true instruments of salvation for all people.

**Points for Reflection:**

1. How do we respond to the cry of the incomeless teachers, aimless students, and hopeless parents?
2. Do you believe your institution needs conversion? What are those aspects which you would like to correct and move forward?
3. What are those new paradigms and praxis you would envisage for your institution?
4. Can we transform our processes of accompaniment, affirmation, accountability and accreditation of our education institutions and the entire educative community?

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**Fr/Dr. Maria Charles SDB** **Fr/Dr. Thaddeus Gregory SDB**

National Secretary Executive Secretary

CBCI Office for Education and Culture Don Bosco Higher Education Network