

WEB CONFERENCE

CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN COVID ERA AND BEYOND CHALLENGES & POSSIBILITIES

ORGANIZED BY

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Student Empowerment

Focus on Skills and not the Content

The low 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 and youth from marginalized families may drop out of schools and colleges. Thousands may enter the child labor force and become vulnerable to trafficking and/or pushed into early marriage.

Focusing much on the skills, new pedagogy, experiential learning and forms of delivery are needed. How can we impart these skills from distance? How can virtual learning environment replace traditional classrooms? There are good practices where eLearning extend to co-curricular education such as dance, music, arts and crafts, yoga, physical fitness and sports.

Topic 1 : Imparting Learning Skills in our Educational Settings

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The onset of 21st century has brought to light that students are empowered not merely by the content of knowledge offered to them. Rather, it is the skill-set that empowers the students to assimilate the knowledge that they have acquired and use it appropriately to enrich their life. Various studies in different educational context all over the world have identified the deficit of such skills in the learning process. Some of the important learning skills that are identified are: 4 C's – Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Innovation, Communication and Collaboration.

In the **present context of Covid-19**, the educators are beckoned more with the challenge of imparting skills that empower the young minds to learn effectively, adopting themselves to a new normal. With the minimized or nil chance of direct face-to-face classroom interaction with students, digital or e-learning has become the new normal right from LKG to University degrees. Without learning skills, students may face the danger of being underachievers, slow-learners and get dropped out of education prematurely.

How to Impart the Learning Skills? Using the accessible and affordable digital platforms, learning skills should be introduced through constructive and experiential activities. Successful models can be shared as best practices using social media. Traditional methods like SQ3R, Whole vs Part learning, Brainstorming can be enforced online. Collaborative learning could be encouraged through Buddy System and Group study using the Communication aids and gadgets the students have already. Creativity and Innovation skills could be implemented by welcoming creative presentation of the content and by encouraging innovative solutions to the problems.

Obstacles to overcome

Rigid mindset, reluctance to learn and explore, easily giving into the old way of rote memory style, Students irregularity in practicing the skills are some of the obstacles to overcome.

Topic 2 : What, Why and How of actualising 21 Century Life Skills training in Schools and Colleges

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Background

Various international studies done on the inadequacy of the present teaching-learning style, have forcefully come out with the proposal that students should be trained in Life skills to suite the need of the 21 century. Otherwise, the students become redundant and misfit to live a happy life personally and professionally. The life skills strongly recommended are: FLIPS (Flexibility & Adaptability, Leadership & Responsibility, Initiative & Self-direction, Productivity & Accountability, Social & Cross-cultural Interaction).

The need of such a shift in teaching-learning style

Class room learning, teacher-centered teaching, exam- oriented learning etc do not anymore make the young people useful and productive; mere high grade in an examination is no guarantee that he/she is happy, positive, capable, responsible, accountable etc. Very often, educators neglect these aspects while imparting education. In fact, Life skills training should start from the very beginning of one's education; the student should learn to live and practice life skills needed at each age and thus make a strong foundation. School life is the most important phase for training a student in life skills; Higher secondary and college education can only build on the foundation. Hence, a 100% paradigm shift is needed in the school/college teaching- curriculum.

How to impart 21 century Life skills?

Possible only by bringing about a shift in the perception of the Leadership and Management team of each institution. They should become apostles of change; they in turn should inculcate in their teacher the culture of Life skills in their teaching style. They should be trained in providing formal and informal coaching to the students in life skills.

Challenges: Resistance to shift from the traditional way of imparting education; excuses about demanding syllabus, time constraint, lack of resources, lack of training, disinterest on the part of parents and students etc.

Points for Reflection

1. How can students in our care be continued to be accompanied during and post COVID days?
2. How can life skills be imparted using virtual learning environment than academics?
3. Have you evaluated your online education to see if values and competencies are delivered to the students?
4. Share your best practices of learning or life skill activities via online explored by your teachers with the existing technology facilities?

Reminder!

Kindly share your opinions on theme 1 if you have not done so by clicking the link below.

<https://forms.gle/TMw4X5K5DYJWYVv17>